



# Adult Social Care Annual Complaints and Compliments Report for 2023-2024

1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024

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## 1. Introduction

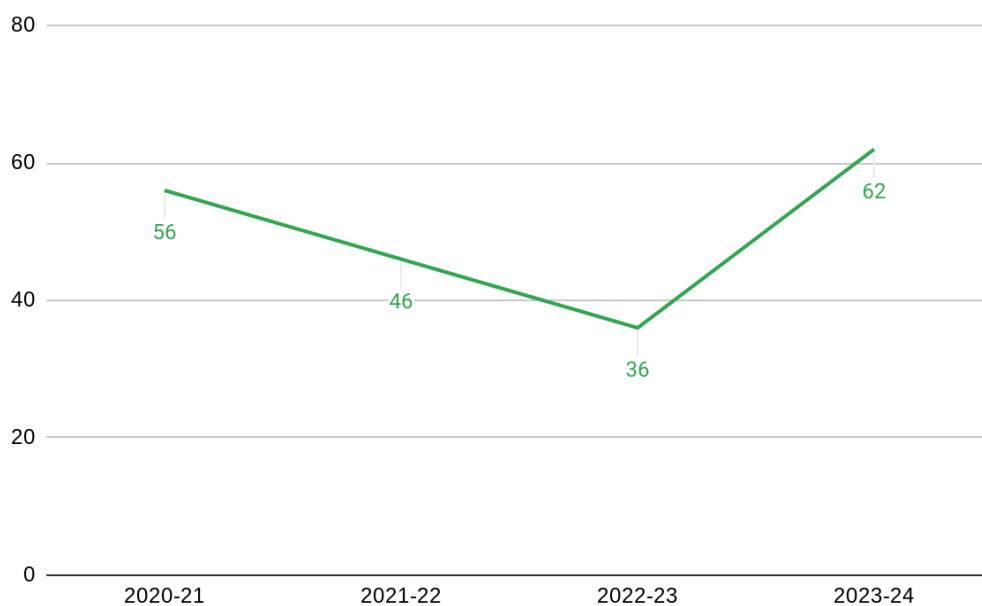
- 1.1. Sutton Council welcomes all feedback and aims to learn from it, as it helps to solve problems, adapt and improve services. The Council monitors and uses the information gained to help improve the quality of services and relations with residents.
- 1.2. The Council treats all complaints seriously and ensures that any concerns and issues raised by customers or their representatives are properly investigated in an unbiased, non-judgemental, transparent, timely and appropriate manner. The outcome of any investigation along with any resulting actions will be explained to the complainant and the Council will take appropriate action to learn from any lessons that arise.
- 1.3. The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the complaints received regarding adult social services. This helps us to understand trends and themes and use this information to drive learning and improvement. This report is written in accordance with Local Authority Social Services and National Health Services Complaint (England) Regulations 2009 and covers the four quarters below:
  - Q1 - 1 April 2023 to 30 June 2023;
  - Q2 - 1 July 2023 to 30 September 2023;
  - Q3 - 1 October 2023 to 31 December 2023; and
  - Q4 - 1 January 2024 to 31 March 2024.
- 1.4. The Council has a duty to ensure that any individual, or their representative who has a complaint about the adult social care service has access to the appropriate procedure. The Council's Customer Care team, the team that processes complaints, is part of the wider Customer Experience service which sits within the Resources Directorate. There is a statutory requirement to have a Complaints Manager in post, this role is filled by the Customer Care Manager. Within the Customer Care team, there is one Customer Experience Lead and two Customer Service Advisers.
- 1.5. The Customer Care team is an important corporate function which supports the organisation and ensures effective and efficient complaint handling procedures are in place. The Customer Care team also provides advice and guidance to council officers on best practices and ensures that the learning from complaints is taken forward to improve service delivery.

