



**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**MUNICIPAL YEAR 2024/25**

<p><b>GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE</b></p> <p><b>4<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2024</b></p>	<p><b>AGENDA ITEM NO. 5</b></p>
<p><b>REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES</b></p>	<p><b>SOCIAL SERVICES - REPRESENTATIONS AND COMPLAINTS PROCEDURES ANNUAL REPORT – 2023/24</b></p>

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**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 This report provides Governance and Audit Committee with an overview of the operation and effectiveness of the Council's statutory Social Services complaints procedure between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024.
- 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 and Children's Social Services, together with achievements for 2023/24 and future developments.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Governance and Audit Committee:

- 2.1 Note the content of this report and the Social Services Representations and Complaints Procedures Annual Report for 2023/24, attached at Appendix 1.
- 2.2 Consider whether they wish to scrutinise in greater depth any matters contained in the report.
- 2.3 Note the work undertaken by the Customer Feedback, Engagement and Complaints Team.
- 2.4 Form a view on the Authority's ability to handle complaints effectively.



### **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 Committee.
- 3.2 In addition, in line with the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021, the Governance and Audit Committee has responsibility to review and assess the Authority's ability to handle complaints effectively and make reports and recommendations in relation to this, noting that these responsibilities have been incorporated into the Committee's Terms of Reference.

### **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; and
- 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 the appointment of an Investigating Officer and in the case of children's complaint an Independent Person, both of whom are independent of the Local Authority. They will investigate the complaint and provide a report detailing their findings and recommendations.



The timescale for dealing with this stage is 25 working days within which a response to the complaint should be provided by the Director of Social Services.

- 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. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY**

- 5.1 There are no equality and diversity or socio-economic implications arising directly from this report.

## **6. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 There are no Welsh Language implications arising directly from this report. The Annual Report is available in Welsh.

## **7. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT**

- 7.1 This report includes feedback from service users directly in the form of compliments, complaints and contacts to the Customer Feedback, Engagement and Complaints Team.

## **8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)**

- 8.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

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

- 9.1 The work of the Customer Feedback, Engagement and Complaints Team 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 CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT**

- 10.1 The function of the Customer Feedback, Engagement and Complaints 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 Council's Corporate Plan priorities to:

- Improve the experience of those using Health and Social Care Services.



- Engage with and use Customer Feedback to inform the redesign our services, where appropriate.

## **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.
- 11.2 Further details and analysis about the number and nature of complaints and compliments for 2023/24 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 Customer Feedback, Engagement and Complaints Team during the year.
- 11.3 The Governance and Audit Committee, in line with the Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 and its Terms of Reference, has responsibility to review and assess the Authority's ability to handle complaints effectively and make reports and recommendations in relation to this.



**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

**AS AMENDED BY**

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

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**GOVERNANCE AND AUDIT COMMITTEE**

**4<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2024**

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ANNUAL REPORT – 2023/24**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

**Background Papers**

Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations Procedure 2014

[Social services complaints procedure | GOV.WALES](#)

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