

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

SOCIAL SERVICES

REPRESENTATIONS AND COMPLAINTS PROCEDURES

ANNUAL REPORT

2022/23



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 2022 and 31 March 2023. 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 2022/23 there were a total of 129 recorded complaints during the year, compared with 110 in the previous year. Children's services have seen a 53% increase with adult services seeing a 9.5% decrease in numbers of complaints received.

Of the Stage 1 complaints that were received across both service areas 45.74%(59) were responded to within statutory timescales which is an increase from 42% in 2021/22. Whilst this is an improvement it does not meet the Complaints Standards Authority suggested target of 75%. This year has seen particular difficulties in Children's Services with higher numbers of complaints, staff vacancies and subsequent pressure on teams resulting in only 35% of complaints dealt within timescales.

Adult Services received less complaints in this period and achieved 60% of complaints closed within the statutory 15 working day period.

Ongoing support to teams from the Customer Feedback, Engagement and Complaints 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 (228) which represents a 38% increase compared with figures for 2021/22. Of the contacts dealt with only 2 contacts progressed to complaints.

Adult Services

57 complaints were received for Adult Services during the year. This represents a slight decrease on the total amount received in 2021/22 when 63 complaints were received.

Of the complaints made about Adult Services, 2 (3.5%) were made by the service users themselves and 55 (96.5%) 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 January 2023.

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	2021/22	2022/23
Long Term Assessment - Locality Teams	22	26
Short Term Intervention Support @ Home	2	0
Short Term Intervention - ACE	4	5
Short Term Intervention – Sensory Services	1	0
Mental Health	4	2
Finance/Grants	2	1
Residential Care RCT	5	3
Independent Sector Residential Care	1	1
Independent Sector Domiciliary Care	18	6
Short Term Intervention – Short Term Care Management	0	3
Community Reviewing Team	3	2
Day Services	0	1
Cross cutting	0	3
Complex Learning Difficulty Team	1	4
Total	63	57

The highest number of complaints were received by the Long Term Assessment Teams which is consistent with Children's Services and reflects the complex nature of providing longer term care and support.

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	2021/22	2022/23
Failure to provide a service	6	5
Financial issues	3	1
Lack of information/communication	19	13
Staff issues	1	6
Quality of care	14	13
Quality of service	13	10
Care and Support Plan	1	1
Change in Call times	1	1
Issues Around Standards	1	1
Missed Calls	1	1
Waiting for Assessment	3	1
Adaptations	0	4
Total	63	57

Of the 57 Stage 1 complaints received for Adults Services, 55 were resolved locally, and one complaint was withdrawn. 1 complaint progressed to Stage 2 of the process.

Children's Services

72 Complaints about Children's Services were received during the year. This represents a 53% increase compared to 2021/22 when 47 complaints were received. 71 complaints made about Childrens Services were made by Parents/Carers/Representatives with 1 complaint being made by two young people. 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	2021/22	2022/23
Safeguarding	1	0
Miskin Project	1	0
Intensive Intervention	28	42
IAA and Safeguarding	1	0
16+ Team	2	2
IAA	1	2
Enquiry and Assessment	6	18
Enquiry and Assessment and DCT	1	0
DCT 11+	2	5
DCT 0-11	2	2
Information Management	1	1
OT	1	0
Total	47	72

Of the 72 complaints received 5 progressed to Stage 2 Complaints.

Representations

There was 1 representation received from children in this reporting period relating to the failure of a commissioned provider to provide services in line with their ethnic and religious beliefs. The complaint was raised on the young people's behalf by their translator/advocate and was immediately resolved.

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 4: Summary of complaints from Parents/Carers

Nature of complaint	2021/22	2022/23
Failure to provide a service	4	3
Lack of information/communication	13	29
Quality of Care/Service	9	14
Staff issues	15	18
Contact Issues	3	1
Information Governance	2	5
Safeguarding	1	0
Challenge to information	0	1
Equality	0	1
Total	47	72

Lack of information/communication complaints are higher this year and again reflect the challenges face by Children's Services over the past 12 months. Staff issues also remain consistent and often relate to less positive outcomes for families with responsible workers often the subject of complaints relating to assessment and court decisions.

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 helping 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, Engagement and Complaints 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 2022/23 the Team dealt with a total of 228 contacts compared with 165 in 2021/22. Of the contacts received only 2 complaints progressing to Stage 1. 106 contacts related to Adult Services and 122 contacts were received for Children's Services. The Team also received 25 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 2022/23 which remains consistent with last year.

Adult Services

There were 4 stage 2 complaints received for Adult Services, as shown in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Summary of complaints made at Stage 2

Nature of complaint	2021/22	2022/23
Failure to Provide a Service	1	1
Quality of Service	1	2
Quality of Care	0	1
Total	2	4

Children's Services

There were 5 Stage 2 complaints received relating to Children's Services, as shown in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Summary of complaints made at Stage 2

Nature of complaint	2021/22	2022/23
Quality of Service/Care	5	4
Failure to provide a Service	1	0
Staff Issues	0	0
Lack of Information/Communication	1	0
Safeguarding Issues	0	1
Total	7	5

6. OMBUDSMAN Enquiries/Complaints

In 2022/23, 21 complaints were made to the Public Services Ombudsman, 13 for Children's Services and 8 for Adult Services.

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

7. LEARNING THE LESSONS

A number of recommendations for improvements have been identified following complaints made at both Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the Complaints process. Some of these have already been actioned and resulted in service change, training for staff and informing wider service planning. Learning themes will contribute to the overall quality assurance, learning and improvement process in both adult and children's services.

