

Complaints Handling and Performance

Annual Report 2024-25

Adults Social Care

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1. INTRODUCTION

Local authorities and the National Health Service are legally required to establish complaints procedures to deal with complaints about their health and social care functions. The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009 applies to Adult Social Care.

Bradford Council is required under the statutory Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints Regulations (2009) to annually report on complaints relating to Adults Social Care.

This report provides information covering the period 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025 in relation to the department of Adult Social Care.

The purpose of the Annual Report is to review the performance of the complaints handling process over a 12-month period. This includes statistical data and information about complaint themes and offers an analysis of what the information obtained from the operation of the complaints process means for the Council.










The Council recognises that customer feedback, along with information relating to the performance of complaint handling, provides a good indication of the overall performance of individual services and departments as well as the whole organisation.
















To ensure a balanced approach, the report also provides information on compliments and comments received by the Council.

2. ACTIVITY SUMMARY

Table 1 below gives details of complaints handling activity for 2024-25 and shows a comparison against the two previous years, 2022-23 and 2023-24.

Table 1 complaint performance summary

	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Total number of complaints received.	123 	184 	153 
No of formal complaints closed in year	151 	182 	149 
% of formal complaints about; -			
• Service provision	49% 	30% 	19% 

• Staff	11% 	11% 	14% 
% Responded to in *agreed timescale (*statutory or policy)	54% 	68% 	89% 
% Complaints uphold rate (* includes partially upheld)	33% 	45% 	34% 
Complaints received by the LGSCO in year	14 	20 	19 
LGSCO investigation uphold rate	14% 	35% 	36% 

3. COMPLAINTS

3.1 Complaints Received

A person is eligible to make a complaint under the Adults Social Care statutory complaint's procedure where the Local Authority and the Health Service have a power or duty to provide or secure a service. This includes a service provided by an external provider acting on behalf of the Local Authority. In such cases service users or their representatives can either complain directly to the provider or to Bradford Council, as the commissioner of the service.

Commissioned providers are encouraged to attempt to resolve complaints at the first point of contact in line with good practice as highlighted by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. However, they are equally advised to direct service users or their representatives to commissioners of the service, where local resolution is not possible or appropriate, or where the complainant remains dissatisfied.

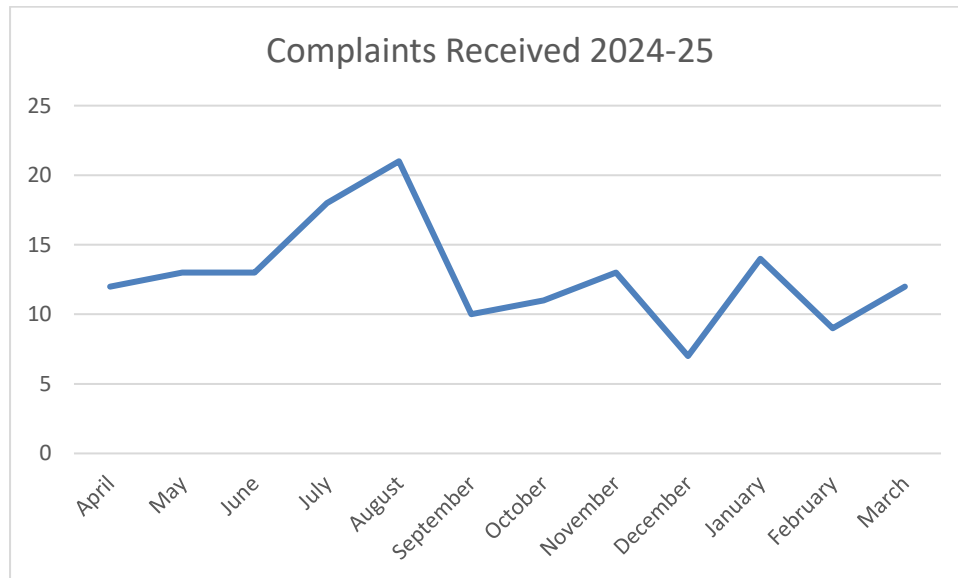
Complaints can be received from service users, or representatives who have consent to act on their behalf.

In July 2024, a dedicated email address and telephone line were introduced to ensure Adults Social Care complaints were received directly by the Adults Social Care Complaints Co-ordinator. This is a new role which has been created as a link between the Corporate Complaints team and Adults Social Care providing a dedicated point of contact for all complaints within the department.

