

Kirklees Council

# Adult Social Care

## Customer Services



Annual Report 2023/24



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# Introduction

Kirklees Adult Social Care Customer Services Unit is based within the Directorate for Adults and Health, which is responsible for the assessment and provision of Social Care support to adults, supporting people with charging for Social Care services and commissioning social care providers.

This report provides information about contact made to Adult Social Care between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024.

We deal with enquiries, complaints, compliments, freedom of information and data protection requests. We work alongside all the teams within the Directorate and liaise with the wider Council corporate team and Information Governance team as well as external agencies and organisations.

Kirklees Council promotes and encourages feedback from all customers whether it is positive or negative, as this supports the continuous assessment and improvement of our service. The customer service process is accessible using various methods, including a dedicated telephone number and web page.

Customers are encouraged to make any comments to the team involved with them prior to it being dealt with as a formal complaint with the Customer Services Unit. Once it has been investigated as a formal complaint, the next stage is for the customer to go to the Local Government Ombudsman.

## Headline Findings

The volume of all of the enquiries the service has received increased compared to recent years. This has impacted on the small team that administer the complaint process and the Managers who have investigated and responded to these complaints and other concerns.

Compliments in particular have increased significantly based on previous years, showing many examples of excellent service that has positively impacted on people's lives.

Timeliness in responding to complaints remains a challenge for the service. There are systems in place to ensure Managers and Senior Managers are informed of complaints and progress but the performance has been below that which we aim for.

Charging for social care was again the number one theme for complaints in this year as it has consistently been in previous years. Concerns about the quality of service was next followed by the actions of staff.

# Compliments

The total number of compliments/positive feedback received this year was 690, which was a big increase on the previous year which itself was a record high for Adult Social Care (555).

As in previous years, the teams with the most compliments was our in-house Short Term and Urgent Support Teams.

Below are a few examples of what we have received:

## **Moorlands Grange (Intermediate Care)**

Thank you for caring for my father during his stay with you. You looked after him so well and understood his needs - especially his quiet times. My father passed away on Wednesday morning - he went very peacefully. I will always remember your professionalism and care. Thank you.

## **Hospital Social Work**

You have been amazing!! We really can't thank you enough and we are so grateful 🙏🙏 You have restored our faith in humanity and the caring profession.

## **Hospital Social Work**

I would just like to say a huge thank you to the assessor who was very professional and very supportive with my daughter and myself while sourcing and waiting for confirmation of a bed. She went above and beyond her role and kept myself informed every step of the way what was happening, ensuring both myself and my daughter was comfortable as much as possible such as asking if we needed anything to eat and drink. She also respected my daughter's privacy and left the room while nurses attended to her and also while I spent time with her when she became distressed she also went out of her way to take me home once my daughter was on her way in the ambulance. She also informed me via text when my daughter arrived. Thank you for being compassionate and caring and for all the support you provided during this distressing time.

## **Rapid Response**

We cannot express our gratitude enough for the kindness and compassion you have shown to our family. You have gone above and beyond to ensure my mother-in-law received the best care possible. Thank you for all that you do. Your hard work and commitment to your profession make a significant difference to the lives of so many.

## **Mental Health**

This is to say how much we have appreciated the work you have done to put a suitable package in for dad. I felt listened to and my concerns were taken into account, I felt the communication was really good and much appreciated and I am grateful that the package will now allow me to do more social things with dad as the pressure is taken off my caring role. I have valued the input of your staff and their consideration for dad.

## **Short Term and Urgent Support**

The service has been excellent and supported my needs. The carers who attended were helpful and sympathetic to my needs and helped when I was struggling whilst letting me do what I could. I have been very grateful for the help given and service is very important.

## **Hospital Avoidance Team**

Thank you for your support whilst he was in hospital and decisions were being made about whether or not he could return home. You considered dad's needs in conjunction with my Mum's needs and the best outcome was agreed. Your swift and efficient delivery of the assessment and subsequent decision made the transition to full time care easier for us as a family. Your communication with all parties as well as co-ordinating the move from hospital to the care home was exemplary.

## **Gateway to Care**

I just wanted to thank you for your excellent customer service. If I could, I would have rated you 10/10! Thank you for your all the information you have provided me with, your patience and your clear communication. It is greatly appreciated.

