

Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel

DATE	30th September 2026
REPORT OF	Katie Brown
SUBJECT	Adult Social Care Complaints
STATUS	open

CONTRIBUTION TO OUR AIMS

The Complaints process contributes to the aim that all adults in North- East Lincolnshire will have healthy and independent lives with easy access to joined up advice and support, helping them to help themselves.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As part of assurance and good governance the Adult Social Care service adhere to 'The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009.' Under these regulations, complainants can raise a complaint or concern to either the provider or the commissioner of the service.

This is the last report through the formal delegations as part of a Section 75 agreement when the ICB Experience Team provided a concerns and complaints management function for adult social work services on behalf of North- East Lincolnshire Council. This function has now transferred back to North East Lincolnshire and in future years the report will be written by the council.

The Adults Social Care Statutory Complaints and Compliments Annual Report provides an overview of the activity and analysis of complaints and compliments for the period 1st April 2025 to 31st March 2026.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION

The panel is asked to consider and review the Adults Social Care Statutory Complaints and Compliments Annual Report.

1. BACKGROUND AND ISSUES

1.1 The ICB Experience team received 38 complaints about adult social care last year.

1.2 24 of the complaints fully or partially concerned Focus Independent Adult Social Work:

- 1.2.1 5 (21%) of these concerned charging
- 1.2.2 15 (63%) of these concerned related to assessment and care planning
- 1.2.3 2 (8%) of these concerned staff behaviour
- 1.2.4 2 (8%) of these concerned communication

1.3 Of the remaining 14 complaints:

- 1.3.1 3 were multi agency complaints
 - 1.3.2 5 concerned home care
 - 1.3.3 6 concerned residential care
- 1.4 There were 12 enquiries and 23 new concerns raised
- 1.4.1 31 concerned Focus – 11 related to Community Care Finance, 7 related to Assessment and Care Planning, 11 related to Communication, 1 related to Direct Payments and 1 related to record keeping.
 - 1.4.2 3 concerned care agencies
 - 1.4.3 1 concerned care homes
- 1.5 The Experience Team were contacted by the Local Government and Social Care ombudsman about 7 cases.
- 1.6 Of these cases 2 were upheld; 1 was closed after initial enquiries, 2 are ongoing, 1 is a premature referral and 1 is at primary investigation stage.
- 1.7 There were 291 compliments logged by Focus Adult Social Work.

2. RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The configuration of the delivery of adult social care in North- East Lincolnshire is unique within England and therefore we need to ensure that we are consistent in the delivery of Adult Social Care across the Health and Care Partnership. Although Focus Independent Adult Social Work CIC provide the adult social work service for the council, reputational risks sit with the council.

3. REPUTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 If the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) make a finding of fault against us, then we are obliged to make public the findings. All complaints investigated by the LGSCO are available on their website at www.lgo.org.uk
- 3.2 The Experience Team received communication from the LGSCO in relation to 7 cases. Of these cases 2 were upheld; 1 was closed after initial enquiries, 2 are ongoing, 1 is a premature referral and 1 is at primary investigation stage.

4. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Limited impact and when in rare circumstances a financial remedy is deemed to be appropriate then these are applied on an individual basis.

5. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IMPLICATIONS

The arrangements entered into under Section 75 agreement with the ICB, does not include responding to complaints about under 18 year olds.

6. CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

The report will not have any impact on climate change or environmental implications.

7. PUBLIC HEALTH, HEALTH INEQUALITIES AND MARMOT IMPLICATIONS

The report provides information on complaints, concerns and compliments, while reflecting NEL's continued commitment to reducing health inequalities in line with the Marmot principles.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The report is providing information on complaints, concerns and compliments received. As such there are no direct additional financial implications arising. On occasion we may be directed to ensure a financial remedy is made to a complainant and in such cases, these remedies are met within current budgets.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

All commissioners and providers of NHS and Adult Social Care services adhere to 'The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009.' Under these regulations, complainants can raise a complaint or concern to either the provider or the commissioner of the service. Within North East Lincolnshire specifically and, through the delegations as part of the Section 75 agreement, the ICB Experience Team provide a concerns and complaints management function for adult social work services on behalf of the Local Authority.

10. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

Any Human Resources implications would be assumed by Focus Independent Adult Social Work service who are commissioned to provide the adult social work service by North East Lincolnshire Council.

11. WARD IMPLICATIONS

People who might make use of the complaints process may live in any ward of the Borough.

12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Complaints and Ombudsman Annual Report, Adult Social Services 2025/2026

13. CONTACT OFFICER(S)

Katie Brown

Katie Brown
Director of Adult Social Care



North East Lincolnshire

Adult Social Care

Statutory Complaints Report

1st April 2025 – 31st March 2026

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1. Context

All commissioners and providers of NHS and Adult Social Care services adhere to 'The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009.' Under these regulations, complainants can raise a complaint to either the provider or the commissioner of the service. Within North East Lincolnshire specifically and, through the delegations as part of the Section 75 agreement, the ICB Experience Team provide a concerns and complaints management function for adult social work and adult social care services on behalf of the Local Authority.

