

Adult Social Care and Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

25 June 2025

Adult Social Care Customer Feedback Annual Report 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025

Recommendation

That the Adult Social Care & Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers and comments on the contents of this report.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This is the Annual Customer Feedback Report for Adult Social Care and Public Health services covering the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025.
- 1.2 In January 2024, a new customer feedback system was implemented to log all feedback received by Warwickshire County Council (the Council). This system is now fully embedded and as a result raising and tracking complaints is simpler for customers. Complaint handling is streamlined, and managers now have richer data and enhanced reporting to identify themes in customer contacts, enabling efficient issue resolution. A central logging process for compliments was also introduced in 2024/25 and is managed by the Customer Relations team.
- 1.3 This report summarises compliments, complaints and comments received by services within the remit of the Adult Social Care & Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, including learning and service improvement activity. Data, trends, and themes have been compared over the last two years.
- 1.4 Feedback can be shared by customers through an online portal, by telephone, by post or via email and it is categorised into complaints, compliments, and comments. Questions from the public are not recorded on the system but are dealt with directly by the appropriate service.
- 1.5 At an organisational level:
 - Overall feedback received is continuing to reduce and in 2024/25, it was at its lowest over the last five years at 2147 cases.
 - Complaints decreased by 43% from 1520 in 2023/24 to 869 in 2024/25.
 - Compliments increased by 43% from 454 in 2023/24 to 650 in 2024/25.

- Comments increased by 89%, from 218 in 2023/24 to 628 in 2024/25. “Comments” are requests for a service or information from customers that require a response from the relevant service but are not a complaint. They only become a complaint if they are not handled appropriately and within the agreed timescale.

1.6 In Adult Social Care services:

- Complaints remained stable increasing slightly from 122 in 2023/24 to 123 in 2024/25.
- Compliments have increased by 72% from 149 in 2023/24 to 255 in 2024/25.
- Comments have increased by 29% from 14 in 2023/24 to 18 in 2024/25.

1.7 Public Health received no complaints in 2024/25 which is consistent with last year. It is important to note that any complaints about Public Health commissioned service delivery are dealt with directly by the service provider and are therefore not responded to under the Council’s Complaint Policy or included in this report.

1.8 Identifying, actioning, recording, and sharing lessons learnt is crucial for improving customer experience with Council services. The Council’s process prioritises this approach and allows staff to reflect on how cases could have been better handled and how to apply these insights for future improvements. Examples of actions taken within Adult Social Care include the introduction of Better Care Finance assessment tool to help reduce issues around financial assessment and sharing areas for development with providers to support better recording of incidents and to make complaint investigations more robust. The Better Care Finance tool is an online self-service tool that is embedded into the adult social care financial assessment process enabling individuals, and their families, to make more informed decisions about their care and support needs. The benefit of the tool is that individuals will no longer have to wait for an appointment for their financial assessment but instead can enlist the help of a trusted family member or friend to fill in the form at a time and place that is convenient for them. Most importantly, clients and their representatives can have greater visibility and clarity of their indicative care contributions.

2. Complaints Process

2.1 Every local authority with a responsibility for Social Care services is required to provide an annual report outlining the workings of both their adults and children’s complaints and representations procedures.

2.2 The procedure for dealing with adults’ statutory complaints (those that meet the criteria within legislation and are raised by or on behalf of Adult Social Care relating to our Social Care Services) is determined by the Local Authority

Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009 (the Regulations). The Council's complaints policy meets the requirements of the legislation, and the supporting guidance issued by the Department of Health in February 2009: 'Listening, Responding, Improving: A guide to better customer care' (the Guidance).

- 2.3 The Regulations cover complaints made in relation to NHS and Adult Social Care Services and/or any of its commissioned services and require that:
- i.) organisations have a single stage system to deal with complaints.
 - ii.) complaints should be dealt with within a maximum of 6 months which can only be extended with the complainant's agreement.
 - iii.) if the complainant remains unhappy following investigation of their complaint, they can refer the matter to the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO).
 - iv.) complainants should be made aware of the response period and how the response will be handled.
 - v.) where complaints involve several organisations, these organisations should discuss and agree who will take the lead.
 - vi.) where complaints are received about a care provider, the Council must ask the complainant whether they consent for the details of the complaint being passed onto the relevant provider and if they do, send those details onto the care provider even if the Council has not commissioned the service for the customer. Where complaints about care providers are in part for the provider to deal with and in part for the Council to deal with, the Council must make it clear which part will be handled by the Council and which part by the provider to ensure the complainant receives a co-ordinated response to the complaint.
 - vii.) complainants must approach the Council to highlight their complaint within 12 months of the incident happening, or within 12 months of discovering the problem.
- 2.4 The Council may also receive complaints that connect to Adult Social Care but do not fall within the boundaries of the statutory social care complaints process as set out in the Regulations. These will usually fall within the remit of the Council's corporate complaints process.
- 2.5 The Council takes every submitted feedback case seriously, especially complaints, as it wants to make sure they are dealt with fairly, consistently and within agreed timelines. It is essential that the Council deals with all feedback efficiently to provide good service, learning and improvements.
- 2.6 The process for dealing with complaints is detailed in [Warwickshire County Council's Complaints Policy](#) and [Adult Social Care Statutory Complaints Procedure](#).
- 2.7 These policies have been developed in line with best practice recommendations and legislation that covers complaints about local authorities' services. In the Complaints Policy, a complaint is defined as:

“... any expression of dissatisfaction with a service that the Council (or one of its partners or contractors) has provided, and that requires a response.”

