

**BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH
COUNCIL**

**SOCIAL SERVICES
REPRESENTATIONS AND
COMPLAINTS**

**ANNUAL REPORT
2021 / 2022**

November 2022

**SOCIAL SERVICES
REPRESENTATIONS AND COMPLAINTS 2021/22**

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1. INTRODUCTION

This report covers the period 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022 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 seventh 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 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 (complaints relating to Children's services). Collaborative arrangements have now been established (on a reciprocal basis) with neighbouring Local Authorities to share details of Independent Investigating Officers and Independent Persons able 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 2021/2022, the Ombudsman progressed 1 complaint to investigation.

The complaint investigated by the Public Service Ombudsman was regarding a lack of support from the Fostering Service. The Ombudsman found a lack of clarity on complainant's status as a Foster Carer and a failure to putting anything in place to maintain the fostering arrangement, such as the "When I am Ready" (WIR) Scheme. The complainant was also dissatisfied with the handling of their complaint. This complaint was upheld, and the Council apologised to the complainant for the failings identified and paid financial redress of £8,500 each in recognition of the impact that those failings. A review has since been undertaken on pathway planning and pathway planning training is in place for relevant staff since January 2022.

The Ombudsman also recommended a review of its approach to commissioning Independent Investigators and quality control in the scrutinising of commissioned reports. The complaints department have since undertaken work to expand previously limited pool of Independent Investigating Officers, so the Authority is in a better position to commission investigators with the most suitable skills and experience. The Independent complaint reports are scrutinised to ensure they meet the expected standard.

Collaborative arrangements have also been established (on a reciprocal basis) with neighbouring Local Authorities to share details of Independent Investigating Officers and Independent Persons able to undertake investigations. This has enabled the Council to expand our pool of quality Investigators.

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 2021/22, Member referrals were received as follows:-

Table 1

2021/2022	Number of Referrals
Wellbeing: Adult Social Care and Wellbeing	118
Wellbeing: Children's Social Care	63
Total	181

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 2021/2022 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 2021 and 31st March 2022, **95** surveys were distributed, **33** were returned completed. This is a **34.7%** response rate, which is a rise from the response rate of 25.3% in the previous year.

General comments provided include:

Very helpful. Always polite and pleasant.
All of the carers are very friendly and thoughtful, always very happy and they cheer my mother up a lot.
All my wife's carers are very good. They are always really polite and caring. They are a credit to BCBC. Thank you all
They are always polite and helpful.
All carers are polite and very good at their jobs.

The Bridgestart service provides short term (up to 6 weeks) personal care to service users in their homes.

Comments provided include:

The girls have treated me like a queen, and I am very grateful.
I spoke to X, she named you as a very caring and attentive.

Bridgend Day Services support adults with a learning disability and older people living with frailty and dementia, with the main aims of the service being:

- Skill development & skill maintenance for the person
- Support the social aspect of friendships and relationships
- Respite for families and carers

These services are provided across a number of venues including specialist provision at Bridgend Resource Centre and local services in Bridgend, Pyle and Sarn. Comments in respect of these venues include:

The Bridgend Resource Centre

Everyone in Bridgend Resource Centre had made me feel welcome during my transition to adult services.
[Christmas Card] BRC team 'fantastic', Thank you for all the support and for looking after my son.
A Father commented verbally on how friendly the staff were and he was impressed his daughter settled in so quickly.
Thank you for help with the dom care calls and the high energy of the Resource centre staff during my visit.

Ty Pen Y Bont

You've done a great job and we thank you for that.
[Card & £250 donation] Thank you for everything. You are a brilliant team
[Christmas Card] Thank you all so much for your help and support under such difficult circumstances. Hopefully 2022 will see a more positive outcome in overcoming this terrible virus.
I must say how impressed I've been with the running of Ty Pen in recent times. Its a real pleasure to visit and say hello to everyone. The current management team have made huge improvements. The staff are very positive and proactive and can't do enough to help the clients and families. Its very reassuring when we leave H with them knowing she is in such good hands.

The Common Access Point (CAP) team acts as the single point of access to integrated health and social care services for adults in Bridgend. Providing access to information, advice, signposting, as well as proportionate support and assistance, when required, to people, their families and carers, as well as to professionals, to enhance outcomes for individuals.

