

||| Social Services Compliments and Complaints Annual Report 2016-17



Listening

Responding

Improving

1. Purpose of report

The Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014 states each local authority must prepare an annual report, which must include details of the records kept in accordance with regulation 20, on its performance in the handling and investigation of complaints for the purposes of:-

- (a) monitoring compliance with these Regulations; and
- (b) improving the handling and consideration of complaints.

This report covers the period 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017. It includes information regarding:

- The complaints procedure
- Complaints, compliments and other representations received and timescales in complaint handling
- Achievements, lessons learnt and planned future development.

2. Introduction

This Social Services Compliments and Complaints Annual Report for 2016-17 summarises the customer feedback and concerns received in Social Services.

We recognise that our customers have a range of experiences when contacting us. Some of the experiences are positive, and we want to recognise where good practice is evident, while others fall short of our standards. It is essential that we learn from this and feed this into service improvement. We provide an opportunity for service users to feedback to us both positive and negative experiences to encourage a culture of listening and learning, where the focus is on resolution and continual improvement. Where possible, we take immediate action to put things right at an early resolution stage, however where this is not possible we operate a robust complaints procedure.

The purpose of the complaints team is to:

- Provide advice and guidance to colleagues and customers
- Provide impartial support for both customers and staff
- Identify advocacy needs
- Carry out recruitment of independent investigators and independent persons
- Manage the pool of independent investigators
- Ensure quality formal investigations are undertaken
- Identify training needs and provide training
- Provide data analysis
- Ensure statutory timescales are adhered to
- Capture learning and manage action plans
- Manage customer expectations

3. Procedure

Complaint management

The Social Services Complaints Officers operate independently as part of the Audit, Risk & Information Service. There are two part-time officers who manage the process. It is the officers' role to ensure that complaints are responded to in a timely manner and comply with the complaints procedure. The officers communicate and explain the process with the complainant in addition to liaising with service managers and senior management.

Stage 1: Local resolution

Complaints received at local resolution stage are recorded by the Complaints Officer and forwarded to the relevant manager to investigate. The complainant receives a written response within 10 working days. The vast majority of complaints are resolved at this stage.

Stage 2: Independent investigation

If a complainant is unhappy with the outcome of the local resolution they can request to have their complaint investigated independently. Pembrokeshire County Council, along with Ceredigion County Council and Carmarthenshire County Council, utilises a pool of experienced independent investigators who undertake a formal investigation of the complaint. The investigator produces a report detailing whether the concerns have been upheld or not and any recommendations for the department to consider. The three local authorities will be carrying out a recruitment exercise later in the year to ensure that there are a sufficient number of experienced investigators.

If the complainant remains unhappy they have the opportunity to contact the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.

4. Advocacy and engagement

Children

The Local Authority commissions the services of Tros Gynnal Plant Wales to provide advocacy support for children and young people.

The advocate works 21 hours a week and plays an active role in resolving complaints at an early stage. The eligibility criteria changed in October 2016 whereby support is provided for looked after children, care leavers, children and young people in receipt of care and support plans and child protection.

Adults

The Local Authority commissions the services of Dewis Centre for Independent Living to provide advocacy support.

Services can be accessed by customers who are:

- over 18, eligible to receive a service under the Fair Access to Care criteria and a carer;
- physically disabled
- learning impaired
- sensory impaired
- vulnerable
- have a mental health issue

5. Complaint activity data

A full breakdown of complaints received by division at Local Resolution stage (1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017):

| Division | Service area | Year total |
|-------------------|------------------------------|------------|
| Children Services | Assessment Team | 2 |
| | Children in Need | 8 |
| | Corporate Parenting Team | 7 |
| | Family Placement Team | 3 |
| | Children Total | 20 |
| Adult Services | Occupational Therapy | 2 |
| | Adult Professional Help desk | 2 |
| | Adult Protection Team | 0 |
| | Community Mental Health | 1 |
| | Managed Care | 7 |
| | Hospital Discharge Team | 1 |
| | Learning Disabilities | 6 |
| | Provider | 8 |
| | Sensory Services | 1 |
| | Adult Total | 28 |
| | TOTAL | 48 |

The total number of local resolution complaints received for the period 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017 is 48 with 2 adult complaints being withdrawn and not pursued. This compares with 64 complaints received last year showing a reduction in 16 complaints over both areas.

As stated above we received 8 provider complaints this year compared with 15 last year. There has been a significant decrease in provider complaints. We have been working closely with providers and have provided complaints training to assist with ensuring responses are robust.

We have not received any Welsh Language complaints in relation to Social Services.

