

Adult Social Care Annual Complaints Report

April 2020 - March 2021

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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 for the London Borough of Bexley Adult Social Care Services for the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021, that were dealt with through either the statutory social care complaints procedure or the corporate complaints process.

Complaints provide us with the opportunity to understand how well services are performing, to learn from any mistakes and to make improvements to the way we deliver our services. This report provides a range of information and analysis about how we dealt with these complaints and attempts to assess our performance over the course of the year.

1.1 Key points

In 2020/21 we received 35 Stage 1 complaints. This is a 41 % decrease from the previous year when we received 59. We responded to 37% of complaints on time this year compared with 62% in the previous year.

- Out of the 23 corporate complaints that were received, seven progressed to Stage 2 and 6 progressed to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.
- The main reason why people complained was due to poor 'service quality'.
- We found a degree of fault in 48% of the complaints that were investigated at Stage 1.
- The Ombudsman investigated three complaints during this period and found no fault with any of them.

2. Adult statutory social care complaints procedure

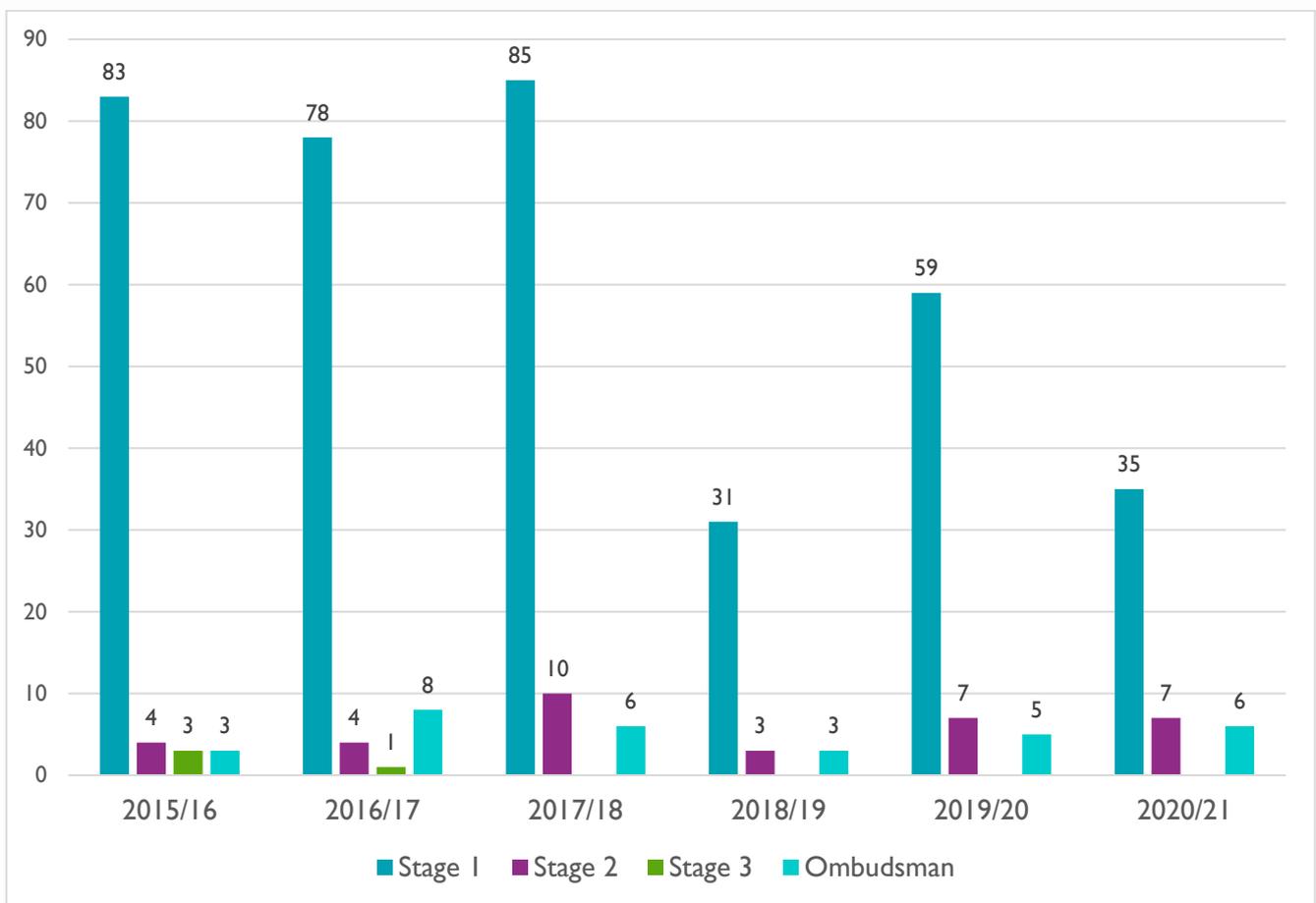
This is a one-stage only process and we respond within 15 working days to align with our corporate complaints process. This can be extended in instances where the complaint is complex and requires a more in-depth investigation. If the complainant remains unhappy after we have completed our investigation, they can escalate their complaint to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

3. Complaints received

The table below shows the total number of complaints received from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.

