

**Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr**  
**Bridgend County Borough Council**

# **SOCIAL SERVICES REPRESENTATIONS AND COMPLAINTS**



**ANNUAL REPORT  
2024 / 2025**

***September 2025***

**SOCIAL SERVICES  
REPRESENTATIONS AND COMPLAINTS 2024/25**

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

This report covers the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 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 and Family Services.

Local Authority Social Services 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 tenth Annual Report relating to representations and complaints received by the Directorate which have been handled in accordance with the Welsh Government Complaint Guidelines “*A Guide to Handling Complaints and Representations by Local Authority Social Services*” which came into effect on 1<sup>st</sup> 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:** An emphasis is placed upon swift resolution of the majority of complaints. An offer to discuss the complaint with the complainant must 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 for complaints relating to Children and Family Services an Independent Person must also be appointed to oversee the investigation process. Collaborative arrangements have 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, they have the right to refer their concern for consideration by the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW).

The PSOW 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 PSOW 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 2024/2025, **11** complaints were received by the PSOW's Office, **9** of which related to Children and Family Services, **2** in respect of Adult Social Care. None were progressed to investigation.

### 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 2024/2025, Member referrals were received as follows:-

**Table 1**

| <b>2024/2025</b>                  | <b>Number of Referrals</b> |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Adults and Prevention & Wellbeing | 101                        |
| Children and Family Services      | 30                         |
| <b>Total</b>                      | <b>131</b>                 |

## 5. COMPLAINTS AND REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED FROM THE CITIZEN VOICE BODY “LLAIS”

The Citizen Voice Body (CVB) promotes public engagement in the planning, designing and delivery of services and plays a key role in ensuring health and social care services in Wales are of a high quality and are responsive to the needs of citizens. The CVB operates under the name “Llais” and became operational from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023. Llais is an independent body which provides a free Advocacy service to support members of the public who may wish to raise a concern. Llais also provide advice and information on the most appropriate course of action. During the reporting period, **6** complaints were received from Llais advocates; **5** of which related to Children and Family Services and **1** in respect of Adult Social Care.

## 6. 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 during 2024/2025 is set out below:

### Adult Social Care

The **Telecare** survey is forwarded to all people who have accessed a Local Authority Domiciliary Care Service and have an active Care and Support Plan.

Between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025, **785** surveys were distributed, of which, **165** responses were received. This is a **21%** response rate, which is a decrease from the response rate of 34% in the previous year.

General comments provided include:

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| I have mobility issues and a great fear of falling and could be on the floor for hours. Telecare is like a security blanket.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Excellent services and everyone helpful and considerate.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| A from your organisation recently visited my mum to set up the emergency response system. Everything went perfectly but I just wanted to say what a great job A did in explaining the system and how it all works. We all found him very concise, very knowledgeable and very helpful! A is certainly a credit to your team and I would be grateful if you could pass on both mine and my mother's thanks. |
| Happy with the peace of mind that you are on call.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| The chap who was here was very polite and patient. Spent a long-time explaining things to us - he was so thorough. He was very pleasant too. He tidied up after installing the key safe.                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| We are grateful. We only set the fall watch off by mistake, but the response time was impressive. Thank you.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |

The **Early Intervention and Prevention Hub** provides all contact for adult health and social services. Both the public and professionals can access the hub, which provides:

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- information, advice and assistance including direction to third sector and community services when they are the best places to address well-being needs;
- and multi-disciplinary triage including mental health services and urgent community response for people who need assessment or immediate service.

Comments include:

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| I really appreciate all the support from you for us as a family.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| You have been so lovely and you have been so nice, you have been very understanding, I was dreading making this call but you have listened to me.                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Honestly B this is life changing I can't thank you enough for everything you have done.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| C is very helpful, she has been excellent, helpful and supportive. She is professional and is approachable. Her communication is always clear, and she has tried her best to get the best package of care for us and I really appreciate it. She's punctual and if she promises to do something, she always follows it up and keeps me in the loop and notifies me of things. |
| I can't thank you enough for being so kind and listening to me and helping me.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

The **Commissioning for Complex Needs** team play a crucial role in effectively engaging with all stakeholders and individuals to ensure support is provided in line with each person's outcomes and aspirations. The team offer proportionate, evidence based, strengths based, outcome focused assessments and reviews, which enable people to achieve their aspirations whilst maximising resources.

Comments provided include:

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Thank you for keeping me updated, we have been to Tenby for a couple of days and have just got home, it will be sad seeing you go, you have been a great help to us all and we will miss you, thank you for everything you have done to help us.                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Just a little email to let you know about a compliment given today around good practice and professional standards in relation to conduct for a NHS Continuing Healthcare Assessment, carried out in Brocastle. Extremely stressful time for family, good outcome, son had an awful experience with his father going through the same process beforehand but felt for his mother it was conducted very professionally. |
| Thanks for all your help and support for D and myself at both meetings, which was really important for D's future happiness and independence.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Thank you for your help on this also. Your support along with E has been invaluable.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |

**Bryn Y Cae** is a purpose built residential home, which provides residential and respite care for older persons with assessed care and support needs. The service provides short term reablement placements for up to 6 weeks to prevent hospital admission or step down; this is an integrated service provided by the local authority and the health board. It has 37 bedrooms; 9 of which are within the dementia unit of the home, 22 are in the frail elderly units and 6 are on the re-enablement unit. The dementia unit has nine bedrooms, all of which have en-suite facilities. They come furnished or residents can choose to bring in their

## APPENDIX 1

own furniture. Staff at Bryn Y Cae encourage families to assist their relative to personalise their room as much as possible. There is an assisted bathroom and separate shower room, a reminiscence room, large lounge/activity room and one quiet lounge. There is also a dining room with access to a secure garden area. Staff at Bryn Y Cae are committed to supporting residents to lead a fulfilled life as possible, in an environment which:

- Places value on individual beliefs, choices and aspirations.
- Promotes maximised independence and community integration.
- Provides a safe, nurturing and homely environment,

Comments provided include:

To everyone on the butterfly unit. Thank you all so much for your care in looking after everyone on your unit.

F told me how absolutely wonderful all the staff have been since G has been there. She said they were all really caring but not just to G but to the whole family and they really appreciated it.

Thank you for everything you do for Mum and making it such a joy for her at this time of her life. We can't thank you enough.

