

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET

26 JULY 2016

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR, SOCIAL SERVICES AND WELLBEING

SOCIAL SERVICES REPRESENTATIONS AND COMPLAINTS ANNUAL REPORT 2015/2016

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To present to Cabinet the 2015/16 annual report on social services representations and complaints procedures as required by Welsh Government guidance.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Objectives /Other Corporate Priorities

- 2.1 This report links to the following Corporate Plan improvement Priorities:
- Helping people to be more self-reliant;
 - Smarter use of resources.

3. Background

- 3.1 Members are aware that there is a requirement under Section 7 of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970 for local authorities to have in place procedures for considering any representations or complaints made in relation to the discharge of their Social Services functions. This is the second Annual Report relating to representations and complaints received by the Directorate which have been handled in accordance with the revised Welsh Government Complaint Guidelines “A Guide to Handling Complaints and Representations by Local Authority Social Services” which came into effect on 1st August 2014. The guidance supports the implementation of the Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014 and the Representations Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014. The Regulations introduced a new two stage process which replaced the previous three stages and also brings the process for social services into line with the NHS Complaints Procedure.

- 3.2 The key elements of the Social Services Representations and Complaints Procedure include:-

- Stage 1 complaints to be responded to within 5 working days of the date of resolution (10 working days permitted to achieve resolution).
- The timescale permitted to complete Stage 2 independent complaint investigations is 25 working days.
- Links with other Directorates of the Authority, the NHS and the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales so as to provide a ‘seamless’ complaints service.
- Monitoring performance of complaints handling, learning from complaints and using this learning to improve services for everyone who uses them.

- 3.3 Members will see from the annual report that strong emphasis is placed not just upon complaints, but also on the comments and compliments received from service

users. The services are keen to learn from the information gathered and use this to inform service improvements.

- 3.4 The annual report also contains statistics relating to complaints addressed in accordance with the Authority's Corporate Complaints Procedure, together with information relating to the fact that the majority of complaints are addressed and resolved informally (prior to reaching Stage 1 of the complaints procedure). This important and significant work ensures that concerns are resolved quickly and prevents complainants being subjected to using the formal complaints procedure unnecessarily.
- 3.5 Statistical information relating to the processing of Member Referrals is provided in the annual report. The Representations and Complaints Procedure does not preclude the right of an individual to approach their Local Councillor, Assembly Member or Member of Parliament who all undertake an important role in handling concerns and queries that individual constituents may have. Member referrals can range from comments and queries to complaints.
- 3.6 The annual report also includes information arising from a cross-section of the feedback generated from user/carer engagement exercises undertaken by a range of service areas across both Adult Social Care and Safeguarding and Family Support.

4 Current Situation / proposal

- 4.1 The number of representations (complaints, comments and compliments) received during the reporting period was 374, broken down as follows:

14	statutory complaints
7	corporate complaints
155	concerns resolved pre-complaints procedure
197	compliments
1	comments

- 4.2 During the initial months of the reporting period (April to July 2014), complaints were handled in accordance with Welsh Government Complaint Guidelines "Listening & Learning" which comprised a three stage complaints procedure. However, new guidelines came into effect on the 1st August 2014. The guidance supports the implementation of the Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014 and the Representations Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014. The Regulations introduced a new two stage process which replaced the previous three stages bringing the process for social services into line with the NHS Complaints Procedure.
- 4.3 The 2015/2016 report contains statistical information in relation to the representations and complaints received during the year for both adult social care and safeguarding and family support services.
- 4.4 The number of Member Referrals received for both Adult Social Care and Safeguarding and Family Support during the reporting period was 123, broken down as follows:

- 4.5 The majority of the work carried out within the Social Services Representations and Complaints Procedure is undertaken in consultation with either the Monitoring Officer and/or the Legal Services Department.

5 Effect upon Policy Framework and Procedure Rules

- 5.1 There is no impact on the Policy Framework and Procedure Rules.

6 Equality Impact Assessment

- 6.1 A screening for equality impact has been carried out in relation to the Representations and Complaints Procedure. There is no negative impact on the protected equality characteristics.
- 6.2 Complainants are welcome to submit complaints in the Welsh language; complaints leaflets are bilingual. The complaint forms have recently been produced bilingually and are available for use by complainants.
- 6.3 There have been no complaints received in relation to equality issues during the reporting period.

7 Financial Implications

- 7.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

8 Recommendation

- 8.1 Cabinet is asked to note the Annual Report for 2015/16.

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Background Documents

None