- 2.8 Customers can, at any time in the process, approach the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) for it to consider their complaint, although the LGSCO will usually expect the Council's processes to be exhausted before it investigates. The proportion of customers who complain to the LGSCO compared to the total number of customer contacts is very small. The annual review and summary of upheld complaints issued by LGSCO in relation to the financial year 2023/24 was taken to Cabinet on 5 September 2024 and can be seen at [Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman – Annual Review and Summary of Upheld Complaints](#)

3. Analysis of customer feedback received during 2024/25

- 3.1 The following analysis covers data, trends and themes compared over the last two years.

Feedback Cases – All Council Services

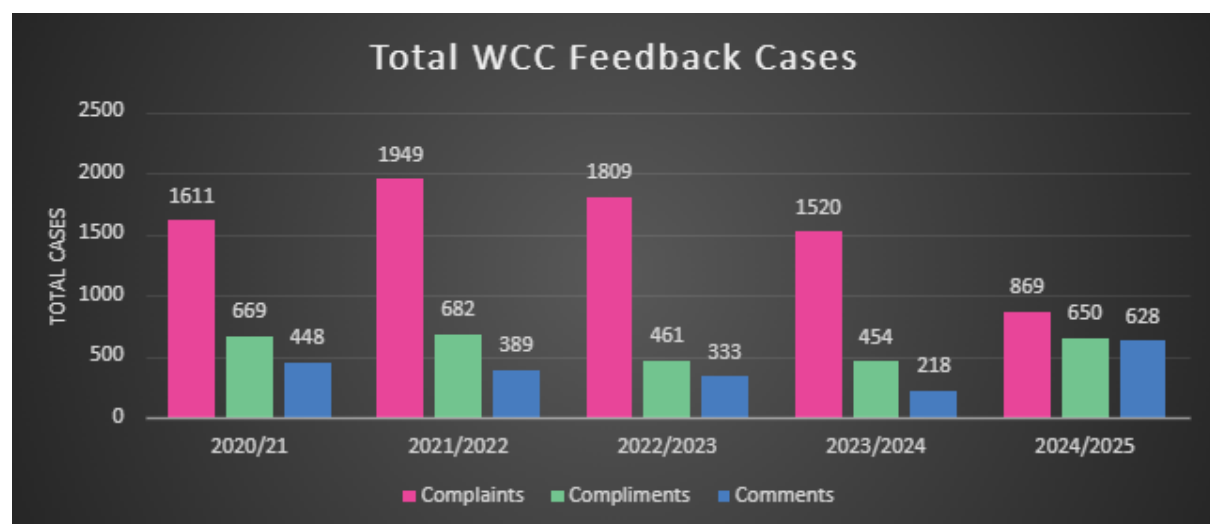


Figure 1: Number of complaints, compliments and comments received from 2020/21 to 2024/25 across all WCC services.

Overall cases

- 3.2 The total number of feedback cases across the Council has decreased by 45 cases, from 2192 in 2023/24 to 2147 in 2024/25, representing a 2% reduction. This decrease aligns with the trend of reducing cases over the last 3 years (see Appendix 1 Adult Social Care OSC feedback data).

Complaints

- 3.3 The number of complaints across the Council decreased by 651 cases, from 1520 in 2023/24 to 869 in 2024/25, a decrease of 43%.

- 3.4 In Adult Social Care, the total feedback 396 and the number of complaints 123. Detailed figures and data can be found in the Adult Social Care OSC feedback data at Appendix 1 to this report.
- 3.5 The significant reduction in complaints this financial year is due to targeted training in complaints handling and improvements in our processes, including a clearer understanding of what constitutes a "complaint." This encompasses exclusions such as court-related concerns and cases eligible for other appeal or tribunal processes. Additionally, there is better identification of service requests and the implementation of checks to determine if a resident is reporting an issue for the first time. If this is found to be a repeated concern, the case is raised as a complaint. In line with the Council's Complaints Policy a service request is defined as follows:

Requests for service or information – initial requests alert us to something we need to respond to and only become a complaint if we do not deal with them appropriately and within the agreed timescale.

- 3.6 This aligns with the definition of a complaint as set out in the new Complaint Handling Code which was published by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman in February 2024 and which local authorities are expected to have regard to.

Comments

- 3.7 The total number of comments over the last two years increased by 188% from 218 in 2023/24 to 628 in 2024/25. This is due to improvements in the identification of service requests, and these being classified as comments (see Appendix 1 Adult Social Care OSC feedback data Warwickshire County Council total cases).
- 3.8 Compared to the previous system, the new customer feedback system, introduced in January 2024, allows for reassignment of cases to the correct feedback category, providing a more accurate reflection of customer feedback. Previously, cases had to remain in the initial category entered by the customer, resulting in service requests being recorded as complaints instead of comments.

