

Kirklees Council

Adult Social Care

Customer Services



Annual Report 2024-2025



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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 2024 and 31 March 2025.

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 remained high 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 have again increased 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 and decisions made by the Service followed close by.

Compliments

The total number of compliments/positive feedback received this year remained very high, similar to the previous year that was a record for ASC (690).

As in previous years, the teams with the most compliments were our in-house Short Reablement and Short-Term Home Care teams.

Below are a few examples of what we have received:

Occupational Therapy

You sit - metaphorically speaking of course, on my shoulder all the time. You have given me so many things to think about that I give consideration to how I achieve daily tasks in an 'OT' way. The bed loop, the trolley and the walking sticks are so well used because of you - thank you! Thank you for the suggestion to have something on the grass on which to put my washing basket for clothes as I hang out. If my husband or Carer isn't available, I have to do it independently and this way I can be. We are planning to make changes so I don't have to lift from the floor but for now I do; then I lift onto a barrel outside, then carry to the wall, then to the upturned bucket you see.

Reablement

Thank you for all your help and advice over the last 6 weeks. Your support and kindness at the extremely difficult time of our lives helped us get through some tough moments we will always remember you, we can't thank you enough as you have been wonderful in so many ways. We will both miss you so much. Takes care and love you lots.

Mental Health Social Work hub

Thank you so much from the bottom of my heart for all your support and encouragement, words cannot express how grateful I am for all of your help and making me see I could get a life back again. I never believed it was possible to ever get away and rebuild my life. You've been so kind and helped me in so many ways with everything. I really don't know what I would have done as I was truly at the rock bottom and couldn't see any way out until you gave me the support and reassurance for things to change for the better. I really admire how strong and resilient you are and so glad you never gave up on me. You made me see, despite hardship and all the uncertainties, there was a way through and brighter days possible. You never judged me and just encouraged me throughout despite me being so pathetic sometimes. I admit, your ability to put things in perspective and be positive. You're

my reminder to try to be a little more brave, to not to be afraid and to remember that things can turn out OK in the long run. I am so very grateful for all your time and I greatly appreciate all of your help. I know, I could not have done any of it myself and to feel so much stranger in myself more than I ever thought possible. Your encouragement and support has been continuous throughout and I realise I must have been a drain when I was so negative all of the time, yet you never gave up on me. I will be eternally grateful to you for everything, thank you.

Reablement

I have always received excellent support, care and kindness throughout my care. Everything that both carers did for me was given me utmost courtesy, humour and gave me a confidence to progress to the stage I have reached. I shall be sorry to see them go. Nothing was too much trouble and most of my time was spent with Franca who took the time to find out more about me and was so personable, and I have no doubt that she is a valuable member of the team. It has been difficult to fill in times when I had to be in Leeds early but I was always well supported in my progress.

Reablement

I cannot think of any areas of improvement. The level of care shown to my Dad has been incredible. A huge thank you to all the team members from our family. The personal relationship based care, having repeatability of staff visits and care for my dad means the world - thank you again. Wife - i totally agree with what my son has written, i have loved the support from this service. Improvement - we were upset to learn that the service was ending and another team taking over, as they had built a relationship, they can verbalise and respond, dad could smile at HSW Bronwyn to say Hi, because he knows her.

Dewsbury Hospital Social Work hub

Thank you so for sending over the information and for all you have done to support dad. My sister and I were really blown away with how you dealt with dad, particularly in the joint discussion with getting dad into a recovery bed. Dad wants to be fully independent and can be challenging at times in declining help, we feared dad would say 'no'. The way you listened to him, dealt with his cheeky banter and reassured him was just perfect. Additionally, the way you took time to listen to my sister and I before the discussion regarding family dynamics and what we thought dad might need was a relief. You really took some pressure off us. Finally, how you took command of setting up a quieter environment on the ward for the conversation to take place was impressive. Even just recognising the only way we could listen to dad properly would be away from the noisy ward was so important. You really are an asset to the people you support caring and 'fighting their corner', so thank you so

very much. Please pass this on to your manager or if needed I am happy to send myself directly if needed. Thank you again.

