



# Annual Report of Adult Social Care compliments and complaints 2023- 2024

# 1. Table of contents

1. Table of contents .....	2
2. Summary .....	3
3. Complaints.....	4
3.1. Number of complaints.....	4
3.2. Services complained about.....	5
3.3. Complaint themes.....	5
3.4. Complaint findings .....	5
3.5. Complaint outcomes .....	6
3.6. Timeliness of complaints .....	7
3.7. Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.....	7
1. Compliments.....	9
2. About our complaints process.....	12

## 2. Summary

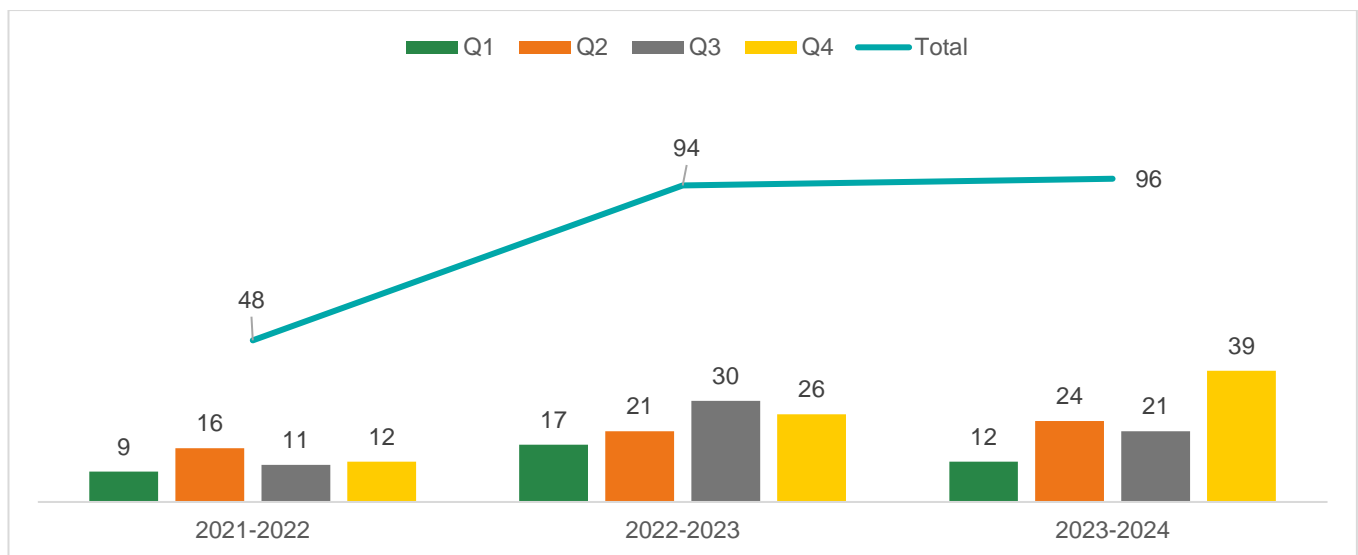
- 2.1. In the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024, Islington's Adult Social Care investigated **96 complaints**.
- 2.2. Whilst this is broadly consistent with long-term trends, there was a significant increase in the number of complaints received in the last quarter of this financial year. Should this trend continue, we can expect to see over 150 complaints in the next financial year which would represent a 50% increase on normal numbers.
- 2.3. Over half of complaints (54%) were either upheld in full or partially upheld and 46% not upheld. This is an improvement on the previous year when 62% of complaints were at least partially upheld.
- 2.4. In the same period, we received **43 compliments**. The service that received the most compliments was the Response team (11).
- 2.5. Communication remains a key theme and is a factor in most warranted complaints. This may be failure to communicate with a resident, their family, or their representative, or with other professionals. Sometimes, officers do not want to deliver bad news, be that a delay in offering an assessment, or sharing the outcome of an assessment. Setting out a clear position and managing expectations is a better approach and officers should be supported through training or administrative support to improve this trend.
- 2.6. Responding to complaints on time continues to be an issue with nearly 60% of complaint responses being late. Sometimes, there is good reason that a complaint response is late: however, it is important that complaint officers keep complainants informed and advise when they can expect a response if it is later than advised.
- 2.7. Waiting for a remedy to be implemented should not be a factor in sending a reply. When an officer identifies fault in their complaint investigation they should send a response that sets out what resolution they will implement and not after that resolution has been completed. Doing it this way will help improve the timeliness of complaints and will ensure the complaint focuses on the issues raised, not the outcome of the remedy.
- 2.8. A key learning and outcome as a result of a complaint in this financial year was a change to the hospital discharge protocol from St Pancras Hospital. Electronic copies of discharge medication is now shared with social services along with the patient's GP so that social services can share it with the commissioned care provider.
- 2.9. In January 2024, we moved complaints to a new case management system. This is a significant change and investment in our complaint handling and should further improve the time to respond to complaints and reporting.