Compliments

- 3.9 The number of compliments has significantly increased from 454 in 2023/24 to 650 in 2024/25 an increase of 43%. This is attributed to a new central logging system and the introduction of a compliments email address for the Council (see Appendix 1 Adult Social Care OSC feedback data Warwickshire County Council total cases).

Complaints per population analysis

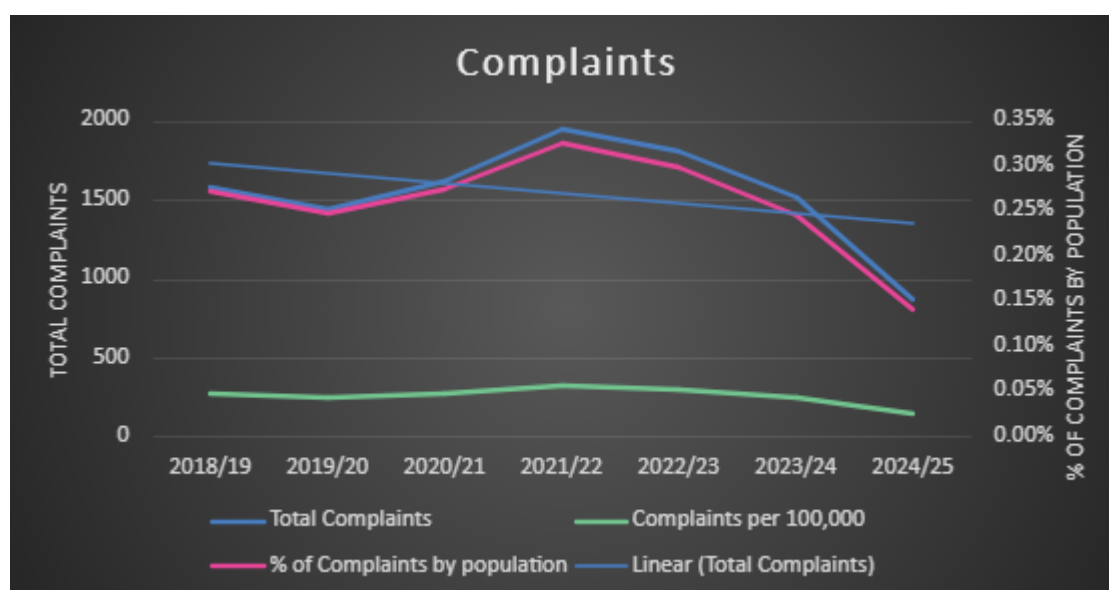


Figure 2: Trends in Complaints from 2018/19 to 2024/25, using 2023 ONS population data.

- 3.10 When total number complaints against the Council as an organisation are analysed per 100,000 population, the complaint rate for 2024/25 is 0.14%. Figure 2 illustrates a steady decline over the last four years from 0.35% in 2021/22. This analysis is based on 2023 data from the Office of National Statistics (ONS), as 2024 data is not yet available.

Feedback cases over time - Adult Social Care and Public Health

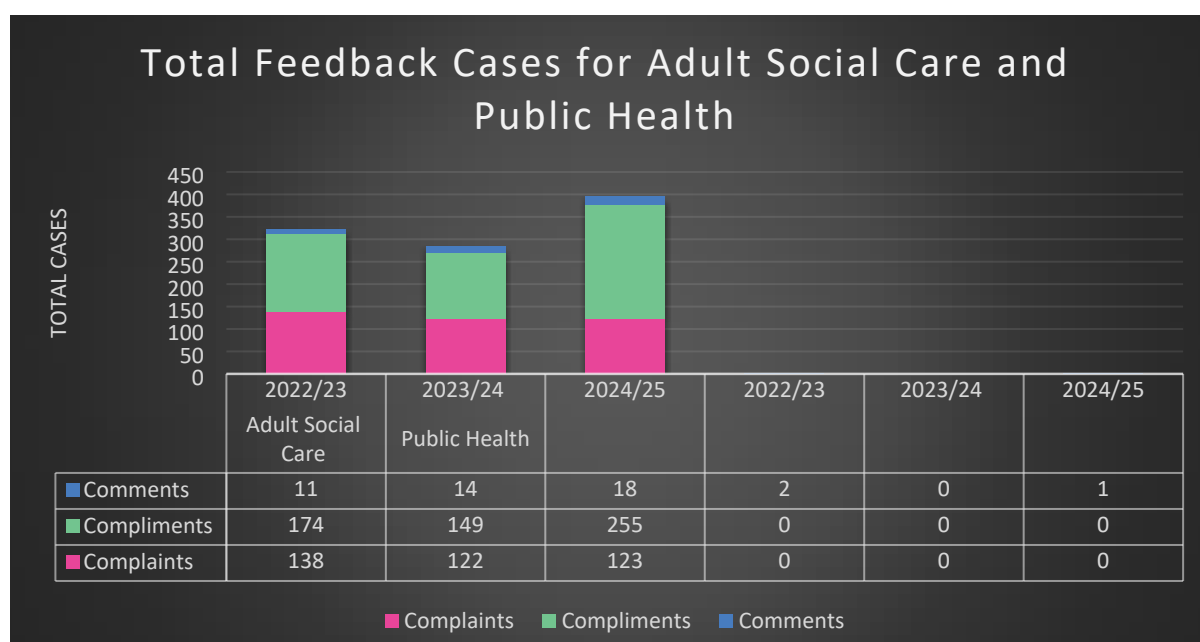


Figure 3: Number of cases assigned to Adult Social Care and Public Health Services by type from 2022/23 to 2024/25.