There was a decrease in complaints received in comparison to the previous year, with 153 received in 2024-25 compared with 184 in 2023-24.

The graph below shows the number of complaints received, on a monthly basis, throughout the financial year.

Graph 1 – Monthly complaints totals



In 2024-25, 9,730 people received care and support services from Adult Social Care to meet their needs in provisions such as Home Care, Residential Care or Re-enablement. The number of complaints received this year indicates that less than 1% of service users, or someone acting on their behalf, raised a formal complaint about a service that they received.

Of the 153 complaints received, 94% were acknowledged within three working days, demonstrating the Council's compliance for acknowledging complaints against the 90% performance target.

3.2 Complaints closed

To resolve complaints efficiently and in an appropriate manner, the Ombudsman encourages local authorities to focus on being able to resolve complaints at an early stage.

Whilst the majority of complaints received were responded to under stage one of the Statutory complaints procedure, 24 complaints were identified to have an issue which could be resolved quickly and effectively through informal resolution. This approach involved the Adults Social Care Complaints Co-ordinator arranging for Managers or Social Workers to contact service users to discuss the content of their complaint with

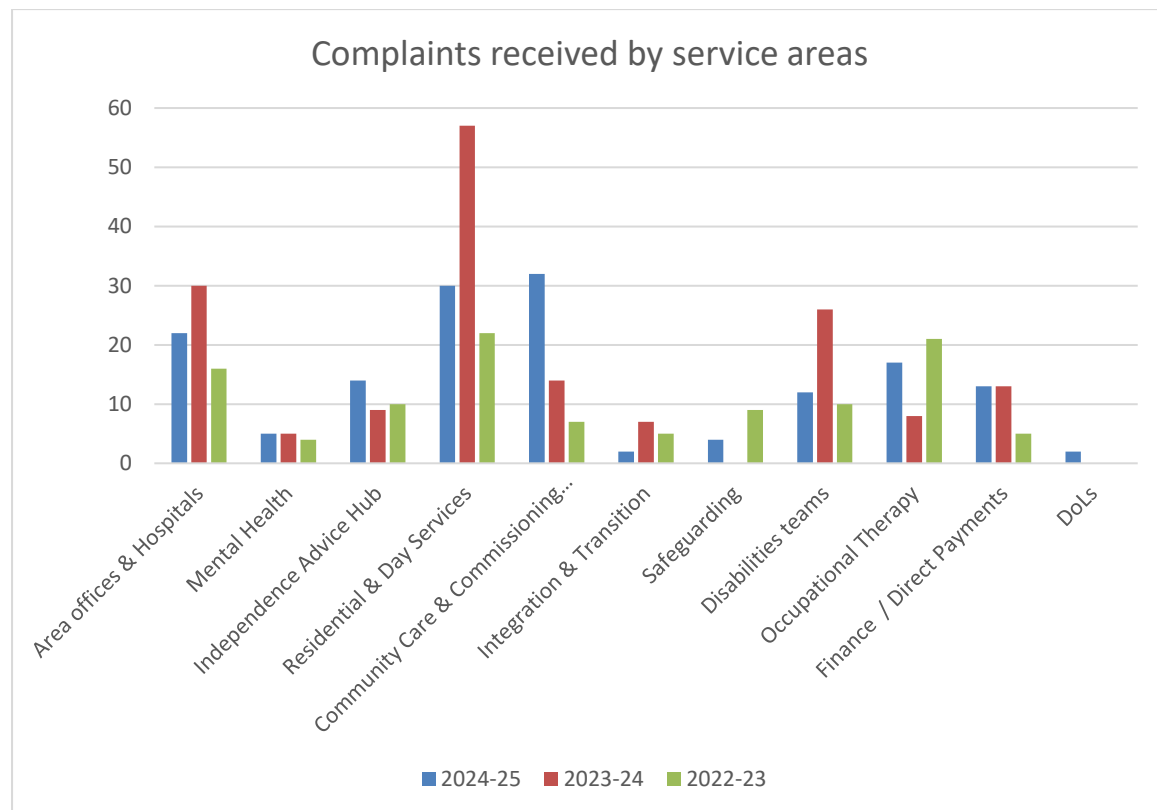
a view to resolving the issue immediately or agreeing to a resolution within a specified timescale. In these circumstances, complainants were asked to confirm if they were happy with the resolution and agreed for their formal complaint to be closed. This approach has been rolled out across all teams and services throughout the department.

4. COMPLAINT THEMES

Complaints can be broken down into both service area and common themes, providing valuable information when planning service improvement.