## 2. Overview of the Complaints Procedure

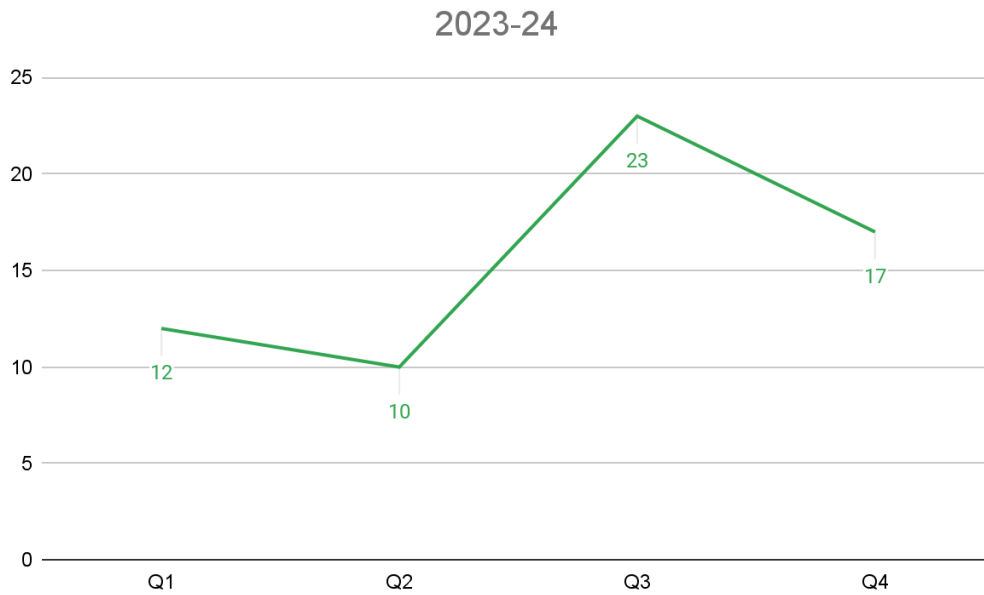
- 2.1. Complaints are processed according to the Local Authority Social Services and National Health Services Complaint (England) Regulations 2009.
- 2.2. The procedure is a single stage process for complaints relating to the provision of health services, a care standards complaint or a complaint about an adult social care provider. The regulations provide six months to resolve a complaint, starting on the day the complaint is received.
- 2.3. The Council aims to provide a first response to all complaints within 20 working days of the complaint being received. If the complainant is dissatisfied, we encourage an ongoing dialogue between the complainant and the service with an aim to resolve the concerns that are being raised. If the complainant remains dissatisfied following a final response or final decision on their complaint, they can escalate their complaint to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.
- 2.4. A complaint may be generally defined as an expression of dissatisfaction or disquiet in relation to an individual adult receiving services, which requires a response.
- 2.5. A complaint can be made by the following:
  - An individual who is or has received services by adult social care;
  - An individual who has been or is likely to be affected by an action, error or decision taken by adult social care; and
  - A representative of an individual who is or has received services by adult social care, such as a family member, provided they have consent or Power of Attorney.
- 2.6. As per best practices recommended by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, complaints will generally be considered if they are made within 12 months of the matter they are complaining about. The Council can however use its discretion to investigate complaints out of this time period.
- 2.7. Complaints are counted for the year in which they were received, not responded to. This means that any complaints received within 2023-24, will be captured in this report.

