
**QUARTERLY COMPLAINTS AND REPRESENTATIONS REPORT
QUARTER 2 2019-20**

Reason for the Report

1. The Committee's terms of reference state that it will receive Children's Services Complaints reports.
2. This Quarter 3 report covers complaints and representations from 1st October 2019 to 31st December 2019.

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	Q3 2019-20
Number open at start of period (01/10/2019)	3
Number received (qtr. 3)	33
Number received directly from children and young people	4
Number closed during quarter 3	34
Number outstanding at end of period (31/12/2019)	2
% acknowledged within 2 working days	100%

9. During this quarter, the number of complaints received by Children's Services was 33, a decrease of 4 from Q2 when 37 were recorded.
 - a. Of the 33 complaints received, 9 were disputing decision-making, a slight decrease from Q2 when 12 were recorded. 15 of the complaints received were in relation to the Social Worker or the service received, an increase from the 12 recorded in Q2. A further 6 complainants alleged a delay in providing services and this has remained relatively static compared to Q1 and Q2 when 6 and 5 complaints were recorded respectively.
 - b. 12 complaints were received regarding the Looked after Children Service compared with 14 in Q2. Complaints regarding the Intake & Assessment Service remained static as 8 complaints were recorded in both Q2 and Q3. 5 complaints were received regarding the Child in Need Service, a notable decrease from Q2 (9).

Examples of complaints concluded during the quarter are:

A complaint where we were able to put things right

A complainant had concerns about the delay with receiving their child's "life story" book

Following a review of the case file, the Operational Manager arranged for the Life Story book and Later Life letter to be issued to the complainant and apologised for the delay in issuing these documents. The complainant responded to say that she was thankful for the quick resolution to her complaint.

A complaint where we had no case to answer

A complainant was unhappy with what she described as the "inconsistency" of social worker visits

The Council accepted there had been some inconsistency as unfortunately the main social worker in question had been on sickness leave and duty social workers had been attending in the meantime. An Operational Manager addressed these issues by apologising to the complainant and offering to look through the plan with the complainant.

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 were initiated during Quarter 3.

Ombudsman Investigations

12. There were 0 Ombudsman investigations in relation to complaints during this quarter.

Learning from Complaints

13. Action Plans are initiated after each Stage 2 investigation to ensure that the recommendations are implemented, lessons are learned and themes recognised. Issues about staff conduct are sent to an Operational Manager to consider.

Themes Emerging During the Quarter

14. Quarterly complaints reports are shared with managers so any emerging themes can be considered and actions can be taken to improve practice. Outside of this avenue the Complaints Manager can highlight issues to an Operational Manager.

15. There were no specific themes that emerged during this quarter, other than those mentioned at point 9.

Early Resolution

16. 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. During this quarter, there were 19 enquiries. The issues in these were brought to the attention of the relevant Team or Operational Managers who acted promptly to address the issues raised to the satisfaction of the individual. This prevented 19 complaints being formally opened as stage 1 complaints, resolving the issue at the earliest opportunity.

Summary of Compliments

17. 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.

18. 23 compliments were received in Quarter 3. A breakdown of compliments by teams is provided below. This will help Children's Services build upon positive work and can assist in identifying improvements

Team	No. of Compliments
Targeted Services	15

Specialist Services	5
Other	3

Example of a compliment received during the quarter:

From a Foster Carer in relation to a Social Worker

“I know that social workers are often very busy and have lots of demands placed on them. However X always replies to my calls, emails and texts very promptly, usually within half an hour. He's never been late for a meeting which in my experience is unheard of!

Everytime he visits, he speaks to everyone in our family, including our young boys who are very impressed with his football knowledge. When others have not done their job properly he has been incredibly professional and not had a bad word to say about them.”

Summary for Quarter 3

19. As at the 31st December 2019, the service were working with 3,034 children and young people and of these, we received:

- a. 33 complaints, a slight decrease from Quarter 2. 4 were directly from the young person, a slight decrease from the 4 recorded during Quarter 2
- b. 23 compliments.

Responses to AM / MP / Councillor Enquiry Letters

20. 10 AM / MP / Councillor Enquiry letters were received by Children’s Services during the quarter, a decrease of 8 from Q2.

21. Requests for Information from statutory agencies:

- a. 92 requests were received and responded to on time, this compares to 150 received in Q2.
- b. 0 were completed outside of the statutory time frame.
- c. 0 requests were withdrawn
- d. There are no new requests in process at the time of writing.

22. The turnover has to be rapid due to the nature of the enquiries. Of these:
- a. 49 requests were from the Probation Service asking if there are children living in a household with individuals who have been bailed or will be etc. and wanting background information
 - b. There were 17 requests from other Council's Children's Services Departments
 - c. 26 requests were received directly from other services such as HMRC, Education and Health Services.

Financial Implications

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

Legal Implications

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

RECOMMENDATION

25. The Committee is recommended to:

- i. To endorse the report.

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