Thank you for the incredible job you do looking after our loved ones. You all have compassion, patience, and an exceptional level of dedication. We cannot express how grateful we are knowing you are looking after all residents (especially H). Hoping you all have a wonderful Christmas. Best Wishes.

The home is wonderful; I can't praise you and your team enough.

### **Children and Family Services**

The **West Locality Safeguarding Hub** work with children from pre-birth to 18 years of age. The team manage care and support, child protection, Public Law Outline and court cases. The team work closely with children and families and partner agencies to facilitate plans in an attempt to facilitate positive change for families. The team analyse and manage risk to ensure children remain at home where it is safe for them to do so.

Comments include:

Just a big thank you for getting who I am and who I could be and for being patient. I'm really grateful and thankful for all your help. All I can say is I got a house, my son, my life back and I just need my grandchildren back and I be completely happy. But again thank you I, I don't know how you do a job like you do.'

As you know J has been a huge part of our lives since February and she has been outstanding. J has everything a family could ever need in a social worker, she's professional but also very down to earth, non-judgemental, supportive and goes above and beyond in all aspects of her work. As you know we as a family have been involved with children's services on and off for years. We've had some awful social workers, some ok but only just, others that whilst have been nice they've been for their mandatory visit and that's it for another 2 or 6 weeks. J however, checks in several times a day even when she probably isn't required to, she has a passion for her job that you rarely see and above all she's very compassionate and empathic and shows that social workers are actual human beings too rather than "robots" who come in, find fault and leave again. My confidence in my parenting regularly takes a tumble but she's always there reassuring me and making me feel better about myself. Again, as you are aware I find it very difficult to converse with people causing a massive reluctance in her engaging. However, J has made a lot of headway with K and K often seeks out J when she's distraught and in need of someone to speak to. K has made it clear that when J leaves, she will not work with anyone else and unfortunately, I believe this to be true. I fear that this will set K back even further and will be detrimental to her mental health and her trust issues with people, she needs consistency and right now other than myself, J is the only other person giving her that. My other children all love J too and love seeing her and speaking with her. I have voiced my concerns to the multi-agency disciplinary team and the majority, if not all are extremely concerned as to what K will do and how she will cope with no longer having J. K is nowhere near ready to come away from her. Finally, I'd like to finish by again saying how amazing J is, she is a great asset to your team and I know that she will go extremely far in life. She's got everything and more required in a social worker. I'm begging and pleading that you keep her on the team for not only K's sake but also the massive difference she will make to the lives of many families in the future, and you will have the pleasure of saying - she's one of my team and I knew from the off she would make a massive difference 😊.

I just wanted to say how impressed I have been by the [local authorities] support for L and her parents and in particular M's work on this case. [The Judge] was very complimentary about his work on this case, and I just wanted you to be aware. There is so much criticism out there I just wanted you to know that others do recognise and appreciate all the hard work that you do.

Would just like to say you've made a good impression on N, she doesn't talk fondly of many adults but she always points out that you actually talk about her, her general life & interests etc & seem to listen to what she says. Thank you

Bridgend County Borough Council's **Child Disability and Transition** team supports disabled children and young people, including those in care, as they transition into adulthood. This team provides support, including financial assistance for meeting care needs, and aims to facilitate smooth transitions from childhood to adulthood.

Comments include:

I just wanted to say thank you for everything you did for me and don't say it's your job because you went above your job to help me so thank you.

Hope you have the best Christmas because that is what you make mine. You truly are the best and extremely awesome.

We hope you and your family have a fantastic festive period. Thank you for all your amazing work. I know he and we really appreciate it.

You were very supportive of staff and O was always on the end of the phone if we needed anything. You also had a very good relationship with P which I felt kept him in a good place and ultimately had a very good outcome.

The **Kinship Care & Permanence** team supports kinship carers, birth parents, and children in special guardianship orders. They provide financial support, home visits, advice, support groups, fostering training, and placement support. The team also assists with communication with other organisations and birth parents.

Comments include:

Thank you for today. Please pass on to Q also. We felt listened to, heard and understood, it's been a long time since we have felt appreciated. Have a wonderful Xmas x

I visited a carer yesterday, R, and she said that the support you are providing to the young person in her care is brilliant, and she couldn't speak highly enough of you. I just wanted to email to say thank you for the work that you do, it is appreciated and makes such a difference to our carers and young people.

I just wanted to share how positive the support from fostering has been over recent weeks. As you know there are challenges in both teams but it certainly feels like a joint approach to address matters rather than it being a [social work team] issue, so thanks S for your hard work and support. I also want to say how impressed I am of T. She is so helpful, upfront and child focused. She has been a great support on several cases recently.

I would like to say that since U has worked with V he is a changed child, he has really helped him. We are really sorry to see him leave us. He has been a very good asset to myself and W. Thank you very much.

**Adult Social Care - Statutory Independent Professional Advocacy (IPA)****Providers**

Bridgend County Borough Council (BCBC) commissions a 'Hub & Spoke' service model for advocacy which includes:

- Bridgend Voice & Choice (BVC) Advocacy Contact Hub: PromoCymru;
- Specialist Learning Disability Provider (statutory and non-statutory): People First Bridgend, and;
- Specialist Communications/Accessible Support Provider: Mental Health Matters Wales

**Performance Data**

During the 2024/25 reporting period, the BVC Advocacy Hub received an average of 35 contacts per quarter, which was down from an average of 50 per quarter the previous year. Whilst the volume of connected contacts has varied, peaking in 2021 and 2022, there has been a marked and consistent increase in the proportion of contacts resulting in formal case records. This suggests that although overall contact demand has not maintained the numbers seen between 2021 and 2022; the helpline is now dealing with a greater proportion of contacts requiring intensive advocacy intervention.

Professionals remained the primary source of helpline enquiries, emphasising their crucial role in facilitating advocacy access, but potentially demonstrating that wider knowledge of the role and rights to advocacy is needed.

Referrals and contacts to the BVC Hub are triaged and referred to the most appropriate support service. During the reporting period, 47% of BVC helpline cases were referred for Independent Professional Advocacy (IPA), ensuring those with statutory advocacy needs received specialist support. 33% of cases involved signposting or transfer to other specific specialist services. 80% of all cases received relevant information and/or advice, indicating that the vast majority of service users benefited from tailored guidance, either as a standalone intervention or alongside further support. Across 2024/25, BVC signposted cases to a total of 48 individual organisations.