## **Support Options**

Your worker did a carer's assessment during which she identified support requirements that were needed. She promptly and efficiently arranged for Carer's Trust to contact me with regard to the sitting service. Carer's Trust have made a huge difference by taking a weight off my shoulders with visiting my mother. You also arranged for Kirklees Wellness Service to contact me to help my mental health and they have rung a few times, making a positive shift in my perspective that is noticeable to those around me. In summary I wish to thank the people and services involved with Adult Social Care for helping me to cope with not only my own personal disability but also supporting me to care for my mother as she becomes increasingly less able to manage on her own.

### **Hospital Avoidance Team**

Thank you for your professional guidance throughout the involvement in obtaining our Care Home placement for my dear wife. Especially thanks for your help in applying for NHS Continuing care in which you supported us through the procedure, your knowledgeable input was very much appreciated. Thank you also for your attendance at various meetings both at the Care Home and at our family home. We are particularly grateful for your help in understanding the financial interpretation, which although not your responsibility, helped us. We really do appreciate your offer to support us until all the details are sorted out.

### **Ings Grove House (Reablement)**

To say we were apprehensive about Dad being transferred after the treatment we had received from both hospitals was an understatement. From our first encounter at Ings Grove we were put at ease. A staff member greeted us, listened to our concerns, and most importantly didn't seek to rush us. They explained the process and reassured us as a family they would do everything to assist Dad in his rehabilitation. Our Dad soon settled in with the team's help. We saw he was more settled and were impressed with the approach being given to our father. We witnessed person-centred care each time we visited. Dad always spoke highly of the team which lifted a great weight from our minds. The team members we had the pleasure to meet and speak with were always polite, professional, and clearly understood their role demonstrating good working practices throughout Dad's stay. I would like to mention and remember all the names of the people we have spoken to, but we thank you all for everything you have done for our father. Every person I have seen at the home always had a smile and a kind word. You don't know what this has meant to our family. One word which I rarely use is trusted. As a team of people and for what you have achieved, I can say you are a trusted team.

### **Huddersfield Social Work Hub**

On behalf of my family I just wanted to say a huge heart-felt thank you for all you have undertaken on behalf of my mum. You have been incredibly professional, compassionate and your attention to detail is exceptional. I really do not think we could have imagined a better placement for my mum - thanks to you! You have made a huge difference you have made to my mum and our family. Wishing you a wonderful and happy life.

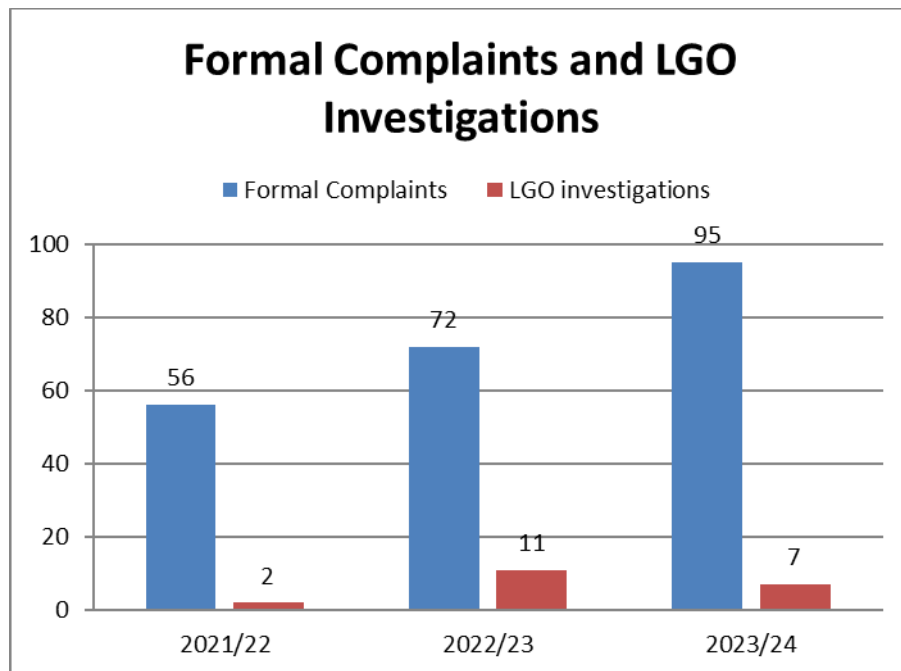
### **Reablement**

For the second time this year the carers have been attending my husband morning and evening. I would like to say a big thank you to all of them for their care and

attention we couldn't wished for better. I think their job they all do is amazing. Thank you again.