Adult Social Care

Complaints

- 3.11 Over the past two years, the number of complaints in Adult Social Care has increased slightly from 122 cases in 2023/24 to 123 in 2024/25. This stability in cases suggests service improvements, such as evaluating complaints for learning, enhancing communication, focusing on the customer, and providing apologies where appropriate. It is also worthy to note that while the number of complaints has remained stable the numbers of people in receipt of Adult Social Care has increased notably over this time period.

Compliments

- 3.12 Compliments have increased from 149 in 2023/24 to 255 in 2024/25. This is attributed to a new central logging system and the introduction of a compliments email address for the Council.

Comments

- 3.13 The number of comments has increased from 14 in 2023/24 to 18 in 2024/25. This is due to improvements in the identification of service requests. These are now raised as comments and sent to operational services for a response.

Public Health

- 3.14 The above figure shows that for the year 2024/25, one comment has been collected via the customer feedback system or the Customer Relations Team. Service complaints are dealt with directly by the commissioned services (see Appendix 1 Adult Social Care OSC feedback data).

Complaints data trends by month

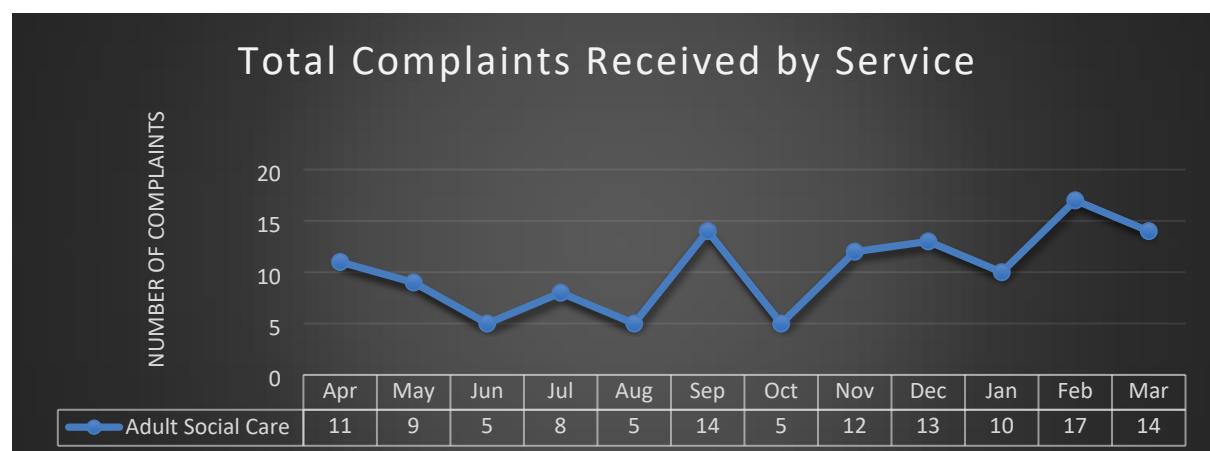


Figure 4: Number of complaints for Adult Social Care and Public Health by month.

- 3.15 Figure 4 highlights the monthly trend in complaints for 2024/25. The highest number of Adult Social Care-related complaints were received in February 2024, with 17 cases raised, representing 14% of new complaint cases reported. The next highest months were September and March, each with 14 cases raised. Complaint numbers decreased in June, August and October with five cases raised in each month.
- 3.16 The trend in complaints can be influenced by various factors such as changes in policy, service delivery, or public awareness of how to log complaints. Seasonal trends can also have an impact. For example, September marks the end of summer and the beginning of autumn, which can bring about changes in care needs and routines (see Appendix 1 Adult Social Care OSC feedback data).
- 3.17 Public Health received no complaints in 2024/25, and this is consistent with last year.

