

Pembrokeshire County Council

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Social Services
Complaints and Compliments Report
2015-16

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1. Introduction

Pembrokeshire County Council welcomes complaints, compliments and comments as a way of improving service delivery in Social Services. Complaints from customers are important to us and provide a valuable insight into the quality of the services we provide and commission. We monitor trends in complaints and use the information to inform training needs, review and revise processes and make improvements to the way we commission, plan and develop future services. Complaints also inform our quality assurance process.

The Council's Complaints and Compliments Policy was established on 1 August 2014 in accordance with The Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014 and The Representations Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014. This report provides a summary of the complaints received relating to Social Services and the actions taken to improve services as a result of the complaints process for the period 1 April 2015 to the 31 March 2016.

2. Complaints Management

There are two officers (1.3 full time equivalent) employed to manage Social Services Complaints. Following a recent restructure, the complaints team now forms part of the Audit, Risk and Assurance Service. The objective of the restructure is to provide a more robust governance and assurance process and to maintain a certain degree of impartiality and separation from Social Services.

3. Executive Summary

During 2015-16 a total of 79 complaints were received in relation to Social Services, 43 were in relation to Adult Care and 36 (1.75% of individuals referred to the service) related to Children's Services.

- 35 (81.4%) of Adult Care and 29 (80.5%) of Children's Services complaints were resolved at the local resolution Stage.
- Only six complainants were dissatisfied with the response to the outcome of their complaint and so referred to the Ombudsman. This is below the Welsh Local Authority average of eight referrals to the ombudsman.
- Only one of the above complaints was investigated further by the Ombudsman. An action plan was created and all the recommendations have now been completed and signed off.

We are committed to developing the complaints and compliments service to ensure that service standards are continuously improved.

4. Key work priorities for 2016-17 are to:

- Improve our response times for resolving local resolution and formal complaints.
- Provide training for independent investigators in partnership with the four regional Local Authorities.
- Continue to develop the way we learn from complaints and how this feeds into service improvement and commissioning arrangements.
- Developing an app/use of social media/factsheet to improve how we communicate with young people about the complaints process.
- Review the system for recording, monitoring progress and reporting of complaints.

5. Service improvements and lessons learnt

The Council is committed to learning from complaints and compliments and continues to record all service improvements outcomes. Below are some of the service improvements that have been put in place in 2015-16:

- Developing customer information around the Deprivation of Liberty Standards (DoLS) process.
- Undertaking a programme of Best Interest Assessor training across the social services workforce.
- Updating DoLS process to ensure that a referral is made to the Independent Mental Capacity Advocate at the point of authorisation.
- Complaints have fed into the newly developed transition procedure for young adults with a learning disability. More robust systems are being developed between commissioning and operations including development of the brokerage function, review of contractual arrangements and better interface with revenues.
- Developing an escalation process to ensure that funding agreements (particularly those involving health and social services) do not delay placement. Where necessary lead officers from health and social services will meet outside of the panel process to prevent any delays in ensuring service users access the placement they need.
- As part of the new safeguarding arrangements, the way in which outcomes are fed back to service users has been reviewed to ensure timely communication.
- Amending processes to ensure that care plans/assessments are shared with care homes at the start of each placement.

- Clause added to contracts with residential care to state that risk assessments based on a customer's assessed needs must be completed for each placement.
- Staff must ensure they communicate with parents prior to meetings taking place so that they are clear about the process. Where specific formats are used such as 'signs of safety', staff should explain this approach to families before any meetings take place. This requirement is built into the signs of safety training for all staff.
- The complaints team has been working closely with the Integrated Safeguarding team to put in place an agreed process for holding 'learning events' based on the Multi Agency Practice Review (MAPF) formula. These are facilitated by either the complaints team or the integrated safeguarding team for all formal complaints where the need for reflective learning is identified. The events will be facilitated using the 'signs of safety' format. Any learning identified through these events will then be fed into the service action plan for complaints for on-going monitoring by the Policy Planning and Change Manager in each division.
- We have increased our pool of independent complaint investigators. This is to ensure we have a good supply of trained and experienced individuals to undertake formal investigations and that investigations are completed within the statutory time-scales. A key priority for 2016-17 will be to provide opportunities for further training for investigators.