This report therefore specifically relates to contact received and managed by the ICB team in relation to adult social care and adult social work services, for the period 1st April 2025 – 31st March 2025.

What is a Complaint?

A complaint can be generally defined as an expression of dissatisfaction or disquiet from a person who is affected, or likely to be affected, by the action, omission or decision of the responsible body which is the subject of the complaint.

The regulation and supporting organisational policy aims to ensure that service users, patients, their families, carers or representatives can have their concerns investigated, receive a response and are treated with respect and courtesy throughout the process.

Who can make a Complaint?

Section 5 of The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009 require the responsible body to consider representations including complaints made to it by:

- a person who receives or has received services from a responsible body; or
- a person who is affected, or likely to be affected, by the action, omission or decision of the responsible body which is the subject of the complaint.
- A complaint may be made by a person (in the regulation referred to as a representative) acting on behalf of a person mentioned in paragraph who
 - (a) has died;
 - (b) is a child;
 - (c) is unable to make the complaint themselves because of—
 - (i) physical incapacity; or
 - (ii) lack of capacity within the meaning of the Mental Capacity Act 2005(1); or
 - (d) has requested the representative to act on their behalf.



2. The Statutory Complaints Process

The Statutory Complaints Process has two stages; Local Resolution with the service provider or commissioner and, escalation to The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

However, it is widely recognised that everyday conversations with our users is hugely important. Staff speak to people who use our service and the services we commission every day. This can often raise issues that our staff can help with immediately. We encourage people to discuss any issues they have with staff, as they may be able to sort the issue out to their satisfaction quickly and without the need for them to make a complaint.

Although not part of the regulation or the statutory process, individuals also have the opportunity to raise a concern, make an enquiry or ask for advice through the ICB Experience Team. When an individual contacts us with an issue which can quickly be resolved prior to going through the statutory complaint's process, these are logged as a concern and where possible responded to within 5 working days.

Informal Stage: Concerns/ Enquiries

The HNYICB Team welcomes all types of feedback in addition to formal complaints, i.e. concerns, comments and compliments. Its approach to handling this feedback is outcome focused and seeks to answer concerns and resolve problems as early and quickly as possible.

These contacts are defined as expressions of dissatisfaction without the need for formal investigation or formal correspondence/ response.

Local Resolution: Formal Complaints

This stage of the process is referred to as local resolution where arrangements are in place for dealing with complaints to ensure that they:

- are dealt with efficiently,
- are properly investigated,
- are treated with respect and courtesy,
- are provided with assistance to understand the process including advice on advocacy services
- receive a timely and appropriate response
- are told the outcome of the investigation and any associated actions

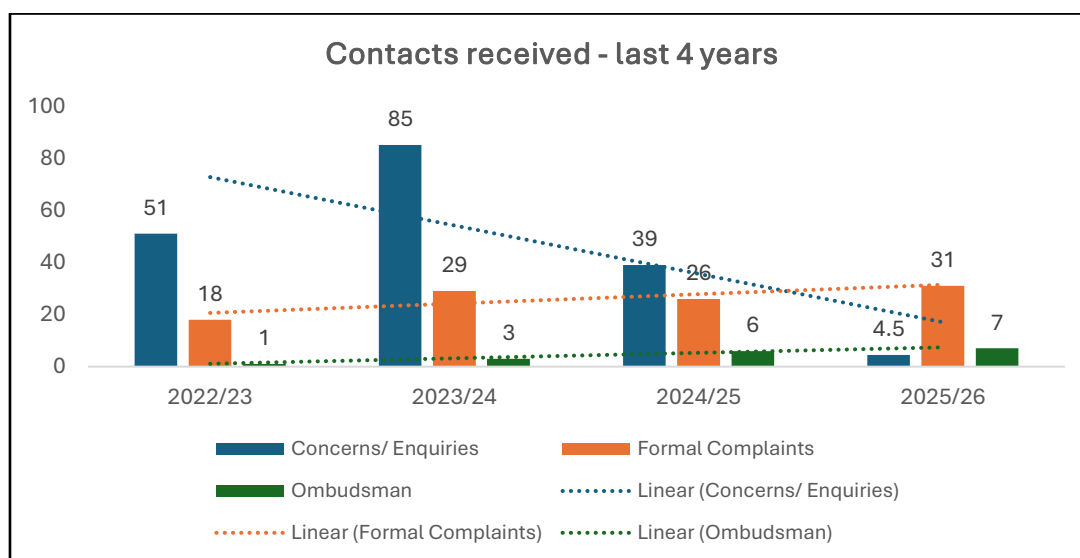
Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

Complaints will be re-opened at Local resolution stage should there be evidence that questions have not been fully answered or, if further questions and queries are raised relating to the information provided.