Initial feedback contact method

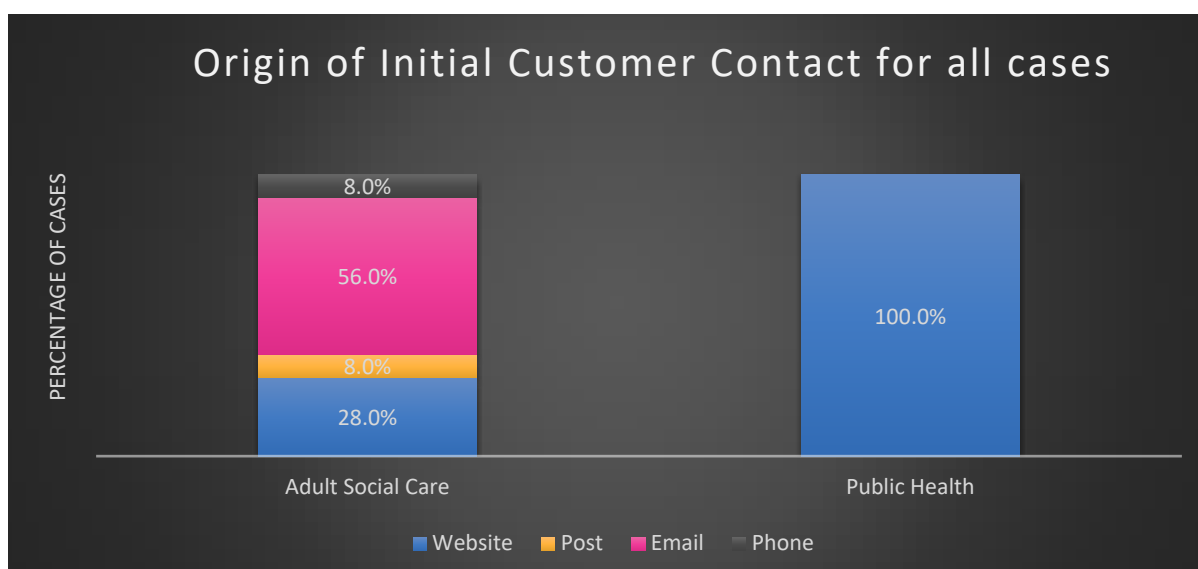


Figure 5: Percentage breakdown of original contact method for complaints, comments, and compliments for 2024/25.

- 3.18 The 'type of initial feedback contact method' data has only been collected since the implementation of the new customer feedback system in January 2024. Therefore, there is no comparative data before this date.

Adult Social Care Contact Method

- 3.19 Figure 5 highlights that the most common method of receiving cases related to Adult Social Care is through email, accounting for 56% of all cases. The second most frequent method is via the customer feedback system portal on the Council website, with 28% of cases submitted this way.
- 3.20 During 2024/25, the Customer Relations Team continued to invest time speaking directly to prospective complainants, regardless of how the initial contact was made or the service that their feedback related to. This proactive

approach provides an important opportunity to build a trusting relationship with the customer, which is particularly critical when managing more complex complaints. This allows for a more thorough understanding of the concerns raised and desired outcomes, and in turn supports investigating managers to provide more precise and detailed responses.

- 3.21 Talking directly to customers also ensures that where it is appropriate and possible concerns are resolved without the need to progress to the formal complaints process. This can prove to be a quicker and more beneficial means of resolution for all concerned.

Complaint categories by subject

	2024/25	%
Protection of user	11	9%
Communication	12	10%
Staff conduct	13	10.5%
WCC Service standards	32	26%
Financial Issues	29	23.5%
Physical environment issues	0	0%
Discrimination	4	3%
Policy	0	0%
Commissioned Service Provision	22	18%
Outside Complaints process	0	0%
Total	123	100%

Figure 6: Breakdown of subject categories for Adult Social Care complaints for 2024/25.

Category Themes for Adult Social Care

- 3.22 The data in figure 6 indicates differing trends for Adult Social Care-related complaints in terms of subject category of the concern. This should facilitate more targeted, specific training within the category area. e.g., communication.
- 3.23 The top categories within this service area are:
- Council's service standards (26%). This category is selected when customers feel that the Council has not delivered a service they are entitled to. This represents an increase from last year, where 9% of complaints (equivalent to 11 complaints) fell into this category. This may be improved by managing customers' expectations at the first point of contact including process and policy explanations.
 - Financial issues (23.5%). This was last year's top category at 25% (equivalent to 30 complaints) and remains high in 2024/25 with 29 complaints. These complaints are typically centred around financial assessments that have taken place regarding a person's entitlement to care. The introduction of the Better Care Finance assessment tool

should assist customers to better understand how care costs are calculated in the future.

- Commissioned service provision (18%). This mainly relates to complaints concerning care packages commissioned to external providers by the Council. The current trend of complaint cases is centred around the length of care calls or quality of care delivered by a commissioned provider. These matters are also picked up by contract management and quality assurance processes.

Public Health

3.24 Public Health received no complaints in 2023/24 or 2024/25 (see Appendix 1 Adult Social Care OSC feedback data).

Complaints per team

Top 3 teams	2024/25	%
Social Care and Health Commissioning	31	25%
Adult North Older Peoples Team	18	15%
Adult Stratford Older Peoples and Quality in Care (QIC) Team	14	11%

Figure 7: Top 3 teams receiving complaints from Adult Social Care for 2024/25.

Adults Social Care Team Data

- 3.25 With the introduction of the new customer feedback system, the opportunity was taken to refine and update references to teams within the system allowing much clearer data about specific areas of improvement and/or complaint. Whilst important moving forward, it does mean that we cannot make a direct comparison with previous years when analysing some data.
- 3.26 Figure 7 shows that the Social Care and Health Commissioning Team received the highest number of complaints in 2024/25, accounting for 25% of the overall complaints. The majority are in reference to the care provided through commissioned packages e.g., care call length or concerns about care within a home. Complaints are used for contract management and quality assurance interactions.
- 3.27 The second and third teams for 2024/25 are Adult North Older Peoples Team with 15% and Adult Stratford Older Peoples and Quality in Care (QIC) Team with 11%. It is noteworthy that the Adult North Older Peoples Team is a larger team in comparison to others and the Quality in Care Team covers the whole of the County which increases the number of customer interactions.