4.1 Teams and service areas

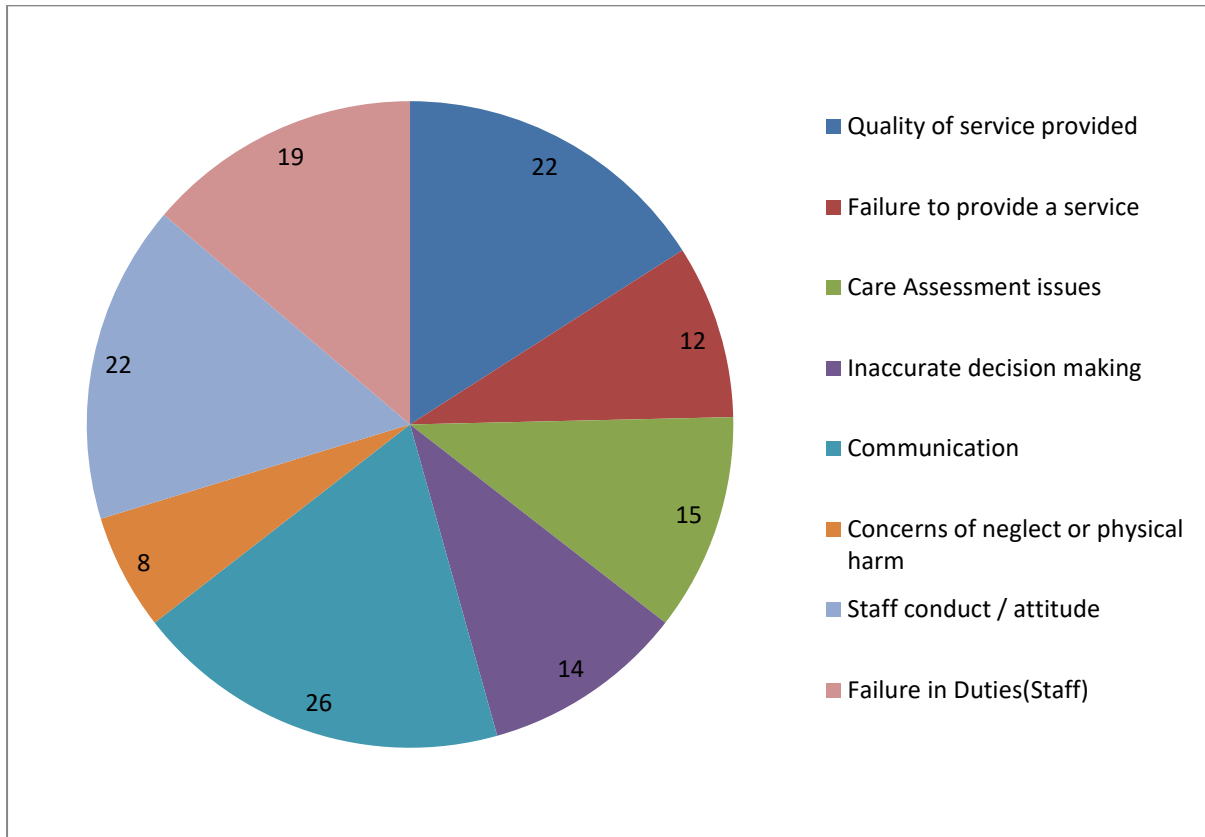
Chart 1 below shows the breakdown of complaints received by service area or team with a comparison to the last 2 years.



4.2 Issues raised within formal complaints

The Chart (2) below shows a breakdown of issues and concerns raised by type and the common themes that form part of individual complaints received.

Chart 2 Breakdown of common issues



***NB: A single complaint can include multiple issues*

The highest number of complaints received involved service users expressing their dissatisfaction at the lack of communication they were receiving. This has been reflected to staff through learning points and feedback provided from individual complaints. Communication issues should be easily remedied and it is anticipated that a decrease in such issues being raised as complaints will be seen in future reporting.

Complaints received relating to financial problems, charges and financial assessments have risen this year. This is indicative of the increase of fees and charging across the department where service users are dissatisfied with the additional costs.