6. Analysis of Complaints

6.1 Complaints Received

A total of 79 complaints were received in relation to Social Services in 2015-16, compared to 87 in 2014-15. The table below provides a breakdown of the split between Adult Care and Children's Services and the stage at which the complaint was managed.

	Total	Local Resolution	Formal Investigation
Adult Care	43	35	8
Children's Services	36	29	7

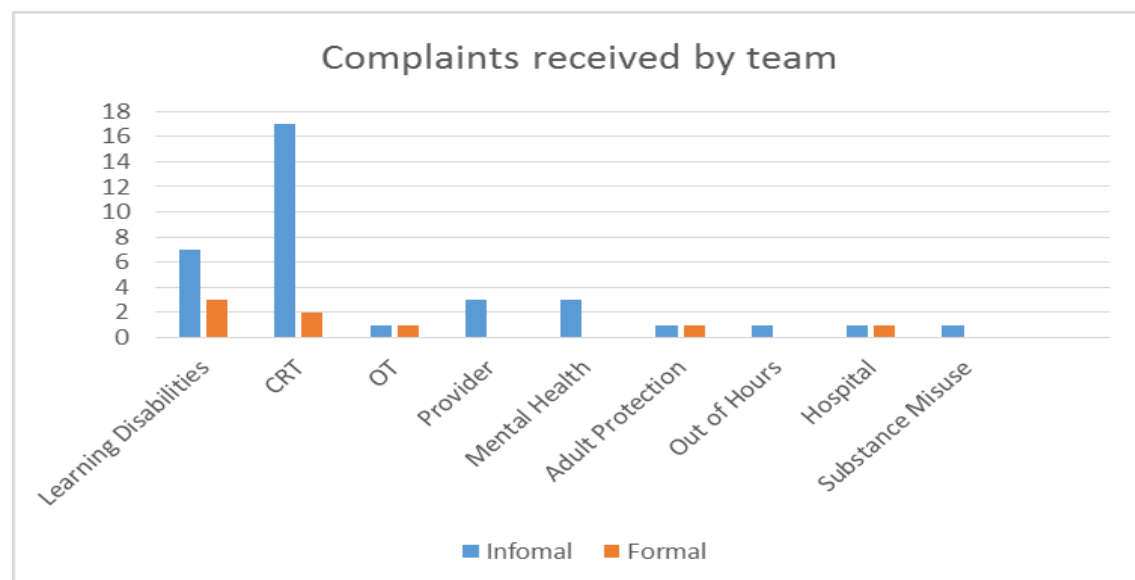
6.1.1 Adult Care

During 2015-16 43 complaints in relation to Adult Care were received, eight of which progressed to the formal stage. This is a slight reduction in the total number of complaints received in 2014-15 (51), although there was an increase in the number of formal complaints. The table below provides an annual breakdown of complaints received in relation to Adult Care and the stage at which they were managed:

	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Total Complaints	22	26	25	40	51	43
Local Resolution	17	18	20	29	44	35
Formal Complaint	5	8	5	11	7	8

Complaints received in relation to Adult Care increased annually between 2010-11 to 2014-15, however there was a reduction in 2015-16.

The chart below demonstrates the complaints received by team or service area within Adult Care for 2015-16:



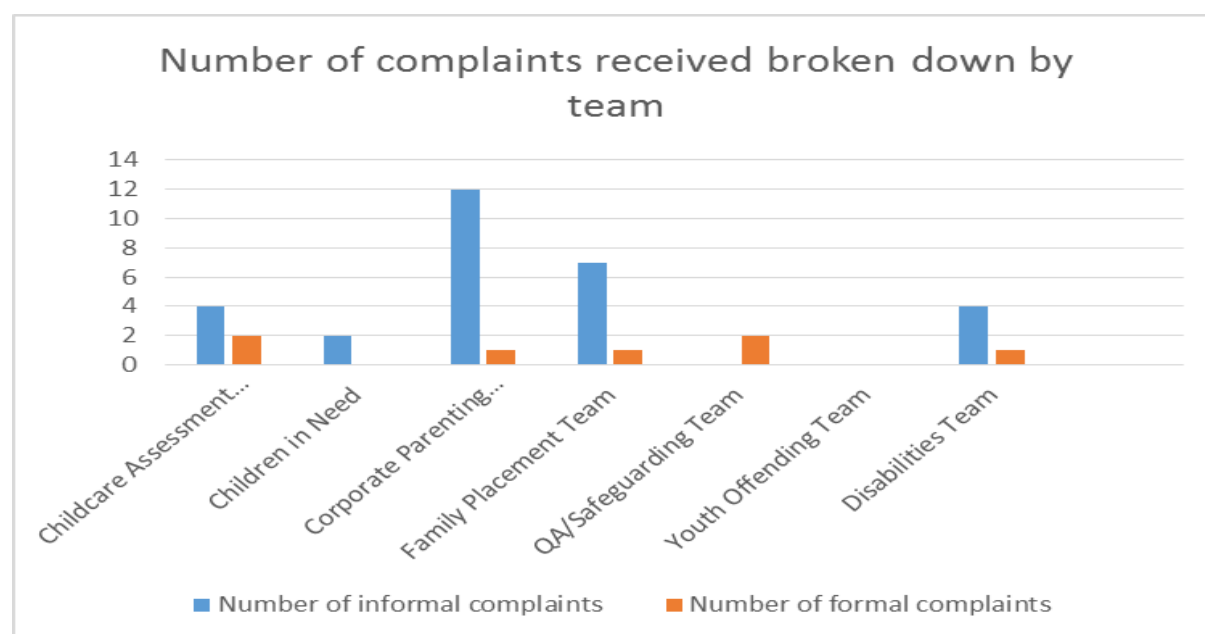
The number of complaints received by the team for Adult Care has remained consistent with those seen in 2014-15. The Community Resource Team (CRT) have the largest customer base so the level of complaints is proportionate and is consistent with previous years.

6.1.2 Children's Services

During 2015-16 36 complaints were received in relation to Children's Services in 2015-16 (same as 2014-15), of which seven progressed to the formal stage. The table below provides an annual breakdown of complaints received in relation to Children's Services and the stage at which they were managed:

	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Total Complaints	27	14	35	35	36	36
Local Resolution	23	12	30	33	33	29
Formal Complaint	4	2	5	2	3	7

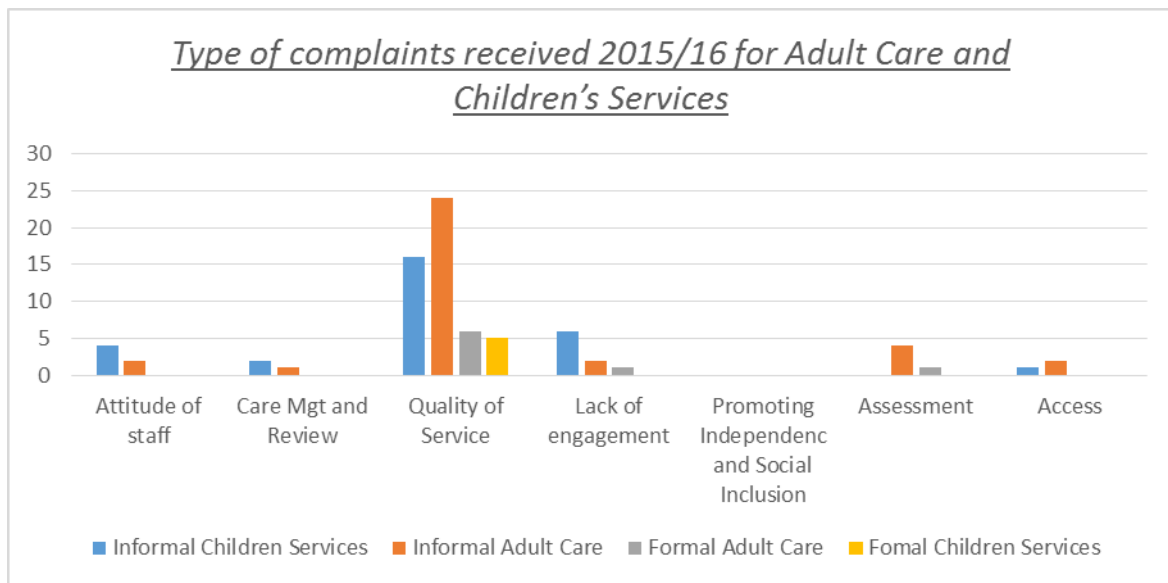
The chart below illustrates the complaints received by team or service area within Children's Services for 2015-16:



There has been an increase in the number of formal complaints received (an increase of four from the previous year) although the number of complaints that have been escalated to the formal investigation stage remain low.

