

Adult Social Care Complaints Report

Annual Report 25/26

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Introduction

The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009 set out the statutory framework for how Barking and Dagenham Council must manage complaints relating to the provision of its Adult Social Care services. These regulations are designed to ensure that complaints are handled fairly, effectively and transparently, and that learning from complaints is used to improve service delivery.

Under the Regulations, the Council is required to publish an annual report reviewing how it has dealt with complaints about Adult Social Care. This report must include the volume of complaints received, the key issues raised, the number of complaints upheld or partially upheld, and any service improvements or actions taken as a result of feedback from people who use services, their families and representatives. The inclusion of compliments alongside complaints also provides a balanced view of customer experience and recognises areas of good practice.

This document presents Barking and Dagenham Council's annual Adult Social Care complaints and compliments for the period 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026. The report supports the Council's wider commitment to learning from feedback, improving outcomes for residents, and strengthening accountability.

The council operates a single stage complaints procedure, intended to resolve concerns as quickly and effectively as possible. Where a complainant remains dissatisfied with the Council's response, they have the right to escalate their complaint to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman for independent review.

While the Regulations do not prescribe statutory response timescales for the initial stage of the complaints process, Barking and Dagenham Council has adopted an internal target of 20 working days to respond to Stage 1 complaints. Performance against this target is monitored to ensure complaints are managed in a timely manner and that learning is embedded across services.

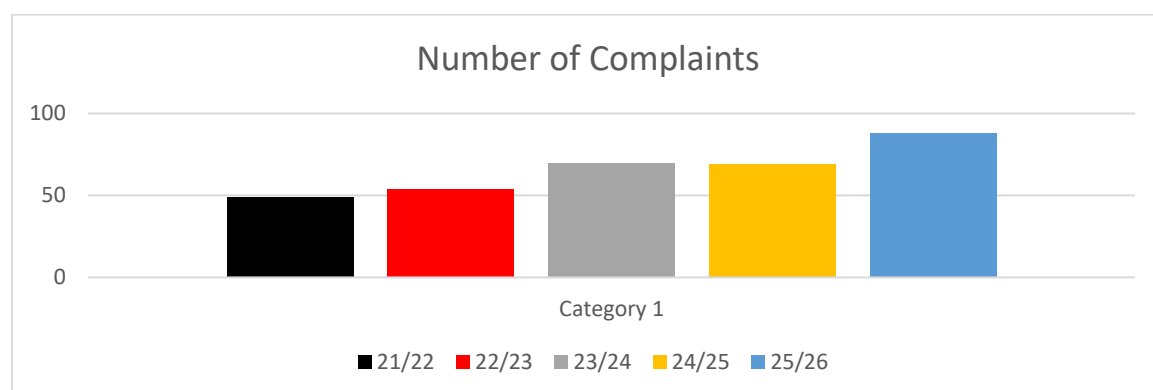
Complaints Received

As a council, it is essential that all complaints received by the council are accurately recorded and actively monitored. This approach ensures that complaints are investigated thoroughly and fairly, while also enabling the council to learn from the experiences and concerns raised by people who use our services, their families and representatives. Effective monitoring of complaints plays a vital role in understanding how services are delivered and identifying opportunities for service improvement.

To maintain a complete and consistent record of all complaints we receive we operate a centralised complaints function. This team is responsible for logging and managing all complaint casework through a corporate complaints management system, ensuring oversight, consistency and compliance with statutory requirements.

During the 2025/26 reporting year Adult Social Care received 88 complaints under the statutory complaints process. This represents an increase from 69 complaints received in the previous year. This increase is not identified as a concern, rather it is welcomed as it provides greater insight into residents experiences and offers valuable opportunities to learn, reflect and improve the services delivered.

The graph set out below demonstrates that, prior to this reporting year, we received a broadly consistent number of complaints. The graph below presents a five year overview of complaint volumes and helps to contextualise trends over time.



LGO Cases

Complaints which fall under the umbrella of Social Care are overseen by the Local Government Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) who provide an independent service with whom our complainants can contact should they feel the response or service provided by the Council has fallen below expectations. The LGSCO publish all their findings on their website which can be found at the following link [LGO Decisions](#)

In 2025/26 the LGSCO has published 7 reports on the council, these complaints outcomes are after external investigation can be found in the table below. When we benchmark ourselves against other councils with a similar geodemographic make up, we are in line with other councils. We should note an increase in number of cases from last year by 40%.

