



BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

SOCIAL SERVICES REPRESENTATIONS AND COMPLAINTS

ANNUAL REPORT 2017 / 2018

July 2018

**SOCIAL SERVICES
REPRESENTATIONS AND COMPLAINTS 2017/18**

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1. INTRODUCTION

This report covers the period 1st April 2017 to 31st March 2018 and relates to representations and complaints received by the Social Services and Wellbeing Directorate regarding services and support provided by Adult Social Care and Children's Social Care.

Social Services Authorities are required to maintain a procedure for considering complaints and representations (comments and compliments). Any member of the public, including a child who has received or was entitled to receive a service from social services may make a complaint. The purpose of this report is to provide a review and statistical analysis of the complaints, comments and compliments received by Social Services during the reporting period.

This is the fourth Annual Report relating to representations and complaints received by the Directorate which have been handled in accordance with the revised Welsh Government Complaint Guidelines "A Guide to Handling Complaints and Representations by Local Authority Social Services" which came into effect on 1st August 2014. The guidance supports the implementation of the Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014 and the Representations Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014. The Regulations introduced a new two stage process which replaced the previous three stages and also brings the process for social services into line with the NHS Complaints Procedure.

2. SUMMARY OF THE STATUTORY COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

"A Guide to handling complaints and representations by local authority social services" (Welsh Government).

Stage 1 – Local Resolution: As with the previous guidelines, particular emphasis is placed upon swift resolution of the majority of complaints. An offer to discuss the complaint with the complainant must therefore be made to attempt to resolve matters. This discussion must take place within 10 working days of the date of acknowledgement of the complaint. Where this approach leads to mutually acceptable resolution, the local authority must write to the complainant with details of the terms of the resolution within 5 working days of the date on which the complaint or representation was resolved.

Stage 2 – Formal Investigation: Appointment of an Independent Investigator is made and, as with the previous guidelines an Independent Person must also be appointed to oversee the investigation process (children's complaints). Collaborative arrangements have now been established (on a reciprocal basis) with neighbouring Local Authorities to share staff to undertake investigations

The Investigation must be completed and a full written response issued to the complainant within 25 working days. Where this is not possible, the Authority must write to the complainant to explain the reason for the delay and ensure the response is issued as soon as possible and no later than 6 months from the date of receipt of the complaint.

3. THE PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN FOR WALES

Where complainants have exhausted the complaints procedure, the complainant has the right to refer their concern for consideration by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.

The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales provides an external independent service for the purpose of considering complaints made by members of the public in relation to all local authority services, including social services. The Public Services Ombudsman also has jurisdiction to examine and determine complaints of injustice as a result of maladministration on the part of the local authority.

The Ombudsman will normally require complainants to have sought redress, in the first instance, via the local authority's complaints procedure prior to accepting and investigating a complaint of maladministration on the part of the local authority.

During 2017/18, two complaints were received by the Public Services Ombudsman's Office, one of which related to Children's Social Care whereby the Ombudsman recommended that the Local Authority commission a Stage 2 independent investigation which was commissioned in September 2017. The second complaint related to shortcomings with the handling of a complaint, as a result of which learning outcomes have been identified and implemented.

4. MEMBER REFERRALS

The Representations and Complaints Procedure does not preclude the right of an individual to approach their Local Councillor, Assembly Member or Member of Parliament. They undertake an important role in handling concerns and queries that individual constituents may have. Collectively, these are called Member referrals and can range from comments and queries to complaints.

If an elected Member considers it to be inappropriate to deal with a concern, the matter can be referred for consideration under the Complaints Procedure. With effect from 2017 only those referrals received from Elected Members have been recorded by Democratic Services. Cabinet Members may liaise with Assembly Members and Members of Parliament to complete referrals but this data is no longer recorded.

