

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

SOCIAL SERVICES

REPRESENTATIONS AND COMPLAINTS PROCEDURES

ANNUAL REPORT

2021/22



1. INTRODUCTION

It is a statutory requirement for local authorities to have in place a representations and complaints procedure for Social Services.

Each local authority is required to produce an annual report concerning the operation of its representation and complaints procedure.

This annual report provides information about the operation of the Social Services Representation and Complaints Procedure between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2022. The report contains information about the number and type of complaints received and also provides details of the activities undertaken by the Customer Feedback and Engagement Team during that period to develop the representation and complaints service.

2. BACKGROUND

Social Services in Rhondda Cynon Taf adopts a positive attitude towards complaints and views them as a valuable form of feedback, which assists in the development and improvement of services. Complaints also provide an opportunity to learn lessons where a service has fallen short of an expected standard.

The representation and complaints procedure is widely publicised generally and specifically to people who use our services and provides them with an opportunity to:

- ❖ Voice their concerns when they are dissatisfied in order that the issue can be rectified to their satisfaction, wherever possible
- ❖ Make compliments
- ❖ Suggest improvements
- ❖ Challenge decisions

The aim is for our representation and complaints procedure to secure a better service for all the people using social care services and is underpinned by the following key principles:

- ❖ Commitment to providing quality services
- ❖ Accessible and supportive to those with particular needs
- ❖ Prompt and responsive with resolution at the earliest possible opportunity
- ❖ Strong problem solving element
- ❖ Operated without prejudice or discrimination
- ❖ Adheres to the principle of equal opportunity

The representation and complaints procedure also provides an opportunity for service users to address concerns in relation to independent sector providers

where they remain dissatisfied following implementation of the agencies own internal complaints procedures.

The Social Services complaints process has two stages:

Stage One: Local Resolution – The emphasis at this stage of the process is to resolve the complaint by means of discussion and problem solving. The complainant will be offered a discussion about the issues they have raised and this can either be done by telephone or face to face in an attempt to resolve the issues. This must be done within 10 working days of the receipt of the complaint. Following this discussion and any further investigation that is necessary, a written response will be provided within 5 working days.

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 an independent investigating officer. The timescale for dealing with this stage is 25 working days.

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.

3. STAGE 1 'INFORMAL' COMPLAINTS

In 2021/22 there were a total of 110 recorded complaints during the year, compared with 54 in the previous year. Whilst this represents a significant increase across both Adults and Children's Services the figure is consistent with pre-Covid pandemic figures for 2019/20 when 112 complaints were received.

It is evident that rather than a significant rise in 2021/22 there was a significant decrease in the number of complaints made during the covid pandemic in 2019/20 due to restrictions and possibly an understanding from individuals and families that services would naturally be affected.

With restrictions lifted and services resuming Stage 1 complaints have risen to what could be considered as average numbers.

Adult Services received 63 Stage 1 complaints compared to 25 in 2020/21 and Children Services received 47 compared to 29 in 2020/21.

Of the Stage 1 complaints that were received, 42% were responded to within statutory timescales which is an increase from 33% in 2019/20. Again, this low percentage can be attributed to the disruption caused by Covid and the priorities for both service areas to continue providing direct care and support. From the outset complainants were made aware that complaint responses may be subject to delays and In some cases, with the agreement of the complainant, complaints were put on hold to relieve the pressure on managers.

Ongoing support to teams from the Customer Feedback and Engagement Team has been provided throughout this period and where possible the team have sought to resolve low level complaints and queries outside of the complaints process. This is reflected in the number of contacts recorded (165) with only 1 contact progressing to a Stage 1 complaint and 1 Referred to the Corporate Complaints Process.

Adult Services

63 complaints were received for Adult Services during the year. This represents an 152% increase on the total amount received in 2020/21 when throughout the COVID pandemic only 25 complaints were received.