Council	Number of Cases	Upheld	Not Upheld	Closed After Initial Enquires
Barking and Dagenham	7	6	0	1
Blackburn and Darwen	3	2	0	1
Bolton	5	2	0	3
Oldham	5	2	0	3

Comparison against Statistical Neighbours

Council	Number of Cases	Upheld	Not Upheld	Closed After Initial Enquires
Barking and Dagenham	7	6	0	1
Redbridge	13	9	1	3
Waltham Forest	9	8	0	1
Bexley	7	1	0	6

Summary of Upheld LGO Complaints

1. Mr X complains on behalf of his son, Mr Y, that the Council wrongly reduced his care package and did not include his privately arranged weekend care as a disability-related expense. We found fault in the Council's decision-making process. The Council also delayed issuing an appeal decision. This caused Mr Y to pay more for his care and caused undue distress. The Council agreed to apologise to Mr X and Mr Y, offset any monies against the debt on Mr Y's client account and pay the recommended financial remedy. It should also review Mr Y's care plan and supported hours.
2. Mr X complained about the Council's delay in carrying out an occupational health assessment for essential moving and handling equipment. This meant he was unable to attend a day centre. The LGO found the Council to be at fault. To remedy the injustice to Mr X and his representative, the Council has agreed to apologise and make a symbolic payment. It will also take action to improve its service.
3. The LGO will not investigate Miss X's complaint that an officer of the Council made defamatory comments about Miss X. This is because the injustice complained of is not significant enough to warrant an investigation. The Council has also apologised to Miss X and reminded staff to be more measured in their communications. The LGO consider this to be a sufficient remedy to this complaint.
4. Ms C complained about the Council's failure to properly assess her needs, its communications with her and its failure to fully respond to her complaint. She also said the care agency did not meet her needs and she complained about the care worker's communications with her. The LGO found fault in the Council's failure to respond to the complaint and the care agency's actions when Ms C had a fall. The Council agreed to apologise, to pay a financial remedy and to implement a service improvement.
5. Mr X complained that the Council failed to safeguard him, did not assess his social care needs properly, and did not implement the reasonable adjustments he needed under the Equality Act. There was no fault in how the Council considered its safeguarding duties and how it assessed Mr X's care needs. There was fault when

the Council failed to implement Mr X's reasonable adjustments and this caused Mr X distress and frustration. The Council agreed to apologise to Mr X.

6. The LGO have found fault with the Council for its poor communication with Mr X about his adult son's (Mr Y's) care contributions. This caused Mr X and his family avoidable distress. The Council agreed to remedy this injustice.

Complaint Themes

The capturing of complaint themes is important as it serves as a compass for organisational improvement. By identifying recurring patterns in complaints, we gain valuable insights into the root causes of issues that may otherwise go unnoticed. Below is a table which indicates the cause of complaint and against which service area it has been registered.

Issue	Adult Disability	Integrated Care	Commissioning	Mental Health	Access and Enabling	% Upheld
Delay in Communication	1	0	0	0	0	0%
Delay in doing something	3	1	0	1	10	33%
Disagree with Charge Received	1	1	1	3	1	29%
Failure to do something	2	1	0	3	4	20%
Inappropriate Behaviour	3	1	0	0	2	50%
Insufficient Information	1	3	0	3	4	30%
No Communication received	2	1	0	1	3	29%
Not to the quality or standard expected	5	3	0	5	3	7%
Other communication	0	0	0	1	0	0%
Other payments	0	0	0	1	1	0%
Other service failure cause	0	1	0	0	0	0%
Other service quality cause	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Other staff conduct cause	1	0	0	0	0	0%
Staff rudeness	1	0	0	0	1	0%

Unhappy with decision	0	1	0	2	5	0%
Total	20	13	1	20	34	

Insights from Complainant Feedback

Analysis of complaints received during the reporting year highlights a number of consistent themes that cut across Adult Social Care services. These themes provide valuable insight into the experience of people who use our services, their families and representatives, and identify areas where continued learning and improvement is required.

1. Timeliness and Follow-Through

Delays were the most common underlying theme across complaints. This included delays in completing assessments, progressing agreed actions, arranging services or adaptations, and providing updates to residents and families.