One of our main aims is to resolve complaints for our customers as quickly and effectively as possible. We believe this results in improved customer satisfaction and is a better use of the Council's resources.

6.2 Nature of Complaint



Overall the trend remains consistent with previous years and the main reasons for complaints are linked to communication and quality of service. Senior managers oversee and monitor the development of improvement action plans made in response to recommendations made in the investigation report.

The complaints system only allows the input of one reason for a complaint against each case (for example quality of service). Many complaints are complex and cover a number of different reasons and areas of concerns. In these instances the most common reason for a complaint is recorded.

7. Response to complaints within statutory time-scales

7.a Percentage of complaints acknowledged within statutory time-scales at local resolution stage 2015-16:

	Acknowledgement	Discussion meeting	Response letter
Adults	90%	59%	47%
Children	79%	61%	23%
Total	87%	60%	35.5%

The procedure expects that all complaints received at the local resolution stage are acknowledged within two working days and complaints escalated to the formal stage are acknowledged within five working days.

The acknowledgement time for Adult Care complaints has fallen for the second year and will be targeted for improvement during 2016-17. The acknowledgement time for Children's Services has improved slightly on last year, however this still requires improvement.

7.b Percentage of complaints responded to within statutory timescales at local resolution stage 2015-16.

	Within statutory time-scale	Outside statutory time-scale but extension agreed
Adult Care	53%	45%
Children's Services	24%	62%

The complaints procedure expects that all complaints received at the local resolution stage are offered a meeting or discussion with a manager within 10 working days. A letter outlining the agreed resolution must then follow this meeting within a further five working days.

We have met this target for 53% of Adult Care and Children's Services complaints in 2015-16. Where we have agreed an extension with a complainant we have met the agreed amended time-scale for 45% of Adult Care and 62% of Children's Services complaints. All remaining complaints were responded to outside of the agreed extension period agreed or are on-hold/discontinued.

It must be noted that complaints can often be complex, requiring multi-agency co-operation and action. Complaints regularly require lengthy investigations involving the collation of information, undertaking of meetings and action plan agreement; all of which can take a considerable period of time.

Improving upon these time-scales together with Social Care managers was a key priority work area for the complaints team in 2016-17.

7.c Percentage of complaints responded to within statutory time-scales at formal investigation stage 2015-2016

	Within statutory time-scale	Outside statutory time-scale but extension agreed
Adult Care	0%	88%
Children's Services	0%	80%

The complaints procedure expects that all complaints investigated at the formal stage are resolved within 25 working days from the date the areas of complaint have been agreed with the Council and the customer. All formal investigations must now be completed by an independent investigator from outside the local authority. This time-scale includes the Director's response to the formal investigation report.

No formal Adult Care complaints were resolved within the statutory time-scale however seven complaints were resolved where an extension was agreed with the complainant. With regards to complaints for children's services four were resolved within the extension time agreed with the complainant, one is on hold and one was discontinued, one was responded to outside of the agreed extension time.

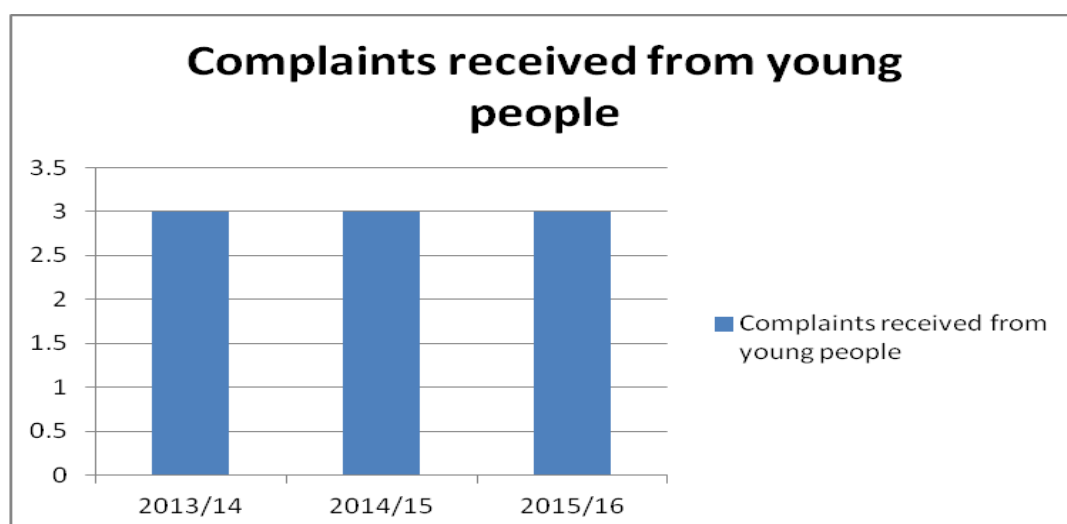
With regards to formal complaints the 25 working day time-scale is an extremely challenging target to meet. Formal investigations are often complex in nature and the independent investigator needs time to meet with staff, view records and produce their report. The Director then needs time to consider the report and agree any recommendations to be made before responding to the complainant. To complete this within 25 working days does present a challenge, a concern that has been raised by other Local Authorities across Wales as part of the new social services complaints procedures. We will continue to raise this as a concern through the All Wales Complaints Officers Group (AWCOG).