Overall, whilst connected contacts have declined in volume; the significant rise in conversion rate demonstrates fewer, but more complex, cases required intensive support.

Most BVC helpline enquiries relating to the adult social care process centred around requests for information, advice, and assistance usually indicating service users wanting to enter the care and support process. Care and carer assessments, as well as care and support planning, also saw increased activity mid-year, mirroring the heightened activity on the helpline from professionals seeking advocacy support in navigating and accessing services during this period. Safeguarding and care reviews remained steady across the year, whilst complaints and child protection issues, though less frequent, were present throughout.

## Children and Family Services – Statutory Independent Professional Advocacy (IPA)

### Provider

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

### Active Offers & Issue-based Advocacy (IBA)

During the year, 133 children and young people accessed the Issue Based Advocacy (IBA) service, presenting with 172 issues. This represents a decrease of 12 young people compared to 145 who accessed the service in the previous year. Of the 133, 58 were accessing the service for the first time, down from 76 first-time users in the previous year.

There was also a small decrease in Active Offers (AO), with 66 received this year, compared to 71 last year. A total of 132 children and young people were eligible for the AO during the year, a 49% reduction from 262 the previous year. Of those eligible, 66 were referred for AO, meaning that 50% of eligible individuals received a referral, compared to just 27% the previous year. While this increase is encouraging, we recognise that further improvement is needed.

To improve this, TGP have delivered presentations to social work teams to increase the understanding of the local authorities' responsibilities in promoting the AO. Additionally, TGP distributed literature via email outlining referral pathways, the AO and the advocacy process. These efforts have had a positive impact, as several IBA referrals were received as a direct result.

The decrease in the number of children and young people in the child protection arena accessing advocacy services may, in part, be attributed to the decline in young people becoming eligible for the AO.

## 7. STATISTICAL INFORMATION 2024/2025

### Number of Representations Received and Timescales

Table 2

| Total Number of Complaints and Representations Received<br>Statutory Complaints Procedure – 1 <sup>st</sup> April 2024 to 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2025 |                   |                              |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|
| Complaints                                                                                                                                            | Adult Social Care | Children and Family Services |
| Informal (resolved outside of the formal complaints procedure)                                                                                        | 41                | 102                          |
| Stage 1                                                                                                                                               | 7                 | 11                           |
| Stage 2                                                                                                                                               | 3                 | 6                            |
| <b>Total Complaints</b>                                                                                                                               | <b><u>170</u></b> |                              |
| Compliments                                                                                                                                           | Adult Social Care | Children and Family Services |
|                                                                                                                                                       | 252               | 122                          |
| <b>Total Compliments</b>                                                                                                                              | <b><u>374</u></b> |                              |

A total of 182 complaints were received in the previous period 2023/24. The table above shows a **decrease in complaints** received during this reporting period, – **6.5%** compared to the previous year.

A total of 362 compliments were received in the previous period 2023/24. The table above shows an **increase in compliments** received during this reporting period, + **3%** compared to the previous year.

### Timescales

**98%** of all complaints were acknowledged by the complaints department within 2 working days during this reporting period.

At Stage 1, the complainant should be contacted within 10 working days of the acknowledgment date by the individual investigating the complaint. This person is usually the relevant manager responsible for the service area related to the complaint. After resolving the complaint, a written response should be provided on behalf of the Local Authority within 5 working days of the discussion or meeting.

During the reporting period, 16.6% of complaints led to a meeting or telephone call held within 10 working days. It's pertinent to acknowledge that this figure reflects mutual availability; as there are times when managers may be busy or on leave, or the dates offered may not be suitable for the complainant, leading to the meeting occurring later than 10 working days.

Overall, **67%** of Stage 1 complaints were resolved within the timescales outlined in the complaints policy. This is the percentage of complaints that received a written response within 5 working days following the telephone discussion or meeting. If no meeting or call took place, compliance is calculated based on those who received a written response within 15 working days from the start date of the complaint. This is an increase from the 47% completed within timescale in the previous year.

At Stage 2, the guidelines specify that an investigation must be completed, and a full written response issued to the complainant within 25 working days of the start date. Unfortunately, no Stage 2 complaint investigations were completed, and reports issued within this timeframe. This is consistent with the previous year. The complexity and seriousness of the complaints that reach this stage have resulted in investigations exceeding the 25-working day limit. The severity and intricacy of the issues investigated during the reporting period necessitated thorough and detailed investigations, requiring more time to ensure all aspects are carefully considered.

Several independent investigations during the reporting period involved interviews with former staff members who have since left the local authority. In these cases, the complaints department must co-ordinate with Human Resources (HR) to obtain contact details and encourage the voluntary participation of former staff members, which can take additional time. As former staff no longer have access to social work systems, they must rely on their recollections of events, making it more challenging to obtain the accurate and detailed accounts needed for the investigation.

Another factor contributing to delays in completing complaint investigations is the complexity of the complaints themselves. A significant proportion of complaints are highly detailed and involved multiple complex issues. During the reporting period, **41%** of complaints covered multiple issues, which is relatively consistent with the 46% reported the previous year. While we strive to meet the timescales outlined in our complaints policy, the complexity of these complaints necessitates a thorough approach to ensure meaningful and positive outcomes for complainants. Additional time is required to ensure all aspects of each complaint are fully considered and addressed.

Additionally, **14%** of complaints involved multiple teams within the local authority, an increase from 9.5% the previous year. This necessitates co-ordination among various service managers, further prolonging enquiries and the investigation process.

When assessing compliance with timescales, it is essential to consider the substantial increase in complaint volumes during the 2022/23 reporting period. That year saw a 158% rise in complaints compared to the previous year. Although there was a slight decrease of 5% in 2023/24, followed by another decrease of 6.5% in 2024/25, the overall number of complaints remains significantly higher than when Welsh Government last reviewed the application of these timescales in 2014.

Despite these ongoing challenges, there has been an improvement in the timeliness of responses to Stage 1 complaints, reflecting the directorate's ongoing efforts to streamline processes, enhance coordination, and provide more timely responses to those raising concerns. While progress at Stage 1 is encouraging, it is clear that further work is needed to ensure compliance with timescales. To support this effort, we are reviewing internal workflows with the goal of refining and accelerating our processes, especially in light of the complexity of complaints received.