In many cases, complainants reported that while initial contact had been made or needs acknowledged, progress afterwards was slow or unclear. Delays were often perceived as particularly distressing where people were experiencing deteriorating health, risks at home, hospital discharge pressures, or caring responsibilities.

This theme reinforces the importance of:

- clear ownership of actions,
- realistic timescales being communicated early,
- and proactive updates where delays are unavoidable.

2. Quality and Consistency of Practice

A significant number of complaints reflected concerns that services did not meet the expected standard, rather than being wholly absent. These complaints often related to how assessments were carried out, how decisions were communicated, or how support was delivered in practice.

For residents and carers, perceptions of quality were closely linked to whether they felt listened to, whether their circumstances had been fully considered, and whether professional judgement was clearly explained.

This highlights the need for consistent, person-centred practice that demonstrates:

- full consideration of individual circumstances,
- professional curiosity,
- and transparent decision-making.

3. Communication and Information Sharing

Communication issues featured prominently across complaint themes. Residents and families described difficulty obtaining information, lack of clarity about next steps, or feeling that communication stopped after an initial response.

Concerns were raised about:

- not receiving updates,
- unclear explanations of decisions,
- conflicting advice from different parts of the system,
- and reliance on residents or carers having to repeatedly chase for progress.

Effective communication was consistently identified as a key factor in whether residents felt reassured, even where outcomes themselves were not what they had hoped for.

4. Decision-Making and Understanding of Outcomes

A recurring theme across complaints was dissatisfaction with decisions, particularly where residents or families felt decisions were made without sufficient explanation or without fully reflecting their views or lived experience.

Complaints often indicated that while decisions may have been lawful or appropriate, the rationale was not always well understood by those affected. Where this occurred, dissatisfaction was frequently linked to a lack of shared understanding rather than disagreement with the principle of the decision itself.

This underlines the importance of:

- clearly setting out the reasons for decisions,
- explaining what was considered and why,
- and signposting options for review, challenge or escalation.

5. Professional Conduct and Interactions

A smaller but significant proportion of complaints related to how individuals felt they were treated by professionals. These complaints described experiences of interactions that individuals perceived as dismissive, insensitive, abrupt or lacking empathy.

While these complaints were fewer in number compared to delay or communication themes, their impact on individual feelings of trust and confidence in services was often considerable. For people already experiencing vulnerability or stress, how services communicate can be as important as the outcome itself.

This theme reinforces the importance of reflective practice, supervision, and a continued focus on respectful, compassionate engagement.

6. Charging, Financial Information and Contributions

Concerns regarding charges, financial assessments, or clarity around costs were a recurring theme across services. Complaints referenced confusion about what was chargeable, when charges would apply, and how contributions had been calculated.

In several cases, dissatisfaction stemmed from unclear or late communication rather than the charge itself. Where financial matters were not explained early or revisited when circumstances changed, complaints were more likely to arise.

This highlights the need for:

- clear, accessible financial information,
- timely communication about charges,
- and joined-up working between financial and care processes.

7. Escalation Following Lack of Early Resolution

Across multiple themes, complaints frequently followed earlier attempts by residents or carers to resolve issues informally. Where individuals felt unable to obtain a response, update or resolution through routine contact, this often resulted in escalation into the formal complaints process.

This suggests opportunities to strengthen early resolution arrangements, supporting concerns to be addressed promptly before dissatisfaction escalates.

Overall Learning and Improvement Focus

Taken together, the complaint themes point more strongly to issues of process, communication, and experience, rather than isolated service failure. The majority of complaints reflect situations where residents and carers were seeking clarity, reassurance, and progress during periods of stress, uncertainty or vulnerability.

The learning from these themes will continue to inform:

- service improvement activity,
- workforce development and reflective practice,
- guidance on communication standards,
- and the Council's approach to monitoring timeliness and follow-through.

