

Introduction

This annual report is to inform people who use our services, family carers, the public, Council Members and staff, of the effectiveness of the Adult Social Care Complaints and Compliments process and our performance in relation to this. The complaints that are dealt with via the Customer Care Team relate to any service within the Adult Directorate.

This incorporates services that are commissioned by Halton Borough Council, including Domiciliary Care, Residential and Nursing Care Home contracts. For these, in the first instance, complaints would be directed to the provider themselves and, where a response is deemed unsatisfactory, the Council will investigate as the commissioning body.

What is Compliment?

A compliment is a polite remark that you say to someone to show that you appreciate their qualities or approve of what they have done.

What is a Complaint?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about an action or lack of action, relating to a service that is being delivered by, or on behalf of, Halton Borough Council.

Complaints may be related to:

- The standard or lack of service provision;
- Staff attitude;
- A failure to follow proper procedures, or;
- Disagreement with a decision taken (where no other appeal procedure exists – for example, this can include appeals against the outcome of a Care Act assessment or in relation to charging).

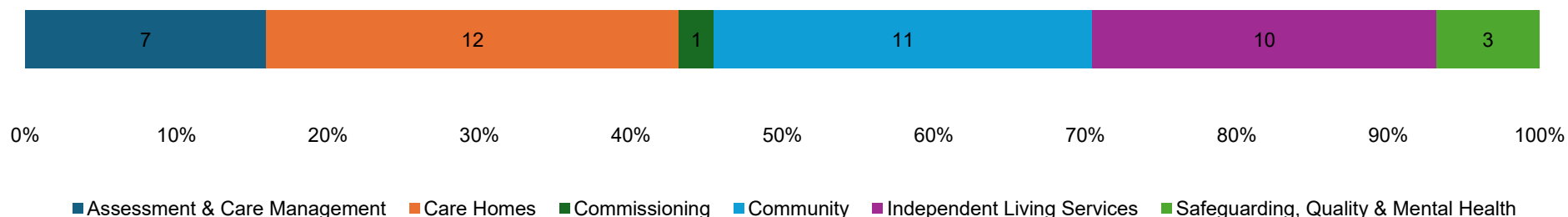
Compliments

44

**COMPLIMENTS
RECEIVED IN
2025/26**

During 2025/26 Adult Social Care Services received 44 compliments. Compliments received are in the main from people who use services, their families or carers, to thank workers and/or teams for their support that has gone above the realm of their daily role, compliments may also come via other teams, providers and partner agencies. A breakdown of compliments by service area is provided below followed by a selection of compliments on the next page.

Compliments Service Area Breakdown



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“All the staff were superb and made us feel so comfortable”

Reablement Service

“You have built an amazing relationship with us as a family, and the boys trust you completely. You consistently go above and beyond in your role”

Occupational Therapy

“Any family that gets you as their social worker is so lucky”

Complex Care Runcorn

“For the first time in years, I didn’t feel judged. I didn’t feel spoken at or treated like a checklist. Instead, I felt heard, respected, and understood”

Mental Health Outreach Team

“This is an excellent service. All the staff are amazing so much so they became to feel like friends and I’ll miss them”

Reablement Service

“You truly deserve recognition for the compassion and commitment you show everyday”

Positive Behaviour Support Service

“It’s a great home, lovely atmosphere. Staff are helpful and made us feel welcome”

St Luke’s Care Home

“We are all so grateful for the love and care you’ve shown for mum whilst she’s been with you”

Day Services

Complaints

Since the introduction of the Resolving Complaints and Improving Services Policy in 2019/20, complainants can now have their complaints resolved without going via the formal complaints process, resulting in a quicker resolution timeframe and outcome (referred to as local resolution). Should this not be the case, they can progress to a formal complaint (stage 1).

37 Stage 1 complaints were received between 1 April 2025 and 31 March 2026. There were 66 complaints resolved at local resolution level in 2025/26.