Type	Stage 1	Stage 2	Ombudsman
Statutory complaints	12	n/a	1
Corporate complaints	23	7	5
Total	35	7	6

The graph table below shows the number of complaints received over the last six years.



*Note, we reduced our corporate complaints process to a two-stage process in 2017/18

Analysis

The total number of Stage 1 complaints this year decreased by 41% compared with 2019/20. There was a reduction in complaints due to Covid-19 and partly because services tried more often to resolve problems over the telephone before they became formal complaints compared with previous years.

The number of Stage 2 complaints received was the same as the previous year. There were no Stage 2 investigations where the outcome of the Stage 1 decision was subsequently reversed.

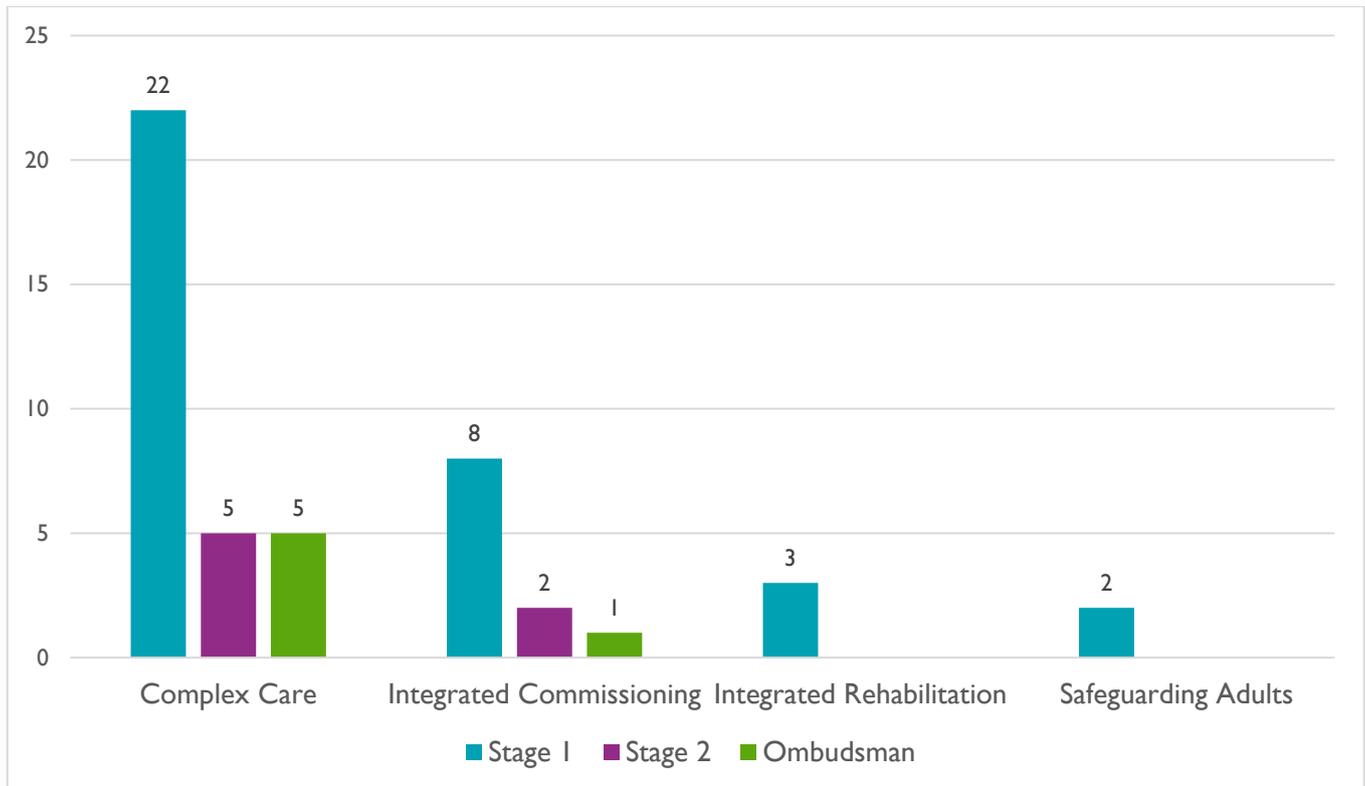
Six Ombudsman complaints were received compared to five in the previous year. There is more detail about Ombudsman complaints in section 8.

3.1 Complaints by service area

Adult Social Care comprises of the following four service areas:

- Integrated Rehabilitation
- Integrated Commissioning
- Complex Care
- Safeguarding Adults

The table below shows complaints by service area in 2020/21.