As a consequence of our complainant's views and our subsequent investigations we have proactively made changes to our approach within Adult Social Care. We have focused on the following:

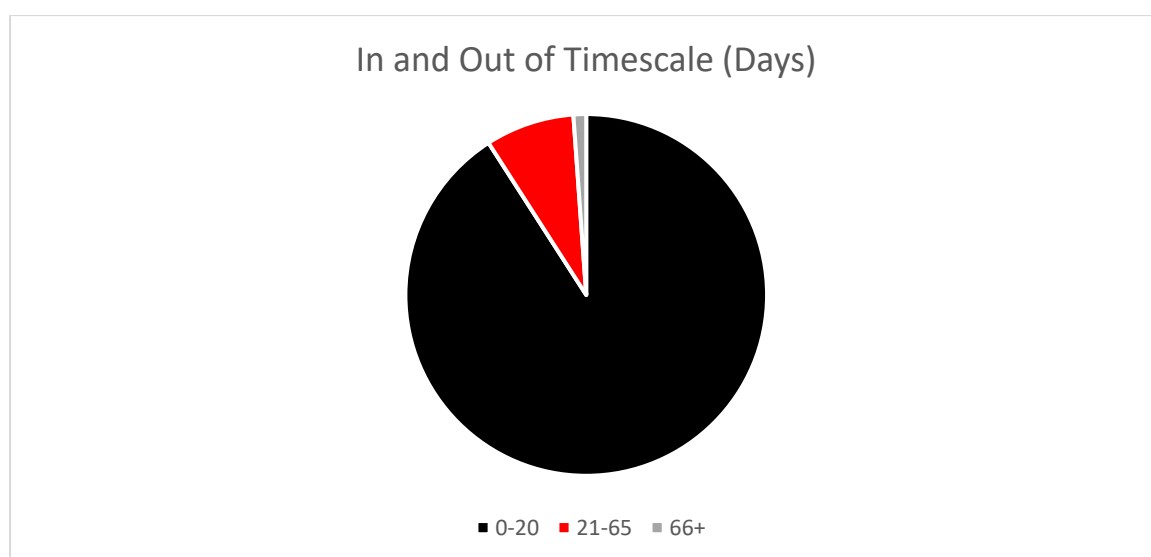
- **Communication:** We are working to improve our information, advice and communication with residents in relation to social care – including via our 'front door' and digital communication. Provisional results from the 2025-6 survey sent to people getting long-term support are that 75% of respondents feel very or fairly easy to find information about support and services. This is improved on the 2024-5 figure and is significantly higher than benchmarks. We are continuing work to improve this over the coming year.
- **Timeliness:** We have worked hard to address waiting times where they exist. Waiting times at the 'front door' of adult social care have reduced significantly. Likewise, the waiting list for OT assessments has reduced by 47% between April 2025 and April 2026 to 185 people, and we are continuing work to reduce this further.
- **Quality of support:** A range of work has been undertaken to improve the quality of support. We have put a focus on support to people to be as independent as possible, including through reablement (short-term support to help people regain their independence) and through care technology. Overall, 67% of people who

received short-term support then no longer needed support in 2025-26, and as of May 2026, over 3,600 residents were using care technology.

- **Involvement in decision-making** We continue to focus on providing personalised support and involving people in the decisions that affect them. In a survey sent to unpaid carers, we were pleased that 74% of respondents always or usually felt involved or consulted in discussions about the person they care for: this response is an improvement on the previous survey (73%) and is above benchmarks. Likewise, 95% of people with care needs where there is a safeguarding investigation were asked about their desired outcomes in 2025-6, and 98% achieved these. Personalised, compassionate and empathetic support continues to form a core part of workforce training and development.

Timeliness of Response

Under the regulations there is no set timescale for response to be provided to the complainant. The LGSCO would consider that 12 weeks would be reasonable in terms for the council to investigate and provide a response to the concerns raised. Within Barking and Dagenham, we strive for 20 working days to respond.



During the reporting period, Adult Social Care continued to make positive progress in the timely handling of complaints. Performance against the locally agreed response time improved to 91% exceeding the target of 90% and representing an increase on the previous year. This improvement reflects sustained focus on effective case management, early identification of deadlines, and closer oversight throughout the complaints process.

Timely handling of complaints is particularly important within Adult Social Care, as individuals and families often raise concerns during periods of vulnerability, stress or uncertainty. Ensuring residents receive a prompt response helps to build trust and provides reassurance that their concerns are taken seriously. While timescale compliance remains an important measure, the Council recognises that timeliness must be balanced with the need for responses to be thorough, proportionate and meaningful.