To support adherence to timescales at Stage 2, we are actively working to expand the pool of available independent investigators. This includes sharing information about both new and experienced investigators with neighbouring local authorities, as well as exchanging insights into the quality of investigatory work conducted (while maintaining complainant confidentiality). Additionally, we are exploring opportunities to attract qualified candidates to these roles. This would help alleviate pressure on existing resources, support adherence to timescales, and ensure the continued delivery of high-quality investigations.

### **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 Council, wherever possible, focuses on early resolution of complaints, with **84%** of complaints resolved informally during this reporting period (pre the complaints procedure). This is an increase from the 77% of complaints resolved informally in 2023/24. The high percentage continues to reflect the Directorate's commitment to achieving early resolution for complainants.

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Some of the feedback and comments received in relation to staff working within the Social Services Complaints Department are as follows:

Well done W, [the] recognition of the professional way you lead complaints for us is very well deserved.

X, you've been exemplary.

Further to today's quarterly performance meeting, can I express my gratitude to Y for supporting me in my role to make sense of emerging themes across the Directorate and subsequent triangulation with Compliments and Complaints data. Y is consistently responsive to information requests and more recently set up regular meetings between us to ensure that we evaluate the findings we critically reflect on to improve quality across the Directorate and promote excellence wherever possible.

Once again, I appreciate your help.

Thank you for responding so quickly.

### *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 the local resolution stage are only closed by mutual consent, with all parties confirming that a resolution has been agreed. The three most common themes during this reporting period were:

- Lack of support (**18%**)
- Staff conduct (**16%**)
- Lack of communication (**14%**)

Further information on themes can be found on Page 17 and 18 of this report.

Stage 2 complaints are investigated by an Independent Investigating Officer (IIO) independent from the Council. Complaints relating to Children and Family 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 and Family Services | Total    |
| Not Upheld                                                  | 1                 | 3                            | 4        |
| Partially Upheld                                            | 1                 | 3                            | 4        |
| Upheld                                                      | 1                 | 0                            | 1        |
| <b>Total</b>                                                | <b>3</b>          | <b>6</b>                     | <b>9</b> |

The following complaints were upheld following independent investigation:

### Children and Family Services

#### **Lack of Care and Support Package.**

The Independent Investigating Officer (IIO) concluded that there was no Care and Support package in place despite the allocation of Direct Payments. The Child Disability and Transition team did not implement appropriate support.

#### **No Carer's Assessment for Parents.**

The investigation established that parents received no support as carers. The Child Disability and Transition team did not act on a referral for a Carer's Assessment.

#### **Funding Change from a Commissioned Service to Direct Payments.**

The IIO found no clear rationale in records or in the information elicited at interview for the proposed change.

#### **Proposed Transition Despite Stable Placement.**

The IIO concluded that the current placement at Ty Teulu was successful, yet Bridgend Resource Centre was proposed to complainants in care planning. The IIO concluded that this was inconsistent with the young person's needs.

#### **Respite Not Offered.**

The investigation identified there was no updated discussion of respite since 2021, and that respite needs were not considered in recent care and support planning.

#### **Inadequate Support Following Allegation Against Foster Carer.**

The IIO found gaps in process, communication, and record-keeping. The investigation established that support was insufficient and that the safeguarding process was mishandled.

#### **Failure to Support Child During Investigation.**

The IIO found evidence of delayed contact and a lack of support. The investigation concluded that the child was not properly supported and the safety plan was not reviewed.

**Disputed Strategy Meeting Communication.**

The IIO established during staff interviews that there were conflicting statements made about police contact. The complaint was upheld due to poor communication and follow-up.

**Poor Safety Planning.**

The IIO found no evidence of adequate safeguarding documentation and communication was lacking.

**Lack of Transparency in Safeguarding Process.**

The IIO concluded that the complainant was not kept informed of the process. There were communication failures; the IIO concluded that the complainant should have been appropriately informed of the process and there were missed opportunities for support.

**Loss of Foster Carer's Records.**

The IIO found inconsistencies around record submission and management. The investigation established that the foster carer records were mishandled and that the record keeping practices were inconsistent with policy.

**Adult Social Care****Lack of Communication About Activities.**

The IIO found that the complainant did not receive email updates on son's activities at Bridgend Resource Centre.

**Decision on Direct Payment Top-up Delay.**

The IIO established that following the notice given from the previous provider, the family were not offered timely alternatives. The IIO concluded that the communication delay was unacceptable; the family were left with no options and were required to fund the direct payment top-up for the new provider.

**Assessment Process Delays.**

The IIO established that there was a delay in assigning a knowledgeable social worker. The delays were due to staffing issues.

**Bridgend Resource Centre (BRC) lacking in Capacity and Suitability.**

The IIO established that, following the notice given from the previous provider, the new provider (BRC) was not appropriate for the complainant's son's needs and there was no availability for the required five days a week.

**Unresolved Funding Issues and Reduced Direct Payment hours.**

The investigation established that, following closure of the previous provider, there was uncertainty regarding the new placements funding. This resulted in a lack of stability or clarity for the complainant's son's care.

**Improper Transition Planning.**

The IIO established that a move to Bridgend Resource Centre was suggested without proper assessment or planning, causing the complainant and family uncertainty.

**Misinformation received During Assessment Process.**

The IIO found that the agency social worker misinformed the family and failed to appropriately coordinate the case. The IIO found that there was an inadequate understanding of policies and poor communication.

**Social Services Complaints****Delay in Stage 1 Complaint Handling.**

The IIO found a delay in requesting daughter's consent and confusing communication. Additionally, the sign off process contributed to delays and complainants' frustration.

**Corporate Complaints Procedure**

There are situations where certain aspects of a complaint do not fall under the Social Services Statutory Complaints Procedure; in these cases, the Authority's Corporate Complaints Procedure is utilised instead. During the 2024/25 period, the Local Authorities' Corporate Complaints team received **3** complaints related to Social Services, which were appropriately addressed according to the Corporate Complaints Procedure. The first complaint concerned a Subject Access Request (SAR) made under the Data Protection Act. The complainant expressed concern that information she expected to be recorded was not provided. The second complaint came from the director of a young person's residential home and was regarding the council's lack of response to the company's proposed price increase. The third complaint, which was Upheld, involved a data breach in Children and Family Services. The Council Annual Complaints Report details these complaints, along with others received across various directorates, in accordance with the Corporate Complaints Policy.