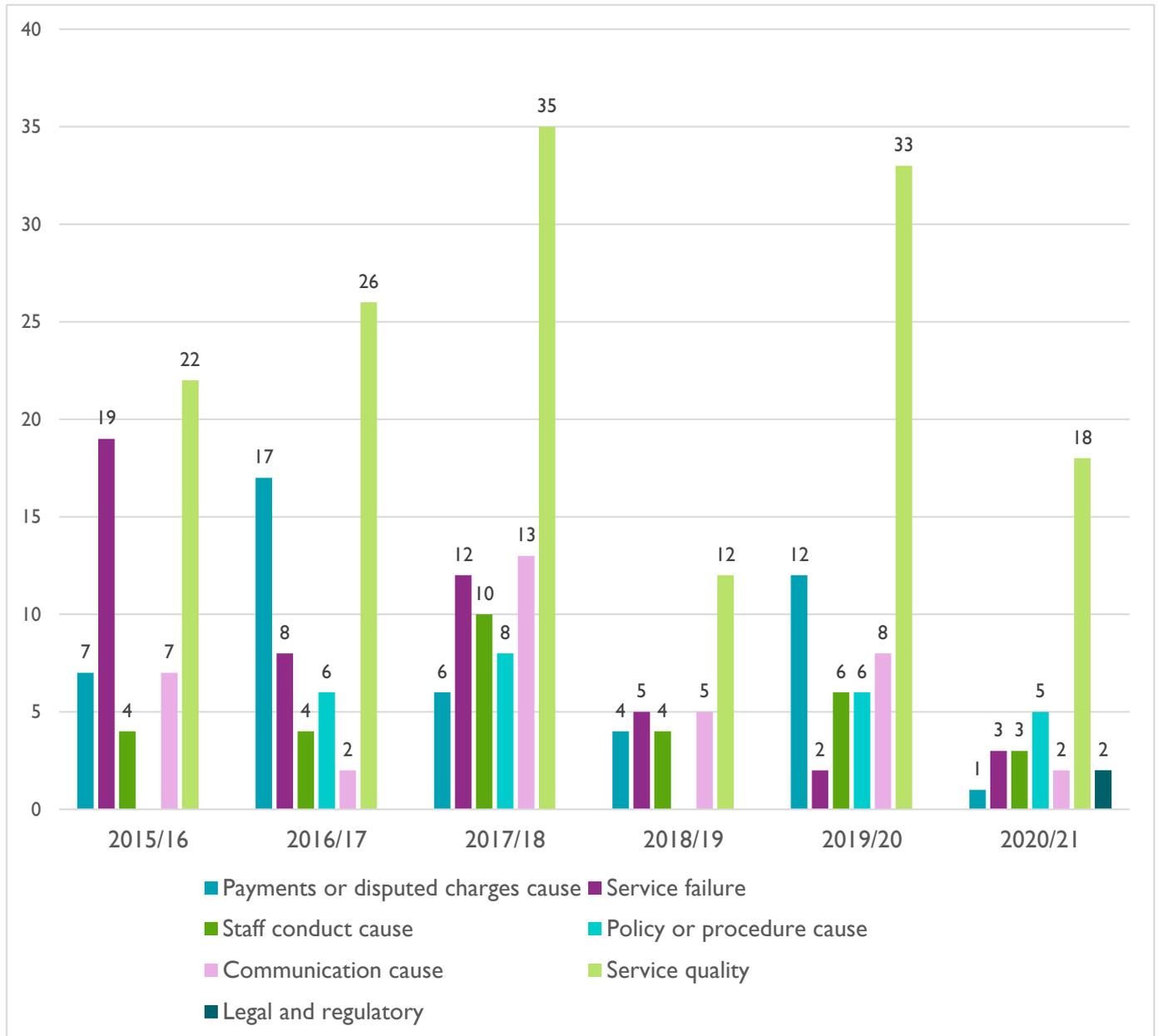


3.2 Causes of complaints

The table below shows why people complained to us over the last six years.

Please note that the data below is collected from complaints that were ‘closed’ during this period and will not match the number of complaints we ‘received’ during this period. This is because some closed

complaints were received in the previous year.



Analysis

The table above shows that ‘poor service quality’ was the main cause of complaint. Of the 18 complaints that were caused by ‘poor service quality’, 10 were upheld after they were investigated. Five of these involved the quality of our home care services, three related to service provided by council staff and one was about a commissioned service.

General observations

- Fewer complaints closed this year compared with the previous four years
- There was a drop in complaints about a lack of communication
- Two complaints received concerning legal and regulatory issues, which have not been recorded in the previous four years

- There was a drop in complaints about staff conduct and policy and procedure
- There was a slight rise in complaints relating to service failure

Home care

All complaints that were upheld were about how home care was delivered to residents which included the quality of the care and support that was offered, care and support was too general and lack not personalisation to the individual and there were insufficient steps taken to reduce infection control.

Service provided by council staff

We upheld three complaints due to a lack of responsiveness and poor communication and a failure to provide personalised care and support to some individuals.