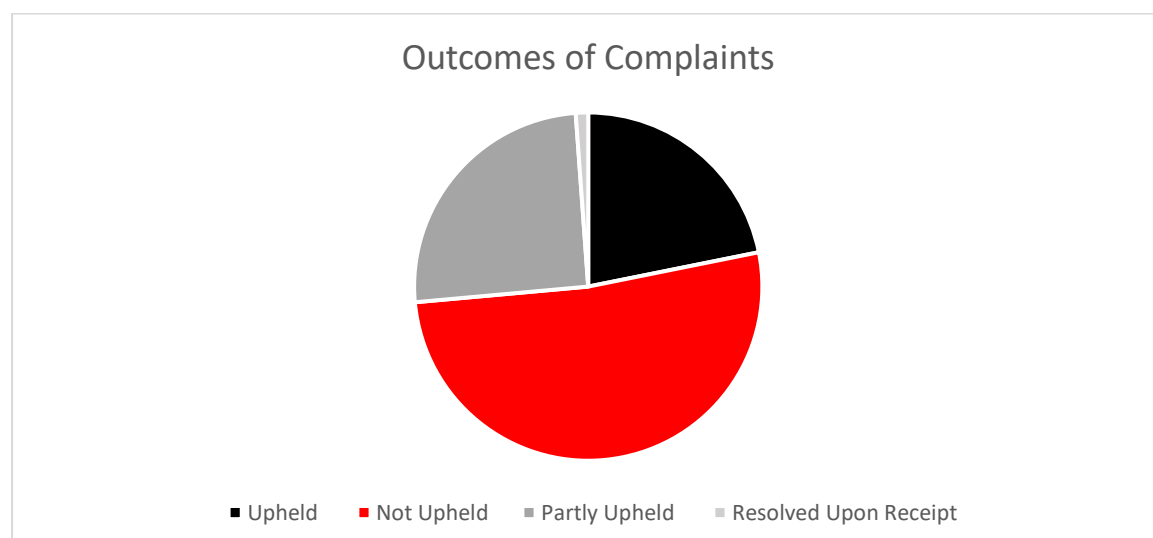
The complaints team continues to work closely with services to support ongoing improvements in the area. This includes maintaining oversight of live complaints, engaging with services early where cases are complex, and offering guidance to help prevent avoidable delays. Where responses fall outside agreed timescales, these cases are reviewed to understand contributing factors, such as complexity or dependency on external information, and to identify learning that can be applied more widely.

Further work will continue during the coming year to strengthen ownership of actions, embed good practice, and improve the overall experience for residents raising concerns. Maintaining strong timeliness performance remains a priority, alongside ensuring that complaint responses are clear, empathetic and focused on resolving issues and supporting learning across services.

Outcomes of the complaints

Recording the outcomes of complaints, whether upheld or not, is essential for several reasons. When complaints are upheld, it signifies that a genuine issue was identified, and it becomes an opportunity for improvement. By documenting the resolution and correction actions taken, organisation can demonstrate their commitment to addressing concerns, which can rebuild trust with the complainant and showcase transparency to stakeholders.