During 2015-16 88% of formal Adult Care complaints were resolved within the agreed extension period and we will look to improve upon these figures and those for Children's Services (80%) in 2016-17.

We have recruited new investigators which has helped ensure investigations are carried out within the time-scale wherever possible and reports meet the required standard. This will ensure that time is not spent in quality assuring poor investigation reports and will help us to meet the target in resolving formal complaints within 25 working days.

A thorough response at the formal stage increases customer satisfaction with the process and reduces the number of complaints referred to the Ombudsman.

8. Number of complaints received from children and young people about Children's Services from 2013-14 to 2015-16



The number of complaints received from children or young people dealt with through the Complaints Officer has remained at three, the same as the previous two years. This figure does not include complaints resolved by the advocacy service (Tros Gynnal) who actively deal with a large number of issues informally by meeting with staff and the young person involved before the Complaints Officer becomes involved. They have received 129 contacts from looked after children this year and only three resulted in making a complaint through formal routes.

9. Recording and monitoring Provider complaints

9.a Number of complaints and concerns received about provider services for Adult Care from 2012-13 to 2015-16.

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Other Provider	0	2	0	0
Residential Care	1	3	1	0
Dom Care	30	14	18	15

The number of provider complaints was 15 for the year 2015-16.

We continue to share information appropriately to ensure that information raised through complaints is fed into other safeguarding procedures. This ensures that any trends or concerns resulting from provider complaints can be picked up and dealt with swiftly and pro-actively.

10. Compliments received 2012-13 to 2015-2016

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Adult Care	81	91	63	41
Children's Services	19	21	19	18

Social Services received 59 compliments during 2015-16.

"Thank you for the social care team for the kindness and support you showed my parents..... Without your help we would never have been able to keep them together in their own home right up to the end of their day. We are truly grateful to you all."

"Hi....all the child care team, I would like to say a big thank you, on behalf of ***** and all my family, for your kindness... I can't thank you all enough, for all your hard work behind the scenes. It has been intense, but thank you."

11. Public Services Ombudsman and Stage 3 Panel Investigations

11.a Comparison of complaints with local authority average

	Pembrokeshire	LA Average
Adult	3	3
Children	3	5

Ombudsman Letter

During 2015-16 the Local Ombudsman received 906 complaints against local authorities, down from 938 from the previous year.

The number of complaints received regarding Pembrokeshire marginally increased from 40 in 2014-15 to 42 in 2015-16. There were three complaints relating to adult service and the LA average is three and three complaints relating to children with LA average of five. The Ombudsman received eight Code of Conduct complaints against members of the county council. In five of the cases the decision was made not to investigate, in one there was no evidence of a breach and in two cases it was deemed no action was necessary.

Children's Services

Our own records show that the Ombudsman received two complaints in total from customers complaining about Children's Services (the same as in 2014-15). Neither of these complaints warranted further investigation. One complaint is currently being investigated by the Ombudsman which was initially made in 2012 and had been put on-hold pending completion of other legal processes which took precedent.

Adult Care

The Ombudsman received two complaints from customers in relation to Adult Care (compared to four complaints in 2014-15). One of these complaints warranted further investigation by the Ombudsman but was not upheld. One S.21 report was received in relation to a complaint made to the Ombudsman in 2014-15. This was upheld. All of the recommendations made have since been implemented by the Council.