# 3. Complaints

## 3.1. Number of complaints

3.1.1. In total, we received 109 complaints in the reporting period. 13 of these were not progressed to a formal complaint and were either resolved informally or withdrawn by the person making the complaint. This means we investigated and responded to **96 complaints**. This compares to 94 complaints in 2022-2023 and 48 in 2021-2022, as shown in chart one.

3.1.2. **Chart one: number of complaints investigated in each quarter, 2021-2024**



3.1.3. The long term trend is for Adult Social Care to receive approximately 100 complaints a year<sup>1</sup>. This means the number of complaints in this financial year is broadly consistent with normal trends.

3.1.4. However, there was a clear increase in the number of complaints received in the last quarter of this financial year (January to March 2024) which was higher than both the same period in the previous financial year and the previous quarter in this financial year. Should this trend continue, we can expect to see over 150 complaints in the next financial year which would represent a clear increase in the number of complaints made.

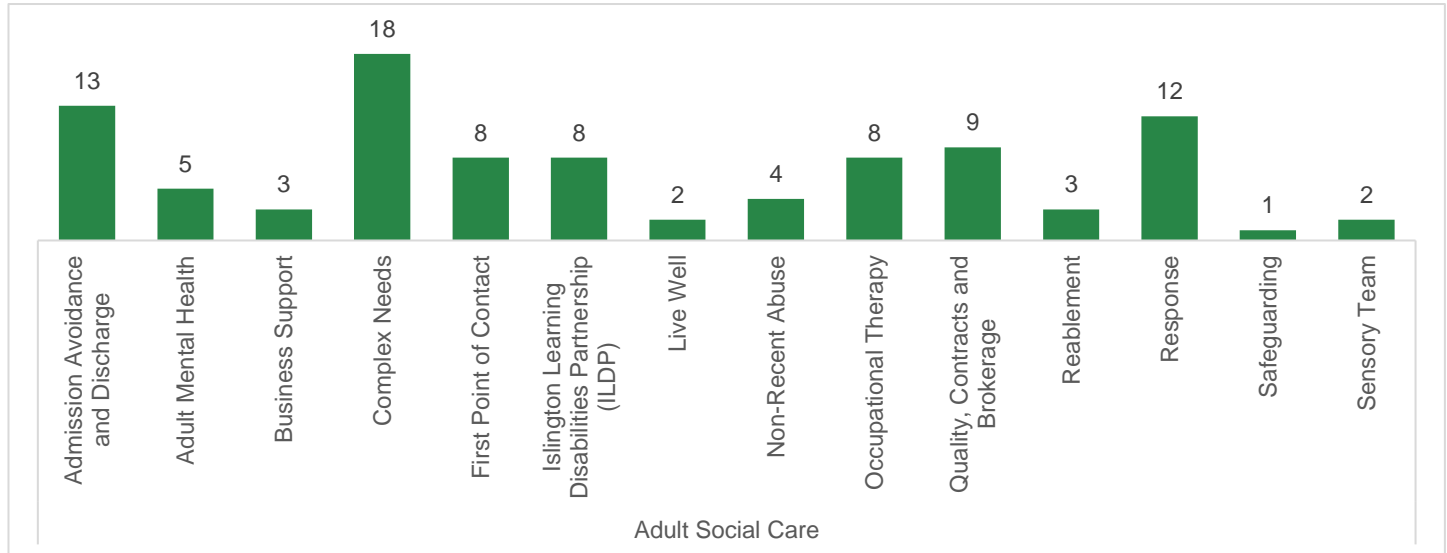
3.1.5. An increase in the number of complaints in itself should not necessarily be a cause for concern, as that shows residents are aware of their right to complain about services, have the confidence and support to make a complaint, and see the value in making a complaint. Nevertheless, we will continue to monitor trends to ensure we are learning from complaints and residents are not complaining about the same things.