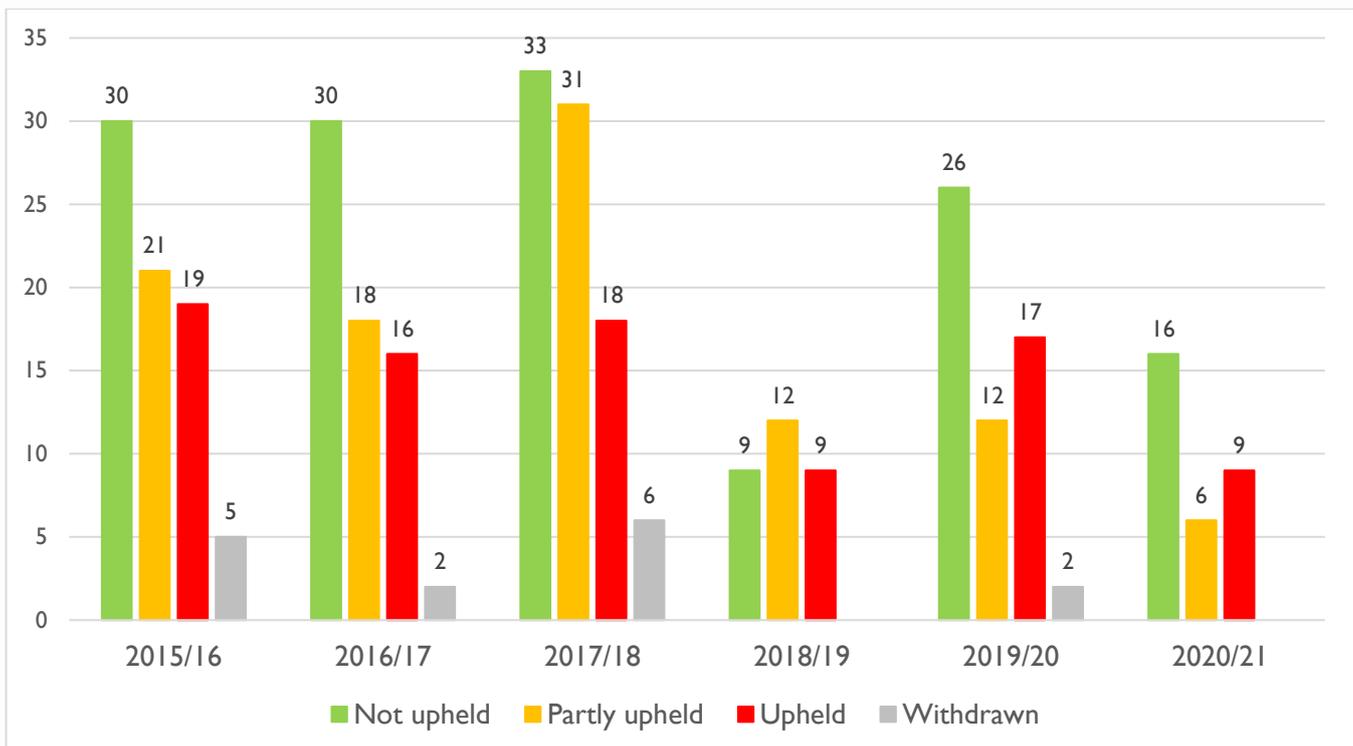
Commissioned service

One complaint was upheld in this area because we felt that a commissioned service did not respond quickly enough to concerns raised by their service user which caused the individual to be treated unfairly.