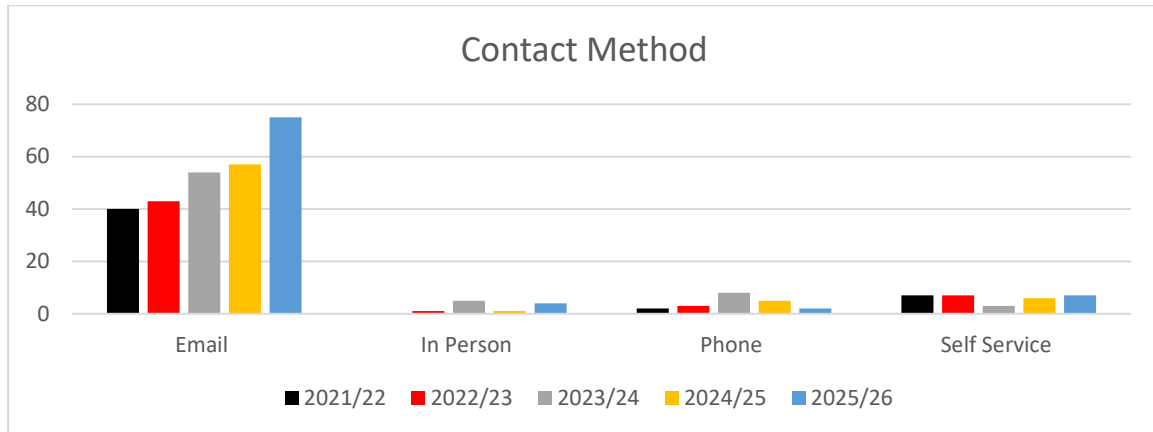
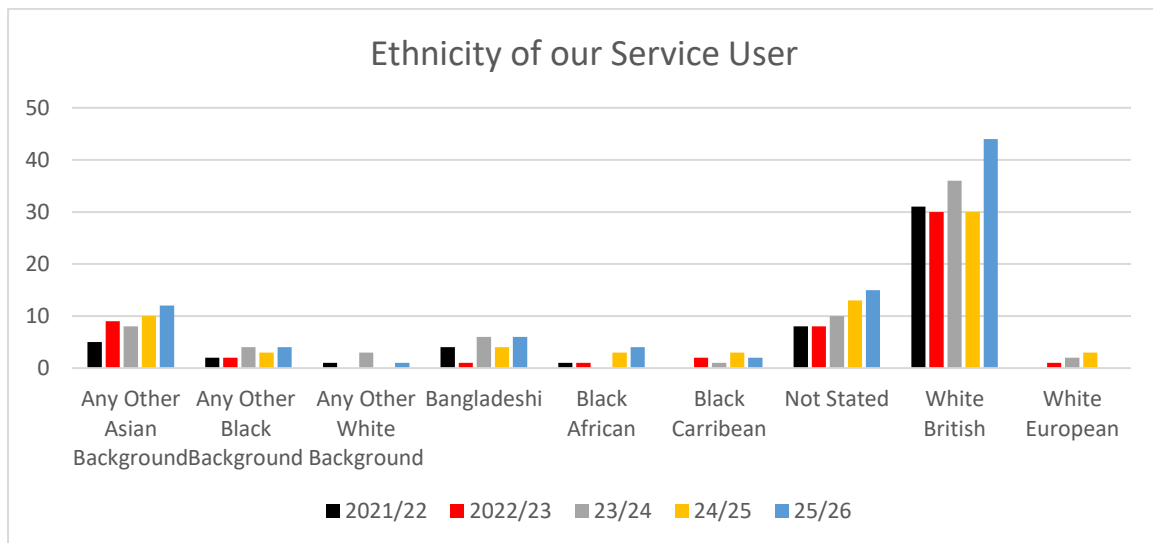
On the other hand, documenting not upheld complaints is equally crucial. It helps maintain a record of investigations, ensuring fairness and accountability in the complaints process. Further to this, tracking both upheld and not upheld complaints allows organisations to analyse trends, assess the effectiveness of their responses, and make data-driven decisions for continuous improvement.