Moorlands Grange Intermediate Care Home

I just want to say a very big thank you to you all for looking after my mum so well. She has been well cared for by friendly, thoughtful staff, well fed by good food provided by good cooks and all her needs have been met by a well organised team of office staff and managers. When she arrived, 6 weeks ago, she was frail and anxious and now she is back to her old self and well on the way . Thank you for providing such a wonderful service.

Occupational Therapy

Rebecca visited my mum for assessment and visited again yesterday to see how my mum is managing with the bed that has been provided. I have found Rebecca to be very professional, helpful, and cheerful and has a great way of engaging with people. I wanted to put my thanks in writing and to formally put on record my compliments to her and to your Service. Please pass on my grateful thanks to her.

Reablement

The reablement team have been fantastic with my father, who is 94, after his stroke. They are extremely kind, caring, well organised, leaving each other notes and ring me if they had any concerns. They go above and beyond what they need to do and have had a very positive impact on my father's life. In particular, I'd like to mention Granca, one of the kindest, most caring people I've ever met, Tracey, who is also very kind and extremely well organised. My father was in great hands.

Ings Grove House Care Home

I had a wonderful experience at Ings Grove. Before arriving and making the decision to come, I was very nervous and I just wanted to recover at home after being in hospital for a long time. However, my family convinced me to see how I felt, and I feel like it was the best decision I made. I felt very comfortable and at ease, as the environment feels very homey. They were also very welcoming to my family too. I received the care I needed and the staff helped me to gain my independence through physiotherapy that I needed for daily tasks. At the hospital there was very little physiotherapy and had I decided to have the care at home, it would have been the same, whereas at Ings Grove I received daily therapy which gave me more confidence and strength. The staff are also amazing. I thought I would find it difficult to communicate as English isn't my first language but there are staff whom I was able to communicate with in urdu and have conversations with them, and all the staff

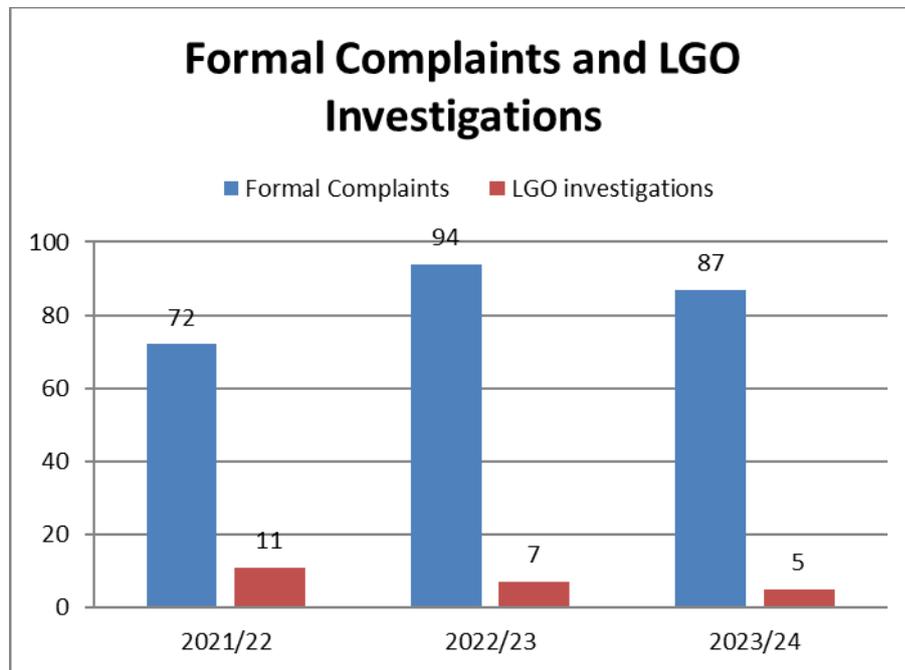
tried their best to communicate with me if I struggled. The care didn't just stop at the house, my key worker made sure my house was adapted to my needs when I was ready to come home. I am very thankful to Ings Grove for my recovery. As mentioned, I didn't want to come at the beginning but in the end I didn't want to leave the place! I strongly recommend the place anyone that needs the care.

