
**QUARTERLY COMPLAINTS AND REPRESENTATIONS REPORT
QUARTER 4 2017-18**

Reason for the Report

1. The Committee's terms of reference state that it will receive Children's Services Complaints reports.
2. This Quarter 4 report covers complaints and representations from 1st January 2018 through to 31st March 2018.

Introduction

3. The current Welsh Government guidance and regulations in relation to social services complaints and representations came into being on 1st August 2014.
4. The procedure places the emphasis on the initial local resolution stage – Stage 1 - with complainants being offered a discussion to resolve the matter. The second formal stage (Stage 2) provides for independent investigation. If the outcome of Stage 2 does not satisfy the complainant, s/he has recourse to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.
5. Citizens making complaints have a right to be listened to properly and have their concerns resolved quickly and effectively. Children's Services emphasis is on listening to concerns and using this learning to improve services for everyone who uses them.
6. Complaints should be handled in such a way that the complainant is the focus, not the process, and that the particular circumstances of the complainant are taken into account (including their age or disability). Where the complaint relates to a looked after child, a child in need or a care leaver the local authority has a duty to provide an advocate as required. All children or young people who make complaints are offered a meeting and all children and families will receive a written response to the

concerns they have raised.

7. The Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 devotes Part 10 to complaints and this reflects Welsh Government guidance and regulations and Council procedures. The Council is mindful that the Act will further promote people's rights and collaborative working will be actively encouraged.

Summary of complaints activity during the period

8.

Item	Q4 2017-18
Number open at start of period	18
Number received (overall)	41
Number received directly from children and young people	0
Number closed	37
Number outstanding at end of period	22
% acknowledged within 2 working days	40 / 41 = 97%
% concluded within 15 working days of acknowledgement	28 / 41 = 68%

9. During this quarter, the number of complaints received by Children's Services has seen an increase in complaints to 41 (20 in Quarter 3, 2017-18).
 - a. 60% (12) of the complaints received were in relation to the Social Worker or the service received. There were no complaints in relation to finance. 10% (2) of the complaints received were in relation to contact. The remaining 30% (6) of complaints were in relation to other issues including decision-making.
 - b. 7 complaints were received about the Intake & Assessment Service, which is a decrease from 11 in Quarter 3 (17-18). 18 complaints were received regarding the Child in Need Service (3 from young people) which compared with 1 in Quarter 3 (17-18); 11 complaints were received about the Looked After Children Service compared with 2 in Quarter 3 (17-18). The remaining complaints were in relation to Child Health & Disability

Services (1) and we received complaints that were dealt with via the corporate process timescales.

Example of complaints concluded during the quarter are:

A complaint where we were able to put things right

Parents of a youngster complained that they had arrived at the venue in which a Child Protection Case Conference would be taking place about their child at the correct time but were informed after one hour that the conference had to be cancelled at the last minute due to an Independent Person not being available to chair the conference. The said that their child was unwell the day of the proposed conference but it was insisted on attending so their views could be shared.

The social worker was informed prior to the conference that this was cancelled but failed to inform the family, thinking that this would be a task completed by the Safeguarding Administration Team. A letter of apology was sent to the family and young person with an explanation that the social worker had been unaware that it was their responsibility to inform of meeting cancellations. The response letter encouraged that they attend the conference when this is reconvened and it was agreed a message will be sent on the day confirming this will be going ahead.

A complaint where we had no case to answer

A mother referred her child because she was experiencing difficulties with behaviour management. An Initial Assessment was undertaken and the social worker agreed to provide support to assist the mother with regards to her child's behaviour problems. The mother said she had tried to contact the social worker and had left messages but these were not returned.

The complaint was answered within Welsh Government timeframe and informed the mother what services the child had been referred to for help, it was established that a number of agencies had been in contact with the mother confirming their referral and subsequent involvement. The neuro development team had sent information to the wrong Department which slowed their

involvement with the child and mother but this had been corrected by the social worker.

The social worker received messages from the mother and did contact her and leave messages, unfortunately, neither were available to talk at the same times and there was a period of 2 weeks when the social worker was absent from work. Apologies were made about this.

Stage 2 Independent Investigations

10. If complainants remain unsatisfied at the conclusion of the informal Stage 1, they are entitled to seek a formal Independent Investigation under Stage 2 of the procedure.

11. 5 stage 2 complaints was resolved during Quarter 4. Investigations continue in relation to the other cases.

12. 5 new Stage 2 investigations were initiated during Quarter 4 (17-18) which remained open at 31st March 2018.

Ombudsman Investigations

13. There was Ombudsman activity in relation to 1 complaints during the quarter –
a. The Ombudsman made 3 recommendations which were accepted and responded to and this led to no further action from the Ombudsman

Learning from Complaints

14. Stage 2 reports undertaken by Independent Investigators and reports from the Ombudsman include recommendations if required. In response, an Action Plan is initiated to ensure that the recommendations are implemented and lessons are learned.