However, if an individual is unhappy with the outcome of the investigation at local resolution, they reserve the right to take their complaint to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

In the written response to each complaint, it will clearly provide information to inform the individual that if they are not happy with the outcome of the investigation, they can take their complaint to the Ombudsman.

3. Findings 2025/26



Informal Contacts – Concerns and Enquiries

Year	Enquiry	Concern
2022/23	NA	51
2023/24	NA	85
2024/25	18	21
2025/26	12	23

There has been a 10% decrease in the combined informal contacts received by the team for adult social care services.



Financial Appeals continue to be logged separately by the team. The Financial Appeals process is utilised for individuals who are purely unhappy with the level of charge they have received for care delivered (or not), or the process of ascertaining the level of charge. 43 appeals were heard between the 1st April 2025 and the 31st March 2026 which is an increase of one from the previous year.

Where appropriate, the team have also signposted individuals to the provider of the service delivered. This includes Focus, for example, where a conversation with the social worker has been sufficient to resolve an issue or concern. 19 contacts have been signposted.

Table for Organisation

Organisation	Enquiry	Concern
Focus	12	19
HICA		1
Cranwell Court		1
Comfort Call		2
TOTAL	12	23

Of the total enquiries and concerns received, 31 related to Focus Adult Social Work. This is a 11% increase from the previous year. Of the 31 contacts, 11 related to Community Care Finance, 11 related to Communication, 7 related to Assessment and Care Planning, 1 related to record keeping and 1 related to Direct Payments.

The numbers of concerns for other providers are extremely low which makes statistical analysis and theming unreliable. However, the 4 further concerns received related to:

- HICA 1 x Quality of Care
- Cranwell Court 1 x Quality of Care
- Comfort Call 1 x Communication
1 x Quality of Care

Formal Complaints

Year	Formal Complains
2022/23	18
2023/24	29
2024/25	26
2025/26	38

Organisation	Formal Complaint
Focus	24
Angelic	1



Cranwell Court	2
Fairways	1
Health Now	1
HICA	2
The Kensington	2
Multi-agency	3
Waltham House	1
Willow Home Care	1
TOTAL	38

24 (63%) of the formal complaints received were related to services provided by Focus. Of the 26:

- **5 (21%)** related to charging
- **15 (63%)** related to assessment and care planning
- **2 (8%)** related to staff behaviour
- **2 (8%)** related to communication

The **14** further complaints related to different services with no outliers in terms of individual organisations. Of those 9 complaints:

- Angelic Care 1 x Quality of Care
- Cranwell Court 1 x Assessment and Care Planning
1 x Quality of Care
- Fairways 1 x Quality of Care
- Health Now 1 x Patient Care including nutrition and hydration
- HICA 2 x Quality of Care
- The Kensington 2 x Quality of Care
- Multi-agency 1 x Communication
2 x Quality of Care
- Waltham House 1 x Quality of Care
- Willow Home Care 1 x Charging

38 formal complaints were closed between 1st April 2025 and 31st March 2026. This compares to the closure of 18 cases in 2024/25. Details of those closed are as follows:

	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Withdrawn	3	4	7
Closed in timescale	8 (47%)	6 (34%)	9 (24%)
Closed out of timescale	9 (53%)	12 (66%)	29 (76%)
Outcome: Upheld	2 (12%)	1 (6%)	5 (16%)
Outcome: Partially Upheld	6 (35%)	11 (61%)	19 (61%)
Outcome: Not Upheld	9 (53%)	6 (33%)	7 (23%)



Encouragingly, over double the complaints have been closed in this last year compared to the previous two reporting periods. In number, more complaints have been closed in timescale however in percentage, the performance continues on a declining trend. Response timescales remain a key area for improvement, influenced significantly by provider timelines as well as staff capacity within both operational departments and the experience teams.

The adult social care complaints dealt with are often complex in nature and involve multiple organisations which does also impact and, often hinders, timescales. Timescales will remain a priority of focus over the next year and will be an area of focus for the local authority team moving forward.

The insights from upheld complaints indicate a slight increase in the number of concerns being substantiated. This is particularly evident in partially upheld outcomes, where some, but not all, elements of a complaint have been confirmed.

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

The LGSCO investigate complaints made to them and decide whether the actions taken have caused an injustice to the person affected and, if the complaints process has taken any steps to remedy the injustice, if well founded.

Between the 1st April 2025 and the 31st March 2026, 7 complaints were received by the LGSCO. This compares to 6 complaints in the previous year.

