

# **Adult Social Care Annual Complaints Report**

**April 2021 - March 2022**

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## 1. Introduction

Our Adult Social Care Service is required to operate a statutory complaints procedure in accordance with the Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009 and the Local Authority Social Services Complaints (Amendment) Regulations 2009.

This report provides information on complaints that our Adult Social Care Services dealt with during for the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022, which were managed through the statutory social care complaints procedure or our corporate complaints process.

Complaints provide us with the opportunity to understand how well the service is performing, to learn from any mistakes and to make improvements to the way we deliver services. This report provides a range of information and analysis about how complaints were dealt with in Adults Social Services and provides a section of compliments received over the course of the year.

### 1.1 Key points

In 2021/22 we received a total of 76 complaints of which 67 (88%) were Stage 1 complaints. We responded to 54% of Stage 1 complaints on time and only two complaints progressed to Stage 2. The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman investigated eight complaints in this period and found fault with Adults Social Care on two occasions.

#### Other headlines

- The main reason why people complained was due to poor 'service quality'.
- We found some element of fault in 59% of the complaints investigated at Stage 1,
- Complex Care received 49% of all Stage 1 complaints,
- There were 27 compliments received this year,
- Key processes that were changed due to complaints were improved telephone monitoring, the introduction of a weekly complaints meeting to improve response rates, improved clarity with patience over charging costs at the point of discharge, updated safeguarding processes and enhanced quality audit to improve care provision

## 2. Adult statutory social care complaints procedure

Is a one-stage only process and we aim to respond to complaints within 15 working days. The deadline can be extended in instances where the complaint is complex and requires a more in-depth investigation. If the complainant remains unhappy after we have investigated their complaint, they can approach the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

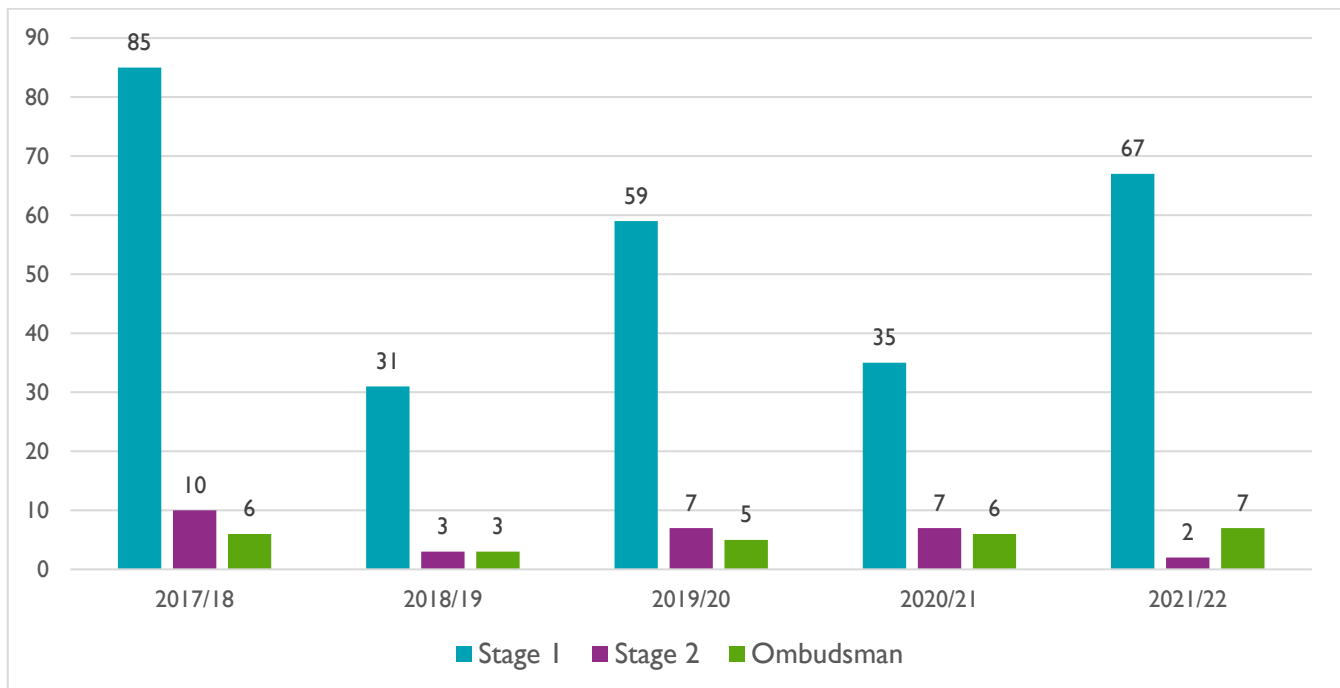
## 3. Complaints received

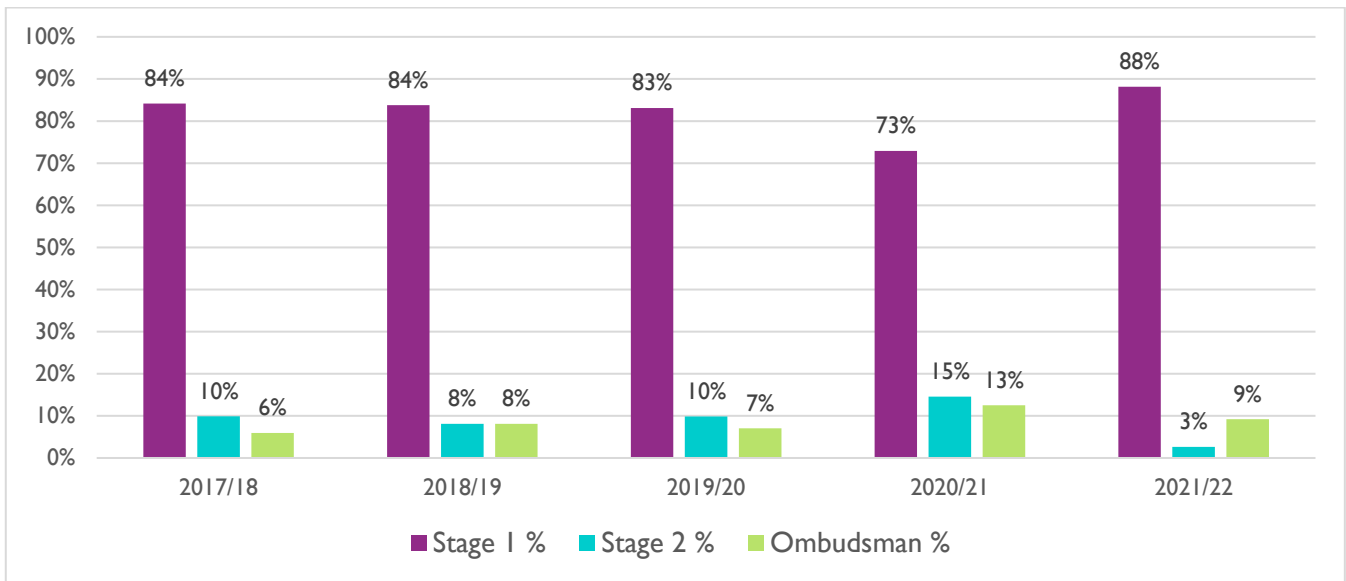
The tables below show the total number of complaints received in 2021/22 and how this compares to the previous four years.