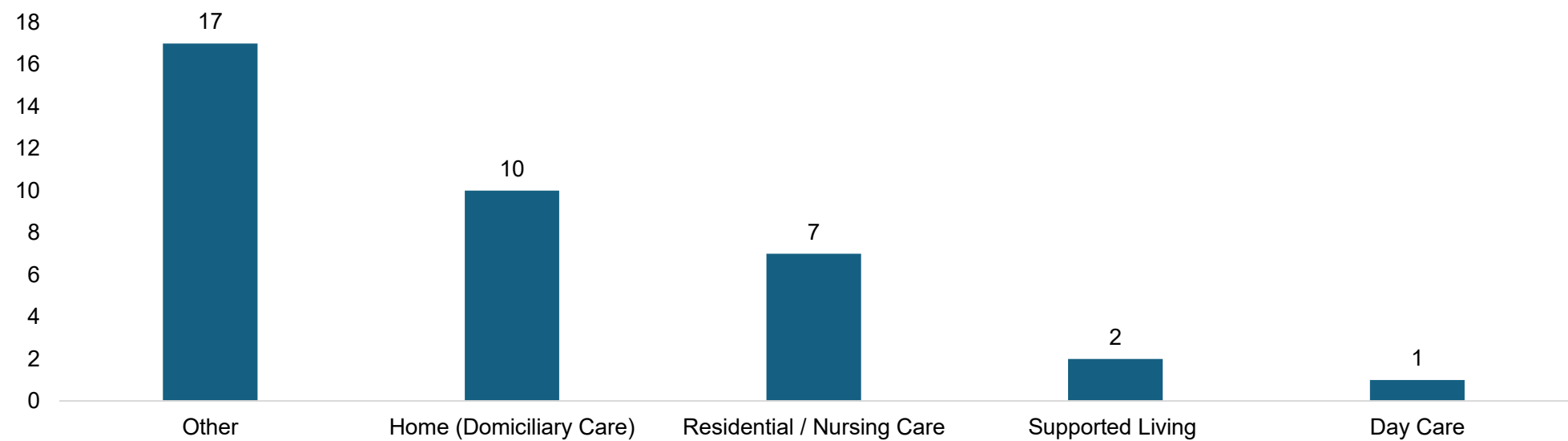
Who investigates the complaint?

Each service will have the opportunity to investigate a complaint for their area, if it is appropriate for them to do so and depending on capacity within the team. Complaints can be allocated to investigating officers outside of the service area and, if necessary, external investigators can be called upon.

The following charts provide a breakdown of the Stage 1 complaints in relation to:

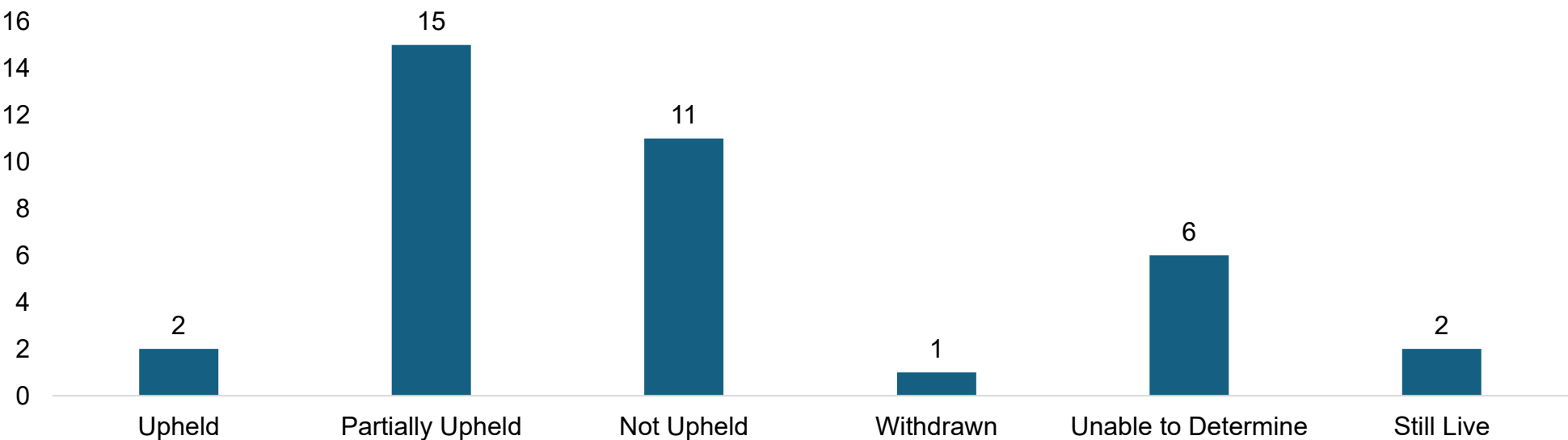
- the complaint setting;
- the outcome of the complaint;
- the primary complaint category and;
- the completion timescales of the complaint.