<sup>1</sup> 2021-2022 was an outlier, due to the COVID-19 pandemic when most services were suspended

## 3.2. Services complained about

3.2.1. Complex Needs received the most complaints across the financial year (18) followed by Admission Avoidance and Discharge (13) and Response (12).

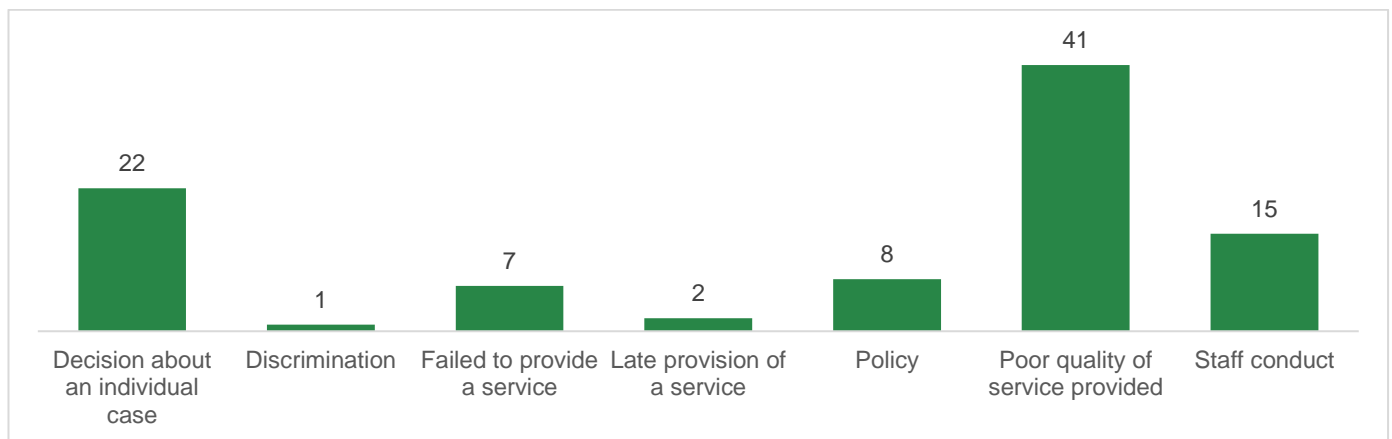
3.2.2. **Chart two: number of complaints by service**



## 3.3. Complaint themes

3.3.1. When we receive a complaint, we record it under one of seven failure categories. In this reporting period, the most common failure was 'poor quality of service provided' which represented 41 complaints, or 43% of the total.