Comments received about the service include:

We were so impressed and truly grateful that our Mother feels a worthy member of society once again.
Honestly thank you so much you did everything you could to find out what is happening, and you got back to me before the weekend which we really appreciate, have a lovely weekend pet.

It's nice to know people like you care love and I am grateful that people like you are about.
It was nice to have someone call them back when arranged and do what they said they were going to do.
I didn't know what to do or what to ask for and I was very embarrassed, but I want to say thank you so much for being so kind and helping me.

Children's Social Care:

Foster Wales Bridgend is divided into two teams: **General Fostering & Placements** and **Kinship & Permanence teams**. These teams provide a range of foster case placements for children and young people who are looked after by Bridgend County Borough council. This includes long and short-term kinship care arrangements and short break services for children with disabilities. They also provide assessments and support Special Guardians.

Comments received regarding these services include:

As you're aware we've had a very challenging few days trying to resolve a placement issue for a very complex YP open to our team. Thankfully we have moved forward with this now however I just wanted to pass on how helpful and supportive A has been in working with us on this issue. She has been working tirelessly on this for the past 2 days linking in with other professionals, providers and agencies. It demonstrates her excellent knowledge of services and resources along with her relationships with other professionals in securing these for children and young people. A has been very young person focused throughout.
B, she is the best and has been by my side throughout
We would like to thank C for all the support and also D for their support. C has been an outstanding supervising social worker and the reason we feel we can continue with the challenging young people that often come to us.
I felt that it was a lifeline I couldn't have done without.
I just wanted to bring to your attention that carer for X informed me this week that the recent support that E has offered to the placement was invaluable, she said that it really helped the male carer and they both felt more reassured and confident after the meeting
Couldn't fault a thing. F and G - BCBC need more staff like them.

The **Child Disability & Transition Team** safeguard and provide a range of support to disabled children and young people and their families including those going through the process of transition into adulthood.

Comments received about these services include:

I'd like to thank you for all the hard work you have done for X in the time you have known her, and you have made a massive positive difference in her life. All the best in your new role we both hope you enjoy it!
thank you very much for the wonderful weekly activity you arranged for X and his new friends during the Summer holidays. It was incredibly valuable for

him. It gave him some independence and opportunity - just like children without disabilities have - to hang out with young people in his age and ability bracket. In his words: he met his friends and made new friends, enjoyed cooking, and making things and sharing his interests on the YouTube mini-programmes, really enjoyed going to Cardiff for the day on the train and playing mini golf - but the golf clubs were too small for his height! He hopes he can do it next summer holidays too. This summer club gave him space and company and a real understanding of his needs - and met his needs for his social development and growth. We are very grateful for this opportunity for him and hope that something like this is operating next summer as well - in fact all school holidays! The summer club is something which we would gladly pay for him to access.

H has done some brilliant work with this young man, and it is lovely to see this recognised by fellow professionals as well as the family

... Having a social worker is great and we have nothing but praise for J but because you are more hands-on you have witnessed how we live and the problems we have had. You have created solutions and made us feel that we are doing our best. X trusts you, you have a great relationship with her. We trust you too, the lives of the three of us are better because of the work you do with us. THANK YOU.

Adult Social Care - Statutory Independent Professional Advocacy (IPA)

Providers

BCBC commissions a 'Hub & Spoke' service model for Bridgend which includes:

- Advocacy Contact Hub: PromoCymru
- Specialist Learning Disability Provider (statutory and non-statutory): People First Bridgend
- Specialist Communications/Accessible Support Provider: Mental Health Matter Wales

Performance Data

The Advocacy Hub continued to receive circa 60 connected contacts per quarter with a total of 209 contacts in the year, which were triaged and referred to the most appropriate support service. This approach ensures that only those eligible for statutory IPA are then referred through to that service, and non-statutory or other services which may be more appropriate are contacted to ensure the best service is accessed.

236 individuals were recorded with statutory IPA support across the services, receiving support for a total of 458 individual issue-based cases. This was a rise from the 212 individuals connected and supported in the previous year, the drop in the previous year mainly being due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The total number of individuals supported in this reporting period has almost been brought up to pre-pandemic levels (246 individuals supported in 2019-20).