### 3. Complaint Summary

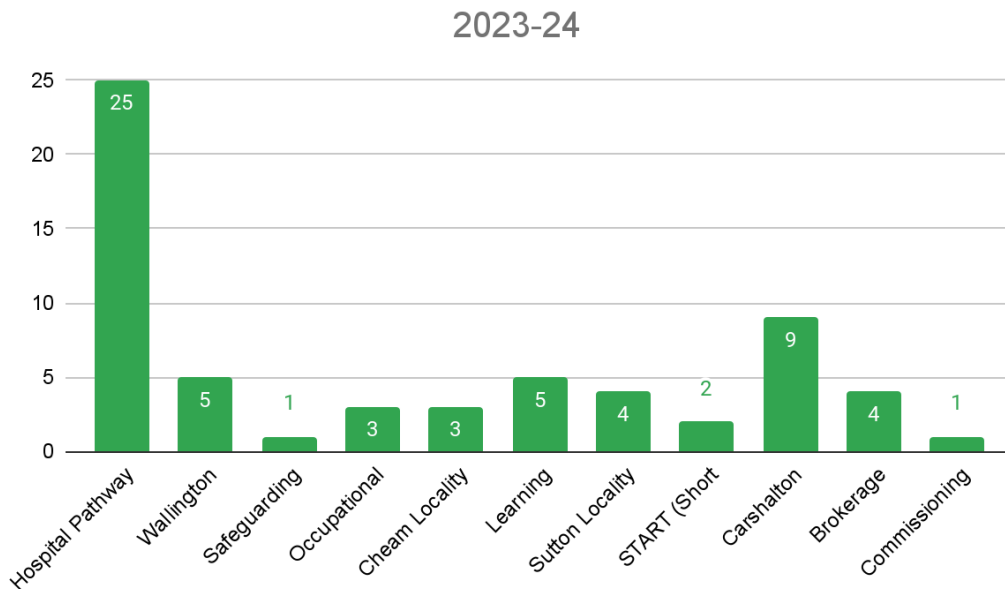
- 3.1. In 2023-24, the Council received 66 adult social care complaints. Four of which were withdrawn, therefore the Council responded to 62 complaints.
- 3.2. The complaints were for a range of services and for a range of reasons across adult social care. This report will provide a breakdown on which services received complaints, what the complaints were about and the performance (timeliness of responding to complaints).
- 3.3. The graph below shows the number of complaints received for the past four years. From 2020-21 the number of complaints did reduce each year, however in 2023-24 we received the highest numbers of complaints in recent years. One of the contributing factors for this increase is due to the number of complaints received relating to care costs and charging, 21 out of the 62 complaints received covered this subject. The learning from this and the actions that will be taken to address it going forward are noted in Section 8, Learning and Service Improvement.



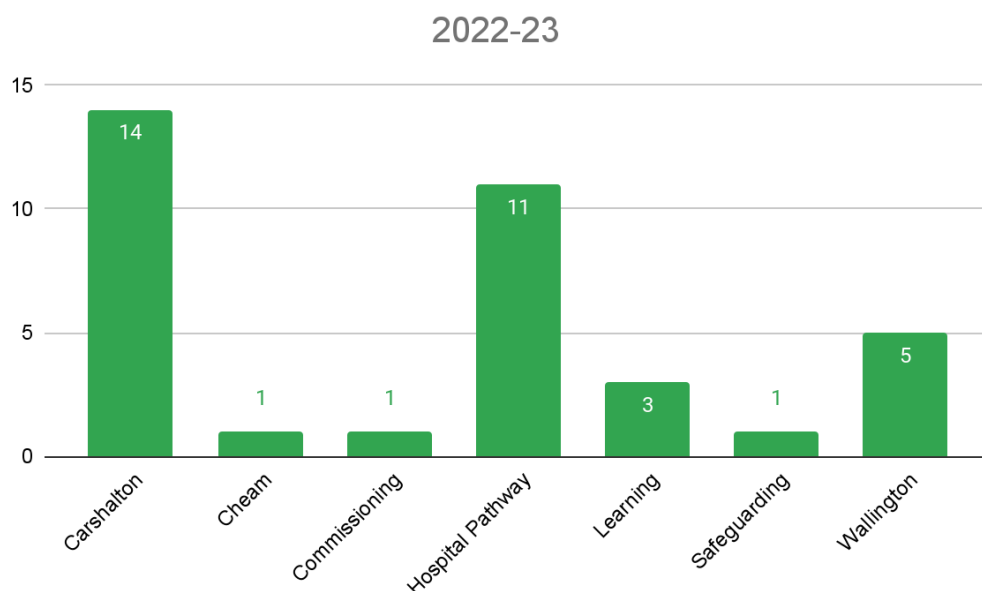
3.4. The graph below shows the number of complaints per quarter. The number of complaints was lowest in Q2 and highest in Q3.



3.5. The graph below shows the number of complaints received by service for 2023-24. The Hospital Pathway service received the most complaints, with 25 out of 62 being investigated and responded to by them.



- 3.6. For comparison, the graph below shows the number of complaints received by service for 2022-23. The Carshalton Locality service received the most complaints, with 14 out of the 36 being investigated and responded to by them.