Huddersfield Social Work Hub

I have been quite upset at the length of time that the finances for my Dads carehome fees has taken , i informed you back in June to say my Dads finances had reached the threshold and it is now November. 6 months is ridiculous amount of time to take to sort out. Only with the intervention of Lesley Young is this finally getting sorted. Lesley has been a tremendous help to me with how she has supported me in this matter. She has been so lovely and helped me no end by trying to get this sorted as she understood my anguish at a time when I've been watching my father come to the end of his life. Her helpful and caring attitude is a credit to the Social Work department. I would appreciate if she gets some recognition for her wonderful work. She has taken a burden from my shoulders at a very stressful period of my life.

Complaints Analysis

The table below shows the numbers of complaints and Local Government Ombudsman full investigations over the past three years.



Complaint numbers remained high compared with recent years.

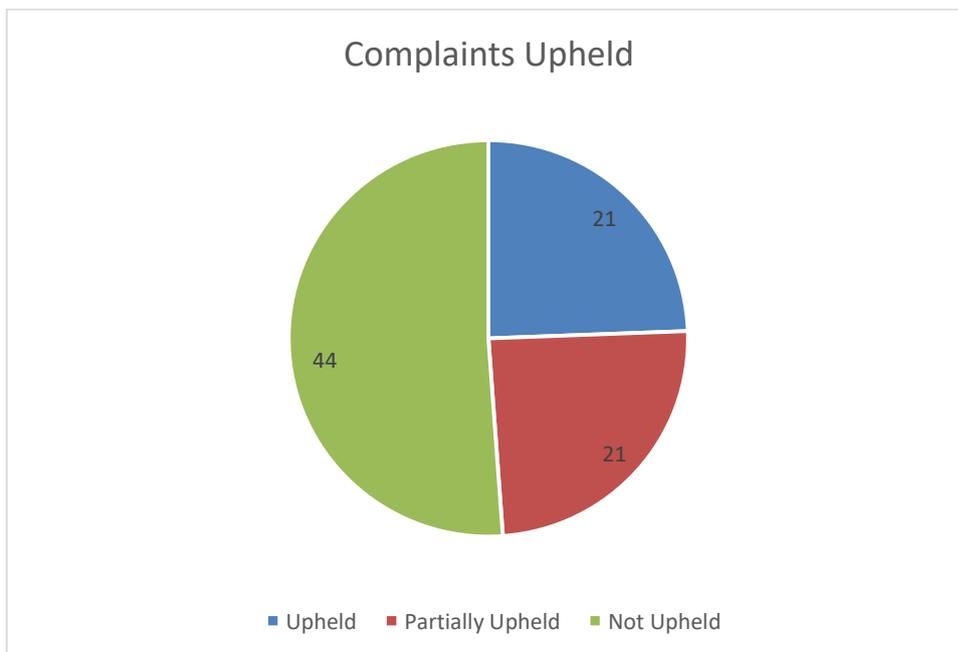
Despite high complaint figures dealt with by Adult Social Care in the past two years, the number of Local Government Ombudsman full investigations have fallen slightly during the same period. We hope this is indicative of the positive manner in which complaints are dealt with in Kirklees.

The Outcome of Complaint Investigations

The outcome of each of our complaints is categorised as follows, although we do not commonly use the word “upheld” in our response letters:

- 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.

The graph below shows the breakdown of decisions following complaint investigations of which there was a total of 87. It shows whether each complaint was upheld, partially upheld, or not upheld.