# Complaints Analysis

Table showing numbers of complaints and Local Government Ombudsman full investigations over the past three years.



Complaint numbers continued to increase on recent years. The numbers seen this year are the highest for a number of years.

The number of Local Government Ombudsman investigations in 2022/23 – 11, was the highest recorded in recent years. This year the figure has returned to one more similar to previous years - 7.

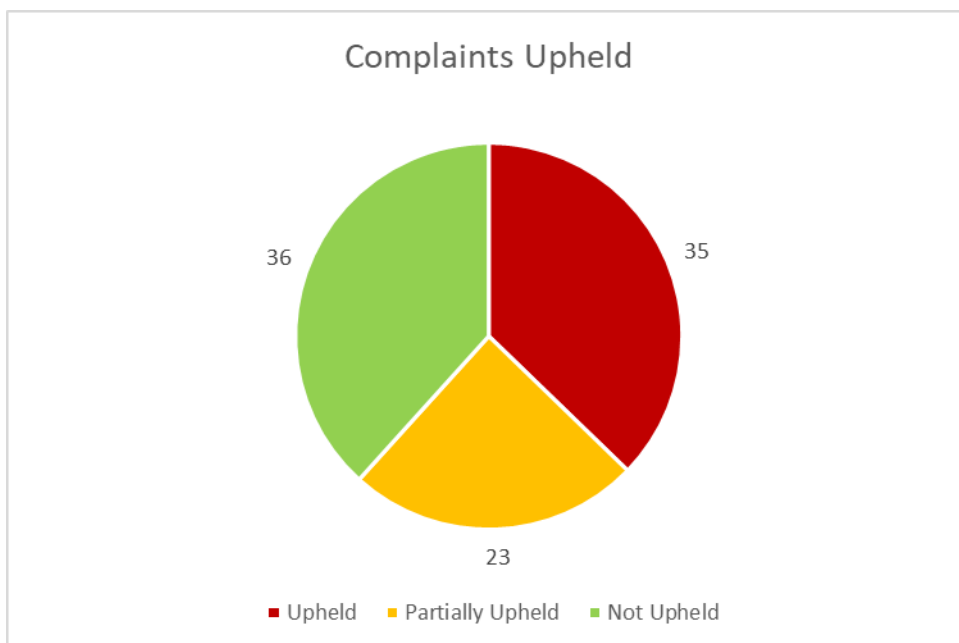


# The Outcome of Complaint Investigations

The outcome of each of our complaints is categorised as follows:

- Upheld – this means we have identified fault in our actions which have had a negative effect on the service user.
- Partially upheld – this means we have identified some aspects of our involvement where our investigation has found fault in our actions.
- Not upheld – this means we have not found any fault in our actions and decisions made regarding the service user.

This graph shows the breakdown of decisions following complaint investigations of which there was a total of 95. It shows whether each complaint was upheld, partially upheld, or not upheld.



- 35 complaints were upheld (37% of the total)
- 23 complaints were partially upheld (24% of the total)
- 36 complaints were not upheld (38% of the total)

The ratio of complaints that were fully or partially upheld has increased on the previous year. We believe this is reflective of our desire to treat complaints and concerns in an open and honest manner and aim to learn from them to improve the quality of services for everyone.

## Timescales

Our procedure allows for each formal complaint to have its own timescale to be set in consultation with the complainant. However, we do start with a target of 20 working days as our default.

Of the 95 formal complaints we had the following performance in terms of timeliness:

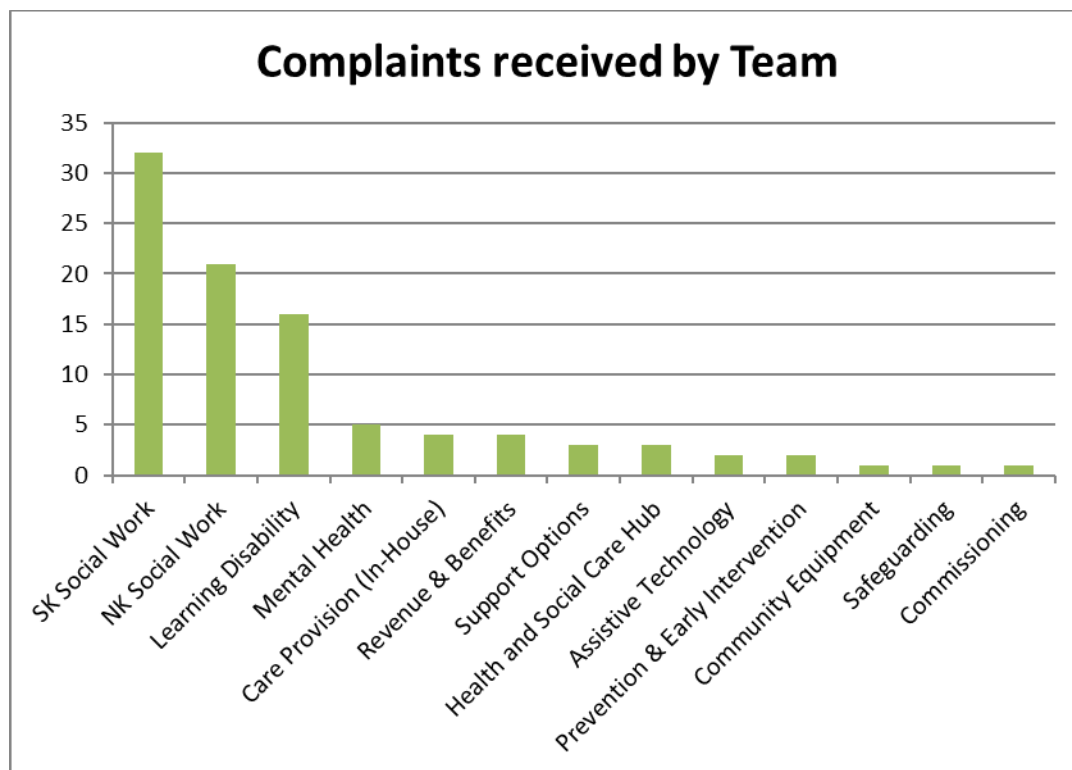
- 64 were completed within the agreed deadline, 67% of the total.
- 31 were completed late, 33% of the total.

This record of timeliness is lower than we aim for and we believe this is due to the pressures faced by Local Government and Social Care in particular.

While our standard to respond is 20 working days, it is accepted that on occasion, more time to conduct a thorough investigation will be required. To ensure the complainant is kept apprised of the expected timescale, we send out early reminders to investigating Managers to prompt them to agree a reasonable timescale with the complainant, one that is achievable.

# Complaints received by Teams

Graph showing the number of complaints received by each team within the Adult Social Care Service.

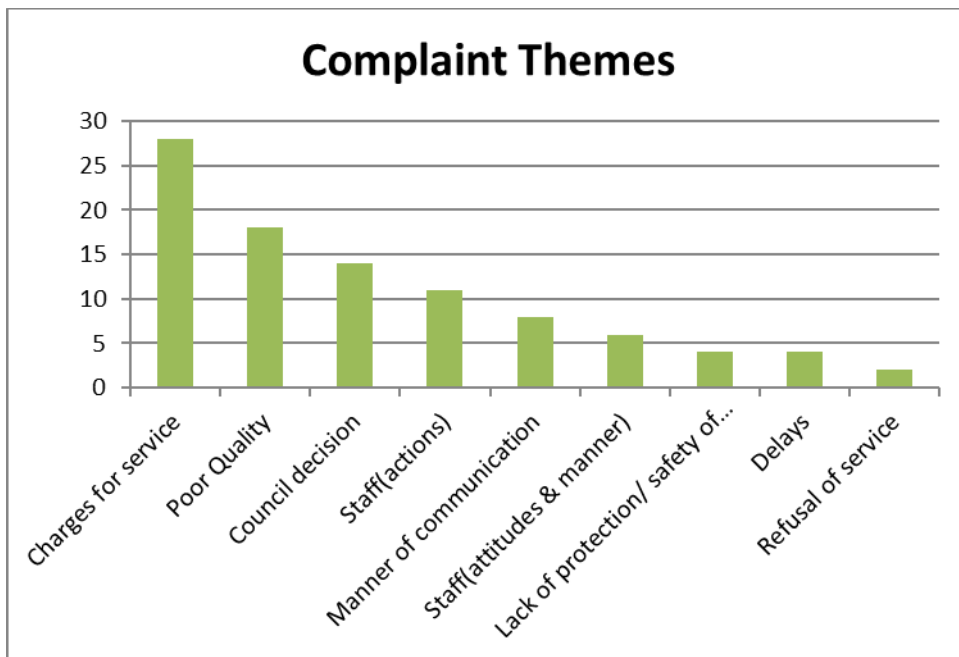


The highest number of complaints received was from the teams dealing with the social care assessment and care management of service users across the hospital, intake and support management teams.