- ❖ Exploring how Children's Services can adapt services and/or develop services to meet the needs of carers of and young people with neuro diverse conditions.
- ❖ Need to Improve case recordings to accurately reflect and differentiate between unsubstantiated and substantiated concerns in assessments and court reports.
- ❖ Exploring with practitioners how work with absent fathers can be improved to ensure they are fully involved in the care planning and review processes.
- ❖ Training for staff of Resilient Families Service on judgments relating to unlawful chastisement.
- ❖ Ensuring individuals with additional needs and their families are clear about the Henregwilym assessment flat provision and its purpose.
- ❖ Support@Home training and instruction for staff on planning system and completing home files.
- ❖ Staff reminded to ensure service users aware of the right of appeal when providing information relating to Continuing Health Care Assessments.
- ❖ Ensure complaints literature is up-to-date and available in a range of formats.
- ❖ Miskin service to arrange training for staff in relation to working with individuals with sensory impairments.
- ❖ Improved public information on the Miskin project to be developed to include details of the project, use of Welsh language and identification of protected characteristics.
- ❖ Review of arrangements for sharing relevant documents with families as part of the child Protection process.

8. 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 2022/23 was 144 compared to 182 received in 2021/22.

Adult Services

In 2022/23 there were 74 compliments received for Adult Services, this is a slight increase on figures for 2021/22. (66 compliments received). Table 7 sets out the number of compliments recorded by Service Area.

Table 7: Summary of compliments received.

Service areas	Number	Percentage
Long Term Assessment - Locality Teams	21	28.38%
Mobile Responder Team and Lifeline	1	1.35%
Mobile Responder Team	3	4.05%
Short Term Care Management	4	5.41%
Community Review Team	5	6.76%
Hospital Discharge Team	7	9.46%
Support@ Home H/C	29	39.19%
Residential Care RCT	4	5.41%
Total	74	100%

The following are examples of some of the compliments received for Adult Services during 2022/23

- *Son and family wanted to thank this person for all his help at during a very difficult time and said that he "is credit to his role".*
- *Family of SU wanted to formally thank SW for the care and support given and truly have gone about and beyond.*
- *Compliment received from SU "Your service has been tremendous, I can't thank you all enough".*
- *Daughter wanted to pass on thanks when assessor has been working with her mother and stated that "She is so lovely and helpful".*
- *Gifts were received from Service User's daughter for each carer that looked after her mother and will be sending a special thank you to the funeral service.*
- *Daughter had observed carers while they were working with mam and wanted to pass on positive comments on how professional they both were and that they are doing an "Excellent " job.*

- *Service user and daughter wanted message of thanks to be passed on because of everything that has been done to help them after a telephone assessment was completed.*
- *Family has sent an email to team thanking social worker "Over the last 3 months Ruth as gone above and beyond. At a time of desperate need.*
- *Husband and Servicer User wants to thank Team Manager and Team for their kindness and help when receiving help following a hospital discharge.*
- *Family wanted to pass on how thankful and grateful they are for the quick thinking of carer and has been brilliant.*
- *Service User and son said that service received was "Epic and thank you"*
- *Service User has thanked SW for all the effort to resolve a issues raised following a complaint made and they will be "Eternally grateful."*
- *Granddaughter has sent email to team so that the social worker can be recognised for her hard work and how "Extremely grateful" they are to them.*

Children's Services

The number of compliments recorded in 2022/23 was 70 compared to 116 received in 2021/22. Table 8 sets out the number of compliments recorded by Service Area.

Table 8: Summary of compliments received

Service areas	Number	Percentage
Miskin Project	9	12.86%
Disabled Children's Team	5	7.14%
Intensive Intervention	21	30%
Enquiry & Assessment	1	1.43%
Carers Support	28	40%
Fostering Support	1	1.43%
Resilient Families	2	2.86%
Kinship Care	2	2.86%
16+ Team East	1	1.43%
Total	70	100%

The following are examples of some of the compliments received for Children's Services during 2022/23.

- *compliments received from facebook regarding the Tai Chi and Tea event that took place with the carers support project saying " It was lovely to take part today, thank you!"*
- *Mother passed on a lovely comment saying that Miskin Worker has "been an amazing help".*

- *Carer wanted to say thank you for making her aware of the carers grant on social media and that she has already received it.*
- *Foster parent wanted to highlight the "fantastic" work Social worker had provided from Resilient Families since day one.*
- *Young person wanted to thank and show appreciation for the love and support and mentioned that "I seriously wouldn't be where I am today with everything I have if I didn't have your support".*
- *Service User wants to thank the "Dynamic Duo" who has felt like family while helping mum through challenging times without judgement.*
- *Mother has sent a card to the Intensive Intervention team to thank them for the support and for "turning their life around".*
- *Service user has sent a text to miskin worker saying that "you've done so much for us and will hold a special place in our hearts"*

9. WORK PROGRAMME, PROGRESS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- ❖ The Customer Feedback, Engagement and Complaints Team has continued to provide support and advice to managers on complaint handling and has provided guidance on writing complaints responses for managers where need has been identified.
- ❖ The Customer Feedback, Engagement and Complaints 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.
- ❖ In 2024 the Team will focus on undertaking refresher training for new managers and staff in both Children's and Adults Services as well as providing ongoing complaint induction sessions for all new social care staff.
- ❖ The Customer Feedback, Engagement and Complaints Team has assisted with training for Advocates from Llais Complaints Advocacy Service, a new service to support individuals who wish to make a complaint about health or social care services.
- ❖ Complaints information on the Council's website is being reviewed to ensure individuals are clear as to the Social Services complaints process and what support is available to assist with making a complaint.
- ❖ Complaints information for Children and Young People to be reviewed and to updated to coincide with the review of information currently available on the 2sides website.
- ❖ All complaints literature to be reviewed to ensure information is up-to-date and available in a range of formats.