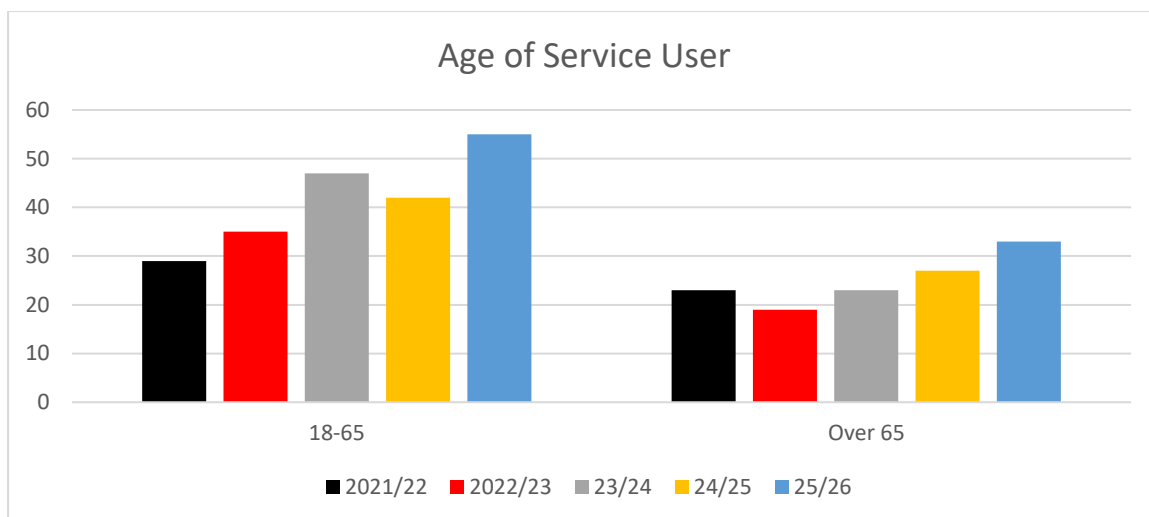
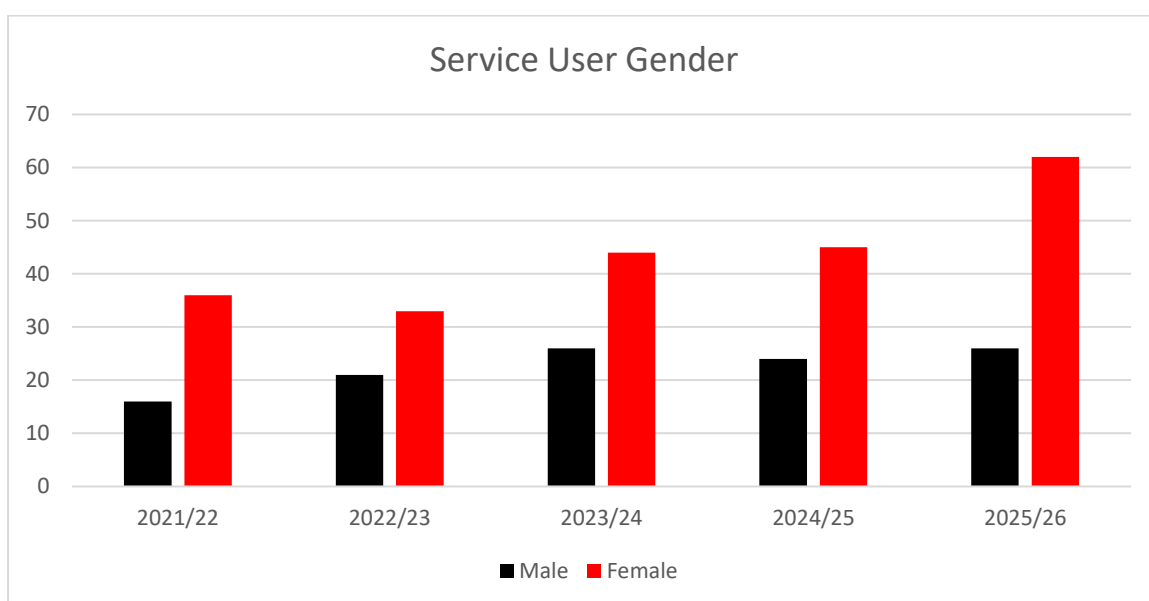


In this financial year we have either upheld or partly upheld 47% of the complaints which have been submitted. While this may appear to be high it shows that as a council, we are fully able to recognise where we could have improved the manner in which we have dealt with service users.

We continue considering upheld complaints to ascertain which service improvements could be made as a consequence.

People who use our complaints process





Compliments

Feedback from residents, carers and families highlights the importance of compassionate, person-centred practice and clear communication. Many people described feeling listened to, reassured and supported during challenging periods in their lives, and spoke positively about staff professionalism and dedication.

Residents told us that being involved in decisions, having processes explained clearly, and receiving consistent follow-up made a meaningful difference to their experience. Practical support, particularly assessments, care arrangements and home adaptations, was described as having a significant impact on safety, independence and wellbeing.

Staff were frequently praised for their kindness, patience and willingness to go the extra mile, helping people feel respected, valued and supported.

Residents and carers told us:

"I felt really supported and reassured that my father would get the right care."

"You kept us informed at every stage and included us in all decisions."

"It made a significant difference to our lives and gave us peace of mind."

"You took the time to listen and really understand our situation."

"Everyone was kind, professional and genuinely cared."

"You went above and beyond to help me feel safe and supported."

"The support helped me feel more independent and hopeful about the future."

Thanks again and we'll see you all soon.