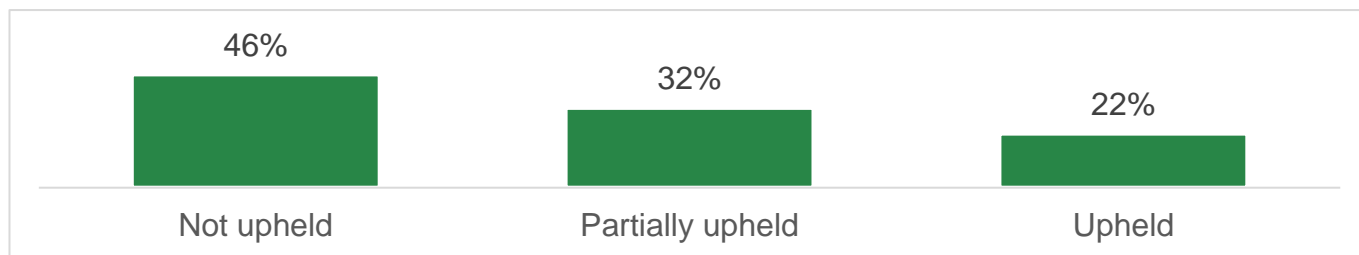
3.3.2. **Chart five: complaint failure**



## 3.4. Complaint findings

3.4.1. Most complaints were either **partially upheld** (32%) or **upheld** in full (22%) and 46% were **not upheld**. This means that over half of all complaints (54%) were at least partially warranted.

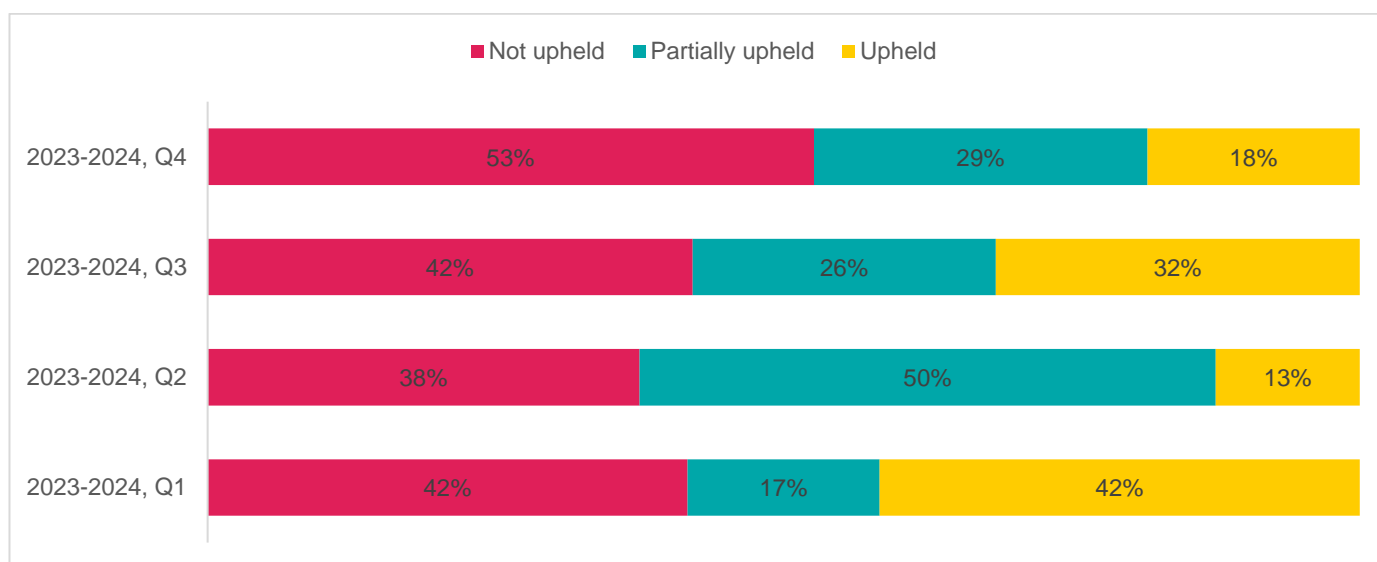
### 3.4.2. Chart three: outcome of complaints at stage one



3.4.3. This is an improvement on the number of complaints upheld in previous years: 69% of complaints were upheld or partially upheld in 2022-2023, and 62% were upheld or partially upheld in 2021-2022.