**Complaints received in 2021/22**

Type	Stage 1	Stage 2	Ombudsman
Statutory complaints	57	n/a	6
Corporate complaints	10	2	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>7</b>

The charts below show the number of complaints received over the last five years, and as a percentage of the total each year.





### Analysis

The volume of Stage 1 complaints received this year increased by 91% compared with 2020/21 and was the highest volume of complaints received since 2017/18. It was expected that complaint volumes would increase this year compared with 2020/21, which showed low volumes of complaints due to the COVID 19 pandemic. During 2021/22 Adult Social Care were experiencing challenges with recruitment and retention across the Social Care workforce which impacted service quality in some areas.

The number of Stage 2 complaints received fell from seven last year to just two in this period. This can largely be attributed to a change in approach as we started logging most complaints under the statutory complaints process, which is one stage only. There was only one Stage 2 investigation where the decision at Stage 1 was revised.

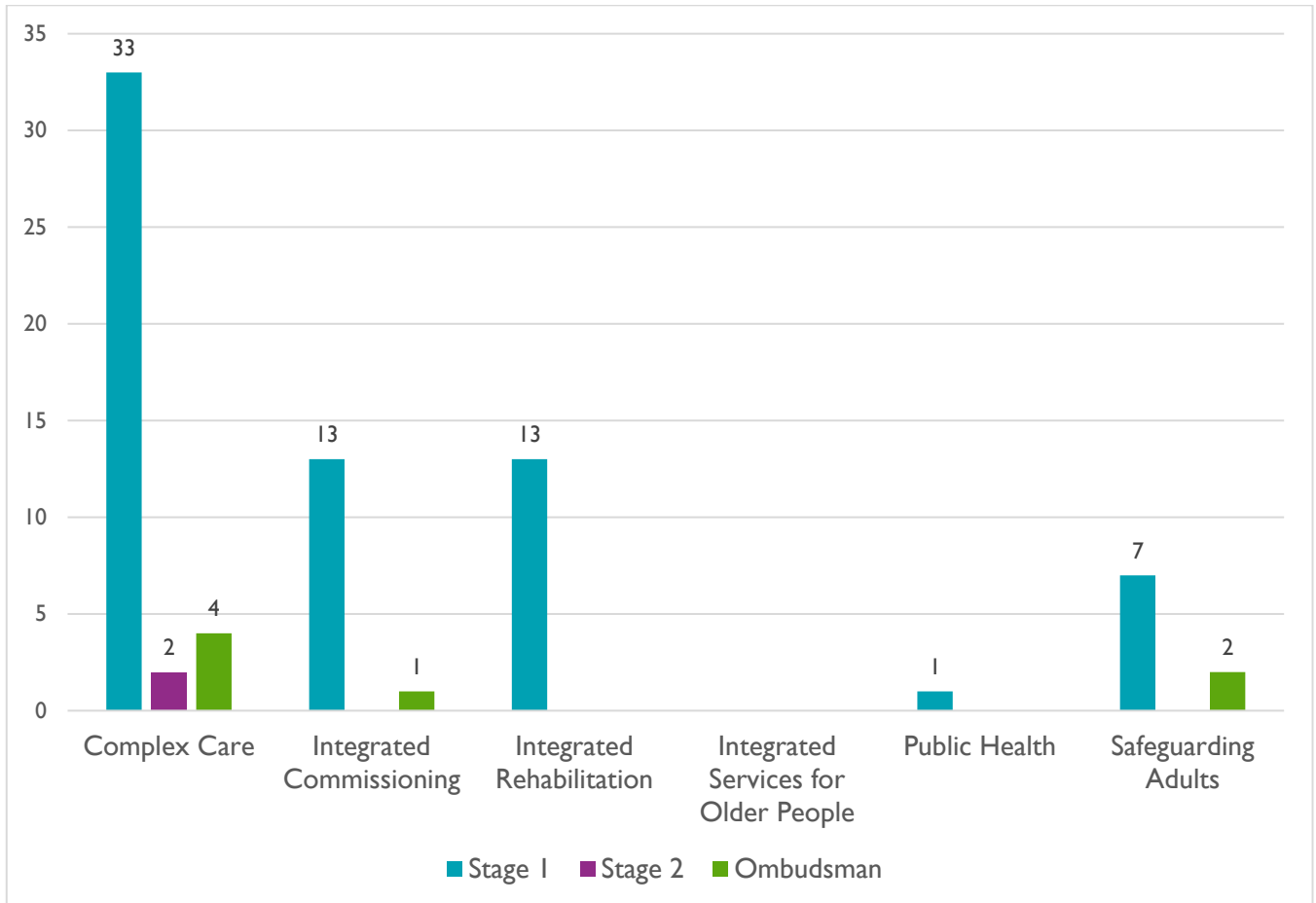
Approximately 10% of all complaints were escalated to the Ombudsman. However, this inflated number was due in part to most complaints being dealt with through the statutory complaints process which allows for a complainant to escalate their complaint to the Ombudsman more quickly.