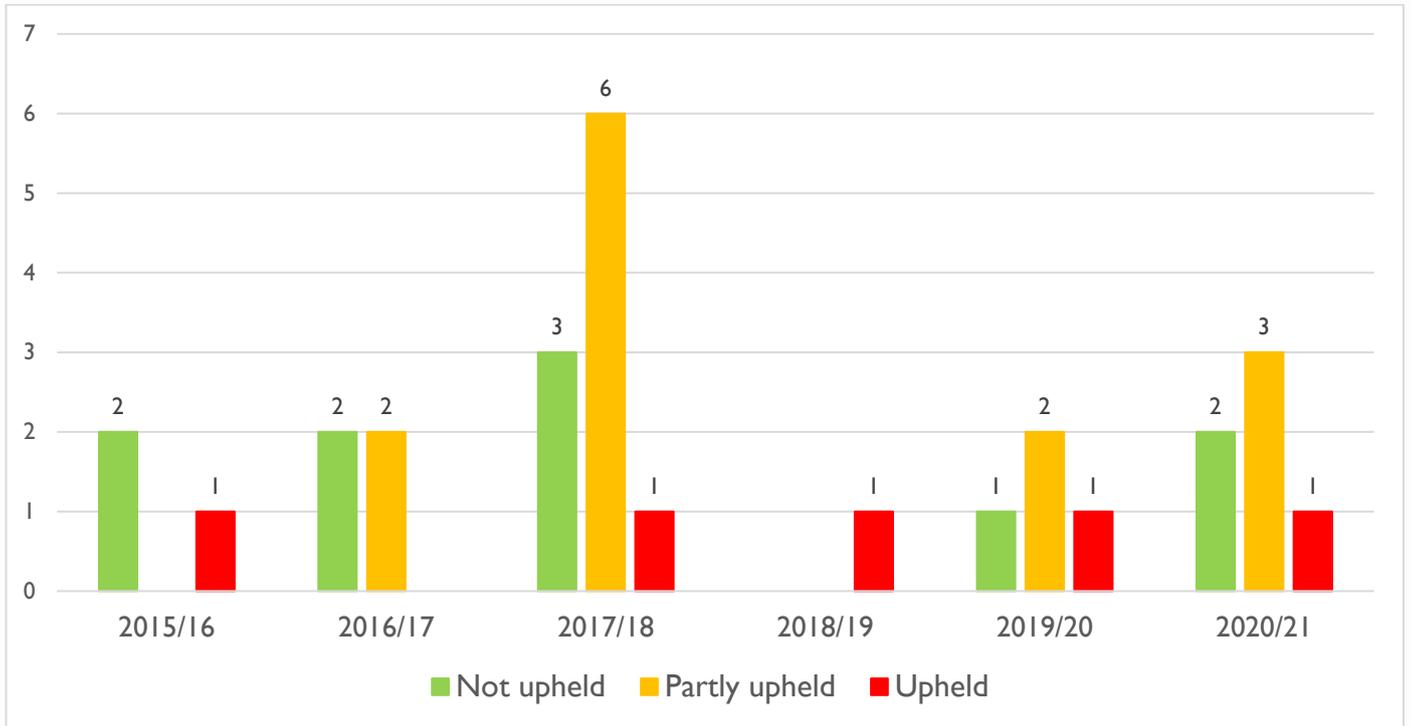
3.3 Complaint outcomes

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

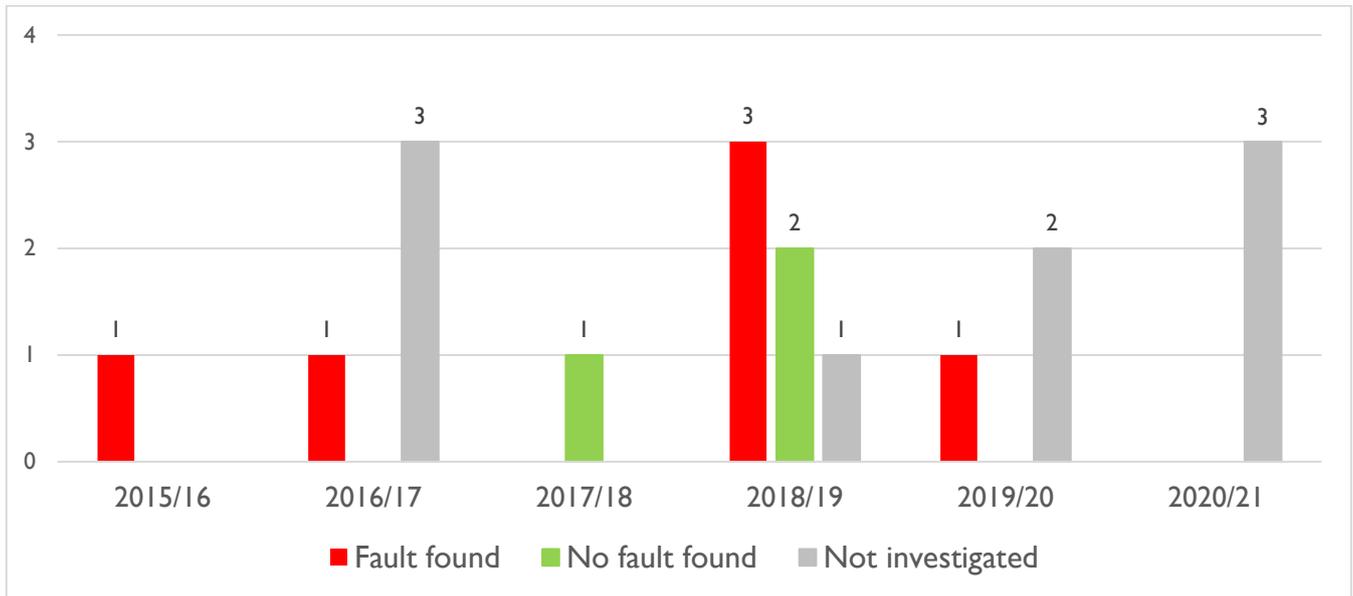
Stage 1 complaints



Stage 2 complaints



Ombudsman investigations



Analysis

- The charts above show that we found fault in 48% of complaints investigated at Stage 1.
- 60% of Stage 2 complaints were either upheld or partly upheld
- The Ombudsman found no fault with us in this period

Note, the figures above show the outcomes of complaints that were “closed” in 2020/21. This means some of the complaints may have been originally received in the previous financial year.