3.4.4. Chart four shows the outcome of complaints received in each quarter as a proportion of the total complaints received. This shows an increase in the proportion of complaints that are **not upheld** over this financial year.

### 3.4.5. Chart four: proportional outcome of complaints at stage one, by quarter



3.4.6. Six complaints were remedied by paying compensation or waiving care charges, totalling £3,019. Five of these related to care costs and incorrect invoicing or information about charging. The sixth related to a delay in arranging delivery of equipment.

## 3.5. Complaint outcomes

3.5.1. In this reporting period, we can report the following changes directly attributed to complaints:

3.5.2. **Changes to discharge policy:** following a complaint about the hospital discharge protocol from St Pancras Hospital, electronic copies of discharge medication is now shared with social services along with the patient's GP so that social services can share it with the commissioned care provider. The same complaint has also led to lessons

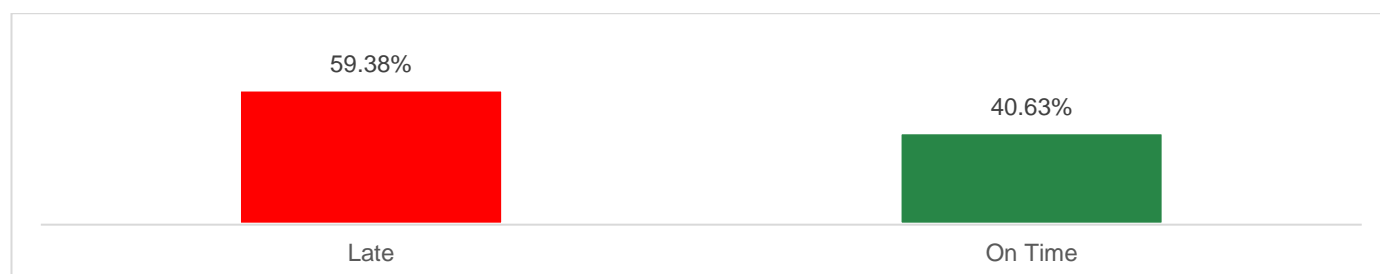
learned by the team about miscommunication from staff about potential safety issues for discharges over the weekend, which was wrong and are not unsafe.

- 3.5.3. **Process for issues with equipment:** two complaints about an equipment provider highlighted a gap in policy around escalation when there are issues or delays with ordering equipment. This includes giving residents contact information for the supplier and information about our complaints process.
- 3.5.4. **Communication with family members:** a complaint about Hospital Discharge highlighted the importance of keeping family members and carers informed of discharge arrangements, and to discuss informing family members with patients who have capacity.

## 3.6. Timeliness of complaints

3.6.1. The normal time to respond to a complaint is 20 days. In 2023-2024, most complaints were late with 41% responded to on time and 59% late.