Around 50 individuals received non-statutory Learning Disability advocacy support during this reporting period.

The levels of face-to-face contact have still been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, but ongoing support continued through the period with no issues or concerns to note.

In addition, People First Bridgend were able to support with a comprehensive engagement for around 100 people with a Learning Disability living in commissioned supported living placements in Bridgend. This process ensured the voice of those individuals was captured within tender documents, putting them at the centre of the commissioning process.

Mental Health Matters Wales also operate complementary community advocacy services in addition to those commissioned by Bridgend County Borough Council. No data is available for those additional services.

Children's Social Care – Statutory Independent Professional Advocacy (IPA)

Provider

Tros Gynnal Plant (TGP) – is an established and long-standing advocacy provider in Bridgend area, under a regional contract for Cwm Taf Morgannwg, contract led by Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council.

Active Offers

37 active offer meetings were held during the reporting period. This is a slight drop from the 41 active offers made in the previous year and is modest in comparison to the number of eligible young person's entering the system. This has been identified as an area for further improvement and Children's Services continue to work closely with TGP in respect of ensuring active offers and issue-based advocacy uptake is increased. This has included inviting TGP to all team meetings for case management teams to enhance knowledge of the support that advocacy services can offer. Team Managers continue to be reminded of the need to promote advocacy within their teams. Independent Reviewing Officers are reinforcing the need for the active offer to be made by Social Workers at each review. A practice note has also been sent to staff to highlight the requirement to promote advocacy. TGP are undertaking targeted awareness to increase the take up of advocacy services among care experienced young people and care leavers in Bridgend. There is also a plan in place to recruit a dedicated Independent Visiting Coordinator with an aim to promoting and growing the Independent Visiting service across Bridgend.

Issue-based Advocacy (IBA)

204 IBA cases were opened during the reporting period; with 197 cases closed and 7 cases remaining open at the end of the period. This is a small rise from the 192 issue-based advocacy cases opened in the previous year. The level of issue-based advocacy service in Bridgend has been consistently high over a number of years in Bridgend. Young people have been effectively supported and continue to have access to an advocacy service that supports their voice. The three most prominent issues during the reporting period were as follows;

- Support at meetings.
- Placement issues.
- Contact issues.

Support at meetings is the most prominent support request by a significant margin.

6. STATISTICAL INFORMATION 2021/2022

Number of Representations Received and Timescales

Table 2

Total Number of Representations Received Statutory Complaints Procedure – April 2021 to March 2022		
Complaints	Adult Social Care	Children’s Social Care
Informal (resolved prior to invoking the formal complaints procedure)	8	47
Stage 1	3	8
Stage 2	3	2
Public Services Ombudsman for Wales	0	1
Corporate	0	2
Total Complaints	74	
Compliments	Adult Social Care	Children’s Social Care
	114	56
Total Compliments	170	

Timescales : Of the 11 stage 1 complaints received, during the year, 55% (6) were responded within the timescale of 15 working days of receipt during this reporting period. Whilst this was a drop from the 100% reported in 2020/21 it is important to note that of the 11, 73% (8) were resolved at stage 1 and did not escalate to stage 2.

The focus in 2022/23 is to ensure that timeliness as well as resolution has a focus in the service. In order to improve on the Authority’s adherence to prescribed timescales resilience is being built into the complaints team through the review of a vacant post to ensure there is capacity to deputise for the Complaints Officer when they are on leave.

Overall Analysis

Early Resolution of Complaints

In line with the Welsh Government Guidance “A guide to handling complaints and representations by Local Authority social services” Bridgend County Borough Complaints Department, wherever possible, focuses on early resolution of complaints. **74%** of complaints were resolved informally during this reporting period (pre the complaints procedure). Although this is slightly lower than the 79% of complaints resolved informally in 2020/21, the high percentage overall continues to reflect the Directorate’s commitment to achieving the early resolution for complainants.

Some of the feedback comments received in relation to complaint staff members involvement with complainants in terms of discussion to understand the nature of complaints and support early resolution is as follows:

“Thank you for your prompt action and support.”
“You are a star!”
“Many thanks X. Supportive as usual.”