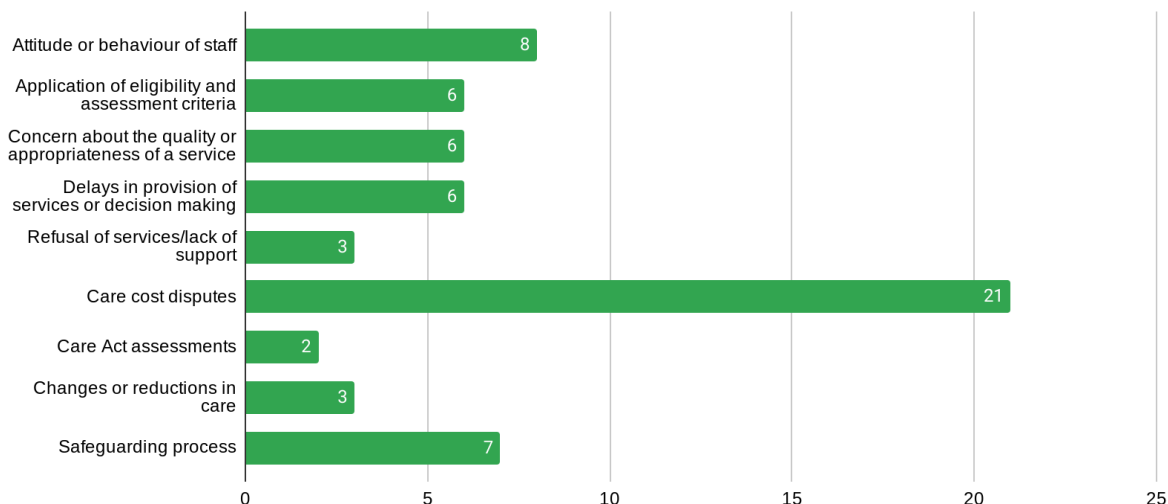


- 3.7. The table below shows the number of complaints received by service per quarter for 2023-24. The Hospital Pathway service tends to receive a relatively high number of complaints each quarter, with the Carshalton Locality also receiving a relatively high number of complaints in Q3.

Service	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Hospital Pathway	5	7	6	7	25
Wallington Locality	3	1	1	0	5
Safeguarding	1	0	0	0	1
Occupational Therapy (OT)	1	0	1	1	3
Cheam Locality	0	1	2	0	3
Learning Disability	1	1	2	1	5
Sutton Locality	0	0	2	2	4
START (Short Term Assessment and Reablement Team)	0	0	2	0	2
Carshalton Locality	1	0	6	2	9
Brokerage	0	0	1	3	4
Commissioning	0	0	0	1	1
<b>Total</b>					<b>62</b>

## 4. Complaint Themes

- 4.1. We have nine themes for monitoring complaints. The graph below shows the themes and the number of complaints logged for each in the reporting period. The highest number of complaints received were related to Care Cost disputes.

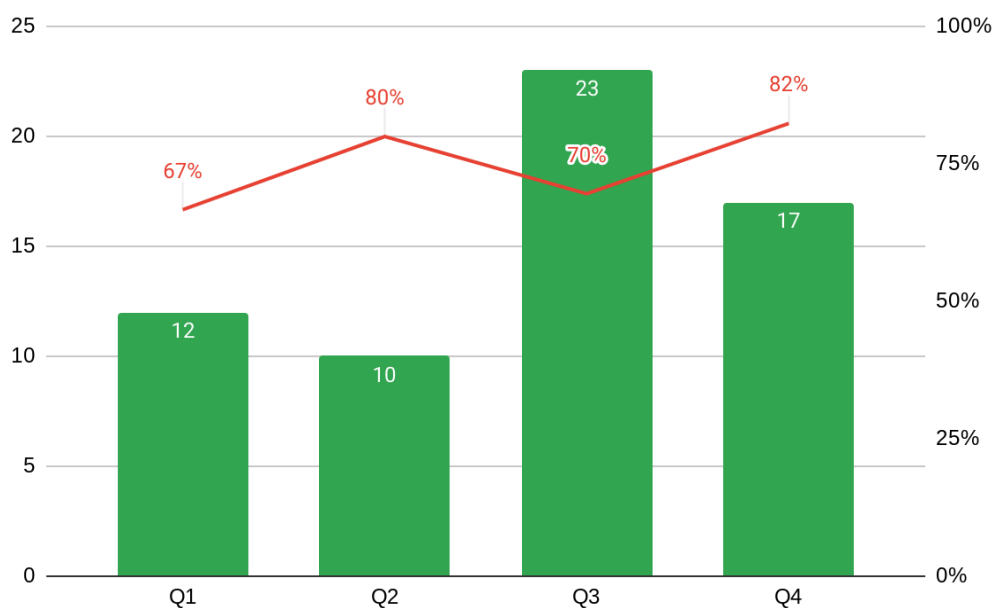


- 4.2. The Council has been recording complaint themes since the beginning of 2023-24, we do not have this data for previous years. Going forward, we will be able to offer insightful comparisons to previous years data with an aim to drive service improvement and delivery. The Customer Care team will be recording the theme of the complaint once it is received and assigned for investigation.