A full breakdown of complaints received by division at Formal stage (1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017):

| Division | Service area | Year total |
|---------------------|-----------------------|------------|
| Children's Services | Family Placement | 0 |
| | Children in Need | 0 |
| | Child Care Assessment | 2 |
| | Corporate Parenting | 2 |
| | Children Total | 4 |
| Adult Services | Learning Disabilities | 1 |
| | Safeguarding | 2 |
| | Adult Total | 3 |

The total number of formal complaints received for the period 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017 is 7 with 10 complaints being withdrawn and not pursued. Five complaints were invalid (there are various reasons for this, for example the complainant does not meet the criteria to make a complaint) and 1 is currently on hold. This compares with 15 complaints last year showing a reduction of 8 overall over the two areas.

Trend analysis:

| Adult Services | 2010-11 | 2011-12 | 2012-13 | 2013-14 | 2014-15 | 2015-16 | 2016-17 |
|------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Local Resolution Stage | 17 | 18 | 20 | 29 | 44 | 35 | 28 |
| Formal Stage | 5 | 8 | 5 | 11 | 7 | 8 | 3 |
| TOTAL | 22 | 26 | 25 | 40 | 51 | 43 | 31 |

| Children's Services | 2010-11 | 2011-12 | 2012-13 | 2013-14 | 2014-15 | 2015-16 | 2016-17 |
|------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Local Resolution Stage | 23 | 12 | 30 | 33 | 33 | 29 | 20 |
| Formal Stage | 4 | 2 | 5 | 2 | 3 | 7 | 4 |
| TOTAL | 27 | 14 | 35 | 35 | 35 | 36 | 24 |

6. Complaint performance

Acknowledgement timescales for Local Resolution Stage complaints:

| Division | Acknowledgement | Discussion meeting | Response Letter |
|---------------------|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| Adult Services | 86% | 36% | 71% |
| Children's Services | 90% | 61% | 85% |

Complaints received at the local resolution stage are required to be acknowledged within 2 working days and 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 5 working days. In 2016-17 there has been a slight increase in the percentage of complaints acknowledged within the statutory timescale from 87% to 88%.

The percentage of discussion meetings held within the statutory timescale has remained the same at 60%. Discussion meetings were held for 36% of adult services complaints. It is important to note that discussion meetings are not always required as sometimes an immediate response is given or following a conversation the complainant does not require a meeting.

There has been a substantial increase in the response letter being issued within the statutory timescales for Local Resolution complaints from 35.5% in 2015-16 to 78% in 2016-17. This is mainly attributed to close working relationships between the complaints team, managers and service managers and a determination to resolve concerns as soon as possible.

Response timescales for Local Resolution stage complaints:

| Division | Within Statutory Time-scale | Outside Statutory timescale but extension agreed |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------|---|
| Adult Services | 71% | 50% |
| Children's Services | 85% | 0% |

Resolving complaints within the statutory time limit has improved since 2015-16 with an increase from 53% to 71% in 2016-17 for Adult Services and from 24% to 85% in 2016-17 for Children's Services.

There will be occasions when we need to extend this time limit if the case is complex or multi-agency. Where we have agreed an extension with a complainant we have met the amended timescale for 50% of Adult Services however, the 3 complaints extended for Children's Services were not met within the agreed extension. All remaining complaints were responded to outside of the agreed extension period or are on-hold/withdrawn.

Improving on the timescales for responses for local resolution complaints was a focus for the team in the year 2016-17. It is a reflection of the efforts of the team as well as the support of staff and managers in Social Services, that this has seen a marked improvement.

Acknowledgement Timescales for Formal Stage Complaints:

| Division | Acknowledgement | Discussion meeting |
|---------------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| Adult Services | 50% | 100% |
| Children's Services | 100% | 66% |

Response Timescales for Formal Stage Complaints:

| Division | Within Statutory time-scale | Outside Statutory time-scale but extension agreed |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| Adult Services | 0% | 100% |
| Children's Services | 0% | 75% |

The complaints procedure states that complaints investigated at the formal stage are resolved within 25 working days from the date the scope of complaint has been agreed with the complainant. All formal investigations are undertaken by an independent investigator from outside the local authority and time-scale includes the Director's response to the formal investigation report.

In the year 2016-17, no formal complaints were resolved within the statutory time-scale however all 3 Adult Care complaints were resolved where an extension was agreed with the complainant. With regards to complaints for children's services 3 were resolved within the extension time agreed with the complainant and one was responded to outside of the agreed extension time.

Investigating the complaint and completing the report within the 25 working days does present a challenge, however we strive to ensure formal complaints are robust, thorough and comprehensive. We do continue to raise this as a concern through the All Wales Complaints Officers Group (AWCOG) and this was discussed with Welsh Government representative's at the most recent AWCOG meeting in July 2017. Local Authorities will have an opportunity to feed comments to Welsh Government as part of a review of the document; A Guide to Handling Complaints and Representations by Local Authority Social Services.