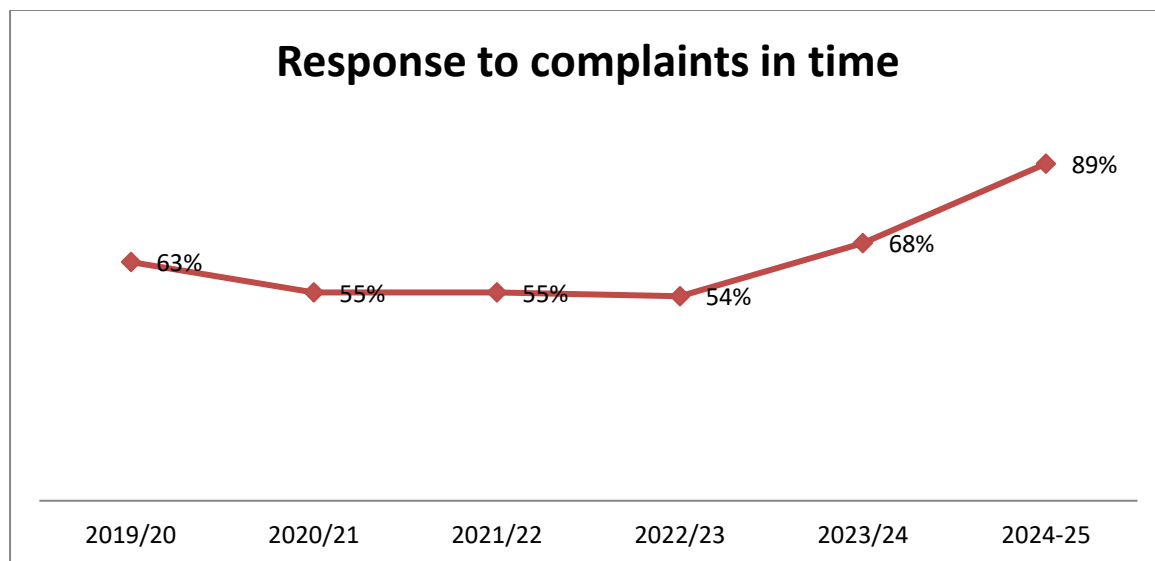
It is pleasing to report that complaints received relating to care assessments has decreased from 31 in 2023-24 to 15 in 2024-25. This demonstrates an improvement in managing the expectations of both service users and relatives.

Complaints pertaining to assessment entitlement or decision making cannot overturn the decision itself, but instead the complaints process will assess if the correct procedures and working practices have been applied. The complaint outcome will be considered using any evidence of fault or maladministration occurring.

5. PERFORMANCE

Performance in responding to complaints within the statutory timescale of 20 working days continues to increase from 54% in 2022-23 and 68% in 2023-24, reaching 89% in 2024-25. This remains marginally below the Council's response performance target of 90% within timescale but is reflective of the efforts made throughout the department to improve this.

Graph 3 below demonstrates the percentage of formal complaints currently responded to within 20 working days from 2019-20 onwards.



6. COMPLAINT OUTCOMES

The outcomes of complaints are classed as upheld, partially upheld, not upheld, withdrawn or inconclusive (when there is no evidence to conclude one way or another).

Whilst reporting on the number of complaints received is useful, it is important to assess this against the number of complaints which have been upheld and thus where fault has been found. This gives a clearer indication of where issues lie within the department and contributes to remedial action and service improvement plans.

The table below demonstrates the percentage of complaint outcomes for the last two financial years.

Where complaints have multiple issues, each issue is given a separate outcome.

Table 3 – Upheld rates

Stage 1 Upheld rates %	2023-24	2024-25
Fully Upheld	26%	7%
Partially Upheld	20%	28%
Not Upheld	40%	36%
Withdrawn / resolved	9%	30%
Inconclusive	6%	1%

The Council's RAG rating for **upheld rates only** is;

	21 to 100%
	11-20%
	0-10%

Whilst the percentage of complaints not upheld remains comparable to the previous year, the number of complaints fully upheld has decreased considerably.

Of the complaints upheld, the most common themes were;

- (i) the quality of service provided was not as expected
- (ii) charges required a review or reassessment

Partially upheld complaints increased from 20% to 28% compared to the previous year. In complaints where there are multiple issues raised and each one is addressed and given an outcome individually, partially upheld represents a higher number of issues upheld than not upheld.

This outcome can also be applied where some elements of any one issue are upheld, but there remains an acknowledgement to other elements which are deemed not upheld.

Of the complaints partially upheld, the most common themes were;

- (i) the quality of service provided was not to the standard expected
- (ii) communication with service users was lacking

7. TRAINING

Complaint handling training for Managers and Officers responding to complaints was delivered in 2024-25 through face-to-face sessions with individual teams. This was extended from in person training to include an e-learning training course. This has enabled staff to undertake training at a convenient time and allows for the course to be re-taken at any time to refresh an individual's knowledge when responding to complaints.