Of the complaints made about Adult Services, 4.8% (3) were made by the service users themselves and 95% (60) were made by their representatives e.g. carers, family members and advocates. These figures highlight the reliance of many adults on their family and carers to raise issues on their behalf and remains consistent with comments received as part of the Social Services Performance Measures Survey undertaken in September 2021.

Details of complaints received recorded by Service Area are summarised in Table 1 and compares them with the previous year.

Table 1: Summary of complaints by Service Area

Service Area	2020/21	2021/22
Long Term Assessment - Locality Teams	10	22
Short Term Intervention Support @ Home	1	2
Short Term Intervention - SPA	1	0
Short Term Intervention - ACE	0	4
Short Term Intervention – Sensory Services	0	1
Mental Health	2	4
Finance	2	2
Residential Care RCT	2	5
Independent Sector Residential Care	0	1
Independent Sector Domiciliary Care	4	18
Emergency Duty Team	0	0
Independent Living Service	0	0
Short Term Intervention – Short Term Care Management	0	0
Short Term Intervention – Stay Well@Home	0	0
Community Reviewing Team	1	3
Day Services	0	0
Safeguarding	1	0
Supported Living	0	0
Vision Products	0	0
Complex Learning Difficulty Team	1	1
Total	25	63

The higher numbers of complaints received directly by the Council, relating to Independent Domicillary care highlight the continued pressure on these providers as a result of COVID and staff shortages.

Table 2 sets out in more detail what the complaints were about and compares them with the previous year.

Table 2: Summary of what complaints were about

Nature of Complaint	2020/21	2021/22
Failure to provide a service	4	6
Financial issues	2	3
Lack of information/communication	5	19
Staff issues	5	1
Quality of care	3	14
Quality of service	6	13
Care and Support Plan	0	1
Change in Call times	0	1
Issues Around Standards	0	1
Missed Calls	0	1
Waiting for Assessment	0	3
Total	25	63

Of the 63 Stage 1 complaints received for Adults Services, 61 were resolved locally, 1 was referred to another organisation and one complaint was withdrawn. 1 complaint progressed to Stage 2 of the process.

Children's Services

47 Complaints about Children's Services were received during the year. This represents a 62% increase compared to 2020/21 when 29 complaints were received. All of the 47 complaints made about Childrens Services were made by Parents/Carers/Representatives.

Table 3 sets out the complaints received recorded by service area and compares them with the previous year.

Table 3: Summary of complaints by Service Area

Service area	2020/21	2021/22
Safeguarding	0	1
Miskin Project	0	1
Intensive Intervention	27	28
IAA and Safeguarding	0	1
16+ Team	1	2
IAA	0	1
Enquiry and Assessment	0	6
Enquiry and Assessment and DCT	0	1
DCT 11+	0	2
DCT 0-11	0	2
Information Management	0	1
OT	0	1
Total	29	47

Of the 47 complaints received 4 progressed to Stage 2 Complaints, 1 was not resolved and 1 required No Further Action .

Representations

There were no representations received from children or advocates in this reporting period.

The Council commissions an Independent Advocacy Provider for children and young people in line with the requirements of the Social Services Well-being Act (Wales) 2014 and the National Approach to Advocacy. This involves all children over the age of 5yrs being offered the support of an advocate when they become a Child Looked After or subject to Safeguarding arrangements.

The Advocacy Service supports children and young people to have their say and effectively supports children and young people to raise any concerns about their care and support. Whilst it is positive to see representations by children and young people it is reassuring that the commissioned advocacy service is supporting young people to resolve issues successfully outside of the complaints procedure.

Table 5: Summary of complaints from Parents/Carers

Nature of complaint	2020/2021	2021/22
Failure to provide a service	1	4
Lack of information/communication	7	13
Quality of Care/Service	4	9
Staff issues	12	15
Contact Issues	0	3
Information Governance	1	2
Safeguarding	0	1
Total	25	47

Complaints in all categories have increased in line with adult services and are almost consistent with figures seen pre-pandemic (58 complaints received in 2019/20). Lack of information/communication and staff issues remain the highest category of complaint and again this remains consistent with previous years.