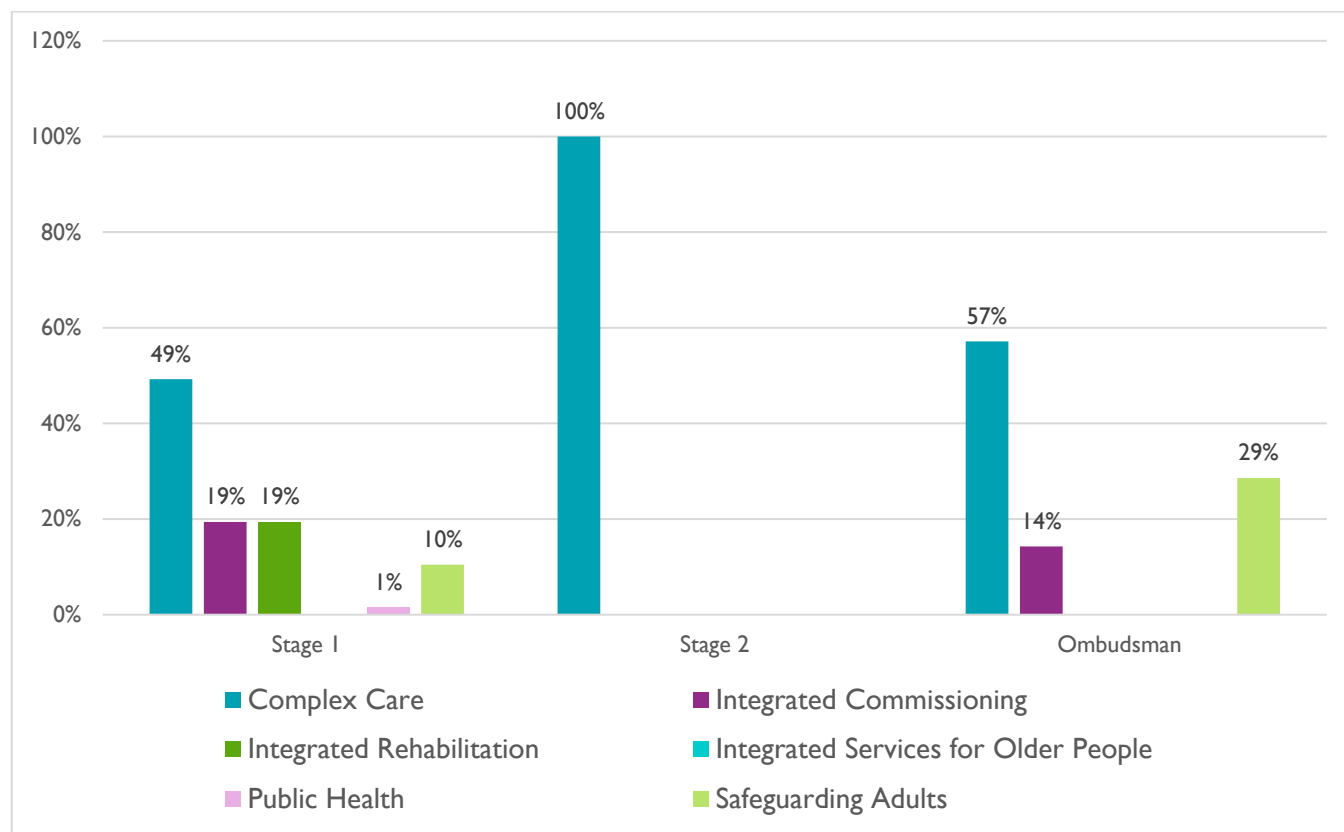
## 3.1 Complaints by service area

Adult Social Care comprises of the following six service areas:

- Integrated Rehabilitation
- Integrated Commissioning
- Complex Care
- Safeguarding Adults
- Integrated Services for Older People
- Public Health

The table below shows complaints received by service area and as a percentage of the total for each of these areas in 2021/22.