### 3.6.2. Chart five: timeliness of complaints



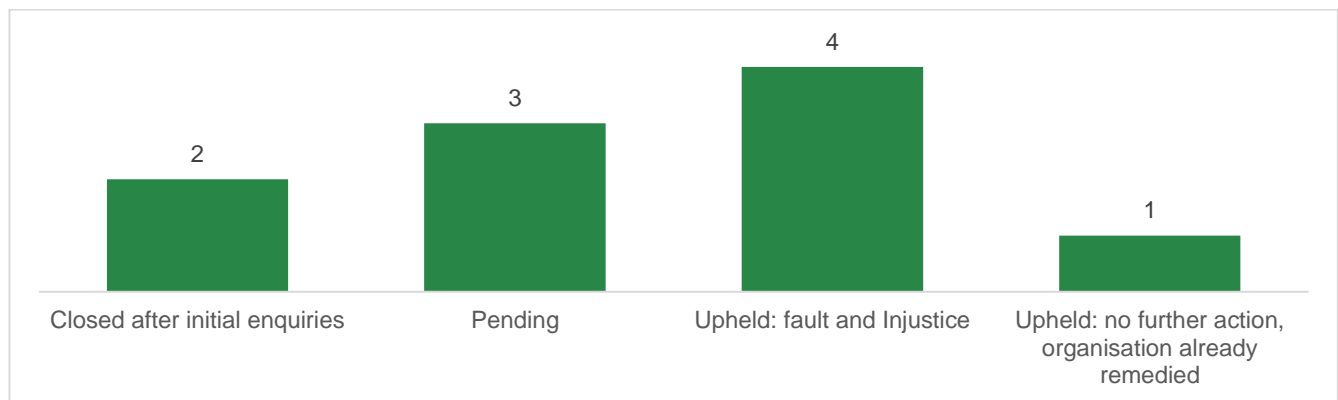
- 3.6.3. Responding to complaints on time continues to be an issue with complaints. Where services know there will be a delay in sending a complaint response, for example if they are waiting on a reply from a care agency or provider, they should inform the complainant. This is likely to reduce further escalation of the complaint.
- 3.6.4. Reasons for delays may be due to lack of confidence in responding to complaints and staff not understanding the importance of prioritising complaints. We're arranging further training with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman on how to effectively respond to complaints and will also take advantage of any new corporate training offered on handling complaints.
- 3.6.5. Some delays are inevitable, but investigating officers should be sending their response when they have decided on their answer and not after any follow-on actions resulting from the complaint investigation have been completed. Changing this behaviour should significantly improve the timeliness of complaint responses.

## 3.7. Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

3.7.1. The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) investigated **10 complaints** in this reporting period. This includes complaints that were answered in previous reporting years: the LGSCO can normally investigate a complaint up to 12 months after it has been responded to by the complained about organisation.

3.7.2. Four complaints (40%) were upheld and the LGSCO found fault and injustice and one was upheld but no further action was required. Two were closed after initial enquiries. Three complaints are pending a decision from the LGSCO.

3.7.3. **Chart six: outcomes of LGSCO investigations**



3.7.4. When the LGSCO finds fault or injustice, they will recommend actions to remedy the injustice. Recommended actions in this reporting period included compensation payments for three complaints totalling £800 and a letter of apology. We complied with all recommendations.