This has been consistent for a number of years and while we continue to focus our attention on service quality, this demonstrates the complexity found in performing assessments and reviews for Adult Social Care.

# Complaints by Theme

Graph showing the number of complaints categorised by theme.



Issues connected with charging remains the top issue which is consistent with recent years. For more information see below, Learning and Service Improvement.

# Learning and Service Improvement

Within this year, Kirklees Adult Social Care has implemented a new case management system to record the social care journeys of every person. This has been a major piece of work and has impacted on every part of Adult Social Care.

## Main areas for Learning and Improvements

### Charging for Social Care services

Financial concerns remains the top issue this year, which has been consistent for the last few years.

Some common issues are:

- A lack of information about how services are chargeable and the financial assessment process.
- A misunderstanding about what services are free of charge (e.g. Reablement services for a period of time) and what services are subject to charging.
- Incorrect information provided by health professionals about social care services prior to Adult Social Care involvement.
- Delays in providing details of how much a person must pay towards their care
- Delays in sending out invoices, sometimes the first invoice is only sent after a substantial amount has already been accrued.

Actions being done to address these issues:

- Updating and clarifying our public guidance on charging for services to better inform people prior to care starting. Including improvements to the Council's online Financial Assessment tool that can give people an early indication of the maximum they can expect to pay towards future care services.
- Ensuring that the Financial Assessment process is started as soon as possible so charges are clearly understood by all before the care starts or as soon as is possible.
- Ensuring that there are sufficient resources available to allow completion of financial assessments quickly so everyone is clear what their care charges will be.
- Where the risk to the individual is such that care needs to be put in place quickly, provide as much information available at that time to better prepare the service user and their family about potential charges.

- Guidance for staff from other partner organisations on social care charging and especially on services that can be considered free of charge for limited periods of time.

### **Quality of Service**

- Ensuring that all parties are kept informed of progress and involved in decisions.
- Managing demand and informing of long delays or waiting times and the reasons behind them, such as limited options for specialist care provision
- Taking a person centred approach. Processes are there for consistency but care packages need to be flexible and proportionate
- More clarity on the roles and responsibilities of Health and Social Care services (e.g. in-patient therapy and reablement)

### **Council Decision**

- Ensuring we include all stakeholders in decision making
- Challenging decisions such as assessments. We need to ensure all information, especially from service users and their network is included and decisions are supported by clear rationale after consideration of all view points.

### **Maintaining communication through challenging circumstances**

This is a theme that while not common, keeps coming back. It is about keeping lines of communication open and good record keeping. Especially where the service user, or third parties such as family members and carers provide challenge about the decisions we make. We need to ensure everything is recorded and the voices of the people important to the service user are heard.

There will be disagreement between the professional view and requests for families, we cannot be afraid of that. As long as our records are clear and are rationale for these decisions are clearly recorded, we should be confident in our actions.

### **Involving people in their complaint investigations**

We try to keep people involved in their complaint and our investigations. In this period, we had one complaint that crossed over several organisations. This required a coordinated approach, so we used virtual meetings as a means to manage the investigation between the various organisations. The complainants were invited and participated in every meeting to understand our actions and to provide insight and feedback throughout the process. This was very well received and allowed them to

understand the decisions and actions taken regarding their relative and for the professionals involved to understand the effects their involvement had. The complaint resulted in a number of actions that were followed through and discussed with the complainants to bring the complaint to a satisfactory outcome.

# Complaints investigated by the Local Government Ombudsman

For the year 2023/24 there were 7 full investigations by the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO).

This is a decrease on the previous year which saw 11 full investigations into Adult Social Care matters. 7 is closer to previous years.

Of these investigations, there were the following outcomes:

- 6 investigations were recorded as upheld
- 1 investigation was recorded as not-upheld

An overview of each completed LGO investigation is provided below. Each one contains the LGO Reference number.