Just over half of all complaints – 51% were not upheld.

The remainder – 49% were with fully or partially upheld.

Where complaints were upheld either in full or in part, we aimed to apologise for all shortcomings, where possible put things right for that service user and identify areas where we could learn and improve the quality of our services for others.

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. Some complaints have extended timescales if we identify early that more time may be required to perform a full investigation.

Of the 87 formal complaints we had the following performance in terms of timeliness:

- 54 were completed within the agreed deadline, 62% of the total.
- 32 were completed late, 38% of the total.

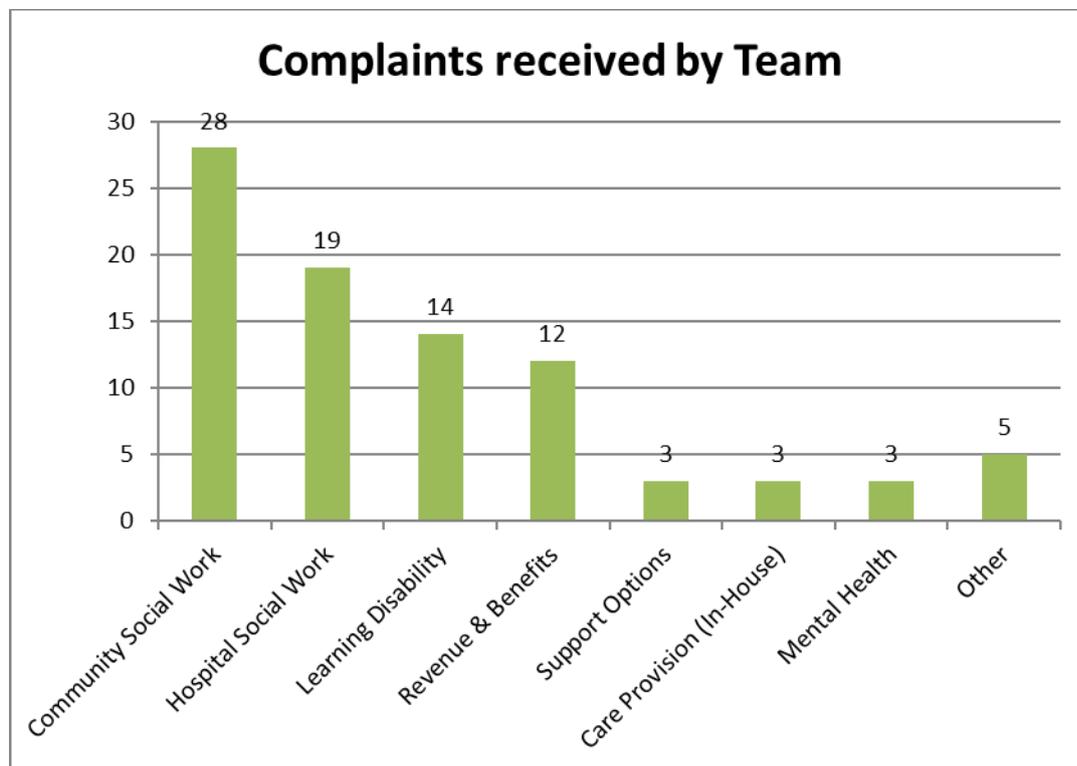
This record of timeliness is lower than we aim for and we believe this is due to the pressures faced by Local Government and Social Care in particular.

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.

Where complaints are delayed for reasons that we did not foresee, we tried to remain in communication with the complainant to apologise for any delays and to manage expectation.

Complaints received by Teams

The graph below shows the number of complaints received by each team within the Adult Social Care Service.

