

**CITY AND CARDIFF COUNCIL
CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

QUARTERLY COMPLAINTS AND REPRESENTATIONS REPORT

QUARTER 4 2014-15

1. Introduction

This Quarter 4 Report covers complaints and representations from 1st January 2015 through to 31st March 2015. Where possible, in future the following report will be presented in tabular form to enable members to identify quarter on quarter changes.

2. Summary of Complaints Activity During the Period

Number open at start of period	22
Number received (overall)	47
Number received directly from Children and Young People	6
Number closed	38
Number outstanding at end of period	31
% responded to within 17 working days	25 / 38 = 66%*

* The remaining 34% were extended with the agreement of the complainant.

77% (36) of the complaints received were in relation to the social worker or the service received. 6 of the 47 complaints (13%) received during the quarter related to looked after children. This is slightly higher than Quarter 3 (5), but lower than Quarter 2 (10). The number of complaints regarding the Intake & Assessment Service has remained the same at 11. 18 complaints were received regarding the Child in Need Service compared with 14 in Quarter 3.

An example of a complaint received and resolved during the quarter is:

A complaint was received from an advocate on behalf of a looked after young person who was placed in an out of area residential home. The young person was informed by a letter from his social worker that his placement would have to come to an end, but it was his wish to remain where he was. The young person was offered a meeting with the Complaints Officer but chose to correspond via his Advocate. The Complaints Officer spoke with the social worker and suggested that the social worker visit the young person in order to explain the rationale. The Advocate attended the meeting and provided an understanding of the reasons for the change of placement (the residential establishment had failed its inspection and following Cardiff Children's Services review of the reports' findings they did not feel it was in the young

person's interest to remain there). The young person fully agreed to the move and is settled in a different placement in Cardiff.

3. Independent Investigations

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. Prior to the end of July 2014 when the Welsh Government introduced new guidelines, complainants were also entitled to ask for a Stage 3 Independent Panel to consider their complaint if they remained unsatisfied at the conclusion of Stage 2. New guidance introduced on 1st August 2014 abolished Stage 3 Panels, and complainants can now seek resolution by complaining to the Ombudsman if they remain unsatisfied at the conclusion of Stage 2. There are currently 8 complaints being investigated under Stage 2 of the complaints procedure, of which 4 have the potential to proceed to a Stage 3 Panel meeting as their complaints were made prior to the introduction of the new Welsh Government guidelines.

4. Stage 3 Review Panels

A Stage 3 Panel was held on 19th March 2015. The Panel addressed two complaints from the same family where the issues were similar. Following the Panel the complainants were satisfied with the outcome and measures taken by the Operational Manager. A second Panel has been requested by another complainant and has been referred to the Welsh Government for a decision about whether it should proceed to Stage 3.

5. Theme Emerging During the Quarter

The primary theme emerging from complaints received during the quarter is social workers not responding to messages and returning calls, sometimes after many messages have been left.

6. Update on Progress from Themes Identified in Previous Periods

From 1st April 2014 – 31st December 2014 there were 7 complaints regarding fathers who did not feel they had been included / consulted as part of the assessment process, or that information had not been shared with them. A further 7 complaints of this nature were received in Quarter 4. In response to the number of complaints about this issue, the case audit tool has been reviewed and amended to capture information on whether assessments demonstrate that fathers were included / consulted as part of the assessment process and that information has been shared with them appropriately. This will enable the Directorate to evidence involvement of fathers and address the

need for this with social workers as required.

7. Summary of Compliments

All teams are more readily sharing the compliments they receive from a variety of sources, e.g. service users, professionals etc. All compliments are recorded electronically.

15 compliments were received in Quarter 4. In future reports, a breakdown of compliments by team and type will be provided. This will help Children's Services build upon positive work and could identify improvements.

An example of a compliment received during the quarter is:

Following Care Proceedings in relation to a one year old child, the child's Guardian from CAFCASS and solicitor commended the social worker (Rachel O'Keefe from the LAC Service) for her high standard of court work. These professionals felt that the social worker had captured the complexities and provided an excellent care plan which ensured there was no "drift" for the child. This young toddler has just been "matched" with a family and will go on to be adopted.

8. Responses to AM / MP Enquiry Letters

12 AM / MP enquiry letters were received during the quarter. These included a query about use of facilities and raised issues such as a delay in a family being informed of the local authority's plan for their child. A clear process is in place and is managed by the Director of Children's Service PA. During the PA's absence, issues raised by Members or MPs are dealt with by the Complaints & Access to Records Officer.