During 2017/18, Member referrals were received as follows:-

Table A

2017/2018	Adult Social Care
Wellbeing: Adult Social Care	81
Wellbeing: Children's Social Care	28
TOTAL	109

5. ENGAGEMENT AND FEEDBACK

In addition to receiving comments and compliments from service users and their relatives/carers, the Directorate also issues a range of feedback questionnaires from across service areas. A cross-section of the feedback generated from user/carer feedback surveys undertaken during 2017/18 is set out below:-

Adult Social Care:

The Homecare survey is forwarded to all people who have accessed a Local Authority Domiciliary Care Service and have an active Care and Support Plan. Between 1st April 2017 and 31st March 2018, 162 surveys were distributed, 72 were returned completed (44%). 97% of respondents confirmed they were either very/quite satisfied with the service they receive. General comments provided include:-

“Just wanted to compliment all of the staff that visits me day and night.”

“I must say that I am very satisfied with the help we receive and appreciate the help we receive.”

“All carers we have had have been excellent.”

The Bridgestart service provides short term (usually 6 weeks) personal care to service users in their homes. 76.5% of respondents indicated that the service they received was very good, whilst the remaining 23.5% did not answer. Comments provided include:-

“I found all of the carers very nice as all doing an excellent job. I shall miss them all as I always had a nice chat with each one of them. Hope they carry on the good work for all other people.”

“Due to other commitments on the service, the majority of the last 6 weeks no-one has been here at the time needed.”

“Excellent service and wonderful staff. Through having the team I feel it prevented an admission to hospital. I would like to thank all team members for all the help and making all the difference. Keep up the good work.”

The Bridgeway service provides an enabling service for people with dementia and their families, comments include:-

“Without the support of the staff I would not be able to cope. The staff have all been very kind and caring.”

“The team are outstanding. They make ‘X’ feel special and it is clear that they all treat caring as a vocation and not just a job.”

The Reablement Service provides support to service users usually following hospital admission to help them regain their independence to remain living in their own home. Comments received on feedback questionnaires include:-

“I can only say this is an excellent service in every respect. Everyone concerned is very caring and works hard to aid your recovery...I would say you have a first class team working together to provide a first class service aiming towards speedy recovery.”

“My only criticism is small – I did not always receive adequate notice of each new week’s rota so did not always know what time to expect the visit. With hospital visits occurring at different times it did occasionally feel stressful not knowing if either my appointment would be missed or the carer finding me not at home and become concerned...”

“I could not possibly have coped without the expertise and plan that the carers gave me...I cannot think of one concern. I shall always be grateful for their friendly and caring manner.”

Telecare/Mobile Response: Provides a support service within the home (also in emergency situations), via use of wireless technology and sensors/pendant buttons. The Early Response Service links into the 24/7 mobile personal care service provided as part of the Telecare service and provides emergency assistance to service users in their home. Comments received about the service include:-

"I would very much like to thank everybody that I have spoken to in regards my father. The staff have been tremendous and the equipment has kept my mind at rest as my father wanted to be at home as long as possible. It enabled me to worry less knowing that if need be there was help within a short space of time."

"Just to "leave as you found" e.g. the bathroom – dry edges of the bath with towel and that's really all I would do as the 24 hour carer."

Contract Monitoring and Commissioning:

Rota Visits to residential care settings and other services have been undertaken by Elected Members (including independent providers). Members' observations included:-

Ty Cwm Ogwr: "The home has a warm and friendly feel with all staff, residents and family members happy and content..." "The building is tired and in need of some renovation"

Hyfrydol: "Home in pristine order as usual. All residents spoken with speak highly of home...I was impressed with the thought given to residents such as the area decorated in a male décor. Very clean throughout."

Glyncynffig: To conclude, we were very happy with the quality of service at Glyncynffig and are even happier to confirm that there appears to be a comfortable, nurturing environment there where members of staff have a real genuine connection with service users."

Serendipity – Bellwave House, Porthcawl – "Bellware House is an 8 bedroom, high dependency residence for people with complex mental health needs. We met 'X', a resident who expressed his happiness of being a resident"

Anwen Care Home, Blackmill – "The Manageressrequested a directional sign be placed on the main road indicating the way to the Home's entrance. A referral has been submitted". We spoke to residents and relatives, all of whom were complimentary about the treatment and services received. The building was warm and spotlessly clean. The staff appeared very happy in their work with a very positive attitude..."