Remedies

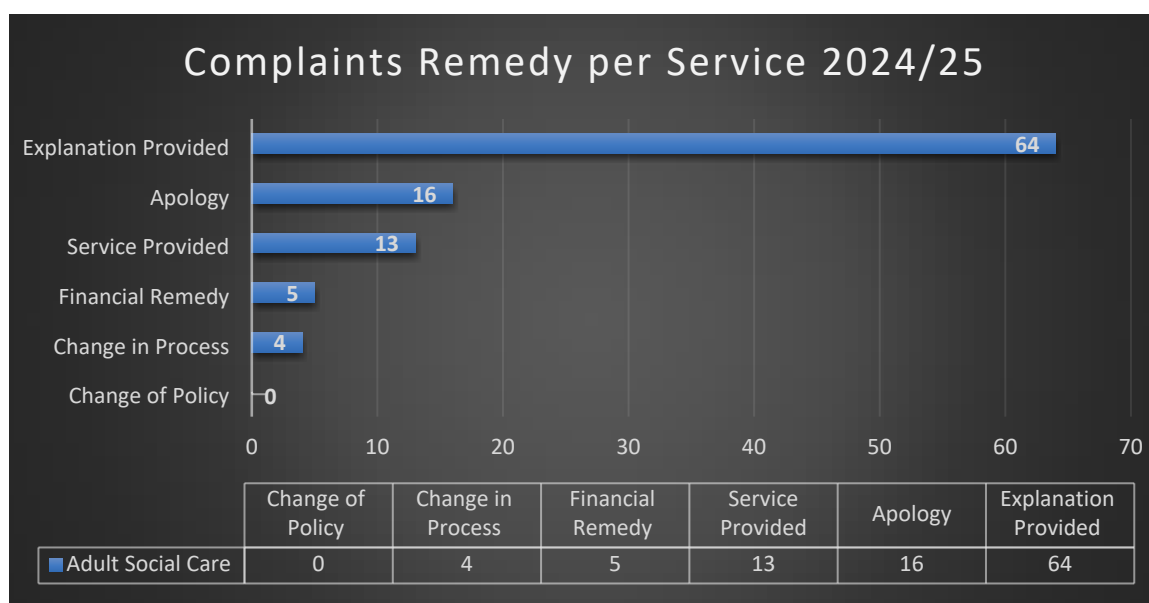


Figure 8: Closed complaint remedies for Adult Social Care in 2024/25. Please note more than one remedy can be selected for an individual case.

3.28 When things have gone wrong, the Council has the power to offer remedies to put things right. The LGSCO's Complaint Handling Code, which the Council is required to have regard to, says that organisations should have systems in place to ensure that a complaint can be remedied at any stage of its complaints process and should ensure that appropriate remedies can be provided at any stage of the complaints process without the need for escalation to Stage 2 or the LGSCO. The Code states that any remedies offered should reflect the impact on the individual as a result of any fault identified and organisations should take account of the good practice guides issued by the LGSCO when deciding on appropriate remedies.

3.29 The LGSCO also has the power to make recommendations to the Council in cases where the LGSCO has investigated and found fault which has caused injustice. Whilst the LGSCO cannot force the Council to carry out its recommendations, it would be usual for a council to comply with the LGSCO's recommendations. The LGSCO's recommendations will usually aim to put the complainant back in the position they would have been in, but for the faults they have identified. If councils fail to comply with the LGSCO recommendations this is noted in end of year reporting and can have a detrimental impact on the council's reputation. The formal LGSCO may also issue a formal public report which must be considered by members at a formal meeting. The LGSCO's guidance on remedies can be found here: [LGSCO Guidance on remedies](#).

3.30 Remedies can take many forms, including apologising, taking corrective action to put things right such as the service provided, a change in process or policy, or a quantifiable financial remedy.

Adult Social Care

- 3.31 In 2024/25, the most frequent remedy provided by the Council was “explanation provided” at 62% of complaint cases closed. This would usually take the form of a detailed, more person-centred explanation, which may include clarifying of the process or language being used. This has remained the top remedy for all previous years (see Appendix 1).
- 3.32 An “apology” ranked second as the most used remedy with 15%. Recently, the Customer Relations Team provided training to services emphasising that apologies should be a “matter of course” for all upheld complaints (see Appendix 1).
- 3.33 “Service provided” is the third ranked remedy selected by services at 13%. This would be entered when the original service requested via the complaint, has been delivered or granted following the complaint e.g., the service that was late has now been provided (see Appendix 1 Adult Social Care OSC feedback data).

Outcomes

- 3.34 Categories of outcomes have changed in the new feedback system to improve data accuracy. Previously, once initially recorded the category of contact was fixed, e.g., a case logged as a complaint would remain identified in that way, even if the initial classification was in error, or further information showed it should be treated as an initial question. The current system allows reclassification of feedback types, improving data accuracy.
- 3.35 The categories have been analysed in respect of the three statutory reportable categories “upheld, not upheld and partially upheld.” For all closed complaint cases.

Top 3 Outcomes	2024/25	%
Partially Upheld	39	38%
Not Upheld	34	33%
Upheld	13	13%

Figure 9: Complaints closed by outcome (excluding withdrawn complaints). This does mean the percentage calculates to less than 100%.