**Complaint Themes**

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

**Table 4.**

| <b>Themes of complaints received 2024/25</b>                         | <b>Percentage %</b> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| Lack of support                                                      | 18%                 |
| Staff conduct                                                        | 16%                 |
| Lack of communication                                                | 14%                 |
| Failure to act in a way the complainant believes council should have | 9%                  |
| Case management/review decisions                                     | 7%                  |
| Breach of confidentiality                                            | 5%                  |
| Request                                                              | 5%                  |
| Factual Inaccuracies/False Accusations                               | 4%                  |
| Other                                                                | 3%                  |

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|                                                                                      |    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Frequent changes of staff                                                            | 3% |
| Delays                                                                               | 2% |
| Child/Adult protection process/outcome, decision for registration or de-registration | 2% |
| Removal and reduction of service                                                     | 2% |
| Safeguarding concerns raised                                                         | 2% |
| Court order not followed                                                             | 1% |
| Issue with assessment                                                                | 1% |

### Complaints regarding a lack of support

As seen in Table 4, the largest proportion of complaints received during this period (**18%**) centred around a perceived lack of support in various areas critical to our responsibilities under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. This theme reflects a range of concerns expressed by service users, carers, and families regarding the adequacy of the assistance provided.

In Adult Services, complainants reported struggling to manage their caring responsibilities and often felt overwhelmed and unsupported. Family members also voiced concerns about the level of involvement and support provided to their vulnerable relatives, believing that social services should be doing more to meet their needs.

In Children and Family Services, a recurring issue was the lack of support for families of disabled children and those caring for children with challenging behaviours. Parents described feeling isolated and under-supported in meeting their children's needs. Foster carers, including those in general placements and kinship arrangements, also raised concerns about the level of support they received in maintaining their caring roles. These concerns included the need for emotional support, particularly for carers facing allegations or involved in child protection procedures. At times, the lack of support referred to was financial. Additionally, complaints during the reporting period were received from or on behalf of young people leaving care who required assistance with finances, housing, or obtaining important documents.

This feedback highlights the importance of timely intervention across both Adult and Children and Family Services. Addressing these concerns remains a key priority for the directorate as we continue to work on improving the quality and responsiveness of the services we provide.

**Complaints regarding staff conduct**

During this reporting period, **16%** of complaints received related to the conduct of individual staff members. Complaints pertaining to the conduct of staff members are handled by the appropriate line manager in accordance with the Council's internal HR policies. These policies are designed to ensure that appropriate action is taken, when necessary. The relevant line manager who handles the complaint must take the concerns seriously, and thoroughly evaluate every concern raised relating to the conduct of their staff. The complaints department hold a record of staff names to support the identification of any reoccurring concerns and are able to highlight this to the appropriate managers. In compliance with legal confidentiality obligations inherent in each employee's contract of employment and the Data Protection Act (2018), the Council must not disclose the results of any investigations to a complainant.

Complainants may also be advised that they are entitled to raise a concern directly with the regulatory body, Social Care Wales or Social Work England, and are provided with details of how to also raise a concern separately, should they wish to do so.

**Complaints regarding safeguarding concerns**

During this reporting period, **4** complaints were raised that highlighted safeguarding concerns, which were addressed according to Wales Safeguarding Procedures. Of these complaints, **3** related to Children and Family Services, while **1** pertained to Adult Social Care.

In Children and Family Services, one complaint prompted a Section 47 investigation. The second complaint was referred to the Group Manager of the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) for review, and the complainant was advised on how to report any new concerns directly to the MASH. The concerns raised in the third complaint were forwarded to the allocated social worker for a thorough investigation; however, it was determined that these concerns did not meet the threshold for further investigation.

In Adult Services, one complaint was received regarding safeguarding concerns. This concern involved an allegation that a Support at Home carer had used a 'Steddy' aid with excessive force, resulting in injury to the service user's feet. In accordance with Wales Safeguarding procedures, the matter was referred to the Adult Safeguarding Team for a comprehensive investigation.

**8. HOW COMPLAINTS WERE RESOLVED and LESSONS LEARNED**

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

**Liaison between Complaints Officers, Management and Complainants.**

- Work with complaints officers and relevant managers to identify and agree on a swift and informal resolution to issues raised.
- Facilitate meetings between managers and complainants to encourage honest and open communication, allowing for a better understanding of the complainants' concerns and desired outcomes.

### Collaboration and Best Practices.

- Fostering positive working relationships with Social Services Complaints Departments across other Local Authorities in Wales to share best practice and ensure consistency in handling complaints. This collaboration helps ensure that complainants receive fair and equitable treatment. For particularly complex cases, we may engage in collaborative problem-solving while always maintaining confidentiality.

### Communication with Complainants.

- Provide complainants with a clear explanation of the reasons behind decisions (both verbally and in writing).
- Maintain openness and honesty by offering apologies to complainants when necessary.
- Identify areas where services can be improved and ensure that corrective actions are recorded and followed up on.
- Offer reassessments where appropriate.

### Advocacy Advice/Support and Independent Consideration.

- Direct complainants to advocacy services such as Llais, TGP Cymru, and BVC for additional support.
- Refer complaints to Stage 2 of the Social Services Complaints Procedure for independent review and consideration.

### Quality Assurance and Improvement.

- Collaborate with the Quality Assurance Officer to discuss recurring issues and trends in complaints. This dialogue allows for a targeted focus on areas needing service quality improvement. The Quality Assurance Officer considers how identified learning outcomes align with broader service improvement plans.

A summary of key lessons learned during 2024/25 were as follows:

**Table 5**

| Team                            | Lessons Learned / Actions Implemented                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Adult Social Care               | <p><b>Even though the complaint was 'Not Upheld', the IIO recommended that we ensure families new to social services are clearly informed about the role of social workers and expectations.</b></p> <p>The Local Authority is reviewing the documentation for first-time service users to ensure they fully understand the role of social services.</p> |
| Care Experienced Childrens Team | <p><b>Ensure Section 47 outcomes are referenced in Reviews of care experienced children and care plans are rationalised.</b></p> <p>A note was placed on the children's records to reflect the outcomes and actions taken, ensuring an accurate record of the Local Authority's interventions.</p>                                                       |