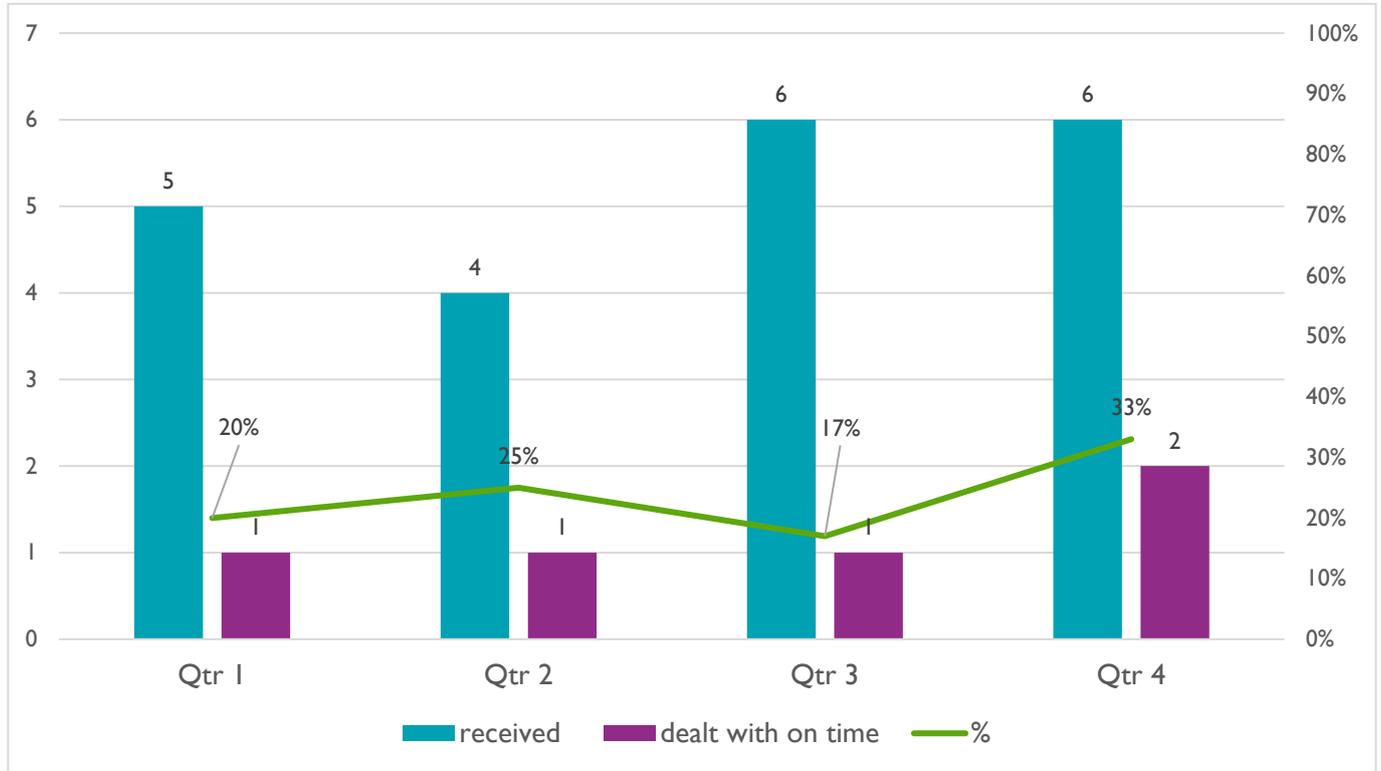
3.4 Complaint performance

The table below shows the total number of Stage 1 corporate and statutory complaints we received over the financial year and what percentage of these we replied to on time.

In this period only 24% of corporate complaints were responded to on time Whereas 67% of statutory complaints were replied to before they were due.

Although there was some improvement in quarter four for corporate complaints, performance was some below where we would expect it to be. Monitoring and reporting will be increased to try to improve performance. Statutory complaint performance was better but inconsistent.

Stage 1 corporate complaints



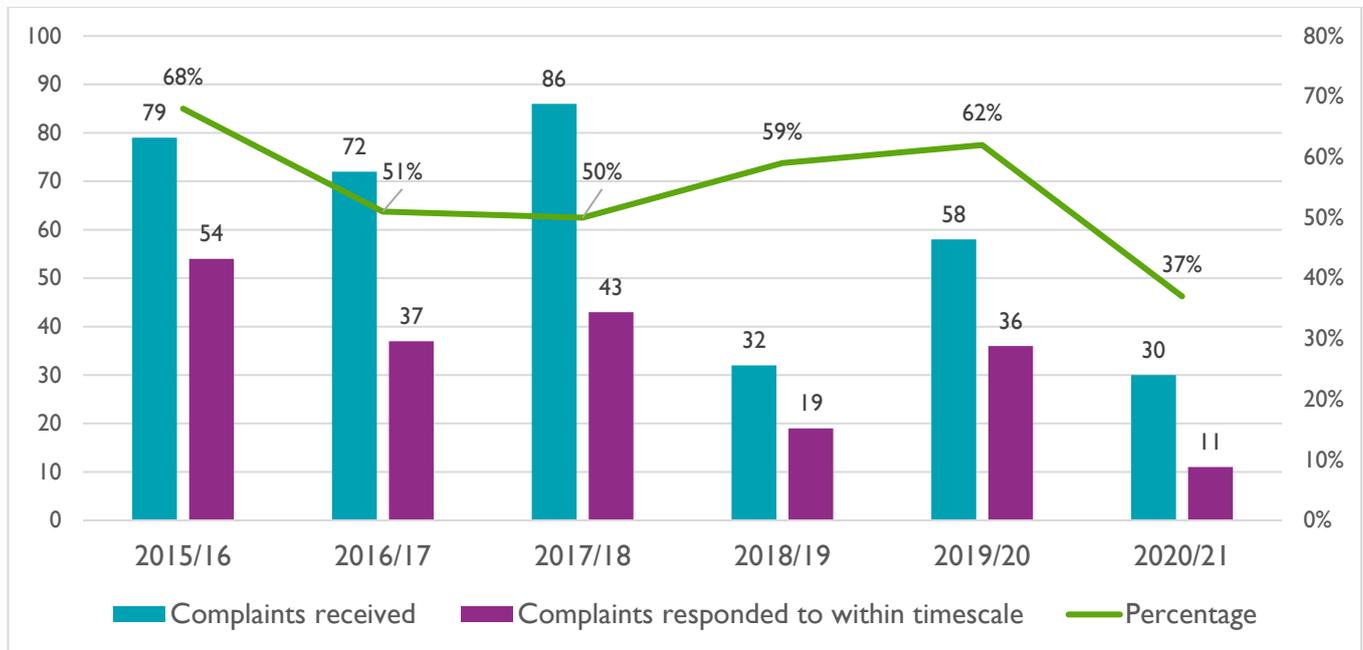
3.5 Statutory complaint performance

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

Statutory complaint performance



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



The combined performance for statutory and corporate complaints this year was 37%. This is the lowest rate in six years. It was impacted by shifting priorities due to Covid 19 and several key staff changes during this period.