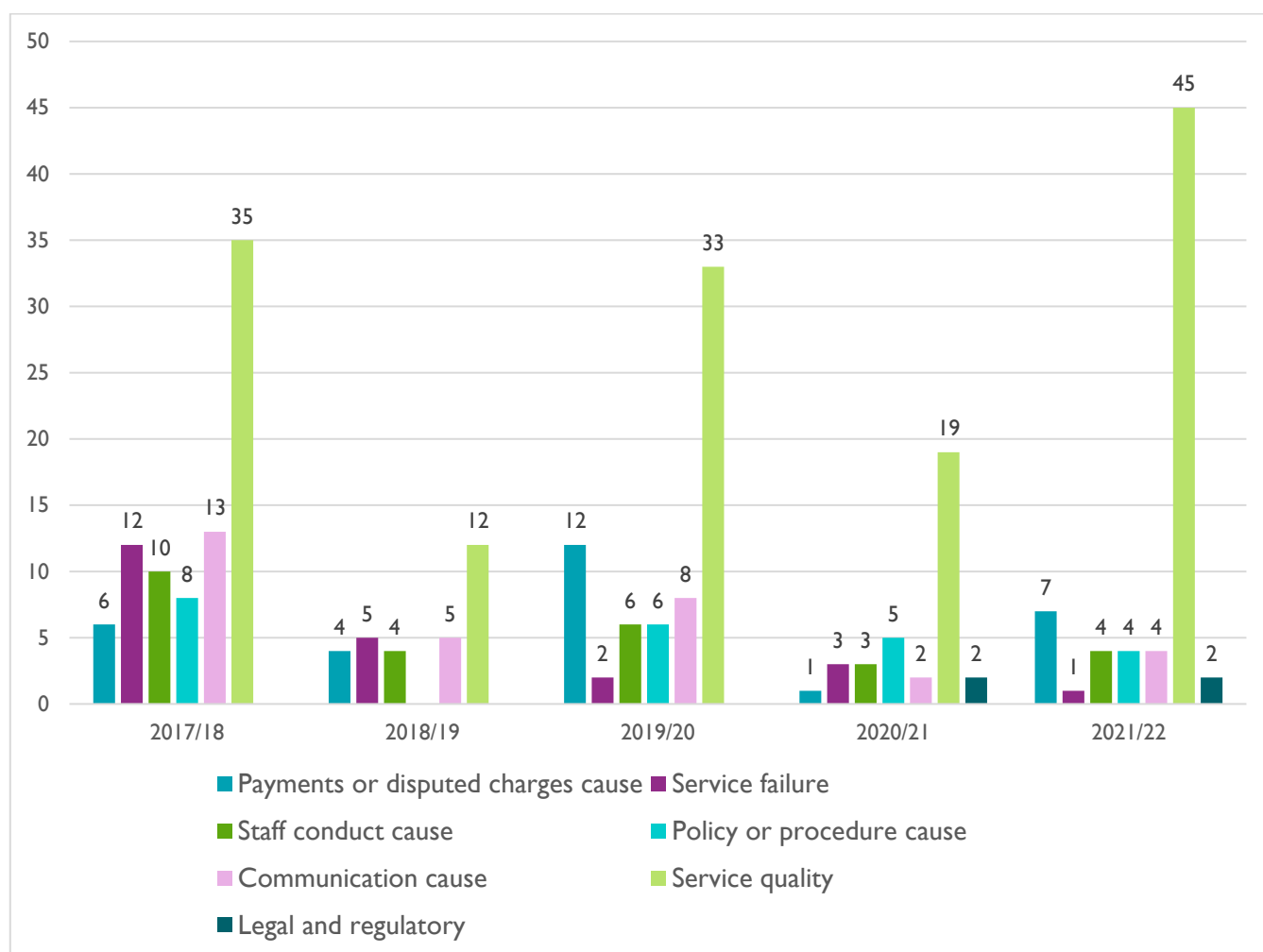


### Analysis

Most complaints received this year were about Complex Care but only 12 % of these were escalated to the Ombudsman. In contrast, 28% of all complaints received about Safeguarding Service went to the Ombudsman. We do not believe this can be attributed to one single factor. Our Integrated Commissioning and Integrated Rehabilitation services received 13 complaints each over the course of the year and we were able to resolve all of them without the involvement of the Ombudsman.

## 3.2 Causes of complaints

The table below shows the reasons why people complained over the last five years. This is in reference to closed complaints some of which were originally received in the previous year, and this means the figures do not match the number of complaints received in the same period.



## Analysis

The table above shows that the main reason people complained was about a perceived ‘poor quality’ of service. This has been the main reason people have complained over the last four years. This categorisation covers a broad range of issues such as, allegations of officers having insufficient knowledge of a service, our record keeping in relation to a decision (often taken in the past) could not be adequately explained or the standard of a service expected by a complainant did not match up to the standard they were expecting due to poor customer care. The complaints related to both care providers and Adult Social Care staff. As stated previously this can probably be largely attributed in this period to the difficulty we experienced in the recruitment and retention of staff and a relatively high turnover of both agency staff working in the service and for third party service providers.

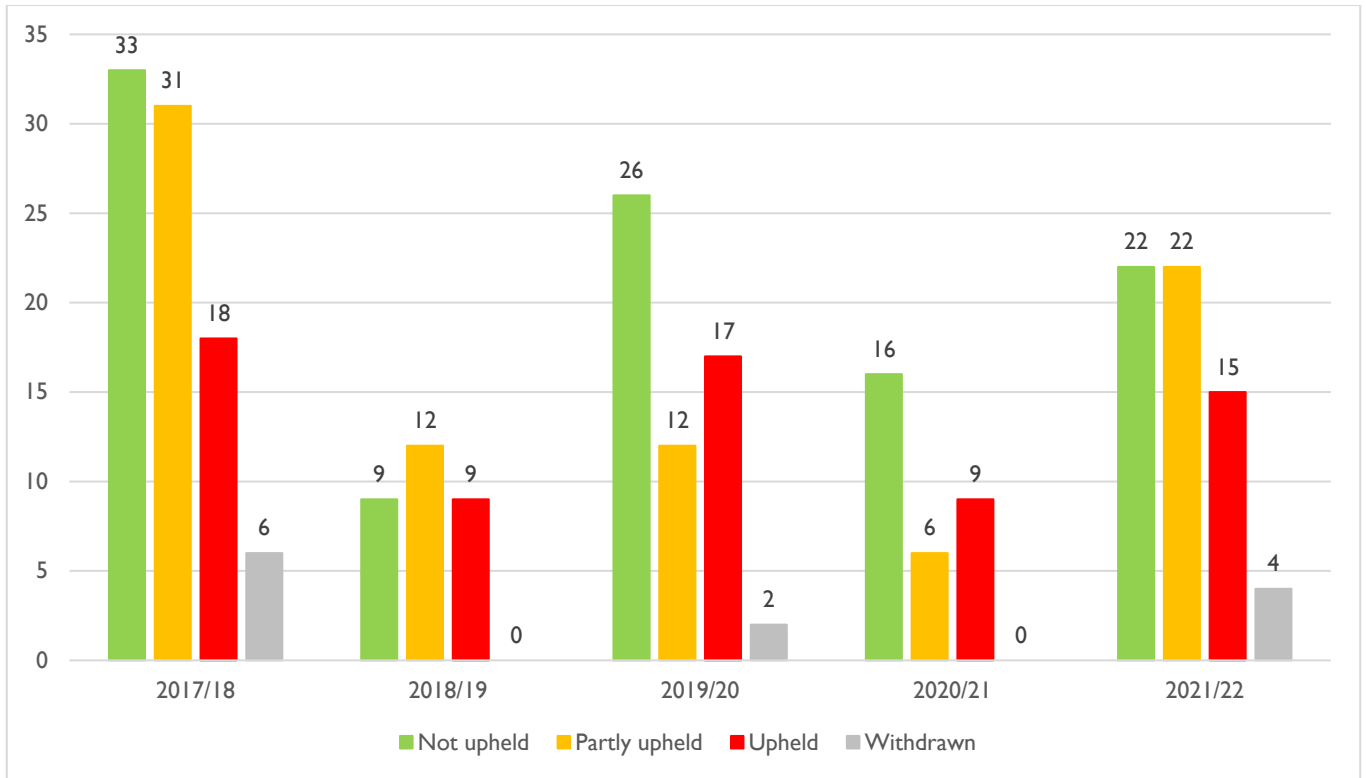
There was also a slight increase in complaints about a lack of communication and payment charges. Although we have received high numbers of payment charges in previous years, and therefore this complaint theme is broadly consistent with the long-term average.