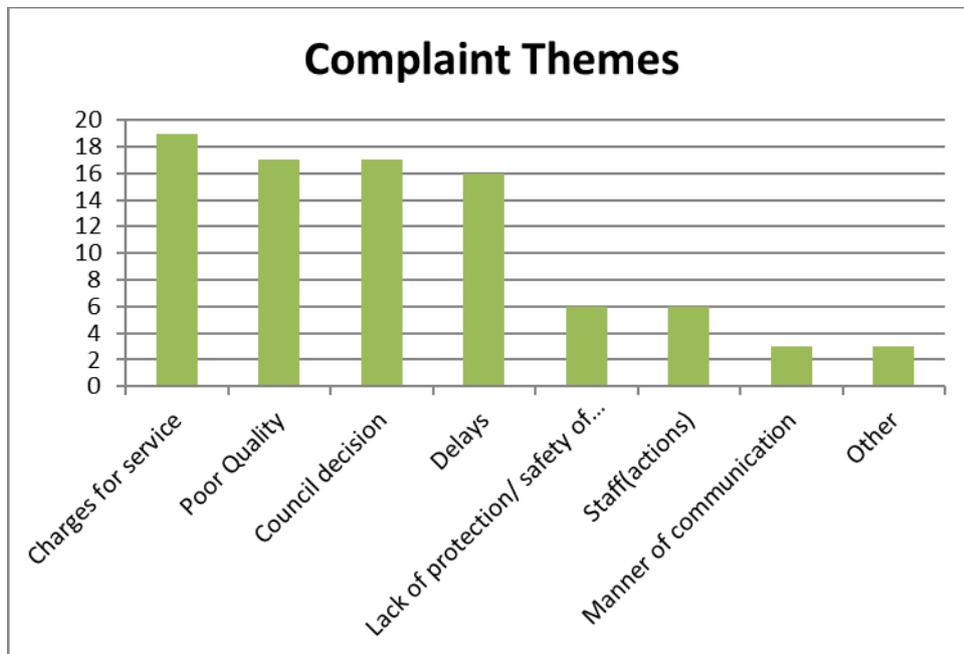


The highest number of complaints received was from the teams dealing with the social care assessment and care management of service users across the community, hospital and specialist teams.

This has been consistent for every year 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

The graph below shows the number of complaints categorised by theme.



Issues connected with charging remains the top issue which is consistent with recent years. Poor Quality, Council Decision and Delays also feature prominently.

Communication problems, while not prominent in the above graph, is also a common feature in many complaints. For more information see below, Learning and Service Improvement.

Learning and Service Improvement

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

It brought challenges in terms of information management and process and while it does not appear to have been a root cause of many complaints, it impacted on the service's ability to meet some targets and made complaint investigations more complex and time consuming.

Main areas for Learning and Improvements

Information around Charging and Financial Assessments

Over this period, the following actions have been completed to address these issues:

- We have put steps in place to help to ensure 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. While we have received more complaints about this matter, in the majority of investigations it was deemed that information was provided and the outcomes followed our policies and processes.
- We have updated 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.
- Made some internal improvements to improve the timeliness of processing financial assessments through to completion and confirmation of the maximum amount each person would pay towards their care costs

Poor Quality services

A small number of complaints were focussed on our in-house rehabilitation services.

Learning identified was:

- Improved guidance for staff when dealing with incidents, such as falls or service experiencing health concerns
- Ensuring families are contacted as soon as possible in the event of an incident or concerns
- Assisted travel for families who do not live near our rehabilitation homes or have difficulty visiting
- Better care when returning personal items following a stay

Council Decisions

A number of complaints concerned assessments and care plans for people who had significant social care needs. Sometimes decisions had been made where the family were in disagreement with the outcomes. We ensure we receive and clearly document all points of view from the service user's network and ensure that all decisions, especially those that may be contentious or unpopular are fully documented and the reasoning is clear.

The approval process for social care assessments has been reviewed this year. The process for checking the quality and appropriateness of care packages fell to a panel of Managers to review the material. While the process was successful, it sometimes led to delays before packages could be put into effect. The process has been changed to make it smoother and not impact on service users in need of packages of care, or increases to the amount of care they receive.