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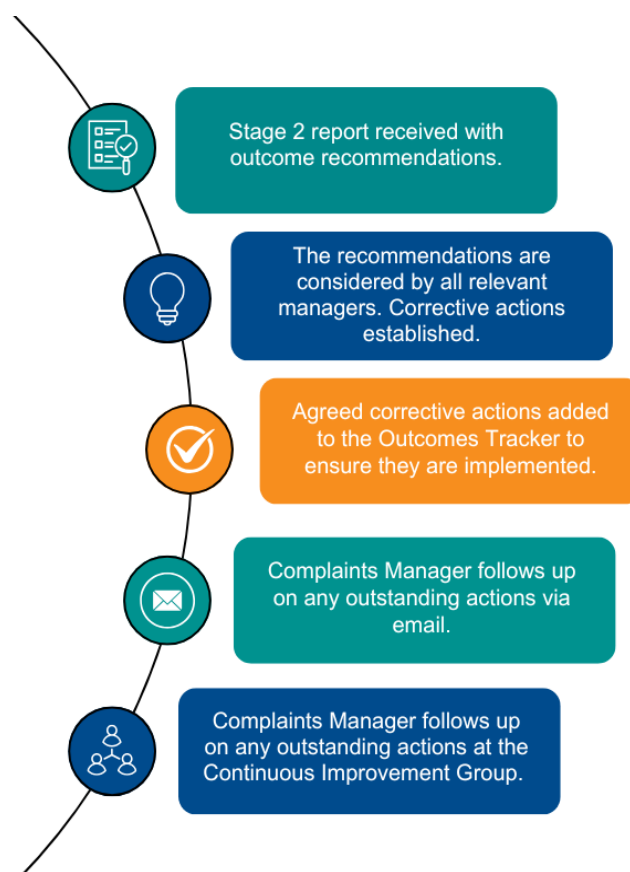
|                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|-------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Child Disability &amp; Transition</b>  | <p><b>Group Manager to try and improve relations between complainant and the service to encourage a robust needs assessment.</b></p> <p>The Local Authority offered this as a potential way forward with the Group Manager intervening to broker a relationship with the complainant, provided that the complainant agrees. If complainant agrees, a robust needs assessment will be undertaken with corresponding Care and Support Plans.</p> |
| <b>Child Disability &amp; Transition</b>  | <p><b>Social workers to read previous assessments and care plans before visits.</b></p> <p>Social workers have been reminded of the importance of reviewing previous assessments and care plans as part of the current assessment process.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Child Disability &amp; Transition</b>  | <p><b>Clearly communicate the rationale behind considering in-house care provision as the first option.</b></p> <p>The Local Authority clarified that under the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014, resources must be allocated fairly and sustainably. This is now being communicated more clearly to families.</p>                                                                                                               |
| <b>Child Disability &amp; Transition</b>  | <p><b>Decisions about funding for placements are evidence-based.</b></p> <p>Outcome Surgery ensures decisions with financial implications are made based on evidence of assessed and agreed care and support needs.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Child Disability &amp; Transition</b>  | <p><b>Engage families actively in assessments and decision-making processes.</b></p> <p>Social workers have been reminded of their responsibility to actively involve families during the assessment process. Learning from this case has been integrated into training, supervision, and quality assurance processes.</p>                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Community Learning Disability Team</b> | <p><b>Reassess care packages and consider reinstating additional care hours if necessary.</b></p> <p>The Local Authority agreed to consider if additional care hours are warranted, however this decision is based on the outcome of the social worker's assessment.</p>                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Community Learning Disability Team</b> | <p><b>Make decisions on funding quickly, based on individual care needs.</b></p> <p>The Local Authority has implemented a more efficient decision-making process at Outcomes Surgery for care plans with financial implications.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                           |

|                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Community Learning Disability Team</b>                | <p><b>Engage families in the assessment process and consider placements holistically.</b></p> <p>This practice is in place and has been reinforced through ongoing training, supervision, and quality assurance processes.</p>                                                                                      |
| <b>Community Learning Disability Team</b>                | <p><b>Allocate cases with complexity to more experienced social workers.</b></p> <p>The Local Authority is reviewing its allocation process to ensure cases are assigned to social workers with appropriate experience and expertise.</p>                                                                           |
| <b>Community Learning Disability Team / Day Services</b> | <p><b>Ensure clear communication with day services about placements and assessments.</b></p> <p>Social workers are required to proactively engage with day services management to confirm service availability before offering or agreeing to services.</p>                                                         |
| <b>Complaints Department</b>                             | <p><b>Ensure consent is obtained at the outset when a representative files a complaint.</b></p> <p>Consent is obtained promptly in all cases where someone other than a parent or legal guardian is making a representation on behalf of a child.</p>                                                               |
| <b>Complaints Department</b>                             | <p><b>Improve communication between the Complaints Team and complainants.</b></p> <p>The Complaints Team has reflected on how to improve communication, especially during staff absences, by ensuring detailed handovers and using file notes to ensure all team members are aware of the complaint status.</p>     |
| <b>Complaints Department</b>                             | <p><b>Provide guidance on the complaints process to Social Work Teams, ensuring timely responses.</b></p> <p>The Local Authority has updated training materials, provided refresher training, and reminded staff of the eLearning module for staff on the complaints process.</p>                                   |
| <b>Complaints Department</b>                             | <p><b>Develop a Quick Reference Guide for Social Workers on their responsibilities within the complaints process.</b></p> <p>The Quick Reference Guide been developed and will be made available to all staff to ensure clarity on their roles and the statutory timescales for responses.</p>                      |
| <b>East Locality Safeguarding Hub</b>                    | <p><b>Even though the complaint was 'Not Upheld', the IIO recommended reflection on whether earlier action should have been taken regarding the removal of children from the complainant.</b></p> <p>The Local Authority reflected on the timeliness of intervention in the response letter to the complainant.</p> |