## 5. Complaint Performance

- 5.1. As mentioned above, the regulations provide six months for Council’s to investigate and respond to complaints. The procedure allows Council’s to respond to complaints flexibly as this enables Council’s to tailor how the complaint is handled to best meet the needs, circumstances and outcomes of the individual making the complaint.
- 5.2. Positively, all (100%) of complaints were responded to within the six months allowed by regulations. The Council aims to respond in writing to all complaints within 20 working days and 46 of the 62 (75%) of complaints received, were responded to within this period.
- 5.3. The graph below shows the percentage of complaints responded to within 20 working days per quarter. Performance was highest in Q4 and lowest in Q1.





## 6. Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

- 6.1. This report provides a brief overview of the adult social care complaints referred to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) and received by the Council. A complainant may escalate their complaint to the LGSCO at any time. However, the LGSCO will seek to ensure that the Council has had the opportunity to respond and resolve the complaint in accordance with the statutory procedure.
- 6.2. In 2023-24, a total of five Ombudsman enquiries were made regarding adult social care. Four of the five complaints underwent a full investigation and the remaining one was closed after initial enquiries from the Ombudsman. Two of the four complaints were upheld in the financial year 2023-24, and the remaining two enquiries remain outstanding.

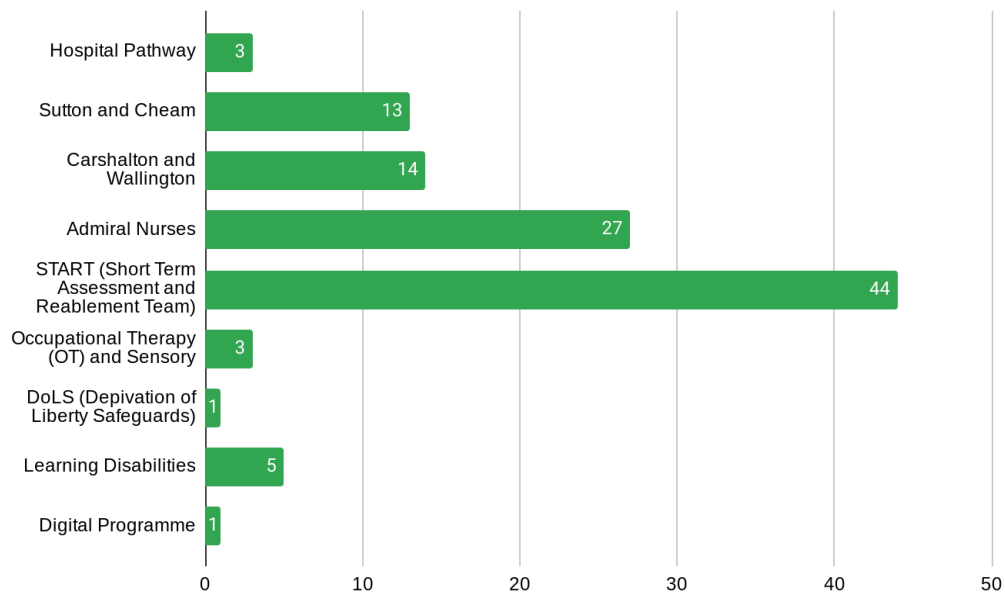
- 6.3. The table below shows the two complaints that were upheld in 2023-24, what the Council was found at fault for and the actions taken to remedy the complaint.

Reference	Areas of fault	Summary improvements made
<a href="#">22 017 725</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Failed to deal properly with a request for a discretionary property disregard.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reconsider discretionary property disregard decision.</li> <li>Guidance to officers on proper consideration of the Council's powers to make discretionary property disregards.</li> </ul>
<a href="#">23 010 730</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Delay in considering a complaint through the process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Written apology.</li> <li>Remedy payment offered.</li> </ul>

- 6.4. None of the decisions upheld in 2023/24 indicate systemic issues with services. However, the Council takes this feedback seriously and the Customer Care team will continue to work collaboratively with services to ensure lessons are learnt and put measures in place to ensure issues do not occur again.