Treetops, Brynmenyn: "...The atmosphere at Treetops is one of a very large family. All the residents and care staff seemed to be very happy. I had a long conversation with 'Y' who said she is very happy at Treetops...and enjoyed the friendships she's made, the homeliness and variety of food..."

Glanffrwd Nursing Home, Pencoed: "Glanffrwd is a reasonably high dependence and palliative nursing home. We met the manager and talked to staff and 8 residents. We were very impressed with the quality of care and approachability of all staff members. Residents were talkative and praised their care and attention to needs."

Adult Social Care - Advocacy Arrangements

Bridgend continues to work with the Golden Thread Advocacy Project (GTAP) in order to build the advocacy support available for people who find it difficult to understand information or communicate their wishes. An independent advocacy service (IPA) has been commissioned and during the year the IPA service received 50 referrals and at March 2018 they were supporting 37 people.

Children's Social Care:

Rota visits are undertaken by Elected Members to the Department's residential homes (children's), following which a report is submitted which focusses on the quality of care provided to service users. Feedback for visits undertaken during this reporting period included:-

Sunny Bank Community Home is considered as one of the first options of accommodation for children/young people who have complex needs and require intensive work being undertaken to stabilise their behaviour to allow them to move on and settle into a suitable permanent or long term placement. Sunny Bank is committed to offering a stimulating, safe caring environment that promotes a holistic approach to all aspects of the child/young person's life.

“...The only other requirement made was for the installation of WiFi...Very impressed with visit; a small complex needs residence. We had a long conversation with a member of staff who demonstrated the individualised care framework. We met 2 residents and discussed their interests and development; both were very happy and clear about progress made and to be made. This residence was welcoming and at ease.”

Bakers Way provides a short breaks service which provides regular planned short break stays for disabled children and young people ages 0-18yrs.

“We were shown the outdoor play area, and noted that some of the play equipment needs replacing and that a grass banking needs to be removed to extend and improve the children's play area....There was a meal being prepared in readiness for when the young people return home...there is a range of foods that meet the needs of these young people...the building was warm and comfortable...we really enjoyed the visit, as the staff team were very warm, friendly, but most of all informative.”

Children's Social Care – Advocacy Arrangements

All young people wishing to make a complaint are offered the assistance of an advocate. 3 young people were supported by an advocate during the reporting period. Advocacy services for all three children were provided via Tros Gynnal. All complainants indicated that they were happy with the advocacy service provided.

In addition to the above, one complainant raising concerns in respect of her children was supported throughout the complaints process by a mental health wellbeing advocate.

Social Services and Wellbeing Act (Wales) 2014 - National Performance Framework:

As part of the National performance framework (in line with their duties under the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014), Local Authorities are required to collect qualitative information annually about people who use their Social Care Services. This data is to be collected locally and provided nationally to the Welsh Government in relation to the provision of care and support. Surveys were sent out in October 2017 and a range of questions were asked relative to services and support provided to adults, children and young people and carers. Results were as follows:-

Adults: A total of 1243 questionnaires were despatched to adults (over 18 years), 416 were returned, a response rate of 33%. Some of the comments received include:

"Without the help and care I receive I wouldn't be able to do anything."
"I feel safe because social services have been very helpful in supplying equipment for my safety in my home and support me when needed."
"Stuck in the ground floor flat. No rear access. Unable to be independent."
"Support received from the Bridgend Social Services and Wellbeing is excellent and beyond reproach."
"My wife wasn't well and social services stepped in."

Carers: A total of 49 questionnaires were despatched to adults (over 18 years), 22 were returned, a response rate of 44%. Comments received include the following:

"The carers are nice people who treat you politely."
"We could use a downstairs toilet."
"More than happy from everyone involved."

Children: A total of 430 questionnaires were despatched to children (age 7-17 years), 90 were returned, a response rate of 21%. Some of the comments received include:

"I have all my family and friends around me. I really feel I belong here."
"I love my carers, I could not be happier at all."
"My social worker takes sides and she listens but not all the time"
"My foster carer is the most nicest person she has taken me in like her own."
"They are all family even if it isn't blood."