For more information on individual investigations and outcomes, you can search using the reference number by going to [www.lgo.org.uk](http://www.lgo.org.uk)

## Upheld LGO Investigations

### **23 002 450**

This complaint dealt with standard of an Intermediate Care Home which is managed jointly between the Council and NHS. A detailed complaint investigation was conducted and resulted in an acceptance that in a number of areas, our joint working and communication fell below the standards we would expect and a number of learning actions were identified and shared with the family.

The LGO investigation concluded that the actions identified were appropriate to the complaint and did not add any more.

In addition, the LGO recommended a “symbolic payment of £300 for the injustice caused”. All recommendations were accepted.

### **23 002 994**

This complaint addressed information shared about the potential costs of respite care. The Council’s investigation found that it believed that there had been communication about the potential charges. The complaint also alleged that the GP clinic had previously suggested there would be no charge. This was denied by the Clinic.



The LGO decision was that while there was mention of charging there was insufficient evidence that charging was clearly explained and recommended a remedy of £100 for confusion and upset caused. All recommendations were accepted.

### **23 007 872**

This complaint dealt with a young adult who had an Education, Health and Care Plan in place but the Council failed to update the plan and failed to provide a care package for the person, including respite for the main carer.

This person has very complex needs and it was a huge challenge for the Council to find appropriate care services to meet their needs.

The LGO recommended actions included:

- Apologise for failings to the service user
- Make payments of:
  - £500 for uncertainty, frustration and distress caused
  - £1000 for the delay in updating the EHC Plan, causing uncertainty and a lack of appeal rights
  - £4000 for the loss of provision for around two years, which caused distress as a result
- Carry out annual review of EHC Plans on time
- Keep records of assessments and reports
- Be aware of the importance of thorough and timely communication with parents and young people

### **23 009 454**

This complaint dealt with a service user placed in a care home that at the time was rated by CQC as inadequate. The family felt that they should have been warned about this and it directly contributed to the service user falling and a poor response from the Care Home Management and staff.

The LGO investigation found fault with the Care Home and the Council as the commissioning agency with the way in which the situation was handled and the information recorded. Recommended actions included:

- Ensure the Care Provider's staff are reminded either through team meetings or a staff circular, and if necessary, provide staff training about:
  - the importance of recording clear contemporaneous records;
  - completing body maps, assessments, and support plans when people enter the service;
  - the importance of providing person centered care when people have communication difficulties.

- Ensure the Care Provider's falls policy has sufficient detail and staff are trained about what a physical examination should entail after a person has a fall.
- Ensure the Care Provider has a communication policy and that staff are trained on this policy.

These actions were followed through with the provider and confirmed to have been completed.

### **23 013 968**

The complaint centred around a misunderstanding of how much the service user would have to pay towards their care charges. There was a mistake from the service user when completing the online financial assessment which meant the indicative expected charge was wrong.

This was compounded by the amount of time – 4 months – before the Council confirmed the correct charge and by this time, a significant amount of arrears had accumulated.

As such the Council, through their own complaint investigation accepted some fault and reduced the arrears by 10%.

The LGO investigator found that this was a reasonable response and added that the Council should ensure that the Council offer an affordable repayment plan for the remaining charges and ensure that they had sufficient staff to process financial assessments.

### **23 014 389**

This complaint concerned confusion over what charges would be required for expected care services. As in the previous complaint, this was also compounded by the length of time it took before the financial assessment was completed and the actual weekly charge confirmed.

The recommendations included a payment to offset some of the outstanding charges, an affordable repayment plan and action to address the timeliness of completing financial assessments.

## **Not upheld LGO investigations**

### **23 005 181**

This complaint dealt with an allegation of poor-quality service provided by two different care organisations.

The Council's complaint investigation found that, although the provider was not fully at fault, and the service user was responsible for some unreasonable behaviour, the Council had not managed the situation as well as it could and offered to reduce the outstanding care bill by £500.

This outcome was accepted by the LGO as a suitable remedy.

Two further full investigations remain ongoing at the current time. This document will be updated once the investigations have been completed.

## Low level concerns

Formal complaints are only one part of the service that is operated by the Customer Services Unit. The council received 233 enquiries which were dealt with separately from formal complaints. This was an increase on previous years again following an increase last year.

Table showing the numbers of the different enquiry types and the percentage of the total.

Enquiry type	Number	%
Concern	131	56%
Query	80	34%
Other service	7	3%
Safeguarding	5	2%
Brokered domiciliary care providers	9	4%
Total	233	

All concerns and queries were dealt with by the relevant team.

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