It is often the case that complaints in relation to lack of information are resolved following a discussion and an explanation of the situation/process. It is noted that advocacy can and does assist in help parents to work through and understand statutory interventions and it may be beneficial for Children's Services to consider the use of parental advocacy in these situations.

4. CONTACTS AND CONCERNS

This year the Customer Feedback Team has again focused on attempting to resolve issues at source where this is considered appropriate and have worked collaboratively with managers across both services resulting in a reduction in complaints being passed to front line services.

In 2021/22 the Customer Feedback and Engagement Team dealt with a total of 165 contacts only 1 of which progressed to a Stage 1 complaint. 3 were withdrawn, 94 contacts related to adult services and 71 contacts were received for Children's Services.

The Team also received 9 concerns where the subject specified that they did not wish to make a complaint but where action was identified as necessary. These were recorded and passed to the relevant service area where they were successfully resolved.

5. STAGE 2 'FORMAL' COMPLAINTS

Overall, there were 9 Stage 2 complaints made during 2021/22, 5 of which progressed from Informal Complaints. 3 of these complaints did not progress after the initial meeting with the Investigator and so whilst the number received appears higher than in 2020/21 the actual number of concluded complaints remains consistent with the previous year.

Adult Services

There were 2 stage 2 complaints received for Adult Services – 1 of which progressed from Stage 1 Informal Complaint process and was subsequently closed following no contact from complainant.

Table 7: Summary of complaints made at Stage 2

Nature of complaint	2020/21	2021/22
Failure to Provide a Service	1	1
Quality of Service	3	1
Total	4	2

Children's Services

There were 7 Stage 2 complaints received relating to Children's Services, 4 of which progressed from unresolved complaints at Stage 1. Of the 7 complaints 3 did not progress due to a lack of response from the complainant in agreeing the detail of their complaint.

In total 4 of the 9 complaints received across both service areas did not progress to investigation.

Table 8: Summary of complaints made at Stage 2

Nature of complaint	2020/21	2021/22
Quality of Service/Care	1	5
Failure to provide a Service	0	1
Staff Issues	1	0
Lack of Information/Communication	0	1
Total	2	7

6. OMBUDSMAN Enquiries/Complaints

In 2021/22, 8 complaints were made to the Public Services Ombudsman, 2 for Children's Services and 6 for Adults.

There were no Ombudsman investigations with all complaints being closed or directed back to the council for resolution.

LEARNING THE LESSONS

A number of recommendations for improvements have been made following complaints made at Stage 2 of the Complaints process. These improvements will be actioned and monitored through similar complaints findings in the future. Some areas where improvements have been identified include.

- ❖ Improving the quality of complaint response at Stage 1 of the process.
- ❖ All concerns raised by users of support@home services to be accurately recorded and escalated if not resolved.
- ❖ Training for Child Care Social workers on assessing and understanding ethnic minority families experience of racism in the community.
- ❖ For all staff to understand how bias can impact on professional judgement.
- ❖ The timely provision of reports to parents for core meetings. i.e. case conferences.
- ❖ Ensuring advocacy support to parents and individuals is appropriate and where this is considered not be the case alternative advocacy support to be offered.
- ❖ Improved use of crisis contingency plans to assist CMHT duty workers responding to crisis'.
- ❖ Exploring with practitioners how work with absent fathers can be improved to ensure they are fully involved in the care planning and review process.

7. COMPLIMENTS

Compliments provide valuable information regarding the quality of services that are provided and identify where they are working well. The number of compliments recorded in 2021/22 was 182 compared to the 90 received in 2020/21.

This is a significant increase and is a direct result of not only improved awareness of the relevance of positive feedback but also the commitment of staff to provide a high quality of service through what continued to be a challenging time for Social Care.

Adult Services

In 2021/22 there were 66 compliments received for Adult Services

Table 8 sets out the number of compliments recorded by Service Area.