## 3.3 Complaint outcomes

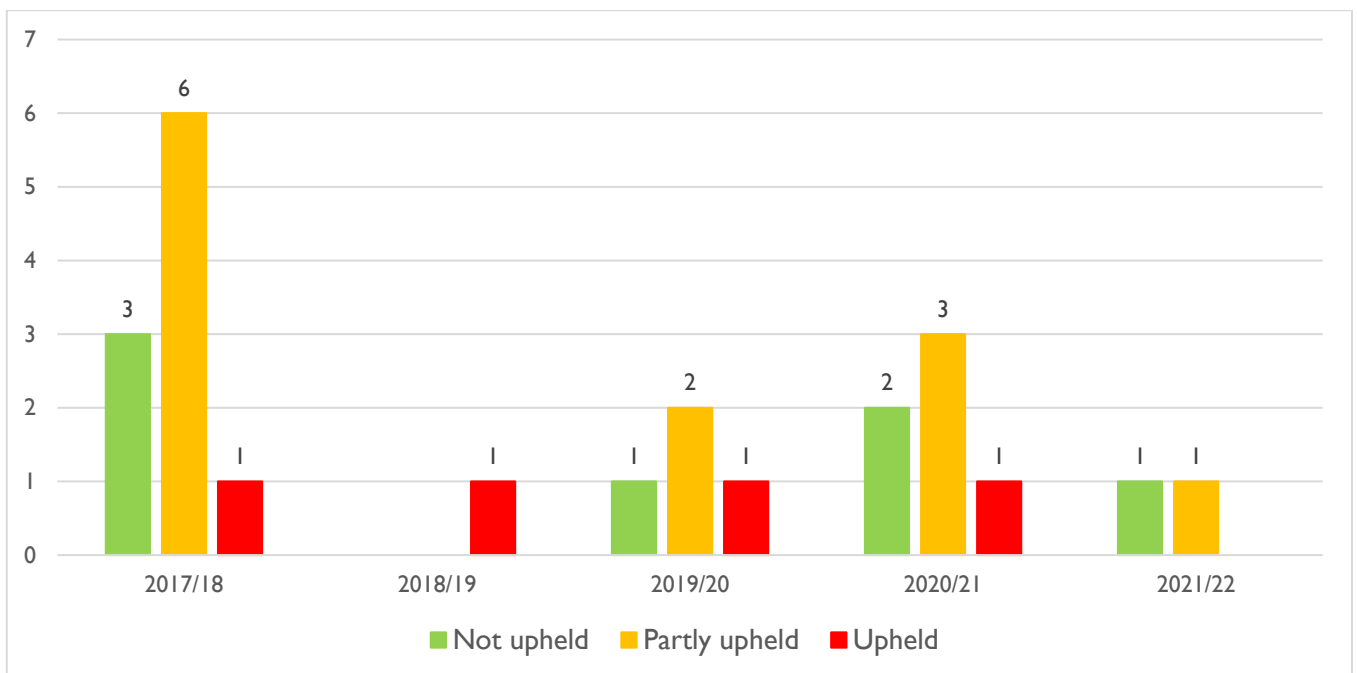
The tables below show the percentage breakdown of our complaint decisions for the last five years.