Adult Social Care

- 3.36 During 2024/25 the most common outcome within the services covered by this Committee was “partially upheld” indicating that 38% of complaints (39 cases) had some concerns upheld, but not all. The second most common outcome was “not upheld”, accounting for 33% of complaints (34 cases), which shows that, after investigation, no failings were identified (see Appendix 1 Adult Social Care OSC feedback data).

Timescale Compliance

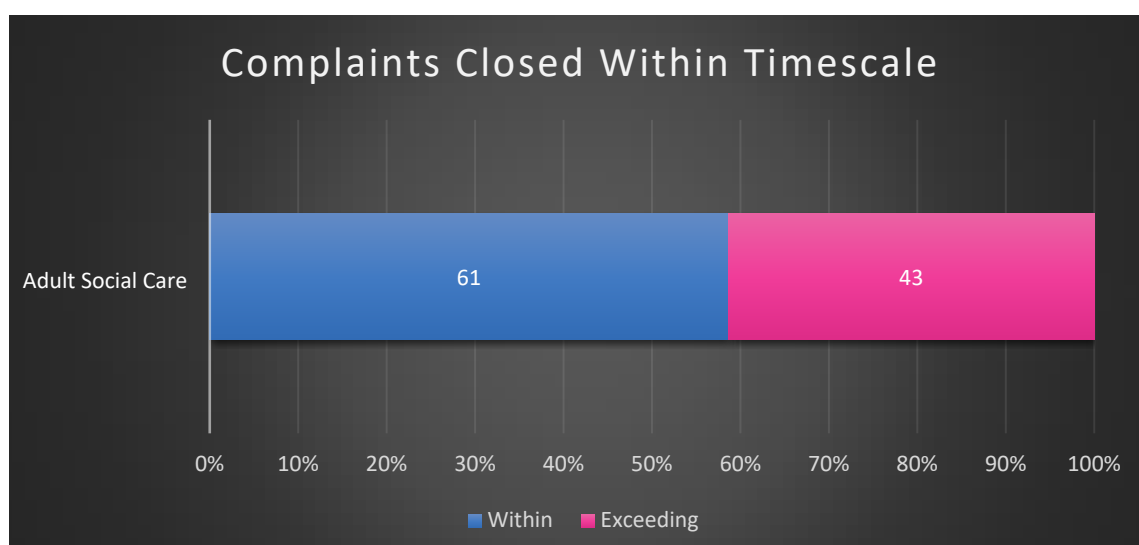


Figure 60: Timescales for closed complaints for Adult Social Care for 2024/25.

Adult Social Care

- 3.37 The timescales for complaint resolution are outlined in the Council's Complaints Policy and associated procedures.
- 3.38 There has been a decrease in the number of complaints resolved within the specified timescales, dropping from 83% (90 cases) in 2023/24 to 59% (61 cases) in 2024/25. This may be attributed to the complexity of complaint cases and awaiting provider responses from our commissioned packages of care. Every effort is made to keep customers updated when their complaint is exceeding timescales. Further targeted work is required with services to emphasise the importance of timely complaint resolution (see Appendix 1 Adult Social Care OSC feedback data).

Lessons learnt and actions taken to improve services

- 3.39 Identifying, actioning, recording, and sharing of 'Lessons Learned' is critical in improving customer experience with council services. It is an opportunity for staff to reflect on how that case could have been prevented/gone better and how the Council can improve in future cases. These lessons are used for learning and training purposes for not only the team who have handled the case, but also for the wider Council.
- 3.40 Examples of lessons learned, and actions taken from past cases within Adult Social Care and Public Health services include:
- **Complaints Timescale Adherence** - Directors now have access to the internal BI dashboard that allows real time analysis of complaints and timescales enabling proactive follow up with relevant teams.
 - **Introduction of Better Care Finance** - This will help to reduce issues around financial assessments.

- **Shared areas for development with providers for them to consider;** Providers have been encouraged to improve by sharing key development areas from complaints through newsletter articles. These focus on recording incidents, investigating complaints thoroughly, and learning from them to make necessary changes.

3.41 The Customer Relations Team has also implemented several actions. organisationally and specifically for Adult Social Care related services following feedback from customers and operational services. These include:

- **Directly Addressing Customer Complaints** - letter templates have been updated to encourage addressing complaints point by point and now include an investigation outline.
- **Policy and Template Accessibility** - all relevant policies and letter templates are now uploaded onto the system for each case, providing services with a clearer understanding of the relevant policy and how to write a good response letter.
- **Complaint Type Determination** - the Customer Relations Team now decide the complaint type ensuring that complaints are categorised in accordance with relevant internal policies and wider guidance allowing for greater confidence in trend data and analysis for lessons learnt.
- **Service Request Understanding** - the Customer Relations Team has been trained to understand what constitutes a service request and have implemented this learning effectively, as shown in the number of comments rather than a complaint.
- **Training in Policy Exclusions** - the Customer Relations Team has been retrained on the Council's policy exclusions, such as complaints about councillors which are dealt with by Monitoring Officers and complaints about data protection or information governance matters are dealt with by the Data Protection Officers. This practice has proven effective in managing customer expectations at the point of contact.
- **Internal Reviews** - general reviews are now primarily undertaken by the Customer Relations Team rather than commissioned to external persons, reducing service costs, and ensuring better team relationships.
- **System Training** - all system users have been offered a service-wide training session on how to use the system, with an additional session following recent system changes.
- **Real-time data** - Directors now have access to the internal BI dashboard, allowing real-time analysis of complaints and adherence to timescales.