## 7. Compliments

- 7.1. In 2023-24, the Council received 111 compliments regarding adult social care services. These compliments are from service users, family members, stakeholders and practitioners.
- 7.2. The graph below shows the number of compliments received by each service for the year. Our Short Term Assessment and Reablement Team (START) service received the most compliments.



7.3. The compliments cover a range of themes from effective working, helpful information and advice, efficient and professional, and caring and empathetic. Below are some examples of compliments received:

7.4. *Thank you for all your help to me and my [service user].* **Hospital Pathway**

7.5. *I would just like to give you a report on your Occupational Therapist [social worker]. After having several visits, I wanted to tell you what an excellent OT they are. They have been so very caring of me. Every time [social worker] has visited they have always been cheerful and very competent in their job. [social worker] has taken great care not to tell me what to do, but rather give me several suggestions and choices.* **Occupational Therapy and Sensory**

7.6. *The team got me through a very frightening time in my life with great understanding and I felt I could confide in them at all times.* **START**

7.7. *I would like to take this opportunity to thank you personally [social worker] for your intervention. You listened to me with empathy at a time when I really needed to be listened to and offered wise counsel. It was very reassuring to know that [service user] interests and safety were being recognised by your department in such a timely manner. So this a heartfelt thank you for all you do.* **Learning Disabilities**

7.8. *I cannot thank you enough for all the support and guidance you've given us, you're a gem!* **Admiral Nurses**

## 8. Learning and Service Improvement

8.1. Learning from the experiences of our service users and their families can identify where our services, policies and procedures can be improved. It also helps to keep senior leadership at the Council informed of the matters that are important to our residents, improve communication and strengthen relationships with our service users.

8.2. Key learnings from the complaints and compliments received for the year 2023-24 fall into the following categories:

- Assessment Criteria;
- Earlier Transitions Planning;
- Charging System Review;
- Carer Grants; and
- Complaint Handling.

8.3. The learning and actions being taken to address these are summarised below.

### 8.4. Assessment Criteria

**Learning:** In line with the care act eligibility, we are aiming to take the following actions to support this:

- Publishing the criteria online in accessible formats;
- Provide training for staff to ensure consistent application of the criteria; and
- Offering opportunities for carers to understand and participate in the assessment process including online assessments as part of our system upgrades.

### 8.5. Earlier Transitions Planning

**Learning:** To strengthen collaboration with children's services to ensure smoother transitions for young adults with complex needs. This work is in progress and we're taking the following actions to support this:

- Establishing robust joint working protocols for transitioning young adults from children's to adult services;
- Sharing information and assessments effectively between services; and
- Holding joint meetings with young adults and their families to discuss future support needs.

## 8.6. Charging System Review

**Learning:** To conduct a comprehensive review of the charging system for adult social care services. We are aiming to take the following actions to support this:

- Assessing the fairness and transparency of the current system, and supporting self funders;
- Options for simplifying the charging structure; and
- Providing clear information to service users about potential costs and financial assistance programs.

## 8.7. Carer Support

**Learning:** To improve communication regarding carer's support and the assessment process. We are aiming to take the following actions to support this:

- Clearly explaining the criteria for receiving carer's support;
- Providing feedback to carers on their assessments, highlighting areas of strength and the potential for increased support; and
- Offering options for carers to discuss their concerns about assessments or financial support.

## 8.8. Complaint Handling

**Learning:** To improve adult social care services complaint handling. We are aiming to take the following actions to support this:

- To offer face to face meetings as necessary with an aim to provide quicker resolution;
- Ensuring clear and transparent communication throughout the complaint investigation process and keeping complainants informed about the progress and the final outcome; and
- Make sure the complaint process is accessible to all, including those with disabilities or language barriers.

8.9. The Council will continue to learn from its strengths and what we do well. Such as building on our good practice and incorporating the learnings from complaints into service improvement and delivery.

## 9. Further Information

- 9.1. For more information regarding Adult Social Care complaints and compliments, please contact the Customer Care team on 020 8770 5000 or email [complaints@sutton.gov.uk](mailto:complaints@sutton.gov.uk).