Complaint Outcomes (Statutory)

In-line with Welsh Government guidance on “A guide to handling complaints and representations by local authority social services” complaints resolved at Stage 1 are only closed by mutual consent, with all parties confirming that a resolution has been agreed. The three most common themes at Stage 1 during this reporting period were:

- Poor communication
- Level of support
- Staff conduct

Stage 2 complaints are investigated by an Investigating Officer (IO) independent from the council. Complaints relating to children’s services must also be overseen by an Independent Person (IP).

The outcome of Stage 2 complaints resolved within the reporting year are as follows:

Table 3

Complaint Outcomes (St. 2 – Statutory Complaints Procedure)			
Outcome	Adult Social Care	Children’s Social Care	Total
Not Upheld	2	0	2
Partially Upheld	0	2	2
Upheld	0	0	0
Ongoing	1	0	1
Total	3	2	5

Some of the issues that were upheld following independent investigation were as follows:

- 1. The Council has failed in its obligation to follow its own *Concerns and Complaints Policy* and outlined timeframes.**

The Local Authority acknowledged the delay and apologised to the complainant for failing to adhere to the prescribed timescale. This was unfortunately due to a lack of workforce capacity at the time.

The Council has since been working on building additional resilience into the Complaints team to recruit and retain staff, so complaints are responded to within the prescribed timescales. The department is currently recruiting an additional member of staff to deputise the Complaints Officer when on leave and support with the Council’s adherence to the *Concerns and Complaints Policy*.

Collaborative arrangements have also since been established between the new Complaints Officer and neighbouring Local Authorities to share details of Independent Investigating Officers and Independent Persons. This has enabled the department to expand the pool of quality Investigators.

2. Direct payment hours were split between two siblings, which did not allow suitable provision for one sibling's more complex needs and deprived the second sibling of the hours he needed.

In this case, complainants were given separate Social Workers for the siblings. Separate Care and Support assessments were carried out for both children and both children received Direct Payments in their own right.

3. Delays in receiving reports and notes of meetings.

The Local Authority agreed that the standard of service and communications were not as good as they should have been at all times. An apology was offered to the complainant for the delay they experienced.

NATURE OF COMPLAINTS

The nature of all complaints received to the directorate varied, and included:

Table 4

Themes of complaints received 2021/22	Percentage %
Level of Support	28%
Staff Conduct	24%
Poor Communication	21%
Issue with Assessment	13%
Request for Financial Reimbursement	6%
Safeguarding Concerns*	4%
Delay with Assessment	3%
Data Breach**	2%

** Further information on complaints regarding safeguarding concerns can be found below. Complaints regarding safeguarding concerns are addressed in line with the necessary safeguarding procedures.*

***Complaints regarding a breach of personal data were reported to the Council's Data Protection Officer in line with UK GDPR processes.*

Complaints regarding safeguarding concerns

During this reporting period, **4** complaints highlighted safeguarding concerns that the complainant believed not to have been addressed appropriately by Social Services via the Wales Safeguarding Procedures. Two of these complaints were resolved informally and two were investigated at Stage 1 of the complaints process.

Three of these complaints were not upheld and the Council gave full details of the actions taken following the safeguarding concern being raised.

One complaint (investigated at Stage 1) identified that process was not followed. An apology was given to the complainant along with actions taken to avoid this happening again. Since the concern was raised, the department has created learning opportunities/group supervisions with the team discussing live cases to ensure processes are fully understood and decisions made are appropriate. The case was also put forward in peer supervision to support improvements across the team through learning.

7. HOW COMPLAINTS WERE RESOLVED AND LESSONS LEARNED

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

- Liaison by the complaints officers with senior managers to identify/agree immediate/informal resolution.
- Meetings by senior officers with complainants to discuss/resolve their concerns.
- Liaison with other Local Authorities ensuring coordinated and cohesive responses.
- 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.
- Strengthening the links with Learning and Development to incorporate the lessons learned into the further development of staff training.