3.6 Stage 2 corporate complaint performance

During this period, we closed 50% of Stage 2 complaints on time. Performance was inconsistent across the four quarters and ranged from 100% of complaints closed on time to only 33%. Performance was impacted by the same issues outlined above.

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 Services and produced a monthly report to senior officers from the service. Individual members of

staff have 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:

- Communication
- The quality-of-care services
- The responsiveness of service provision
- Financial charges

Analysis

In 2020/21 we have again seen residents raise concerns regarding the style and approach of our communication. Unfortunately, this has been a recurrent issue and highlights an area still requiring further development. Staff must respond to complaints more proactively and do more to try to resolve them earlier in the process before they escalate. To help this we are planning to develop an online communication tool through our website in 2022.

During the year, better management oversight was enacted to learn from complaints, including monthly meetings with team managers to review complaints and the various issues raised by the complainant.

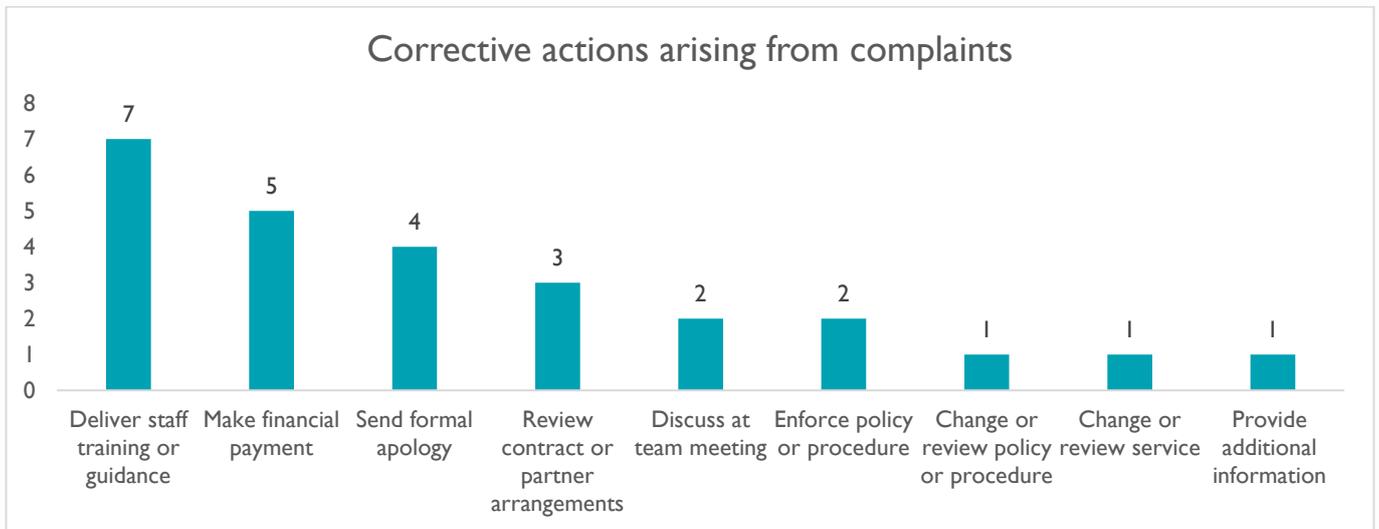
We continue to see complaints under the category 'service quality' and 'finance and invoicing'. These issues have been exacerbated by significant changes in 2020/21 in relation to hospital discharge care and support. The rapid implementation of the hospital discharge policy during the pandemic has meant changes in how care is funded on discharge.

By regularly reviewing complaints we have identified that residents have not always been informed when care moves from, health funded support to fairer charging. As the policy embeds in practice, we have sought to improve communications with residents about fairer charges. We have also identified the need to revise our charging policy and a period of public consultation will commence for this in 2022.

Throughout the year, service managers and their teams have use complaints to identify how they can improve service delivery to prevent complaints about the four key issues listed above. This has identified various training needs, opportunities, and a recognition that more needs to be done to improve the quality of complaint responses. An external provider has been commissioned for this purpose and will provide complaints training to senior officers in 2022.