Table 8: Summary of compliments received

Service areas	Number	Percentage
ACE	2	3.03%
Complaints Department	3	4.55%
Mental Health and Long Term Assessment	1	1.52%
Long Term Assessment - Locality Teams	10	15.5%
Mobile Responder Team and Lifeline	1	1.52%
Carers Support Project	1	1.52%
Mobile Responder Team	6	9.09%
Independent Domiciliary Care	1	1.52%
Single Point of Access	1	1.52%
Short Term Care Management	1	1.52%
Community Review Team	6	9.09%
Hospital Discharge Team	2	3.03%
Support@ Home H/C	29	43.93%
Day Services	1	1.52%
Residential Care RCT	1	1.52%

The following are examples of some of the compliments received for Adult Services during 2021/22

- *Daughters of SU would like to thank "For the help and assistance in securing places at TY Pentwyn Nursing Home".*
- *Email received from SU and wanted to thank one member of staff from the complaints team "I am extremely grateful to you for giving me this information, " in regards to a her social services records held on file.*

- *Daughter of SU wanted to pass on her thanks to all staff who supported her dad over the last 2 weeks and stated "without the help and support from IC staff they wouldn't been able to manage".*
- *SU wants to thank the team for their efforts and mentioning how "organised" and "polite" they are*
- *Wants to thank the complaints team as a whole for their efforts in regards the Complaints Standard Authority*
- *SW wants to thank Supervisor, TM and other members of the team for their support as a new employee as a SW and stating he feels "proud" to work for such an organisation.*
- *Daughter of SU was so grateful that SPA member was so "considerate" and could not praise him enough for the arranging a call back and home visit for the same day.*
- *SU wants to thank two of the responders that went out and helped her this morning mentioning that they were "fantastic".*
- *Daughter sent email to team to thank them all over the recent months stating "they are truly gifted".*
- *Family wants to thank care and support practitioner and CRT who supported SU through final hours during a very sad time of their lives and "God bless all of you".*
- *District nurse wants to thank ACE team and saying that they are a "very efficient service."*
- *The wife of the indicated SU has asked that we pass on her great thanks to the night mobile staff that have provided the overnight visits to her late husband.*
- *Daughter of SU wanted to thank adult services regarding her late mother " Office staff were always kind and courteous to me" and also for TM mentioning she is "an asset to the team".*
- *Wife wanted to express her thanks to "the wonderful carers" for the last few weeks and feeling that nothing was too much trouble.*
- *Daughter wanted to thank the time the carers took and patience while looking after her mother and for providing "excellent" support.*
- *Family said that the team were "amazing" when they went out see SU to get him back in to bed safely.*
- *SU wanted to thank mobile responders and was very pleased with the home visit that took place.*
- *Widow and family wanted to thank the team who cared for her husband and said "You truly made a difference".*
- *SU rang in to give her thanks to the OT that was allocated to them stating she was "extremely helpful".*
- *Carer received a text from SU brother and wanted to thank her for talking "sense" and for being so "sincere" and went on to say that SS are very lucky.*
- *Daughter wanted to pass on thanks to the team when her mother fell saying how "amazing" they were at the time.*

- *SU wanted to say "A big thank you to all the staff for all their help" during home care to make SU more independent.*
- *Mother of SU has now obtained a positive outcome in arranging transport for SU to get to college and thanks SW for his support on this outcome.*

Children's Services

The number of compliments recorded in 2021/22 was 116 compared to 92 received in 2020/21

Table 9 sets out the number of compliments recorded by Service Area.