3.7.5. The faults identified by the LGSCO were:

3.7.5.1. Failure to inform persons of the outcome of a safeguarding investigation

3.7.5.2. Delays in paying a Shared Lives carer's allowance

3.7.5.3. Failure to provide a breakdown of care charges, even when this was requested

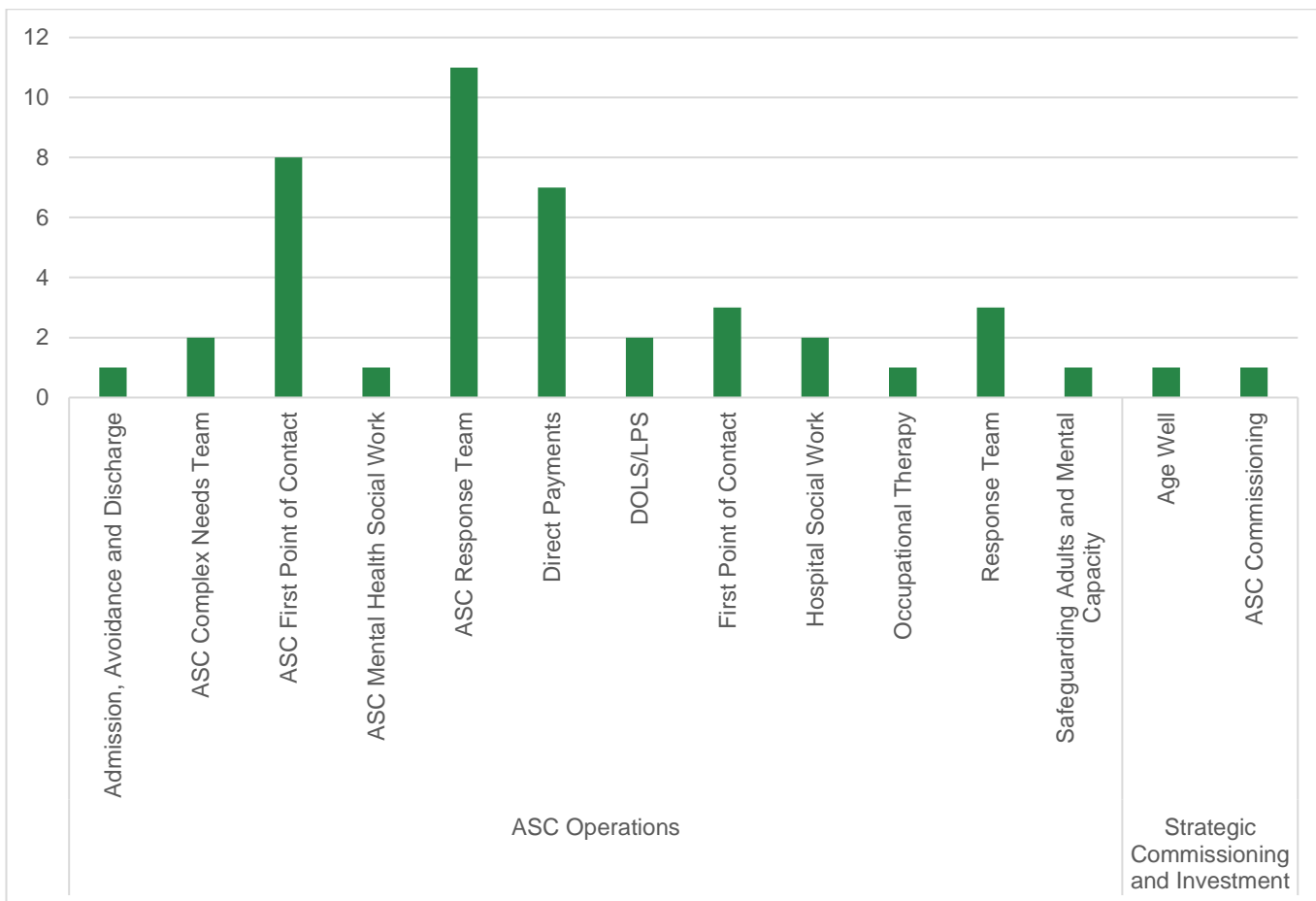
3.7.5.4. Failure to produce a care and support plan after identifying eligible needs



# 1. Compliments

1.1. Adult Social Care received 41 compliments in the reporting period, and Strategic Commissioning and Investment received two, meaning we received 43 in total.

## 1.2. Chart seven: compliments by service



## 1.3. Table one: sample of compliments received

Named team	Compliment
Direct Payment team	"I would like to say a big thank you to everyone in the team for their support and assistance over the years. The service I've received has been excellent in all areas. My mother, sadly passed away at the grand age of 100. Joining the <b>Direct Payment</b> scheme back in 2020, enabled us to provide her with the best care possible. Once again a big thank you to everyone!"
DOLS/LPS	"You must be one of if not THE best DOLS team in the country! I can't imagine anyone who are so spot-on and on it all the time with a smile and literally always providing me with whatever I've asked for almost