Complaint Setting



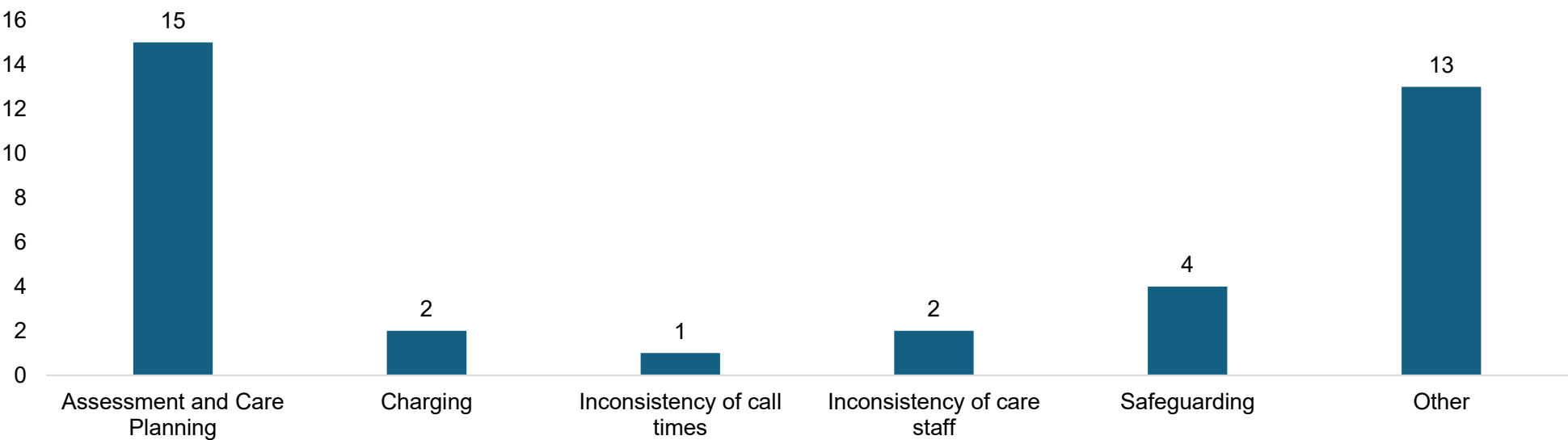
The figures for the setting of complaints received in 2025/26 are displayed to the right. ‘Other’ complaint settings can include hospitals, the community and complaints about workers or teams etc.