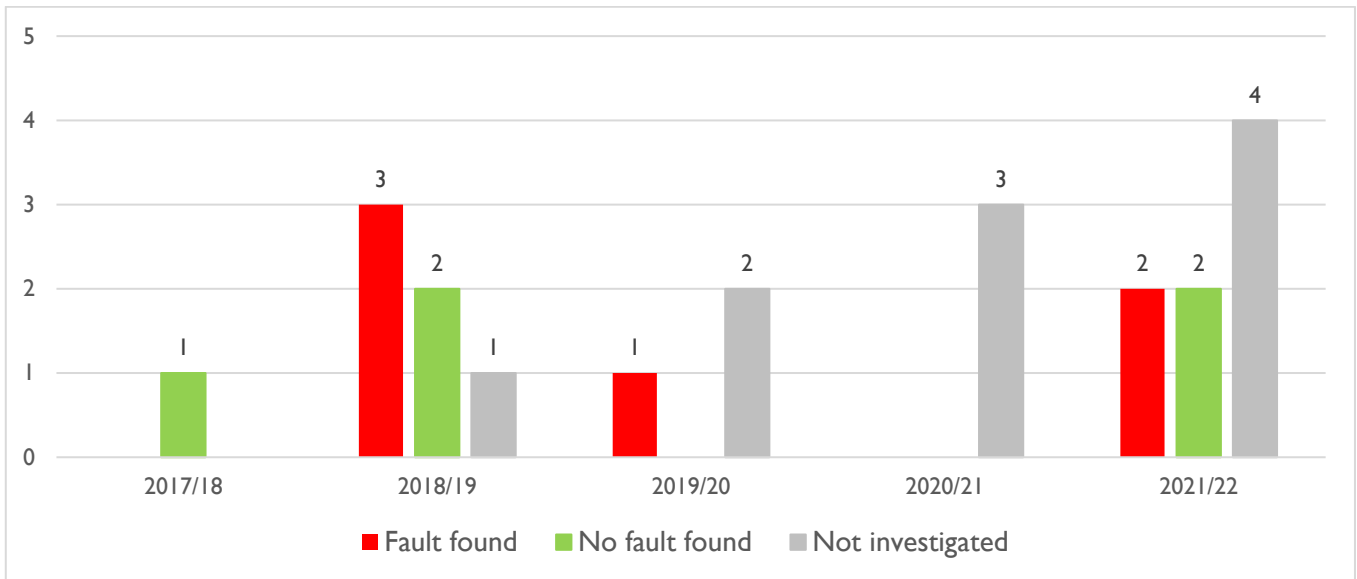
**Stage 1 complaints**



**Stage 2 complaints**



### Ombudsman investigations



### Analysis

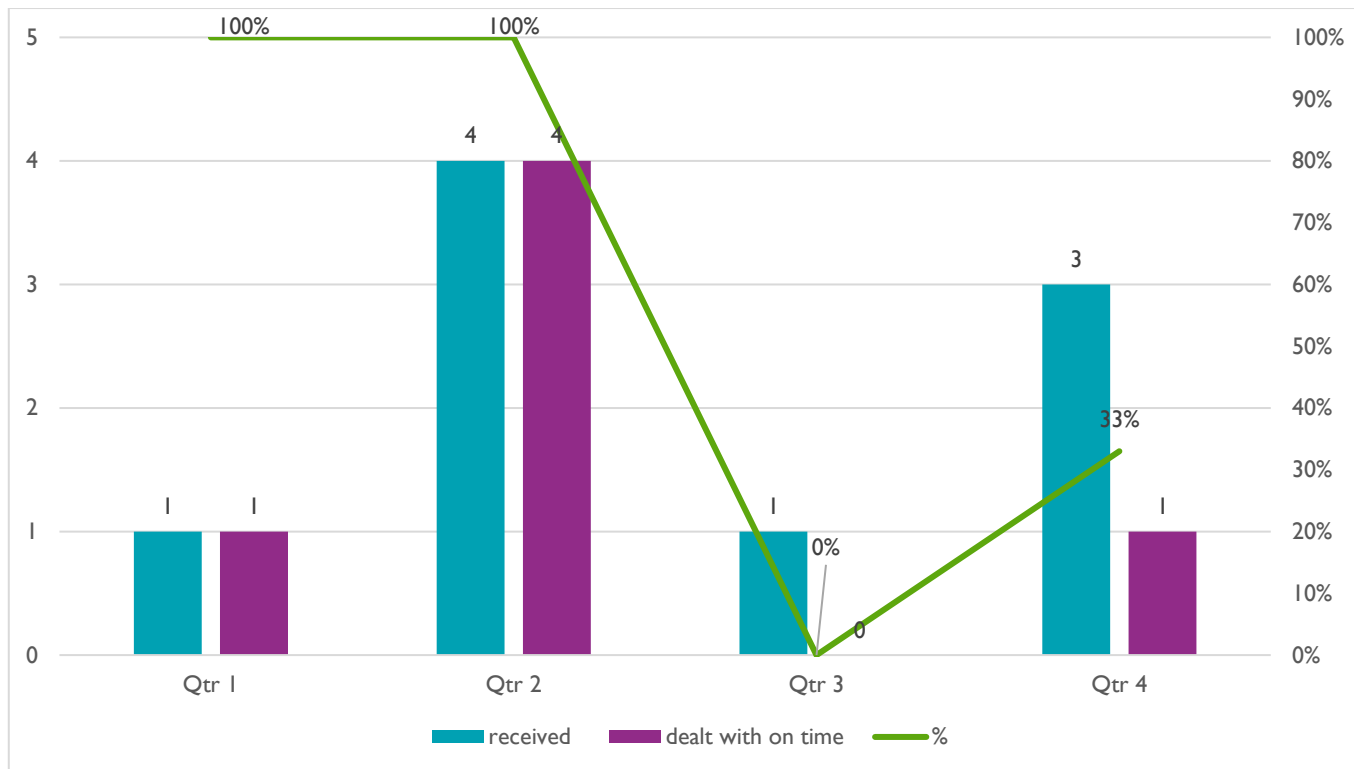
- The charts above show that we found fault in 59% of complaints investigated at Stage 1.
- 50% of Stage 2 complaints was upheld.
- The Ombudsman found fault with us twice in this period

Note, the figures above show the outcomes of complaints that were “closed” in 2021/22. This means some of the complaints may have been originally received in the previous financial year.

## 3.4 Complaint performance

The table below shows the total number of Stage 1 corporate and statutory complaints we received and what percentage of these we dealt with on time.