Table 9: Summary of compliments received

Service areas	Number	Percentage
Miskin Project	30	25.86%
Disabled Children's Team	5	4.31%
Intensive Intervention	49	42.24%
Complaints	1	.86%
Enquiry & Assessment	2	1.72%
Carers Support	14	12.07%
Fostering Support	2	1.72%
Resilient Families	1	.86%
Independent Reviewing Team	9	7.76%
Kinship Care	3	2.59%
Total	116	

The following are examples of some of the compliments received for Children's Services during 2021/22

- *"my experience has been very positive. I have had the most amazing social workers looking after my granddaughter and my family"*
- *"I want to thank you for all your support over the past few months. Leading up to the outcome, I always felt listened to. You deserve credit as throughout the process we've really appreciated your professional guidance, as well as your understanding and empathy. So I'd like to thank you as well as Sian, Jo and the rest of your colleagues for all your support. Looking forward to continuing to work with you ,"*
- *RCPC Coordinator wanted to congratulate SW for such a positive outcome for the family and for having an open and honest relationship with the family.*
- *SU wanted to thank SW for her trust and professionalism and for going above and beyond.*
- *In regards to a cooking hamper received by the carers project - " a big thank you for the hampers you delivered yesterday, they are most appreciated".*

- *Foster Parents feel that SW is a "real asset to the team" and "We have been very lucky to share the beginning of our fostering journey with her and will be forever grateful for all of her care and support."*
- *Miskin team received a text from mum "'Hi Jo , I want to say a massive thank you for everything you have helped me with and though it's still a massive shock to me lol but your boss has one amazing person working for him thank you once again xxxx"*
- *Mother has put forward positive feedback of her experience in terms of safeguarding "You need people like Ruth and you certainly need a manager like Kellie who I can assure you was so far above the level of the managers I've had to deal with before from your service. I can only pray that you do everything you can to keep Kellie and Ruth in safeguarding because many families need them and they are very family orientated "*
- *Headteacher said that "The way the meeting was conducted was excellent" following CLA Review.*
- *SU sent SW thank you card and "Best SW in the world" mug. For being supportive as they transfer over to DCT*
- *"Just wanted to provide feedback following a CLA review regarding Ashley Baker foster carer expressed how positive the intervention offered by Jon has been."*
- *Mum wanted to express the emotional and "Life Changing work" that SW had undertaken with them as a family*
- *Service User said that they "Really enjoyed the cooking session. Lovely to catch up and have an hour doing something different. " in regards to the come dine with me cooking session.*
- *SU wanted to pass on thanks to IRO for the handling of their CP meeting yesterday and thought that she was diligent, and passionate despite the added pressure of a very complex case.*
- *IRO received feedback from family in CPC yesterday saying "I was really impressed with Kath in the meeting. She didn't make me feel like complete dirt like I was expecting. We could both see from the meeting that Kath actually cares about what happens to us. "*
- *Carer passed on thanks via social media in regards to the Outdoor Family session and thanked them "for a fun morning" at Barry Sidings.*
- *Solicitor passed on the thanks from parents in regards to a court proceedings today. They were grateful for the support that they had been provided for a positive outcome for all those involved.*
- *Message received from SW on behalf of the family thanking for making a difference their family and for being there when needed.*
- *Parents wanted to pass on positive comments to thank the SW from DCT for all the support and that and how massively it has helped them as family.*
- *Mother wanted to pass on positive feedback about SW on her professionalism and commitment to the case and how much easier it was.*

8. WORK PROGRAMME, PROGRESS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- ❖ **The Customer Feedback and Engagement Team has continued to provide support and advice to managers on complaints handling resulting in clear improvements on response writing for individual managers.**
- ❖ **In 2022/23 further focus on written responses will include a quality assurance process to target individual training needs of managers in complaints handling as well as working to improve response timescales.**
- ❖ **Good practice guides have been developed for both complaints response writing (Council wide) and for the management of Subject Access Requests. Collaborative working with both service areas and the Information Management Team have resulted in positive management of individuals wishing to access their Social Care records.**
- ❖ **The Customer Feedback Team continues to support service areas with the management of unreasonable and persistent customers and provides advice on early interventions and appropriate use of the Council's UPC policy.**
- ❖ **Moving forward the Team will re-focus on raising awareness of complaints and the role of advocacy in successful resolution through team sessions and induction training.**