|                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|---------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Fostering                                               | <p><b>Strengthen training and support for foster carers, especially for those with children who have challenging behaviours.</b></p> <p>The Local Authority is currently reviewing the training and support provided to foster carers, including developing targeted training for those caring for children with challenging or complex needs.</p>                                                        |
| Fostering                                               | <p><b>Revisit record-keeping policies and ensure staff and Foster carers are clear about the importance of accurate, timely records.</b></p> <p>The Local Authority has updated practice guidance, conducted workshops, and increased monitoring to ensure compliance with record-keeping standards.</p>                                                                                                  |
| Fostering                                               | <p><b>Ensure foster carer records are accurate, signed off, and located in the appropriate systems.</b></p> <p>A new Recording Policy has been implemented and staff have been trained on proper record-keeping procedures. Foster carer records are now regularly reviewed as part of annual reviews.</p>                                                                                                |
| Fostering                                               | <p><b>Address issues of concern with foster carers during supervision sessions and maintain detailed incident records.</b></p> <p>The Local Authority is reviewing its placement stability approach to identify early interventions that could prevent potential breakdowns. Staff and Foster carers are encouraged to maintain detailed incident records.</p>                                            |
| Fostering /<br>Care<br>Experienced<br>Childrens<br>Team | <p><b>Introduce case consultations for early intervention and to reduce escalation.</b></p> <p>A new case consultation model has been introduced, allowing teams to book consultations with senior managers for advice and guidance on next steps.</p>                                                                                                                                                    |
| Fostering /<br>Care<br>Experienced<br>Childrens<br>Team | <p><b>Ensure that allegations against foster carers are properly tracked and handled, with staff aware of their roles and responsibilities.</b></p> <p>The Local Authority has updated its Quality Assurance framework, embedded the Signs of Safety model, and created a Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) post to oversee allegations against professionals, providing training and advice.</p> |

|                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Fostering / Care Experienced Childrens Team / LADO</b> | <p><b>Managers should review how the case that led to a complaint could have been handled differently to improve communication and information sharing.</b></p> <p>A comprehensive learning event was held to discuss how communication breakdowns occurred and ways to improve communication between teams and foster carers.</p>                           |
| <b>Older People Mental Health</b>                         | <p><b>Even though the complaint was 'Not Upheld', the IIO recommended that we ensure families receive written records of reviews and care plans, especially in cases where there may be misunderstanding.</b></p> <p>The Local Authority will provide written records of care plans and reviews to families, where the individual's consent is obtained.</p> |
| <b>Outcomes Surgery</b>                                   | <p><b>Make swift decisions when in-house services cannot meet an individual's needs, and ensure transparency in decision-making.</b></p> <p>The Local Authority has updated its practice in the Outcomes Surgery to ensure swift decisions on external providers and clear communication on how decisions are made.</p>                                      |

In order to ensure that the directorate learns from complaints, and improvements are embedded effectively, the complaints department record, analyse and report on the learning from complaints. Improvements are monitored using an 'Outcomes Tracker' spreadsheet, which is reviewed periodically by the Complaints Manager to ensure that all outcomes and agreed actions have been completed. While some actions are straightforward and can be implemented quickly, others may require a period of work, time and commitment from the service to embed. The Complaints Manager also follows up on any outstanding actions during the 'Continuous Improvement Group' meetings in both Adult and Children and Family Services. This group, attended by team managers and senior managers within the service, ensures that all areas of improvements are being addressed. The flowchart to the right demonstrates the process we follow from the recommendations being made, to ensuring they are completed.



## 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 section of the Council's [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 shown in Table 2 (page 12), **374** compliments were received during 2024/25 compared to 362 the previous year, a welcome **increase of 3%**. Please see a cross selection of the compliments received for 2024/25 in the table below:

**Table 6.**

| <b>Compliments - Adult Social Care:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>I wanted to say, my nan moved in earlier in the year and the reception and service received has been fantastic.</p> <p>Her moving in has given my family peace of mind that she is safe, secure and in a friendly, homely environment. Since her moving in, she has been having her medication regularly and eating set meals and can see the improvement from this in her.</p> <p>We had one incident where she fell and had to go to hospital, we were contacted straight away and everything was dealt with seamlessly.</p> <p>The staff have all been excellent and very friendly and welcoming when I come to visit. They have been very kind to us, while we have been going through some personal issues and when visiting have made us feel welcome.</p> <p>I would like to thank everyone for their care for my nan in the last year.</p> |
| <p>I would like to thank Z and his team C.D.A.T. they've been absolutely brilliant with me.. looked after me in a way.. never judge me at all. But without Z I'd be dead and his support..... they have been nothing but outstanding with me and how and how my life is changing for the better. I think all the team, but Z's been by the side off me or whenever I needed someone to talk to when I was down at any time. Don't know what else to say other than thank you 🙏 Legends!!</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <p>A sadly passed away last week, and B has worked with her and her family for many years and has built a very positive and trusting relationship with them, providing vast amounts of support over the years. The family thanked her for her support and 'for being there when we needed you most and for caring'.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <p>I was speaking to one of the social workers in CMHT who are helping us out with some of our referrals and she said she takes her hat off to you all for the work that you do in the hospital, she has realised since helping how hard you all work and the processes you complete, thought that it was nice for her to appreciate what you do.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |

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Glyn Cynffig is a clean and well run place with excellent staff, thank you. All of the staff have always been helpful. Thank you for all the help and support I have had while in Glyn Cynffig . It has changed my life for the better.

Not everyone will be lucky enough to have you as a social worker and my dysfunctional - but not overly traumatic background. It would be so much worse for someone else.

I will sing your praises throughout, of course.

If I never speak to you again, I need you to know that you made a real difference in mine and my mums life. I genuinely believe you were chosen to oversee her transition and that no one on the planet would've cared more than you.

That call you facilitated for the kids, my mum and me was literally the act of an angel.

Lovely to see you and C again today.

I'm literally blown away by my new hearing gadget.

I was excited to get it for the TV. Being able to wear it out is on another level.

I'm pleased and grateful with my NHS hearing aids, they're brilliant.

To have my hearing enhanced even more, too another level is absolutely amazing. The sound is so much clearer.

It's going to make so much difference to me, I cannot begin to tell you how much that means.

I feel confident that I won't have to concentrate as much wearing it out as I do with my hearing aids. I feel I'll be able to hear people talking normally without asking them to repeat themselves.

I feel like a kid at Christmas, with the best gift ever of superpower hearing! I could hear you clearly the other side of the street!!!!

There were tears after you both left. Happy, grateful tears.... they haven't stopped just yet.

I'm so excited and grateful to have it. I feel so lucky. It's blown my mind. It's flipping genius, and my new best friend.

It's going to make so much difference for me.

I cannot put into words how much it means.

Thank you both from the bottom of my heart.

I just wanted to share some lovely feedback I received this afternoon regarding yourself and a male colleague. I spoke to a senior manager in the Health Board today, who's mother receives Telecare and the Mobile Response service, her mother lives with MND. She described yourself and a male colleague as attending her mother and said how sympathetic and respectful you both were to her mother. She said she had set up a similar type of service down West Wales but said, "when you see a service in action for your own family members and they were so professional and amazing, you feel so grateful." She was saying how her mother has communication problems but you both took your time and were so respectful, that she was so impressed.