Outcome of Complaints



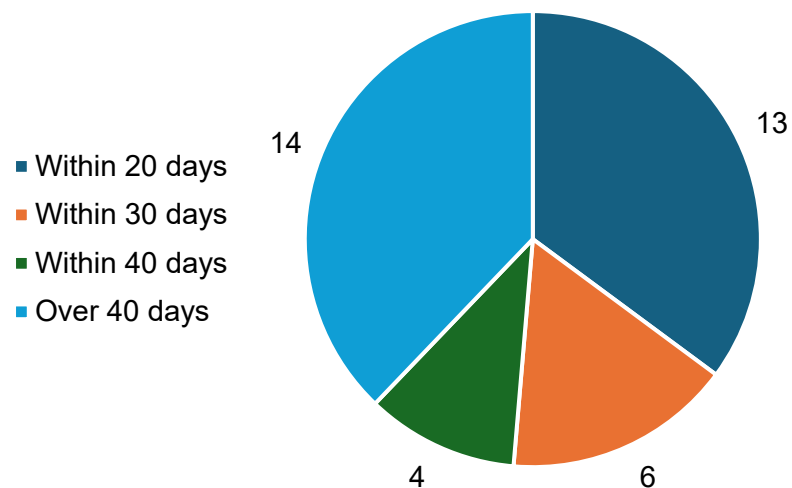
Just under half of the complaints received were either upheld or partially upheld (17 out of 37) and less than a third (11) were not upheld. For those where it has not been possible to determine the outcome, this is due to the complaint being complex in nature with multiple elements and no clear single outcome.

Primary Complaint Category



Assessment and Care Planning is the category with the most complaints. Complaints classified as ‘Other’ was the second highest category. These predominantly related to complaints about staff.

Completion Timescales for Complaints



The target timescale for responding to stage 1 complaints is within 20 working days; 35% of complaints received in 2025/26 were responded to within this timescale (13 out of 37) and 38% of stage 1 complaints were open for more than 40 days (14 out of 37).

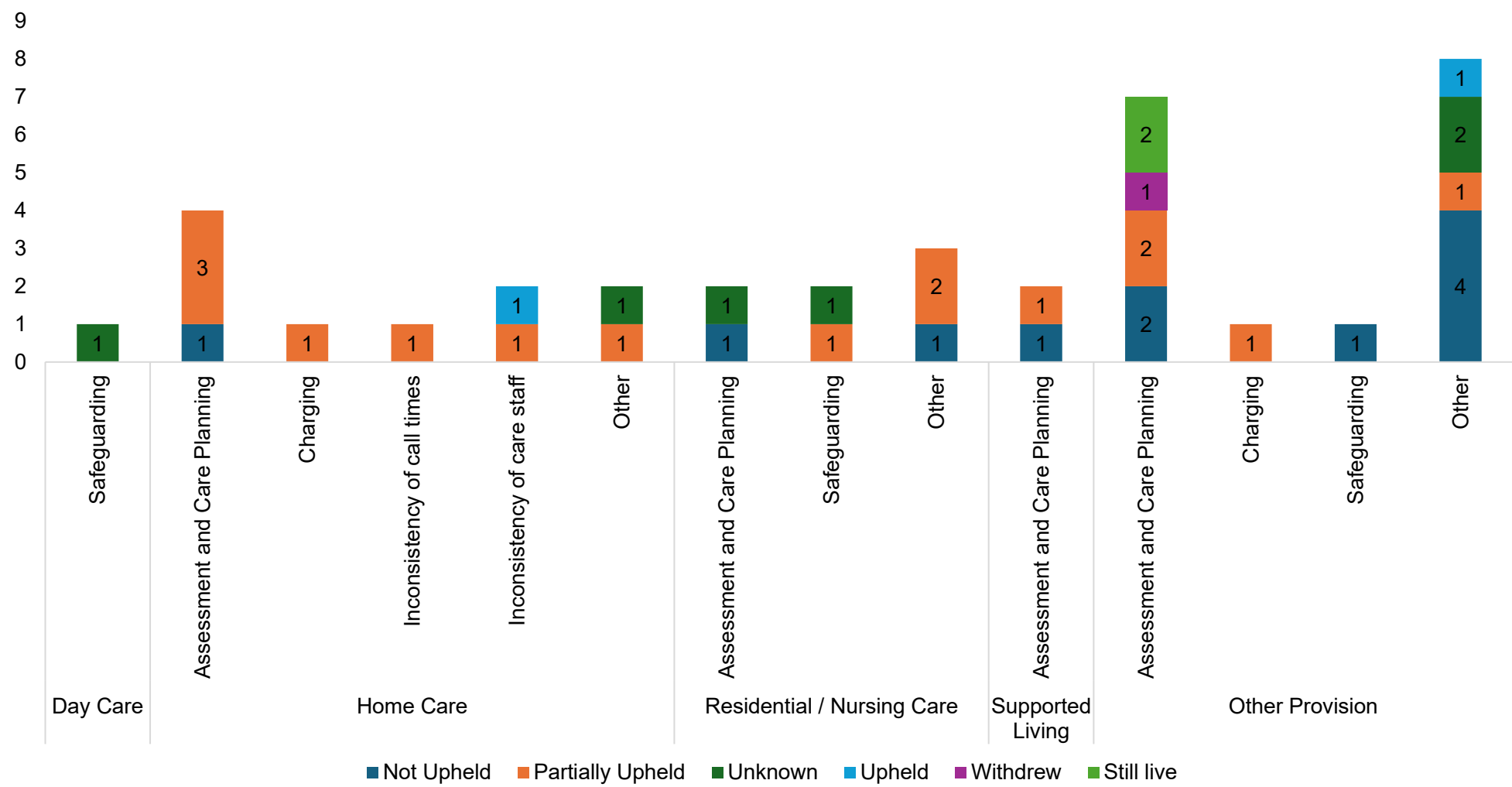
There are various reasons for complaints taking longer than the 20 working day target, which could be due to the nature of the complaint being complex and needing additional time for the investigation to be completed thoroughly. Complainants are kept informed of the status of their complaint and notified as soon as possible if the investigation is expected to take longer than 20 working days.