Case	Organisation	Outcome
Case 1	Care Plus Group, The Old Library and Local Authority	Upheld
Case 2	Willow Home Care and Focus	Closed after enquiries
Case 3	Focus	Upheld
Case 4	Focus and Health Providers	Premature referral – local resolution to be revisited
Case 5	Focus	Ongoing
Case 6	Navigo and Focus	Ongoing
Case 7	Focus	Primary Investigation stage

2 of the cases investigated had elements of the complaint upheld with the following recommendations completed:



- Apology letters for distress caused
- Financial redress

Lessons learned and Improvements

All feedback provides organisations with valuable insight into the user experience and also an opportunity to learn and improve their services. Focus Policies remain embedded within the organisations Quality Assurance Framework, with learning from complaints continuing to be collated internally and common themes and trends identified. These continue to be shared with the Quality Assurance Panel to support ongoing oversight, learning and service improvement.

Below are some examples of actions taken and learning from complaints this year:

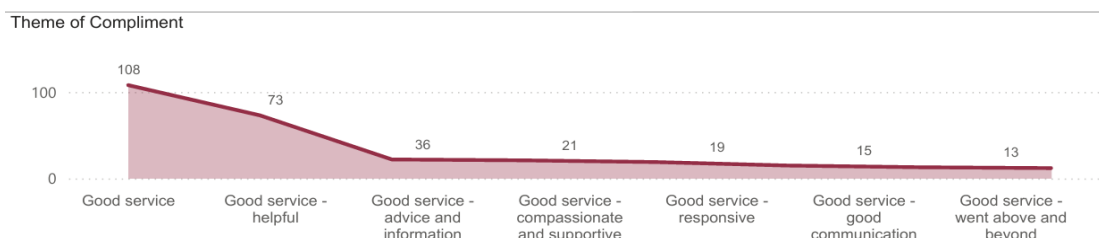
- Identified that information should have been provided to service user in person and not over the telephone. This learning point has been taken forward with the worker concerned.
- It has been identified as an area of learning for updates to be provided to the panel when individuals and families are not in agreement with the outcome, to ensure alternative options can be explored or revisited.
- Reminder sent to all Focus Practice staff of the importance of timely responses and the financial impact on service users
- HICA have reminded all staff of the importance of syncing their electronic Rota every shift to ensure calls are not missed. They have also advised that all devices require a 'clean' sync which clears the device and re downloads the data at least once a week.
- HICA completed reflective practice with the identified staff member and asked that they ensure that medication is administered from the correct blister packs.
- To provide individuals and families with more information regarding the process of moving out of area and being on a waiting list for Extra Care housing elsewhere, or sourcing suitable accommodation.
- In one case, evidence showed a delay in the service user leaving the care home due to the unavailability of the social worker and this resulted in a financial charge. Focus have reflected on the issues raised and are working to develop a better mechanism for dealing with concerns when a worker is on leave.
- Investigation identified records did not include details of care provided or the reasons this was not provided - used this as lessons learned for staff to either ensure documentation is correctly transcribed or refusals are correctly logged.



- The Safeguarding team should have discussed the proposed plan directly with a family after they had spoken to the keyworker. This matter was raised with the member of staff concerned and has also been discussed as a learning point in a practitioner meeting to remind all staff about Focus's expectations in terms of giving direct and explicit feedback to those reporting safeguarding concerns.
- Staff communication shared regarding the importance of having a clear plan, devised by those professionals involved at the earliest opportunity. This plan should consider and pre-identify potential immediate and future risks providing a clear contingency plan, such as identifying and discussing potential alternative housing options if required in advance.
- Learning taken from this matter and the Finance Team will now include the RICs valuation costs within the Court Of Protection agreement so that it is clear and transparent.
- Focus have acknowledged the delay in completing the annual review and are currently making changes to the way reviews are completed such as postal and telephone to make the review process more efficient. Focus started postal reviews at the end of last summer, to assist in improving overdue annual review numbers. There is also an internal action plan in place, to assist in improving annual review numbers which is a working document.
- Not all staff within the Hospital Discharge Team were familiar with the correct referral process for patients residing locally but registered with an out-of-area GP. As a result, an inappropriate referral was made to the CPG Haven Team, which was subsequently rejected. The correct process will be reiterated during a team meeting to ensure staff understanding and compliance.

Compliments

Focus Adult Social Work have logged 287 compliments for their services, which compares to 282 last year. The Single Point of Access have received the highest number of compliments at 174. The main theme of the compliments was in relation to 'good service' with this further split as below:





Looking forward to 2025/26

Conclusions

The handling of Adult Social Care Statutory complaints and compliments transferred back to North East Lincolnshire Council from May 2026.

The council's Feedback Team will now be undertaking the administration of them, with a strong focus being maintained on local resolution and ensuring we continue to learn from the feedback we receive to improve services and the experience of our service users and their families.