Key lessons learned during 2021/22 were as follows:-

Table 5

Service Area	Lessons Learned/Actions Implemented
<p>Children’s Social Care Foster Service Documentation</p>	<p>A review on Pathway planning documentation was undertaken in December 2021. This was following the findings from the investigation by The Ombudsman and his Professional Adviser’s comments.</p>
<p>Children’s Social Care Foster Service Training</p>	<p>Pathway planning training has become available for Independent Reviewing Officers since January 2022. This addresses the Local Authorities responsibilities under the statutory framework, human rights considerations and implications for practice when working with young people who are leaving or have recently left its care. This area of improvement was recommended by The Ombudsman following the findings from his complaint investigation.</p>

<p>Children’s Social Care</p> <p>Foster Carer Payments</p>	<p>Policies in relation to foster carer payments now clearly outline allowances and fees payable to mainstream and kinship foster carers. The Foster Service implemented a new Fostering Financial Policy in March 2022, which details allowances payable to all of BCBC’s Foster Carers. The new policy is dated and includes a date by which it should be reviewed, as recommended by an Independent Investigating Officer.</p>
<p>Social Services Complaints</p> <p>Timeliness of Complaints</p>	<p>An Independent Investigating Officer has recommended that the Local Authority should take the opportunity to summarise why the Welsh Government’s timescales for completing complaint investigations at Stages 1 and 2 were not met for a complaint against Adult Services.</p> <p>This was a result of workforce capacity, the Council's prioritisation of the response to Coronavirus which impacted on timeliness and a shortage in Investigating Officers.</p> <p>The Council has since started work on building additional resilience into the Complaints Team to ensure complaints and resolutions are responded within a timely manner.</p> <p>Collaborative arrangements have also been established (on a reciprocal basis) with neighbouring Local Authorities to share details of Independent Investigating Officers and Independent Persons able to undertake investigations. This has enabled us to expand our pool of quality Investigators.</p>

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 Welsh and English.

Compliments

Compliments are regarded as important information which can be used to identify and learn from good practice. All compliments are therefore recorded centrally and details provided in management reports. As mentioned above, 117 compliments were received during 2021/22 compared to 206 the previous year. Please find a selection of the compliments received for 2021/22 below:-

Table 6

Compliments - Adult Social Care:
<p>"...I must say how impressed I've been with the running of Ty Pen in recent times. It's a real pleasure to visit and say hello to everyone. The current Management team have made huge improvements. The staff are very positive and proactive and can't do enough to help the clients and families. It's very reassuring when we leave X with them knowing she is in such good hands...."</p>
<p>"...I haven't had the pleasure of meeting you as I live in "X", but my Mum keeps me updated and always mentions how wonderful and extremely helpful you have been. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you, so very much for your persistence and success in achieving what you did..."</p>
<p>"...We were so impressed and truly grateful that our mother feels a worthy member of society once again..."</p>
<p>"...I just wanted to pen a quick but nevertheless huge 'thank you' to you in relation to the support you have provided to the Day Services Team over the past few weeks. A number of my team have commented on your efficiency and equally your professionalism which has most certainly been underscored – however, just as noticeable is how helpful and friendly you have been in providing that assistance so promptly. I am copying A and B into this email because I think the service you have provided to this team has been outstanding. Thank you so much..."</p>
<p>"...First of all, please accept my thanks for returning my call and your assistance. I should like to take this opportunity to give praise to the two ladies from your emergency response team who were called to my husband on the evening of X. My husband was stuck between the lower part of the wheelchair; myself and two others were unable to lift him out of there. The ladies who arrived, took seconds to dismantle the footrests off the wheelchair and free my husband without causing him any injury. They then proceeded to attend to him and were very efficient, helpful, considerate and comforting to him and to myself. They decided that it seemed as if my husband had had a stroke and telephoned for an ambulance from my house telling them it was a suspected stroke. Unfortunately the ambulance took almost fourteen hours to arrive and is currently in hospital. He has suffered a stroke to his left side. Please pass on my grateful thanks to the two ladies from your team who attended upon my husband..."</p>
<p>"...Just a 'little' thank you off Mum and I for all the help, understanding, kindness and love you've shown us this year. I could not have survived without you and Dan-Y-Graig. You really are a superstar..."</p>
<p>"...I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the staff at Ty Pen Y Bont who were so accommodating of X's attendance at the centre. I know she really enjoyed her days with you and it was a real lifeline for the family following the sudden onset of her rapidly progressive condition..."</p>
<p>"...wanted to pass her compliments to the T&R Team. She has appreciated the support that we have provided throughout the year, particularly with the welfare calls. In particular, X wanted to also thank C, who she has said has been wonderful, she appreciated the advice and support that C has offered. X said that C provided useful contact numbers for when she goes away..."</p>