Overall a total of 528 responses were received.

6. STATISTICAL INFORMATION 2017/2018

Number of Representations Received and Timescales

Table 1

No. Representations Received Statutory Complaints Procedure – April 2016 to March 2017			
		Complaints	Compliments
Adult Social Care		14	264
Children’s Social Care		13	23
Business Support /Finance		0	13
Total	Stage 1	27	300
	Stage 2	2	

*(1 x complaint progressed straight to Stage 2).

Timescales: 100% Stage 1 complaints were resolved within the prescribed timescale of 10 working days.

Timescales: All Stage 1 complaints were acknowledged in writing within 2 working days of the date of their receipt. 100% were resolved within the prescribed timescale of 10 working days and written responses provided within 5 working days of the date of resolution. There were no complaints received outside the 12 month time limit for investigation.

Complaints Resolved Informally (pre-Complaints Procedure Stage 1)

Bridgend County Borough Council complaints processes have, for a number of years, involved successful early resolution of complaints wherever possible. Recently, the new Complaint Guidelines emphasise that the complaints process will provide for a more straightforward and citizen centred approach. Swift and effective complaints handling is also encouraged with an expectation that the majority of complaints and representations should be resolved by Local Resolution.

Complaints staff therefore undertake a significant amount of work liaising with managers to identify and agree swift resolutions to the satisfaction of the complainant (by the end of the working day following the day on which the complaint was made).

Table 2

No. Complaints Resolved prior to invoking the formal Complaints Procedure(s) 2017/2018	
Adult Social Care	57
Children’s Social Care	139
Business/Finance Support	2
Total:	198

Corporate Complaints Procedure

There are instances whereby aspects of a complaint do not fall within the remit of the social services statutory complaints procedure and, in these instances, the Authority's Corporate Complaints Procedure is utilised. 25 complaints were received which were deemed appropriate to be addressed in accordance with the Corporate Complaints Procedure during 2017/18. Three related to Adult Social Care and 22 to Children's Social Care.

Total Representations Received 2017/18

The total number of representations received in relation to Adult Social Care and Children's Social Care is as follows:-

Table 3

2017/18 - Total No. Representations Handled via:	
Complaints Resolved at pre-Complaints stage	198
Statutory Social Services Complaints	27
Ombudsman	2
Corporate Complaints	25
Total:	252

The total number of complaints received and addressed in accordance with the Statutory Complaints Procedure by Social Services during 2017/2018 was 27 compared with 21 in 2016/17. The number of people receiving a service from Adult Social Care during the reporting period was 5631 and 2262 from Children's Social Care.

Complaint Outcomes (Statutory)

Complaint outcomes are identified within the categories: Upheld, Partially Upheld and Not Upheld. Outcomes for each service area have been recorded during 2017/18 as follows:-

Table 4 – Complaint Outcomes (St. 1 - Statutory Complaints Procedure)

2017/18	Adult Social Care	Children's Social Care	Business /Finance Support
Not Upheld	4	6	--
Partially Upheld	3	4	--
Upheld	7	2	--

NATURE OF COMPLAINTS

The nature of complaints received varied and included:-

Table 5

2017/18 – Most Common Complaints Received
Quality / Level of Service / Standard of Care
Lack of / Poor Communication
Disagreement with Assessment / Care Plan
Unacceptable Delays
Poor advice / misinformation

Staff attitude / conduct
Policy / Procedure Non-compliance
Missed / Late Appointments / Times of Visits
Charges for Care Services
Disagreement with Policy / Procedure

7. HOW COMPLAINTS WERE RESOLVED and LESSONS LEARNED

A variety of methods were used to resolve complaints, including:-

- Liaison by complaints officers with senior managers to identify/agree immediate/informal resolution;
- Meetings by senior officers with complainants to discuss/resolve their concerns;
- Provision of explanation of reasons for decisions (verbal and/or written);
- Provision of an apology (written), where appropriate;
- Corrective actions, e.g. change of decisions, review of procedures;
- Reassessment (independent);
- Advocacy services/support;
- Independent investigation;
- Staff training (E:learning).