**Stage 1 corporate complaints**

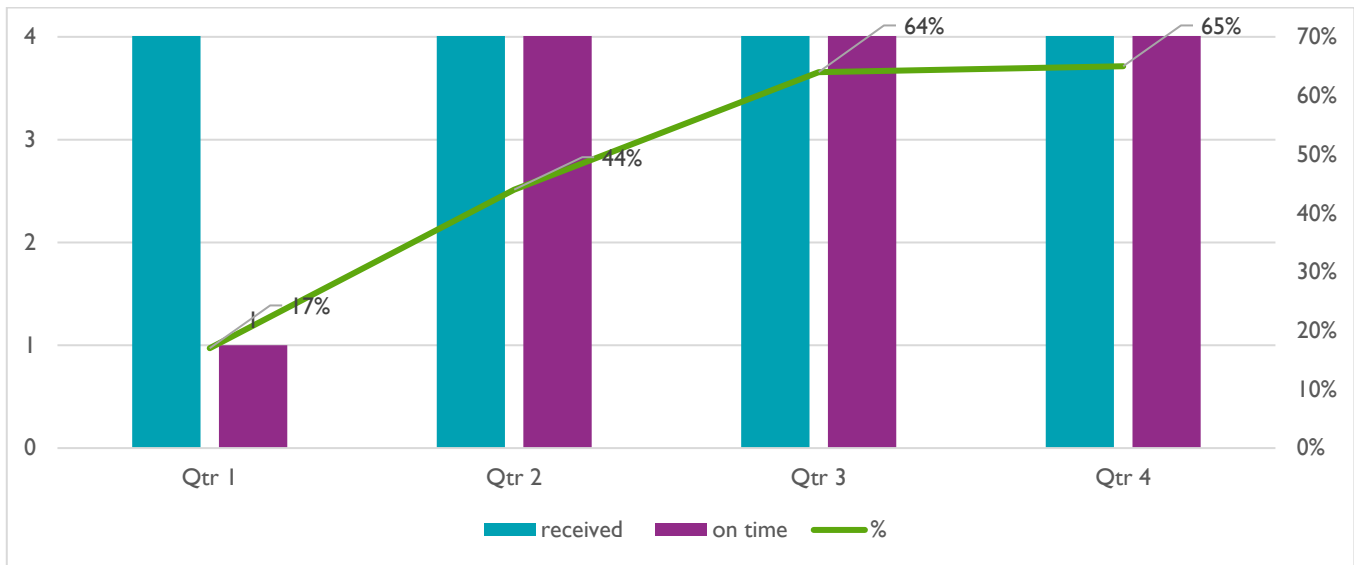


**Analysis**

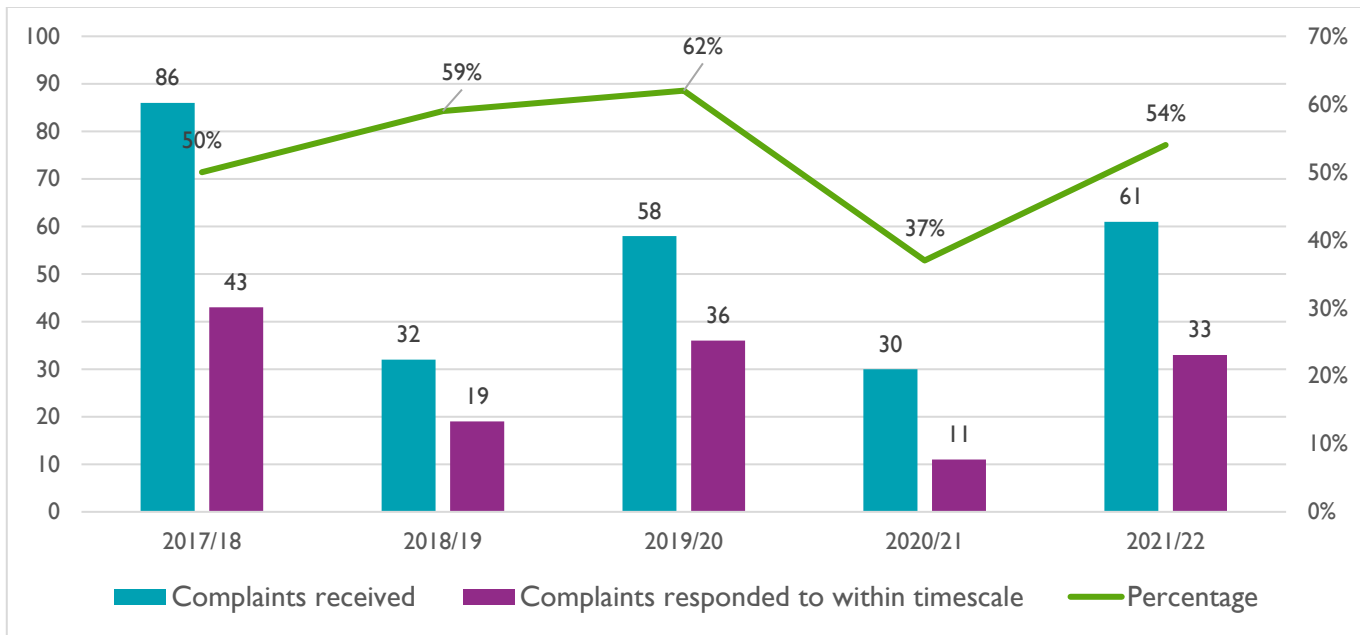
In this period 67% of corporate and 52% of statutory complaints were responded to on time. Performance in quarter one and two was 100% for corporate complaints. However, performance dropped in quarter three and four. This was due to significant vacancy and sickness amongst managers overseeing complaint responses. Statutory complaint performance increased throughout the year but was continuously below our target of 90%.

**3.5 Statutory complaint performance**

The table below shows the total number of Stage 1 statutory complaints we received and the percentage of these we responded to on time.



The graph below shows the performance over the last five years.



The combined performance for statutory and corporate complaints this year was 54%. This is an improvement from last year but was below our 90% target. Pressures on the workforce, exacerbated by the COVID 19 pandemic, hospital discharge pressures and recruitment and retention challenges influenced performance in complaint responses and will be an area of priority for 2022/23.

#### 4. Improving and learning from complaints

Complaints provide us with a valuable insight into people’s experience of our services and we use this feedback to try to improve the service we provide. We do this by reviewing the causes of complaints,

complaint themes, and complaint outcomes. This helps us to identify ongoing problems within the service and take steps to put them right.

Over the course of the year, the Complaints Team have regularly discussed complaints with officers from Adults Social Services and it produces a monthly report to senior officers from the service. Individual members of staff have also discussed complaints during supervisions and in 1-2-1s, and we have taken account of feedback from the Ombudsman to improve our service.

Below are four areas of concern that have been identified through dealing with complaints over the course of the year.

Four key issues requiring improvement:

- Poor communication or customer care
- Clarity of charges
- Delay or failure to do something as promised
- Insufficient quality of care provision

## Analysis

2021/22 has continued to see concerns being raised regarding our communication. It is therefore a key area in which continued improvement is required. In response to this, a review of customer care was undertaken, particularly in relation to accessibility through the telephone system, and our response time to complaints.

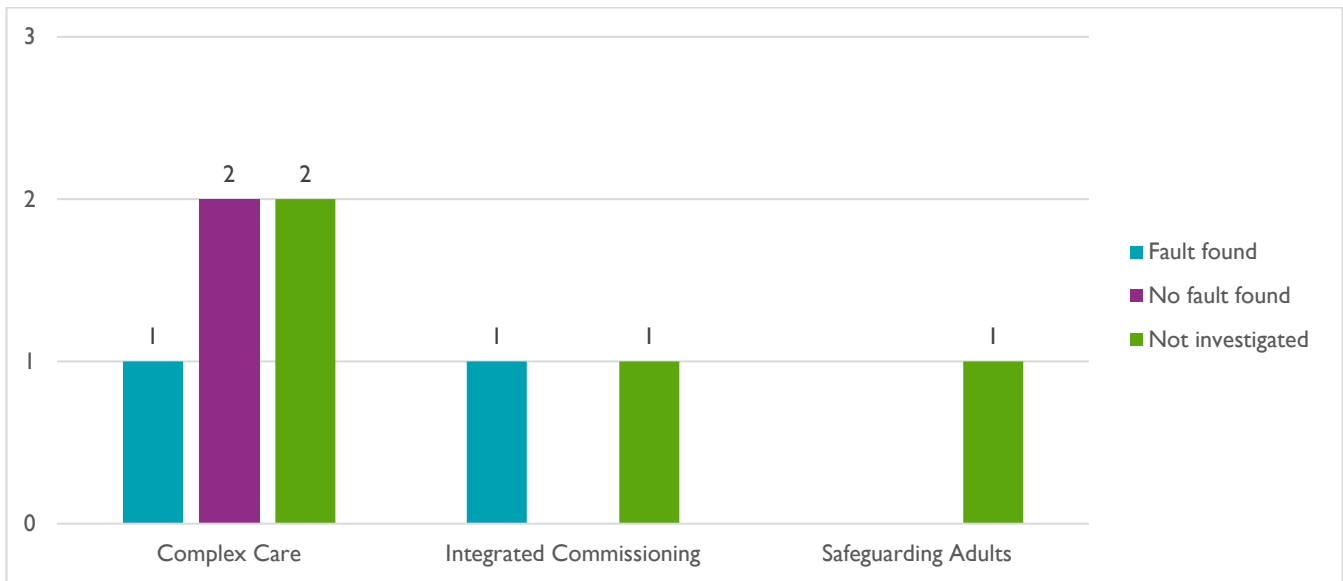
This review led to the implementation of monthly meetings to monitor telephone response times and abandoned calls, which has resulted in significant improvements in our telephone communication, as evidenced through the data we collect on abandoned calls throughout the year. We have also implemented a weekly complaint monitoring meeting to oversee timely response to complaints and learning from each one. Managers and Senior Managers also completed “Getting it write” complaints training.