Outcomes by Complaint Setting/Category:

The chart below shows outcomes by complaint setting and category. Most complaints fell under 'other provision' (17) where one complaint was upheld with the majority (7) being not upheld followed by partially upheld (4). The setting with the second highest number of complaints was domiciliary (home) care where most complaints were partially upheld (7). The majority of complaints (15) fell into the

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assessment and care planning category; none of these complaints were upheld. Most were partially upheld (6) followed by not upheld (5).



Appeals

People have the right to appeal against a decision of a Care Act assessment or a decision made, as described earlier in this report.

In 2025/26, there were 4 appeals made against decisions – 2 of these related to charging for services and 2 related to support provision.

What can we learn from this information?

Ensuring positive working relationships with people who use our services, their families and carers is at the heart of what we do and we encourage feedback from people who use services as this helps us to continually improve.

A large proportion of complaints have been classified as 'other' in terms of the setting and service category, which demonstrates the need to expand our categories for recording complaints in order to better identify themes and trends.

There are also improvements to be made around response timescales, as the 20 working day target timescale has only been met in just over a third of cases in 2025/26.

We continue to ensure that any learning from complaints is translated into improvements to services and practice. This is done through regular reporting to Senior Management Team regarding themes and trends so that any requirement to amend policies and procedures can be identified and fed back to the relevant operational team. Learning from complaints is also shared across teams using a number of mechanisms,

for example via Team Meetings, through the Social Work Matters Forum, which is a quarterly meeting chaired by the Principal Social Worker and acts as a way to identify and share good practice to continually improve service delivery.

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)

Complainants can refer their complaints to the LGSCO at any time should they not be happy with the way the Council is dealing with their complaint, however, the LGSCO will not normally accept a complaint until the Council has completed its own investigation. If complainants are dissatisfied with the outcome of the Council's investigation, they can contact the LGSCO.

During 2025/26 Halton had 10 complaints referred to the LGSCO (not all of these will have been investigated and the complainant may have been referred back to the council to investigate, or the LGSCO investigation may not yet have concluded).

Of the 3 where decisions have been made, 1 was upheld, 1 was not upheld and 1 was referred back for local resolution (this is where the LGSCO determines that the complainant brought the issue to them too early and the council did not have the opportunity to consider it first).

The LGSCO complaints are reviewed for any patterns / recurring issues but in 2025/26, there have been no particular issues identified in terms of areas where complaints are being upheld by the LGSCO.