In addition to this, bespoke in-house training has been provided to Adults Social Care staff to provide an understanding of where informal resolution can be applied, how complaints can be avoided and encourage learning from complaints to prevent the same issue re-occurring.

Guidance on specific issues continues to be provided by the Corporate Complaints team and available for all staff on the Council intranet site. Topics made available in 2024-25 include how to write effective apologies and how to manage deadlock situations.

8. LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN

The Council is legally required to inform people of their right to complain to the Ombudsman if, for whatever reason, they are unhappy with the way the Council has dealt with their complaint or if they disagree with the outcome. All statutory stage one responses provide complainants with the details of how to contact the Ombudsman.

If a complainant approaches the Ombudsman, without initially raising their concern with the Council, the Ombudsman will invariably advise that the complaint is “premature” and will refer the complaint back to the Council for investigation. This provides the Council an opportunity to offer a response and if fault is found, to put corrective measures in place.

8.1 LGSCO Annual Review Letter

The Ombudsman publishes an annual letter to review the Council’s performance and provide information on the complaints they have investigated on behalf of service users within the Bradford district.

The Ombudsman has recently changed the timescales of producing annual letters and performance data for all Councils, recognising that earlier reporting by themselves enables the inclusion of the most up to date information in our own internal annual reports.

The latest Ombudsman annual performance letter of Bradford Council complaints was issued in May 2025 and provides information relating to the 2024-25 financial year.

In 2024-25 the Ombudsman received 32 complaints against Bradford Adults Social Care services. Of these, 7 were closed due to being incomplete or invalid with a further 12 closed after initial enquiries where made with the Council. In these instances, the initial complaint or action taken by the Council was reviewed and the decision made by the Ombudsman not to investigate.

Where the Ombudsman carried out and concluded their own investigations during the 2024-25 period, 3 complaints were closed not upheld, whilst 10 complaints were upheld due to fault and injustice caused to the complainant.

The Ombudsman made recommendations in 7 of the 10 upheld cases to remedy the fault. Remedies and recommendations included providing apologies, financial redress, staff training and where identified, changing procedures and working practices.

Of the 3 cases where no recommendations were made, the Ombudsman recognised that the Council had previously remedied the fault and injustice through its own actions prior to the case being presented to the Ombudsman.

The Ombudsman was satisfied that Bradford Council was 100% compliant in implementing the Ombudsman's recommendations to remedy the upheld complaints.

Compensation awards for 2024-25 where fault and injustice were found within Adults Social Care Statutory complaints totalled £3,252.

8.2 LGSCO Adults Social Care Annual Report

In addition to the Council annual review letter, the LGSCO also provides national reports pertaining to Adult Social Care across the country. The latest Adults Social Care report was published in September 2024 and highlighted poor communication as a key theme throughout their casework, urging all Councils and providers of social care to focus on clear and effective communication.

The tables below show further statistical information on themes and outcomes from the Ombudsman's September 2024 Adults Social Care report providing a comparison with the five West Yorkshire local authorities for the 2023-24 financial year.

Table 4 – Ombudsman Complaints received by themes 2023-24 providing a comparison across the West Yorkshire Councils

Authority name	Assessments and care planning	Charging	Safeguarding	Direct payments	Disabled facilities grants	Residential care	Home care	Supported living	Other
Calderdale	7	5	0	0	0	1	1	1	1
Bradford	6	6	5	3	2	2	2	0	3
Kirklees	4	4	0	0	0	2	1	0	1
Leeds	9	4	2	1	2	5	0	0	5
Wakefield	3	1	2	0	1	0	0	0	2

Table 5 – Ombudsman Complaints and enquiries decided by outcome 2023-24

Authority name	Invalid or incomplete	Advice given	Referred back for local resolution	Closed after initial enquiries	Investigation Not upheld	Investigation Upheld	Uphold rate (%)
Calderdale	0	0	4	3	0	4	100%
Bradford	0	0	5	11	5	6	55%
Kirklees	0	0	3	4	1	6	86%
Leeds	1	0	2	7	3	10	77%
Wakefield	1	0	4	5	0	1	100%

8.3 LGSCO identified learning for Adult Social Care complaints.

In addition to financial redress and symbolic payments, Ombudsman cases provided a variety of learning outcomes which were actioned by the Council as follows

- Provide training and reminders to relevant staff to provide clear advice and explanations of the process to be followed when an increased care package is requested.
- Ensure any staff who are involved in hospital discharge arrangements are made aware of failings in discharge planning and the impact this has on individuals.
- Discuss complaint findings to address the failings of providers and follow up with monitoring visits along with reflecting on the lessons learned in respect of individual complaint investigations.
- Remind staff about the Continuing Health Care scheme and their duty to refer individuals.
- Review financial assessments procedures to ensure detailed written information is provided at an early stage to the service user and their families.