The second key issue that required attention was charges for care and support, particularly in relation to discharge from hospital processes and clarity about charging at the point of assessment. In response to this, we have revised the information we provide regarding charges related to care and support, and plan to develop a dedicated telephone number for queries regarding charges and invoices for care and support. Social workers aligned to specific hospital wards support with communications around charging, and a new Discharge hub has been developed to coordinate and advise people in receipt of care and their families about the support provided on discharge from hospital.

A theme was also identified in relation to our delay/failure to do something, which led to us identifying a need to review our safeguarding process and time scales, as well as reviewing the customer journey through our service. We have also considered the backlog of work which has led to delays, and the staff demand/capacity in relation to this.

In response to this identified issue, we have updated our safeguarding process and are now monitoring the allocation of safeguarding within expected timeframes. We have started monitoring our staff demand





We take all Ombudsman decisions very seriously. We implement all their recommendations and amend our services to try to prevent similar failings from recurring. In this instance we have revised our charging policy for arranging individual care needs, asked a care provider to improve care provision to ensure all care needs were properly met and that the individual concerned was not overcharged. We also apologised to the individuals who had been subject to our old charging policy and paid compensation to the person who was the subject of the Ombudsman investigation.

## 6. Compliments received

We received 27 compliments in this period. A select few by service area are detailed below.

### Complex Care

'I am sending this card to express my thanks and how grateful I am for your help during the last few months of my mother's life. When I was caring for my mum solely and needed support and help as my mum's care needs increased, you made yourself available to me.

I will never forget your help and support during these difficult times'.

'I wanted to write to you and let you know how amazing Christelle has been for myself and my family.

My father has Alzheimer's and Vascular Dementia and has deteriorated somewhat over the past few months and weeks. Since Christelle became involved, we have all felt so much support from her. Christelle always offers a solution and is so calming to speak with. She understands the issues and it is clear from our numerous conversations that she really does care.

On numerous occasions Christelle has worked past her contracted hours to ensure we are all ok and that plans have been executed as agreed. I cannot thank her enough. I honestly do not think my mum or family would have coped as well as we have without her continued help and support. She is honestly one in a million and I always remember the support she has given us.

No matter what problems or obstacles we have faced, Christelle has been a constructive, friendly and helpful voice at the end of the telephone. She has ensured everything runs smoothly and has kept us updated every single step of the way. She is so patient, understandable and professional and always makes you feel she has all the time to assist you.

I seriously cannot thank her enough and my family feel the same. From myself, my mum (and dad) and my sister and brother-in-law, we all thank Christelle so so very much. You are incredibly lucky to have someone so special on your team'.

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'We are writing to express our thanks and appreciation for the kind help and assistance provided by Fiona.

Fiona has been helping with a complex family issue in relation to XXX Mum and she was very compassionate and professional dealing with a challenging situation affecting the family. Fiona provided pragmatic solutions and followed up with additional advice on the way forward'.

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'Can I please send you feedback on Joanne Roe. She is a complete asset to your social services. She has gone above and beyond her duties. I cannot believe how committed she is to your department. Joanne deserves the positive feedback.

### **Integrated Commissioning**

'I just want to thank you again for all that you did to achieve such an unbelievable result yesterday.

I think I am still in shock and cannot take in what has happened. I cannot put into words the relief that I am feeling. To know that Mum can remain at Heathfield Court and be cared for by the amazing staff who work there is such a weight off our minds.

We know that we shall never get "our Mum " back but we do know that she will be so well cared for however long that she has left. We cannot thank you enough.

We send you our very best wishes and are especially grateful to you for your personal understanding of our situation which has given us such an amazing outcome'.

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'I cannot thank you enough for the wonderful care and support that was shown during the last 8 weeks that we had together at home. Your wonderful care meant that XXX was clean and comfortable all day and felt cared for'.

'I wanted to take this opportunity to say thank you for everything you did yesterday to support the team and the people who live at Howard Goble House. I cannot tell you how much everyone appreciated the fact that you came to the house and stood alongside the team when they needed you the most. An example of outstanding commissioning Elizabeth that meant a great deal to us all'.

### **Integrated Rehabilitation**

'I would like to take this opportunity to thank in particular Marcia Rowe whose support and efficiency with my mum's case has meant that I myself felt supported and will say that I will be eternally grateful.

Sometimes just someone who can show a caring and supportive side to people when they need it most is all that people need'.

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'You recently helped my mum with some equipment to help her out at home as she finds it difficult to get around. I just wanted to say thank you for helping her out, she told me how lovely you were and that you always did what you said you were going to do. We both appreciate all your help!'

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'Pauline was extremely helpful and guided me through what help I might get and ensured that the things I needed to aid my mobility around the house were provided and sent to me on time! Without the support I received from this remarkable lady I doubt whether I would have reached the point where I no longer need to move around with crutches or take independent showers or baths! Permit me if you may to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to this amazing lady who stepped in to render the most valuable assistance I needed at the time! Many thanks for the service you provide in your department and God bless you all!!'

If there is anything in this report which requires further clarification, please contact the complaints team at [complaints@bexley.gov.uk](mailto:complaints@bexley.gov.uk)