We have managed to secure some additional investigators which has helped ensure investigations are carried out within the time-scale required wherever possible and quality reports are produced.

The table below illustrates the volume of concerns requiring investigation which can be raised in a formal complaint. It also demonstrates that the majority of concerns are not upheld; which is reflective of the fact that in most cases the service is adhering to the appropriate policies and procedures.

Example of Complaint outcomes for Formal Services:

| | Areas of concern | Upheld | Partially upheld | Not upheld |
|-------------|------------------|--------|------------------|------------|
| Complaint 1 | 22 | 11 | 7 | 4 |
| Complaint 2 | 5 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| Complaint 3 | 32 | 0 | 0 | 32 |
| Complaint 4 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 |

7. Recording and monitoring Provider complaints

The number of provider complaints received has reduced from 15 in 2015-16 to 8 in 2016-17.

We continue to work closely with the quality assurance and safeguarding teams to ensure that concerns raised are dealt with appropriately. This ensures that any trends or concerns resulting from provider complaints can be picked up and dealt with swiftly and pro-actively. The Information Governance and Complaints Manager attends the Quality Assurance Group which monitors service provider performance and quality and safeguarding concerns.

8. Compliments

During 2016-17 Social Services has received 80 compliments. This is a significant increase compared with last year when 59 compliments were received.

Several compliments relate to the Family Intervention team (11%) and also the Children in Need Team (7%).

Trend analysis:

| Division | 2012-13 | 2013-14 | 2014-15 | 2015-16 | 2016-17 |
|---------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Adult Services | 81 | 91 | 63 | 41 | 49 |
| Children's Services | 19 | 21 | 19 | 18 | 31 |

Example of a compliment to Adult services:

"X, most kindly and caringly arranged for wonderful help at short notice. I was not only grateful but also felt the compassion and care from him that I needed at the time and the care he arranged was wonderful. Agency sent really special carers to attend to my husband on the last seven days of his life. A short time I know but such a blessing to me and my tired old arthritic body and hands. I thought I could manage to the end but need help quickly and xxxxx gave just that. All I can say is thank you many times over and bless you all for this special service."

Example of a compliment to Children's services:

"I just had to say thank you for all the support given to me this last few months. I have had help from so many people, all of whom have given me time to moan and where available physical help. I feel that it is often not acknowledged when the staff in the Foster care team put themselves out to help both the children and the carers. I for one had a really supportive team working around me and my child. This is a thank you to all that I have moaned to, xx, xx. Who have had most hands on and everyone else who has had the misfortune to have picked up the phone in both teams. You have all been there for me. Please pass on my thanks to everyone"

9. Public Service Ombudsman for Wales

In the reporting year there have been 8 complaints that have been referred to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. This has been an increase from 5 last year, however none were upheld. Of the 8 complaints referred 6 related to Adult Services and 2 to Children's Services. The Wales Local Authority average for each service is 4.

At the time of writing this report we had not received the final Annual Letter from the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales and so this could be subject to change however, this letter will show comparative data across Wales when finalised and released.

10. Reflections of the last year

- Complaints form part of the Audit, Risk & Information Service as of September 2016, with a view to providing an improved and more robust independent assurance service to the Council.
- Changes in Director and Heads of Service within the Social Services and Leisure Directorate.
- The Information Governance and Complaints Manager reports to the Adult and Children's Service Heads of Service and Director for Social Services and Leisure on a monthly basis to advise of outstanding complaints, any Ombudsman cases and action plans.
- A review of policies and procedures has taken place to ensure that our information is up to date and correct versions are displayed on our website and internal intranet.
- A new recording system for complaints is being trialled to improve complaint management, analyse trends and escalate outstanding actions in action plans.
- Continued involvement in the Quality Assurance Group, sharing practice information regarding providers.
- Complaint handling training for providers delivered.
- Successfully recruited two new independent investigators.
- Delivered the first learning event for learning disability services.
- Greater emphasis on early resolution and close working with managers to address issues.
- Met with a group of young care leavers to talk to them about the complaints process.

11. Learning Lessons

Complaints Action Plan

We transfer all recommendations resulting from investigations into an action plan to ensure that the actions are monitored and carried out in a timely manner.

During the last year we have implemented a large number of service changes which have been recommended as a result of complaint investigations. Some examples being:-

- Developed a Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DOL's) leaflet
- Developed leaflets on transitions, moving from childhood to adulthood and moving from children's to adults services; safeguarding adults at risk from abuse.
- Safeguarding Multi Agency Professional Forum (MAPF) held on 4.8.16 regarding a customer who was injured at a residential home.
- Amended policies and procedures regarding sharing a customer's care plan and assessment with the home provider at the commencement of placement (November 2016).
- Development of policy for travel costs for carers (January 2017).
- Provide a laminated sheet at conference meetings stating set agenda for parents and families.
- Increased the pool of independent investigators to try and reduce delays.