9. LEARNING FROM COMPLAINTS

It is widely recognised that complaints provide a tool for service improvement and lessons learned. This can be in the form of general reminders for staff, specific learning points resulting in changes to processes and the sharing of good practice.

In May 2024 Adults Social Care created a “learning from practice” group. The group has met on a regular basis since then to provide information for dissemination and team discussion relating to complaint outcomes along with also sharing good practice from compliments.

Feedback forms are presented to all staff responding to complaints to collate learnings and actions from individual cases for monitoring and sharing more widely

through the service. It is noted that the form is not consistently used resulting in reminders being issued on a regular basis.

Examples of learning based on complaint outcomes in 2024-25 include

- Social Workers to refrain from using inappropriate language or give their personal opinion which could be deemed as the Council's stance when communicating with service users.
- Reminder to ensure relatives or representatives of service users have consent to act on their behalf before sharing any personal information and that this is recorded correctly.
- Staff to be aware of service users (or relatives) frustrations when handling calls and to not hastily terminate calls without trying to resolve issues.
- Care plans should include or provide contingency plans.

10. COMPLIMENTS

Whilst complaints provide an indication of where performance may need improvement and can contribute to identifying where service improvements are needed, compliments help to recognise good practice and acknowledge where staff have made great efforts to support people accessing Council services.

Between 1st April 2024 and 31st March 2025, 81 compliments were received. This is an increase to the number of compliments reported to CCT for 2023-24 when 72 compliments were received. It is acknowledged that there will be additional compliments received within the department during "business as usual" which are not forwarded to CCT to record. Regardless of where compliments are received, it is important that they are noted by Managers to reflect where services are delivered to an excellent standard, shared as examples of good practice and that where staff are personally complimented, they are given the recognition they deserve.

The table below provides a breakdown of compliments received for individual teams.

Table 6 – Breakdown of compliments received by team.

Bradford Hospital teams	7
BACES	1
BEST	2
Commissioning and contracting	10
CTLD	4
CMHT teams	6
Dove Court	4
Independence Advice Hub	11
Occupational Therapy	2
Safe and Sound	13
Sensory Needs	5

Community Review Team	3
Shipley Home Care	1
Social Work Area teams	10
Safeguarding	1
Community Care Admin	1
Total	81

Compliments can be received from both service users and other professionals.

Table 7 - Provides details of compliment themes

Quality of service provided	32
Individual staff	42
Impact and experience received by service user	7

Examples of compliments received in 2024-25 include

Bradford Hospital Teams

I wanted to take a moment to inform you of the exceptional service Salma has provided to us. From the first day of re-assignment, she contacted and engaged me, appreciating the fact that I was overseas, distressed by the lack of communication and the sense of helplessness I was experiencing in feeling unable to partake in my mother's care planning. Salma has displayed all the qualities that are crucial from a client centred perspective. Her deep understanding of our family's needs has been remarkable, with her cultural sensitivity and demonstration of cultural competency. Salma consistently demonstrated her ability to provide us with targeted support, service navigation and more importantly being an advocate for my mother and holding those difficult and challenging conversation with the hospital around discharge planning.

Sensory Needs team

As my placement comes to an end, I want to express my deepest gratitude to all of you. Working with the Sensory Needs Team has been an incredibly rewarding experience, and I feel fortunate to have had the opportunity to learn from each of you.

Dove Court

The world is a much better place with wonderful people like you all in it

Independence Advice Hub

I have just been speaking to a lovely lady from your team. This was my first call to your team in relation to a query about funding and how to progress my enquiry. It's lovely to speak to someone who is understanding, polite and LISTENS. Well done and thanks again, it makes such a difference not having to constantly repeat information and it's restored my faith in human nature

Safe and Sound

Our family would like to express our thanks and appreciation for the excellent service all your staff have consistently provided. You have given us peace of mind and confidence in the care of our dad. Thank you so much for the wonderful service you provide.