- **Quality Assurance Process** - Customer Services has piloted a quality assurance process for Stage 1 complaints with the SEND Service, resulting in fewer Stage 2 escalations and the upskilling of a new staff member responsible for complaints.
- **Improved Accessibility** - the Customer Contact Team recently launched SignLive, a 24/7 British Sign Language (BSL) interpreting service, to ensure deaf and hard-of-hearing people can contact the Customer Service Centre by phone.

Improvements Planned for 2025/26.

3.42 The following improvements are planned for 2025/26:

- **Complaints Policy Review:** Ensure the existing policy is compliant with the new LGSCO Complaint Handling Code. Action was taken at the last refresh to include themes from the then draft Code which was under consultation. We will now review to ensure the policy is consistent with the final code.
- **One-to-One Complaints Sessions:** Provide ad-hoc case guidance through one-to-one sessions between the Customer Relations Team and internal services.
- **Letter Writing Training:** Offer training for internal services on Stage 1 letter writing, including LGSCO best practice guidance.

4.0 Benchmarking

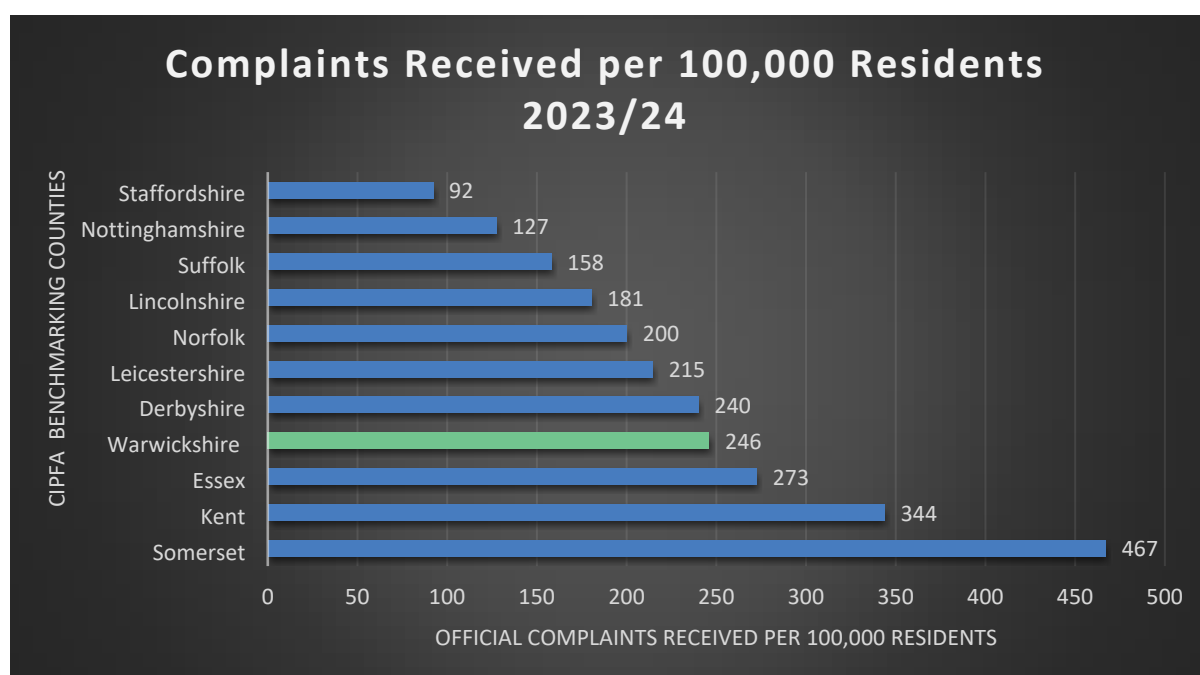


Figure 11: Complaints received per 100,000 residents (2023 ONS Data) from CIPFA benchmarking counties 2023/24.

- 4.1 This year's feedback report includes benchmarking data regarding the number of complaints for all the Council's services per 100,000 residents. This enables comparative analysis across Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) benchmarking counties, although the data in Figure 11 relates to the previous reporting period 2023/24, as current data is not yet available.
- 4.2 The 2023/24 data indicated that at 246 complaints per 100,000 residents. In 2024/25, as outlined in this report, there has been a significant reduction in complaints, resulting in an improved statistic of 141 complaints per 100,000 residents in Warwickshire. How this figure compares to other counties can only be determined once their 2024/25 complaints data is published.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 There are no additional financial implications arising from this report

6. Environmental Implications

- 6.1 There are no additional financial implications arising from this report.

Appendices

- 1. Appendix 1 - Adult Social Care OSC Feedback Data.

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The report was circulated to the following members prior to publication:

Local Member(s): None as countywide report

Other members: Councillor Michael Bannister