

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CABINET**

**3<sup>RD</sup> OCTOBER 2018**

**REPRESENTATIONS AND COMPLAINTS PROCEDURES  
ANNUAL REPORT**

**REPORT OF THE GROUP DIRECTOR, COMMUNITY & CHILDREN'S SERVICES  
IN DISCUSSION WITH THE RELEVANT PORTFOLIO HOLDERS, COUNCILLOR  
HOPKINS AND COUNCILLOR LEYSHON**

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**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 This report provides Cabinet with an overview of the operation and effectiveness of the Council's statutory Social Services complaints procedure between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018.
- 1.2 The report contains information on the background of the Social Services statutory complaints procedure, information on lessons learnt from complaints and performance data for Adults & Children's Social Services, together with achievements for 2017/18 and future developments.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- 2.1 Agree the contents of the Social Services Annual Complaints report (attached as Appendix 1).
- 2.2 Note the work undertaken by the Social Services Complaints Team.

**3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 It is a requirement of the Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations Procedure 2014 that the Local Authority produce an annual report and that the report is considered by the appropriate Scrutiny Committee.

**4. BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 Social Services has a statutory requirement to operate a complaints procedure that follows the legislative requirements of the regulations specified

above. The guidance requires an annual report to be produced relating to the operation of the complaints procedure.

4.2 The Social Services complaints procedure is available to:

- All service users or their representatives
- Any child with a care and support plan
- A parent of a child with a care and support plan
- A local authority foster parent
- A person who the Authority consider to have sufficient interest in the child's/adult's welfare

It is based upon the principle that people have a right to complain; to have the complaint examined and resolved as quickly as possible.

4.3 The complaints process was amended in August 2014 in line with the new Complaints Regulations and Guidance issued by the Welsh Government and became a two stage process:

**Stage One: Local Resolution** – The emphasis at this stage of the process is to resolve the complaint by means of discussion and problem solving, whilst adhering to the 15 working days response time that has been imposed under the Regulations.

**Stage Two: Formal Consideration** – If the complainant remains dissatisfied after completion of stage one, they may request that the complaint proceeds to stage two of the process. This involves a formal investigation of the complaint with a report being produced by the investigating officer appointed to the case. The timescale for dealing with this stage is 25 working days.

4.4 If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the stage two Investigation, they may progress their complaint to the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales.

## **5. SOCIAL SERVICES ANNUAL COMPLAINTS REPORT 2017/18**

5.1 When analysing complaints, it is important to remember that an increase or decrease in the number of complaints does not necessarily reflect a change in the standard of service provided. An increase might indicate the positive view we take towards complaints, together with the fact that people are well informed about how to make a complaint. Given the vulnerability of many people accessing services, it would be worrying if people felt unable to complain if they were dissatisfied with the services they received.

5.2 During the reporting period a total of 162 complaints were received requiring a response at stage one. This is a decrease of 20 complaints when compared to the previous year. Overall, the number of complaints received remains comparatively low in contrast to the number of people that come into contact with Social Services annually.

- 5.3 Across Social Services 52% of stage one complaints were responded to within the required timescale, compared with 59.5% reported last year. This continues to be an area highlighted for improvement and processes have been introduced across both Children's and Adult Services to address both the quality and timeliness of responses to issues raised.
- 5.4 Of the 162 stage one complaints received, 3 progressed to stage two with 1 complaint being received directly at stage 2 of the process. This is a decrease on last year and the number remains low in contrast to the number of people receiving services and demonstrates that the majority of people are happy for the Council to deal with their complaints at a local level and that managers are effectively dealing with the issues raised.
- 5.5 Further details and analysis about the number and causes of complaints and compliments, and the service areas where these have been made, are provided in Appendix 1. The annual report also outlines some of the achievements and developments undertaken by the Complaints Team during the year.

## **6. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There are no equality and/or diversity implications from this report.

## **7. CONSULTATION**

- 7.1 No consultation has been undertaken in relation to this report as it provides information on the operation of the Representation and Complaints Unit and direct feedback from service users in relation to how well services are delivered through the monitoring of complaints and compliments.

## **8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 There are no financial implications aligned to this report and the Work of The Representation and Complaints Unit services is managed within the existing allocated budget.

## **9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

- 9.1 The work of the Complaints and Representation Unit is underpinned by the requirements of the Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014 and the Representations Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014. This report has been produced in line with the legislative requirements contained within those procedures.

## **10. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT**

- 10.1 The function of the Complaints and Representations Team and the collation of service user feedback through both complaints and compliments

provide a quality assurance mechanism by which Adults and Children's Services can measure their performance against the corporate priorities to:

- Provide essential services well, and;
- Ensuring increased levels of satisfaction with people who have contact with Council Services.

## **11. CONCLUSION**

11.1 Social Services continue to provide a robust and effective complaints procedure in line with the statutory requirements. Complaints are seen as providing valuable customer feedback, with the information from complaints providing valuable lessons learnt when planning and improving services to meet the needs of our customers.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

**AS AMENDED BY**

**THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**

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**Background Papers**

Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations Procedure 2014

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