Themes Emerging During the Quarter

15. Quarterly complaints reports are shared with managers so any emerging themes can be considered and actions can be taken to improve practice.

16. The only patterns that emerged related to complaints that were in court proceedings so we were unable to answer the complaint. No other patterns emerged that suggest

there are any new thematic issues that need to be addressed.

Update on Progress from Themes Identified in Previous Periods

17. The previously noted issue of social workers not returning calls continues to be the cause of, or an element of, complaints received. The strong message regarding the importance of returning calls continues to be reiterated by senior managers who follow up individual issues that are brought to their attention. The new agile / mobile working arrangements have provided social workers with more flexibility and the right kit to enable them to respond to messages in a more timely way and this will continue to be monitored to seek an improvement in this area.

18. As a result of the following, there is an improved oversight and overall a reduction in the number of complaints being received

- a. Senior managers have more of an oversight into casework (e.g. by chairing Care Planning Meetings) and challenge practice where it is considered that both parents have not been consulted.
- b. In the Signs of Safety approach (which maps out a safety network for children considered to be at risk), social workers routinely consider every relationship linked to the child and this will include both parents and extended family.

Early Resolution

19. Children's Services place an emphasis on resolving issues at the earliest possible opportunity, and where these concerns are dealt with immediately they are not opened as a formal complaint. On these occasions, the issues are brought to the attention of relevant Team or Operational Managers who acted promptly to address the issues raised to the satisfaction of the individual. There were a number of examples of this during Quarter 4

Review of Complaints in Social Services

20. An external independent review of the arrangements for receiving, managing and resolving complaints in Social Services was accepted which result in a combined social services complaints unit for both Adults and Children's complaints. Agreement has since been reached that Social Services Complaints will be managed alongside Corporate Complaints, effective from June 2018

Summary of Compliments

21. Teams are more readily sharing the compliments they receive from a variety of sources, e.g. service users and professionals, although it is recognised that further work is required to ensure that all compliments are captured and reported.

22. 22 compliments were received in Quarter 4, which is an increase from 7 in Quarter 3 (17-18). A breakdown of compliments by team is provided below. This will help Children's Services build upon positive work and could identify improvements.

Team	No. of Compliments
Targeted Services	12
Specialist Services	6
Other	4

Example of a compliment received during the quarter:

"I wanted to say how thankful I am for all the support you have given me. Till the day you came to see me in London, then Birmingham and helped me move back to Cardiff and now today, you have supported me in every step and have always checked upon me to ask how I am and how I'm doing. Last year I had a very hard time and went through a lot with X and you helped me a lot, though my court case and gave me a lot of courage and confidence. I was very lucky that the day X got his sentence you were there by my side. Since I was 19 and got to know you, you understand me very well. I was rude to you at the start which I am truly sorry for, but even then you were calm and patient with me. You have also done so much for my son and have always given me the best advice in my life. I RESPECT you more than anyone in my life. Now its time to say goodbye, I feel so sad and will miss you a lot. Thank you XX"

Summary for Quarter 4

23. As at the 31st March 2018, the service were working with 2787 children and young people and of these:

- a. In total, we received 41 complaints (1.4%), of which, 13 related to Looked after Children (0.4%). 4 were directly from the young person.

- b. 1 of the Looked after Children complaints related to a decision that they must have a HPV (Human Papilloma Virus) vaccination – they were quite clear they did not want this and were not being influenced by their foster carers, clearly stating this was their decision despite being told of the risks.
- c. In total, we received 22 compliments (0.7%).

Responses to AM / MP / Councillor Enquiry Letters

24. 17 AM / MP / Councillor Enquiry letters were received by Children's Services during the quarter. An example of these enquiries was financial assistance for respite care.

Subject Access Requests

25. A Subject Access Request is a request from an individual to see a copy of the information an organisation holds about them, or their children. These requests should be responded to within 40 calendar days of receipt. Some types of personal data are exempt from the right of subject access and so cannot be obtained by making such a request. On receipt of the request, work is undertaken to ensure that individuals are only provided with information that they are entitled to receive.

26. Children's Services undertook the following activity in relation to Subject Access Requests in Quarter 4 2017-18:

- a. 6 requests were received, 5 were responded to on time and within the statutory time frame.
- b. We achieved 83% compliance (40 day deadline)

27. In addition to this, Children's Services received:

- a. 57 requests from the Police under the 2013 Protocol and Good Practice Model re: Disclosure of information in cases of alleged child abuse and linked criminal and care directions, an increase from 36 in quarter 3 (17-18).
- b. 142 requests were processed in relation to access to requests from other Councils, Probation, Solicitors or Insurance, an increase from 83 in Quarter 3 and 67 in Quarter 2 (17-18).

Financial Implications

28. There are no direct financial implications arising from the report.

Legal Implications

29. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

RECOMMENDATION

30. The Committee is recommended to:

- i. To endorse the report.

Irfan Alam

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