Dear D, E and all the team at Ty Cwm Ogwr, I just wanted to say a huge thank you to the care and support that you provided to my mum but also my dad. Living so far away, it was comforting to know that mum was in safe hands and being cared for by a team of such wonderfully kind and thoughtful people. Keep doing what you do - you are all amazing.

| <b>Compliments – Children and Family Services:</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Thank you for working with me. I'm sad it's come to an end but thank you so much being there for me when I had no one. I'm going to miss you so much.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| I can only attribute the change being a result of the commitment and hard work of the Social Worker who managed to develop a positive working relationship with F and her father. Additionally, professionals involved have shared nothing but positive praise about the way in which Social Worker, G progressed this case.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| To H, Thank you so much everything you have done for me + my family. We would still be hitting a brick wall if it wasn't for all your hard work, support, determination + not giving up on us.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Thank you so much for all the help and encouragement over our time together. You don't know what difference it made to us.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Myself and my son have recently had the pleasure of working alongside social worker H from assessment team. I'd just like to thank her massively from the bottom of our hearts for all the guidance and support she has given myself and I over these last few weeks. Thank you for being there for I and always putting his needs first. He really opened up to H because he gained her trust instantly. Please could you forward this email on. We will be forever grateful, keep doing an amazing job you really are one in a million. We will always remember H thanks to all she's done. Thanks again. |
| Thank you so much for all your help, support, understanding and your dedication to helping our family. It is hugely appreciated. I feel truly blessed you were the social worker allocated to us. I wish you good luck for your future. You truly do make a difference.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| I've just read through the report which was really good to read through. We're so pleased with all the positive feedback and that is testament to your support throughout our first steps in foster care over the last 18months / 2 years. You're a fabulous [supervising social worker] that continues to support and encourage us, reading what you have said about us shows just how well you know us all, this is so important to us and gives us the confidence to continue our journey supporting the children that come into our care.                                                               |
| Just a big thank you for getting who I am and who I could be and for being patient. I'm really grateful and thankful for all your help. All I can say is I got a house, my son, my life back and I just need my grandchildren back and I be completely happy. But again thank you J, I don't know how you do a job like you do.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

## 9. ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2024/25

### Overall Reduction in Complaints

There has been a **6.5%** decrease in the total number of complaints received compared to the previous year. This decline reflects ongoing efforts to improve service delivery and communication and may indicate an increase in customer satisfaction with the quality of services provided by Social Services.

### Early Resolution of Complaints

A notable achievement this year is the high proportion of complaints resolved at an early, local level. The majority of concerns were successfully addressed informally or at Stage 1 of the Social Services Complaints Procedure, with only **5%** advancing to a formal

independent investigation (Stage 2). This emphasises the effectiveness of early resolution approaches and highlights the commitment of teams to respond promptly and constructively to concerns.

### **Implementation of the Most Significant Change (MSC) Approach**

This year marked the beginning of implementing the Most Significant Change (MSC) methodology as a tool for learning from complaints. MSC enables the collection of compelling narratives that illustrate meaningful change and service impact. By providing qualitative insights that may not be evident through traditional complaint analysis, MSC will enhance our understanding of service effectiveness and support more reflective, person-centred service development.

### **Service Improvement Through Complaint Outcomes**

During the reporting period, independent complaints investigators at Stage 2 of the complaints procedure issued a significant number of service improvement recommendations; **49** in total. This process has required closer collaboration between the complaints manager, operational managers, and the quality assurance officer to ensure these insights inform service planning and development. Additionally, quarterly thematic reviews of complaint trends are shared with senior leaders and service managers through directorate management team meetings, team managers meetings, and continuous improvement groups. This helps to identify recurring issues, drive targeted improvements, and reinforce the role of complaints as a critical mechanism for learning and continuous improvement.

## **10. OBJECTIVES FOR 2025/26**

### **Strengthening the Culture of Learning and Improvement using the Most Significant Change (MSC) Model**

The first objective for the year ahead is to regularly capture and reflect on the experiences of the people we support, as well as the outcomes of interventions and the impact of complaint resolutions using the MSC model. This approach fosters a culture of continuous learning, helps identify patterns and best practices, and enables us to adapt our services to reflect service users' lived experiences, thereby improving the quality of service delivery.

### **Further Develop Accessible Complaints Information**

Create complaint information in formats that are accessible to young people, individuals with learning difficulties, and those with hearing or visual impairments. All complaints materials to be available in easy read, audio, braille and child-friendly formats. Ensuring this information is accessible promotes inclusivity, allowing all individuals to engage fully with the complaints process. This builds trust and empowers a wider range of service users to voice their concerns, ultimately enriching the department's understanding of diverse perspectives.

### **Collaborate with the Social Care Workforce Development Programme (SCWDP)**

Link with SCWDP to ensure that training materials are readily accessible to all staff members. Collaborate to keep training resources current, inclusive, and available in formats that cater to different learning styles and roles within the department. Regularly reviewing and refining these materials will facilitate a consistent understanding of procedures and

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responsibilities across teams, improve adherence to timescales, boost staff confidence, and enhance complaint handling standards and outcomes for complainants.

### **Further Expand the Pool of Independent Investigators**

We currently share information about high-quality Investigating Officers with neighbouring local authorities on a reciprocal basis. This year, one of our objectives is to explore additional opportunities to attract qualified candidates to this role. Increasing our pool of independent investigators will help alleviate pressure on existing resources, support adherence to timelines, and ensure the provision of high-quality investigations. Enhanced investigative capacity will contribute to timely and consistent complaint resolutions and ensure investigations remain impartial.

### **Promote a Positive Complaints Culture**

In the coming year, we aim to conduct a feedback survey to identify areas for improvement, streamline processes, and foster a positive attitude toward complaints as opportunities for learning and development. This initiative will help clarify the complaints process and the roles within the complaints department, reduce defensiveness, and position complaints as valuable opportunities for growth and service excellence, thereby improving overall morale and attitudes toward 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 in relation to equality impacts received during the reporting period in relation to the Social Services Representations and Complaints Procedure.

We do not currently request or record equalities information from complainants. As a result, we are unable to report on the proportion of complaints received from individuals with protected characteristics as defined under the Equality Act 2010.

**Report prepared for Claire Marchant**

**Statutory Director of Social Services**

**By the Compliments and Complaints Resolution Manager**