Delays in service provision

The timeliness of completing assessments and reviews remained a focus during this year. It was made more challenging due to a new IT system being implemented across Adult Social Care and staffing concerns within the social work services.

Work was done to address an issue of late invoices to ensure confirmation of charges and invoices are sent out in a more timely manner.

Communication

While communication was not recorded as the highest cause for complaints, it is an ever present and many of the complaints we received contained aspects where communication was not to the standard we would expect.

To address this, we have worked on improving:

- Clear record keeping, detailing all interactions, reasoning and decisions
- Impress on all staff the importance of communicating when things go wrong, such as cancelled meetings, failed visits or completing tasks or responses late.

Complaints investigated by the Local Government Ombudsman

For the year 2024/25 there were 5 full investigations by the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) into Adult Social care services.

This is a little lower than the previous year where there were 7.

Of these investigations, there were the following outcomes:

- 3 investigations were recorded as upheld
- 2 investigations remain ongoing

An overview of each completed LGO investigation is provided below. Each one contains the LGO Reference number and the outcome as noted by the Local Government Ombudsman.

For more information on individual investigations and outcomes, you can search using the reference number by going to www.lgo.org.uk

Upheld LGO Investigations

24 000 679 – Upheld, Fault & Injury

This complaint dealt with an admission to a Discharge to Assess bed and a subsequent needs assessment. The complainant felt the family had to pay for additional costs connected with one-to-one care and were not informed of the financial assessment which prevented them from making decisions on future care.

The complaint outcome was that the care provision was appropriate. While there was a delay in performing a needs assessment, the service had already agreed to cover the cost of the one-to-one care and as such, no fault was found on this point.

Fault was identified in the time taken to provide the outcome of the financial assessment.

The Council was instructed to:

- Apologise
- Pay £500 for the distress caused by failing to provide the full information about the likely costs of care
- Remind staff in writing of the importance of providing full information about the likely costs of care.

These actions were accepted, completed and fed back to the LGO.

24 009 084 – Upheld, fault & injury

This complaint concerned a service user who moved from another area to Kirklees to be closer to family.

The service user was placed in a care home privately as a self-funder and subsequently, Kirklees Council was contacted as the service user's funds were reducing towards the national threshold. There was confusion at the time over the ownership of the house and whether that meant the service user would continue to be a full-payer.

Due to a number of factors including unpaid care fees, it led to the care home serving notice on the care provider.

The LGO deemed that the Council was at fault for this situation and instructed us to:

- Apologise.
- Pay £300 for the upset caused by this situation.
- Ensure the full cost of the care provision is paid and to refund any money owed to the service user's estate.
- Review the process for completing financial assessments

These actions were accepted, completed and fed back to the LGO.

24 005 959 – Upheld, Fault & Injury

This complaint dealt with charging for care, regarding a young person with an Education, Health and Care Plan. The complainant also stated that we sent information to them when they was no longer an appointee for the service user.

The investigator determined that we were not at fault for the charges for care. We only charged against services received to meet social care needs. The investigator did feel that we did send invoices inappropriately to the complainant.

The recommendation was to apologise for this mistake. This has been completed.

In addition to the full investigations, a number of contacts were received from the Local Government Ombudsman that were dealt with in the following ways:

- No further investigation needed, the LGO was satisfied that the Council had dealt with the complaint adequately
- No investigation as the complaint does not meet the LGO criteria

Low level concerns

Formal complaints are only one part of the service that is operated by the Customer Services Unit. The council received 232 enquiries which were dealt with separately from formal complaints. This was almost identical to the previous year, 233 which was the highest number compared to previous years.

The table below shows the numbers of the different enquiry types and the percentage of the total.

Enquiry type	Number	%
Concern	97	42%
Query	81	35%
Other service	35	15%
Safeguarding	8	3%
Brokered domiciliary care providers	11	5%
Total	232	

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

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