<p>“...I didn’t know what to do or what to ask for and I was very embarrassed, but I want to say thank you so much for being so kind and helping me...”</p>
<p>Compliments – Children Social Care:</p>
<p>“...We would like to thank D for all the support and also E for their support. D has been an outstanding supervising social worker and the reason we feel we can continue with the challenging young people that often come to us...”</p>
<p>“...As H’s work was a model of how social work should be – approaching a case with an open mind...”</p>
<p>“...Just wanted to add my appreciation. This has been so complex for years, you caught it at the eleventh hour which I know hasn’t been easy. But sometimes the results are worth the challenge and X is very happy at the outcome and it’s thanks to you. I’m sure this has been a challenging one for you too, so thank you for your diligence and your support...”</p>
<p>“...I felt that it was a lifeline I couldn't have done without...”</p>
<p>“...I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has worked with X over the last few years...”</p>
<p>“...I'm X's biological mother to say J has been a joy and pleasure to have been in mine and my daughter life these last 10 years is an understatement words cannot begin to describe the way she has been, she always goes the extra mile she fights with whoever she needs to make sure my daughter has everything she needs and deserves. I am proud to say she isn't just my daughter's formal social worker but also, she is my friend...”</p>
<p>“...I have never known a Social Worker make the time and effort to come in and do an activity with a young person. I think this will have a number of positive benefits for both of you going forward. This is a great way of working and Thank you...”</p>
<p>“...pleasure to read and to note that there is very good management of the case of “X” by H... case is very complex...aware that there is a very high level of work that is needed since last LAC review, and she has achieved so much by completing many tasks before today’s LAC Review...did praise E in the LAC Review on her commitment and her management of the case to those in attendance...”</p>

8. CUSTOMER FEEDBACK – THEIR EXPERIENCE OF THE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

The rate of return by complainants of completed questionnaires has been very poor historically, the service only received one response 2016/17 and two responses in 2015/16. Therefore, the focus since 2018/19 has been on the outcome of the complaint, as opposed to the experience of using the complaints procedure.

Questionnaires will be reintroduced in 2022/23 to try to gain customer feedback on the experience of the complainant’s experience of the complaint’s procedure.

9. ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2021/2022

- Fewer complaints were received overall for the period 2021/22 compared to 2020/21. There was a reduction from 16 to 10 in the number of Stage 1 formal complaints handled in the period compared to 2020/21, and a decrease in the number of Stage 2 complaints from 9 to 5.
- Complaints staff have continued to work closely with complainants and managers 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**).

10. OBJECTIVES FOR 2022/2023

- Continue to encourage and work with managers/staff to support early resolution of complaints and representations, where possible.
- Review current data collection arrangements that support the understanding of the Directorate's performance around the Complaints Process. This will include, re-evaluating how we can continue to develop the use of the Welsh Community Care Information System (WCCIS) to report on complaints; initial work has begun on this area.
- During 2021/22 the Council experienced difficulties in appointing suitably experienced Independent Investigating Officers in a timely way. Work is being undertaken to further develop the pool of investigators. A new Complaints Officer came into post in April 2022 and has developed relationships with neighbouring Local Authorities, in order to share information on good quality Investigating Officers. This has supported the service to identify and appoint 2 new Investigating Officers to further support the timely resolution of complaints at Stage 2.
- Review in-house policies and procedures that support the complaints process. This will be followed by the formulation of a training plan to ensure:
 - All current staff are aware of any changes made and have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities within the process.
 - Complaint's training is an integral aspect of the induction of new starters across the Directorate.
- Build additional resilience into the Complaints Team to ensure complaints and resolutions are responded within a timely manner. The Department is currently in the process of appointing a revised post within the Team to support the Complaints Officer to ensure there is a deputising function when the officer is on leave and support effective performance reporting and analysis.

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 in relation to equality impacts received during the reporting period in relation to the Social Services Representations and Complaints Procedure.

**Report prepared for Claire Marchant
Statutory Director of Social Services
By the Compliments and Complaints Resolution Manager**