Key lessons learned during 2017/18 were as follows:-

Table 6

Service Area	Lessons Learned/Actions Implemented
Adult Social Care: Breakaway	To prevent exclusion of service users from trips out, a more structured arrangement is now in place with Porthcawl & Pyle Community Hub to borrow/use wheelchair accessible transport.
Adult Social Care:	Provision of contact details of BCBC's Common Access Point to Herefordshire Careline (the agency commissioned to handle BCBC Telecare calls) to allow them to refer callers appropriately in cases where they do not have an emergency.
Children's Social Care:	Reviews of those cases awaiting allocation to be undertaken to ensure families are kept updated on current status.
Children's Social Care:	Social work staff to ensure that Care & Support Plans are factually accurate and outcomes shared in a timely manner as appropriate.

Welsh Language Standards

There have been no complaints received during this reporting period that have been communicated via the medium of Welsh.

To ensure compliance with the requirements of the Welsh Language Standards all complaints publicity material, including leaflets and the complaints website have been translated and are readily available in the medium of Welsh. Complaints staff have also attended basic Welsh Language training.

Compliments

Compliments are regarded as important information which can be used to identify good practice. All compliments are therefore recorded centrally and details provided in management reports. As mentioned above, 300 compliments were recorded during 2017/18, a selection of which are set out below:-

Table 7

Compliments - Adult Social Care:
Bridgeway: "I would like to thank 'X' and her team for the excellent service they provide. They always go the extra mile caring because they care. If there as an award for them they would most certainly come first."
Bridgestart: "Dear 'X' and team, words cannot express how grateful I am for the care that you and your team provided/afforded my father this last few months.....Your team always treated him with the utmost dignity and respect and ensured that I too was always kept fully informed. Please can you extend my sincere thanks to all involved with my father's care. Many thanks."
Minerva Day Service: "To all the staff at the Day Centre, We will always remember and be grateful for the love and kindness you gave to 'X' during the years she was with you."
Home Care: "(A thank you to Unsung Heroines). My sister and I would like to say a Huge thank you to the Home Care ladies who throughout the atrocious weather last week never missed a call. My sister requires double handling three times a day and with no thought for their own safety these ladies from North Cornelly, Pyle, Cefn and Kenfig turned up with the usual smiles and cheerful conversation. Thank you all ladies, we are sure everyone else you visit could never manage without you."
Telecare: "I have just called 'X', daughter of Mr 'Y' to arrange collection of Telecare equipment. She said that she would very much like to thank everybody that she has spoken to in regards her father. The staff have been tremendous and the equipment kept her mind at rest as he wanted to stay at home as long as possible and it enabled her to worry less knowing that if need be there was help within a short space of time."
Common Access Point: "Wow, what a response, thank you so much, I really appreciated it. I live in London and am attempting to get some support for my husband's uncle who lives in Bridgend. I will print out your email and send it to him. The last time I contacted Bridgend Social Services to attempt to have a handrail fitted for him, I was amazed at how quickly he was offered help. Once again, I have to say how very impressed I am at the level of care shown. Thank you so much."
Older People Mental Health: "We would like you to know how grateful we are to 'X' for the efficient and professional service he has been our mother .This has always been done in a warm and friendly way which has added to the whole experience. You will know that Mam is now a resident of Bryn y Cae Care Home which we are also pleased with. Please thank 'X' on our behalf."
Brynycae: "'X' stated that he couldn't have been treated better even if he'd been