Corrective actions arising from complaints

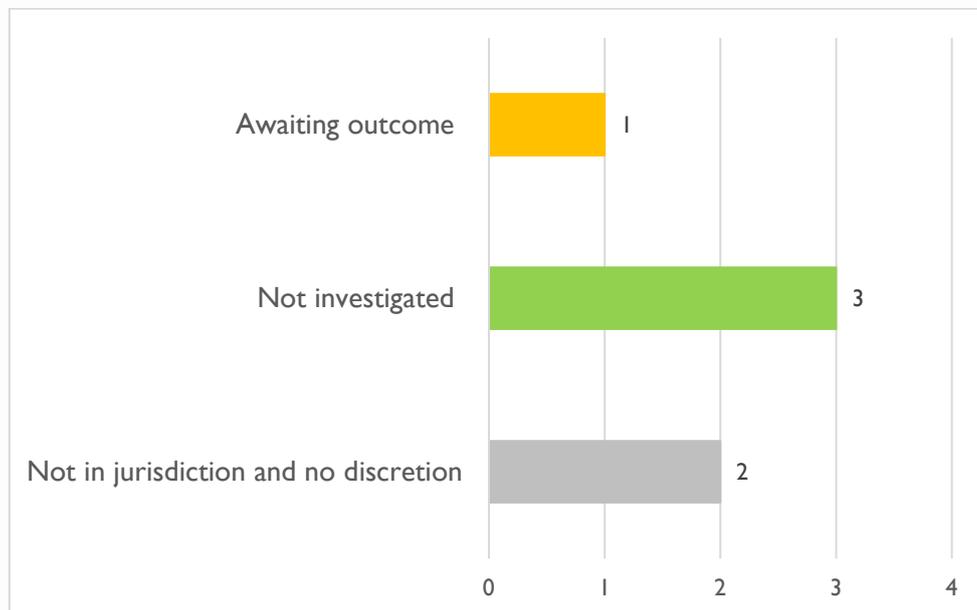
The chart below shows the remedial actions that were taken over the year after we investigated the complaints received about the service. Note, sometimes we identify multiple corrective actions after we have completed our complaint investigation.



5. Ombudsman complaints

The Ombudsman advised us that they received nine complaints about the service during this period. Although they only contacted us about six of these complaints, which are detailed in the table below.

Complaints from the Local Government Ombudsman



6. Compliments received

We received 57 compliments in this period.

Service Area	Number
Complex Care	25
Integrated Commissioning	13
Integrated Rehabilitation	19

A select few are detailed below.

Complex Care

'I would like send a massive thank you to Karen from the Bexley Adult Social Care for being so understanding and helpful with my request to support my elderly parents who live in Bexleyheath and are shielding... Karen listened to my concerns, responded quickly and kept in touch with me - super lovely - and has managed to put in place a meals delivery service for my parents which I am really pleased about as I have been travelling 45 miles with shopping twice weekly.

I really appreciate everything you are doing for my Mum and Dad - Thank you Karen x'

'I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your professionalism, compassion and directness in dealing with mums' welfare. I have to admit that when I was informed that a Social Worker has been assigned to mum, I thought "here we go again" back to square one!!

I had been struggling for quite a while, I felt, against all the odds, watching her starve herself and her dementia increase along with her other issues, you took some of the burden off my shoulders just by understanding and believing what I was telling you, for that you have my grateful thanks. I do also understand that the knock-on effect of Covid played its part in the struggle.

What a relief though, to find you actually listened and not only that, understood what was being said, I knew all of mums' problems and I felt you did too, this I concluded later, was due to your extensive experience in dealing with such cases and being at the top of your profession. Your understanding and determination to do what was best for mum was a revelation. Your compassion and directness were much appreciated. I and my brothers know that the decision mum needs 24hr residential care is the correct one for her.

Finally, Valerie, I wish you all the best, I know that any future clients of yours are very lucky to have you looking out for them.'

Integrated Commissioning

'Maggie, I have to personally thank you so much, you went out of your way to help me (and my brothers) do what is best for mum. I was at my wits end when I first talked to you, you were the only person, of all the people who I had dealt with regarding mums' condition, who listened to me, you were professional, compassionate and took action immediately, for that I am immensely grateful.'

'I would just like to pass my thanks & thoughts on to you regarding the two members of your staff above.

Basically, I have had ongoing issues with Bluebird since March this year, I finally couldn't take any more & contacted a member of your team early last week. I was lucky enough that Barbara called me back & I have to say her patience, kindness & professionalism was outstanding. I then became involved with Michala as I understand that Barbara was off, Michala has been exactly the same, & gone over & above to meet my needs, it seems that nothing has been too much trouble.

I just want to say that at a time when I felt my uncle was being dehumanised these two amazing people have been there providing answers to all of my requests and found a new agency for us, I cannot thank them both enough.'

Integrated Rehabilitation

'I would like to say that whilst we have and still are in this crisis of the virus Shared lives have gone out of their way to support all of the service users and carers, they have enabled the carers to go shopping for our essentials by providing identification so we can shop in certain hours. Also provide validation for us to park in certain places to get to the shops quicker. We have regular emails making sure all is okay, we have been supplied with protective gloves,

We have also had emails sent through with useful information and links for any of us that need support with stress etc, and also entertainment i.e. Karaoke and games so we can keep occupied even links for exercise. Shared lives team have always been there for us no matter what and I can't praise them enough.

Well done Team you are stars.'

If there is anything in this report which requires further clarification, please contact the complaints team at complaints@bexley.gov.uk.