

# Minutes of Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Board

**Monday, 28 April 2025 at 6.00 pm**  
**at Council Chamber, Sandwell Council House, Oldbury, B69 3DB**

**Present:** Councillor E M Giles (Chair)  
Councillors Williams (Vice-Chair), M Allcock, E A Giles,  
Kalebe-Nyamongo, Muflihi, F Shaeen, Uppal, W Gill and  
Owen.

**Officers:** Helen Green (Strategic Improvement Manager), Debbie  
Lynch (ASC Customer feedback Co-ordinator), Alexia Farmer  
(Healthwatch) and Rhys Attwell (Interim Democratic Services  
Officer).

## **17/25**      **Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies of absence.

## **18/25**      **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were made.

## **19/25**      **Minutes**

**Resolved** that the minutes of the meetings held on 20 March  
2025 are conformed as a correct record.

## **20/25**      **Urgent Additional Items of Business**

There were no additional items of business to consider.

**Adult Social Care Statutory Complaints report 23-24.**

The Board received the annual Adult Social Care statutory complaints report for the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. The report was presented in line with Regulation 18 of the Local Authority Social Services and National Health Services Complaints (England) Regulations 2009, which required an annual summary of complaints received and outcomes, along with details of any actions taken to improve services.

The Board was advised that 142 complaints were received during the reporting period, a significant increase from the 59 recorded in 2022/23. Of the 142 complaints received, 107 were concluded by 31 March 2024. The main themes identified were delays in service provision, poor communication, and the quality of service. Most concluded complaints were either upheld (39) or partially upheld (31), with 29 not upheld and a small number either unresolved or recorded with no finding.

Officers explained that increases in complaints reflected broader national pressures on adult social care services, with rising demand and increasingly complex needs across Sandwell's ageing population. In response to this, several improvement measures were being implemented including a revised recruitment strategy, a new practice framework focused on strength-based approaches, and ongoing development of a whole-system quality assurance framework.

Following comments and questions from members of the Board, the subsequent responses were provided and issues highlighted: -

- In response to concerns about the fiscal impact on the authority from complaints that were upheld or partially upheld. It was noted that information payments which have been made following investigation by the LGSCO, could be circulated to Members following the meeting.
- In response to concerns around staff retention, it was noted that work had been conducted to make Sandwell Council an attractive workplace for potential recruits, including higher baseline pay, training and workplace development opportunities.
- Members were concerned about delays in service provision caused by staff retention, being informed that job evaluation projects have taken place to ensure that there is a drive for

competing with other neighbouring authorities overpay bands for separate roles.

- It was noted that some complaints may have multiple elements to a singular complaint. Every element would be individually investigated, with the possibility of an investigation closing one element but upholding another element of the complaint.
- In response to continual learning from complaints, it was noted that learning opportunities would be shared with the relevant manager and Officer involved, and if a wider learning opportunity arises it would be brought to the attention of the team.
- Members were informed that where there had been no conclusion to a complaint, it was not equivalent to no investigation taking place. It was explained that some complaints have no outcomes.
- Member were informed that where there had been delays, it may be down to staffing issues.
- In response to questions about the number of overseas recruits there was, it was explained to the Board that the figure was hard to obtain.
- In response to questions about neighbouring authorities seeing similar trends in retaining staff, it was noted that there was a wider national trend across the social care market, with issues being further exasperated since Covid 19.
- It was noted that feedback from customers and staff about service delivery, would be used to continually improve the service.

**22/25**

## **Scrutiny Action Tracker**

It was noted that the Board would be provided an update on the report concerning Loneliness in the new municipal year.

Meeting ended at 18:46pm.

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