royalty. And it would have been impossible to improve the service.
Compliments – Children’s Social Care:
16 Plus Team: “Throughout the Proceedings the social worker kept in touch with me, her written work was excellent and she had a really good understanding of the case.”
Safeguarding East Team: The Grandmother of a young person stated the social worker “had been off the chart amazing and that the progress that has been achieved would not have been possible had it not been for the hard work put in by the social worker’.
16 Plus Team: A young person and family stated “X’ has been the best social worker she has had and would like her to remain as her PA... we appreciate all the work and input that ‘X’ has given.”
Adoption Panel: “I was asked to pass on how impressed they (the Panel) were with the great work you have undertaken with ‘X’.”
Safeguarding North Team: Following Judgement, Her Honour Judge ‘X’ congratulated the family and the Local Authority on their approach to this case and personally thanked ‘X’ for all of his hard work, not only on this case but over the 9 years that she has been encountering him.
16 Plus Team: Foster Carer stated - “I have been fostering for 15 years and ‘X’ is the best social worker I have worked with’.
Compliments - Business Support/Finance:
Non-Residential Charges: "I just wanted to give you some feedback from the son of the above service user. 'X' wished me to let you know that he was “more than impressed” with the information and level of financial understanding you displayed when he contacted you. He told me that having worked as a Manager for a National Bank, (Fraud Department) he felt that the level of competence you displayed when providing information to him was at a level some of his staff would have struggled with. In this day and age it is so easy for people to make complaints and it is rare that people take the time to give positive feedback. I will copy your line manager into this email."
Residential Charges: “Thank you, and the staff at Bryn y Cae, very much for such prompt and efficient action after my mother’s death last week...On a personal note, I would again like to thank you for all the help given to me in understanding the complex (for me!!) financial processes associated with care and achieving the best solution for my mother.”
Deputyship & Safeguarding: “Just wanted to say thanks for all your help on Friday and with managing ‘X’s finances. ‘X’ was so excited about getting her new phone, she was giggling all the way home! Having her finances managed by BCBC has had a huge impact on her life. Day Services and her respite carer have described her as having more confidence and being much happier. She is taking pride in being able to shop for new clothes and go to the hairdresser. Things she had wanted to do for some time but had not been able to...”

8. CUSTOMER FEEDBACK – THEIR EXPERIENCE OF THE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Questionnaires were forwarded to all complainants (statutory complaints). Complainants were provided with various options via which they could submit their responses, including, ‘reply paid envelopes’, by email or telephone. Unfortunately, no responses were received for the reporting period.

9. ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2017/2018

Achievements during 2017/18 include:-

- Complaints staff have encouraged and worked closely with managers/staff to aim to resolve complaints locally and as swiftly as possible. This is reflected in the high number of complaints resolved at the pre-complaints stage (**Table 2**);
- There was a 15% increase in the number of complaints handled during the period. 100% of the Stage 1 statutory complaints were resolved and responded to within the statutory timescale;
- There was also a 10% increase in the number of compliments recorded for the Directorate;
- On-line complaint information has been updated and included on the Local Authority's website. The information is also available in the medium of Welsh;
- Complaints information has been uploaded, reviewed and kept up-to-date on the Dewis Cymru Information database. The Dewis Cymru website provides a single point of access to information about wellbeing in Wales. The website can be accessed by members of the public as well as social care professionals across Wales.

10. OBJECTIVES FOR 2018/2019

Plans for 2018/19 include:-

- Continue to encourage and work with managers/staff to aim to resolve complaints locally and as swiftly as possible;
- Continue to monitor Stage One timescale compliance rates;
- Work with ICT to develop the use of the Welsh Community Care Information System (WCCIS) to record & manage complaints;
- The Complaints Awareness E:learning module developed in 2015/16 (aimed at new and existing staff employed by the Directorate) has had a low staff take-up. Consideration will therefore be given to inclusion of this Module within the Social Services Induction Programme to ensure that all new starters complete it;
- Commence/complete the development of the E:Learning module "Managing Complaints Effectively" (aimed at managers responsible for investigating and responding to complaints).

11. EQUALITIES

A screening for equality impact has been carried out in relation to the representation and complaints procedure. There is no negative impact on the protected equality characteristics.

There have been no complaints received during the reporting period in relation to the Social Services Representations and Complaints Procedure.

Complainants are now requested to provide information in relation to the Equality Act 2010. This data includes information relating to ethnicity, gender, marital status and disability. The feedback is currently low, but we will continue to pursue this.

**Report prepared for Susan Cooper
Statutory Director of Social Services
By the Designated Complaints Officer
July 2018**