Due to the nature of complaints being dealt with in this process, sometimes situations are extremely complex and have more than one team involved. As part of the complaint resolution process it is imperative that the complaints team and Social Services work together to learn from complaints and share best practice.

Complaint Learning Events:

Over the last year we have developed processes for identifying and carrying out learning events and have developed a flow chart to illustrate the process.

The first complaint learning event was held in January 2017 and was extremely successful. All professionals involved participated in sharing their experiences both positive and negative and learning actions were agreed. The complaints team wish to undertake at least two learning events a year.

Complaint officers have also taken part in learning events that are under the safeguarding agenda known as MAPF's (Multi Agency Professional Forums). The MAPF's process is based on the Signs of Safety Model and we use this tried and tested approach in complaint learning events.

12. Focus for the current year

The teams focus for the current year is to build on the improvements already seen and also;

- Maintain and improve Social Services Practice and Customer Service Standards
- Further improve complaint response times for complaints, both local resolution and formal stage
- Improve our learning culture by implementing a programme of learning events
- Develop our reporting systems by migrating to a new complaints system ensuring regular reporting both departmentally and corporately
- Development of MKI data base system to improve the overall management of complaints
- Provide investigation training for internal contact officers
- A 'Meet and Greet' to be arranged to speak to prospective independent investigators
- Continue involvement in the All Wales Complaints Officers Group and re-establish the local complaints group comprising of Pembrokeshire, Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion to share best practice and training opportunities.

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| Complaint 2 | 5 | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| Complaint 3 | 32 | 0 | 0 | 32 |
| Complaint 4 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 |

7. Recording and monitoring Provider complaints

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We continue to work closely with the quality assurance and safeguarding teams to ensure that concerns raised are dealt with appropriately. This ensures that any trends or concerns resulting from provider complaints can be picked up and dealt with swiftly and pro-actively. The Information Governance and Complaints Manager attends the Quality Assurance Group which monitors service provider performance and quality and safeguarding concerns.

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Several compliments relate to the Family Intervention team (11%) and also the Children in Need Team (7%).

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- Successfully recruited two new independent investigators.
- Delivered the first learning event for learning disability services.
- Greater emphasis on early resolution and close working with managers to address issues.
- Met with a group of young care leavers to talk to them about the complaints process.

11. Learning Lessons

Complaints Action Plan

We transfer all recommendations resulting from investigations into an action plan to ensure that the actions are monitored and carried out in a timely manner.

During the last year we have implemented a large number of service changes which have been recommended as a result of complaint investigations. Some examples being:-

- Developed a Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DOL's) leaflet
- Developed leaflets on transitions, moving from childhood to adulthood and moving from children's to adults services; safeguarding adults at risk from abuse.
- Safeguarding Multi Agency Professional Forum (MAPF) held on 4.8.16 regarding a customer who was injured at a residential home.
- Amended policies and procedures regarding sharing a customer's care plan and assessment with the home provider at the commencement of placement (November 2016).
- Development of policy for travel costs for carers (January 2017).
- Provide a laminated sheet at conference meetings stating set agenda for parents and families.
- Increased the pool of independent investigators to try and reduce delays.

Due to the nature of complaints being dealt with in this process, sometimes situations are extremely complex and have more than one team involved. As part of the complaint resolution process it is imperative that the complaints team and Social Services work together to learn from complaints and share best practice.

Complaint Learning Events:

Over the last year we have developed processes for identifying and carrying out learning events and have developed a flow chart to illustrate the process.

The first complaint learning event was held in January 2017 and was extremely successful. All professionals involved participated in sharing their experiences both positive and negative and learning actions were agreed. The complaints team wish to undertake at least two learning events a year.

Complaint officers have also taken part in learning events that are under the safeguarding agenda known as MAPF's (Multi Agency Professional Forums). The MAPF's process is based on the Signs of Safety Model and we use this tried and tested approach in complaint learning events.

12. Focus for the current year

The teams focus for the current year is to build on the improvements already seen and also;

- Maintain and improve Social Services Practice and Customer Service Standards
- Further improve complaint response times for complaints, both local resolution and formal stage
- Improve our learning culture by implementing a programme of learning events
- Develop our reporting systems by migrating to a new complaints system ensuring regular reporting both departmentally and corporately
- Development of MKI data base system to improve the overall management of complaints
- Provide investigation training for internal contact officers
- A 'Meet and Greet' to be arranged to speak to prospective independent investigators
- Continue involvement in the All Wales Complaints Officers Group and re-establish the local complaints group comprising of Pembrokeshire, Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion to share best practice and training opportunities.