Named team	Compliment
	before I press “send” on my emails! You’ve made the absolute difference and I am grateful for each and every one of you.”
First Point of Contact	“I wanted to take a moment to express my deepest gratitude for your recent call and the exceptional way you've handled my health and situation. Your sensitivity and care have truly made a difference during this challenging time. I can only imagine the number of tenants you assist regularly, and your dedication doesn't go unnoticed. I wanted to let you know how much I appreciate your willingness to go the extra mile. Your kindness has touched me deeply.”
Hospital Social Work	“My father and I wholeheartedly express our profound gratitude for your unwavering dedication and utmost professionalism throughout this case. Your exceptional work ethic and composed demeanor have been a beacon of hope during an otherwise stressful period. Your unwavering support and genuine openness serve as a shining example, and as a family, we feel truly blessed to have you by our side, working tirelessly to support our grandmother”
Response	“I am writing to express my sincerest appreciation and gratitude for the exceptional service provided by X as my mother's social worker. It is with great pleasure that I share my positive experience and convey my utmost satisfaction with X’s outstanding support and dedication. Throughout the entire duration of my mother's case, X exhibited a remarkable level of professionalism and compassion. She consistently went above and beyond to ensure that my mother's well-being and best interests were at the forefront of her efforts. X’s commitment to her role as a social worker was evident in every interaction we had with her, and her genuine concern for my mother's welfare brought us immense comfort during a challenging time. One aspect of X’s service that particularly impressed me was her proactive approach to communication. She consistently kept me informed and updated on my mother's progress, ensuring that I was always aware of any changes or developments in her case. X's ability to provide clear and concise information allowed me to make informed decisions and actively participate in the decision-making process. I truly felt heard and valued as an integral part of my mother's support system. X's exceptional listening skills were truly commendable. She took the time to actively listen to my concerns, providing a safe and non-judgmental space for me to express my thoughts and feelings. Her empathetic nature and genuine interest in understanding our needs made a significant difference in the quality of care my mother received. X consistently demonstrated her commitment to tailoring the support provided to our specific circumstances, which greatly contributed to our overall

Named team	Compliment
	<p>satisfaction. Furthermore, I greatly appreciate X's willingness to address and acknowledge our concerns. She not only listened attentively but also took all of our feedback on board, ensuring that our voices were heard and our worries were addressed. Her ability to navigate complex situations and find effective solutions demonstrated her expertise and dedication to her role. As a result of X's efforts, our family feels a renewed sense of happiness and stability. In conclusion, I cannot express enough how grateful I am for the exceptional service X Heal provided as my mother's social worker. Her helpfulness, dedication, and attentiveness have made a significant impact on our lives, and we are genuinely appreciative of the positive outcomes she helped facilitate. I kindly request that you pass along my heartfelt gratitude to X for her outstanding service. She is an invaluable asset to your organisation, and I hope her exceptional work is recognised and commended. Thank you once again for your attention to this matter. I look forward to any opportunity to recommend your exemplary services to others in need."</p>
<p>Safeguarding Adults and Mental Capacity</p>	<p>"I've spoken to a number of professionals about my mum today, including nurses, physiotherapists and doctors. You have been by far the most diligent, approachable, helpful and informative. Thank you very much indeed. Your thoughtfulness and professionalism is very much appreciated."</p>

## 2. About our complaints process

- 2.1. A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction by a customer about an action, lack of action or standard of service.
- 2.2. When we receive a complaint in Adult Social Care, our aim is to resolve and learn from the issues raised to ensure they do not happen again. Our ambition is to ensure we get things right first time so that customers do not need to make a complaint.
- 2.3. We actively encourage service users and their carers to make complaints as they help us identify where we are not getting things right and what we need to do to improve services.
- 2.4. Adult Social Care Complaints are managed through a one-stage process. On receipt of a complaint, the service is given the opportunity to reply (**stage one response**).
- 2.5. The stage one response should normally be sent within **20 working days** of receipt of the complaint. Where necessary, these deadlines may be extended, but all complaints should be investigated and responded to within six months.
- 2.6. Should the investigating officer not fully answer a complaint, or not consider all the evidence provided by the complainant, they have one further opportunity to remedy the complaint (**stage one review**). Complainants can request a review within two weeks of receipt of their stage one response. This then completes the complaints process.
- 2.7. All complaints can be escalated by the complainant to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) who will independently review the complaint and determine whether there has been any fault or injustice and their recommendations for remedying that fault. The LGSCO will normally only review a complaint after it has been through our complaints process in full (stage one response and stage one review).
- 2.8. Information about how to make a complaint is available on our website: [adult social services complaints process](#). We also have an [Easy Read version](#) of our complaints process and a [BSL video](#).