

Social Services Compliments and Complaints Annual Report 2017-18



Listening

Responding

Improving



CONTENTS

1.0 Purpose of Report...	2
2.0 Introduction	2
3.0 Executive Summary	2
4.0 Procedure	3
5.0 Advocacy & Engagement	4
6.0 Complaints Received	4
7.0 Complaint Handling & Investigation Performance	6
8.0 Compliments	8
9.0 Public Service Ombudsman for Wales	9
10.0 Reflections for the last year	9
11.0 Learning Lessons	10
12.0 Focus for the coming year	10

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1** The Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014 requires each local authority to prepare an annual report, which must include details of the records kept in accordance with regulation 20, on its performance in the handling and investigation of complaints for the purposes of:-
- (a) monitoring compliance with these Regulations; and
 - (b) improving the handling and consideration of complaints.
- 1.2** This report covers the period 1st April 2017 to 31st March 2018. It includes information regarding:
- 1. Complaints procedure
 - 2. Complaints, Compliments and other Representations received and timescales in complaint handling
 - 3. Achievements, lessons learnt and planned future development.

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1** This Social Services Compliments and Complaints Annual Report for 2017-18 provides a summary of the volume of complaints received in relation to Social Services and compliance with the statutory timescales.
- 2.2** We recognise that our customers have a range of experiences when interacting and receiving services from us. Some of these experiences will be positive, and we want to recognise where good practice is evident. Where service standards fall short, it is vital that we learn and feed into service improvement. We provide an opportunity for service users to feedback to us both positive and negative experiences to encourage a culture of listening and learning, where the focus is on resolution and continual improvement. Where possible, we take immediate action to put things right at an early resolution stage, however where this is not possible we operate a robust complaints procedure.

3.0 Executive Summary

- 3.1** During 2017-18, Social Services received 107 compliments and 58 recorded complaints. Of the 58 complaints received, 24 related to Children's Services and 34 related to Adult Care. Only 9 complaints reached the formal complaints stage and required an independent investigation.
- 3.2** The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW) received 13 complaints in relations to Pembrokeshire County Council Social Services Directorate. Of these, 6 were not investigated, 2 were outside of scope and the remaining 5 were dealt with at early resolution stage. The outcome of the early resolution assessments, were recommendations to apologise, hold meetings to resolve issues and in one case financial recompense for accidental loss of a clients personal items. Although the number of referrals to the PSOW has increased during 2017-18, the outcomes demonstrate that the PSOW are largely satisfied with the complaint handling process.

3.3 There are statutory timescales for responding to Social Services complaints which, given the complexity of many of the complaints received can prove difficult to comply with. During 2017-18, 88% of complaints at local resolution stage and 78% of complaints at formal stage were acknowledged within the statutory timescales. Compliance with response times for complaints at local resolution stage was 78%. Further work is required during 2018-19 to ensure that all complaints are acknowledged within the 2 working day statutory timescale.

4.0 Procedure

4.1 Complaint management

There are two Social Services Complaint Officers, one full-time and one part-time, who are part of the Audit, Risk & Information Service. The role of these officers is to ensure that complaints are acknowledged and resolved promptly and comply with the complaints procedure and regulations. The role of the Social Services Complaint Officers includes:

- Providing advice and guidance to colleagues and customers
- Providing impartial support for both customers and staff
- Identifying advocacy needs
- Carrying out recruitment of independent investigators and independent persons
- Managing the pool of independent investigators
- Ensuring quality formal investigations are undertaken
- Identifying training needs and provide training
- Providing data analysis and statistics
- Ensuring statutory timescales are adhered to
- Capturing learning and manage action plans
- Managing customer expectations

4.2 Stages:

4.2.1 Stage 1: Local Resolution

Complaints received at local resolution stage are recorded by the Complaints Officer and forwarded to the relevant manager to investigate. The complainant receives a written response within 15 working days. The vast majority of complaints are resolved at this stage.

4.2.2 Stage 2: Formal Investigation

If a complainant is unhappy with the outcome of the local resolution they can request to have their complaint investigated independently. Pembrokeshire, along with Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion call on a pool of investigators who each have a specialist background in social care. The investigator will produce a report detailing whether the concerns have been upheld or not and any recommendations for the service to consider. Pembrokeshire County Council has managed to secure four additional investigators this past year to supplement the pool.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint, they have the opportunity to contact the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.

5.0 Advocacy and Engagement

5.1 Children

The Local Authority commissions the services of Tros Gynnal Plant Wales to provide advocacy support for children and young people.

The advocate works 21 hours a week and plays an active role in resolving complaints at an early stage. The eligibility criteria changed in October 2016 whereby support is provided for looked after children, care leavers, children and young people in receipt of care and support plans and child protection.

5.2 Adults

The Local Authority commissions the services of Dewis Centre for Independent Living to provide advocacy support. Services can be accessed by customers who are:

- over 18, eligible to receive a service under the Fair Access to Care criteria and a carer;
- physically disabled
- learning impaired
- sensory impaired
- vulnerable
- have a mental health issue

6.0 Complaints Received

6.1 Complaints received by division at local resolution and formal investigation stage 17-18

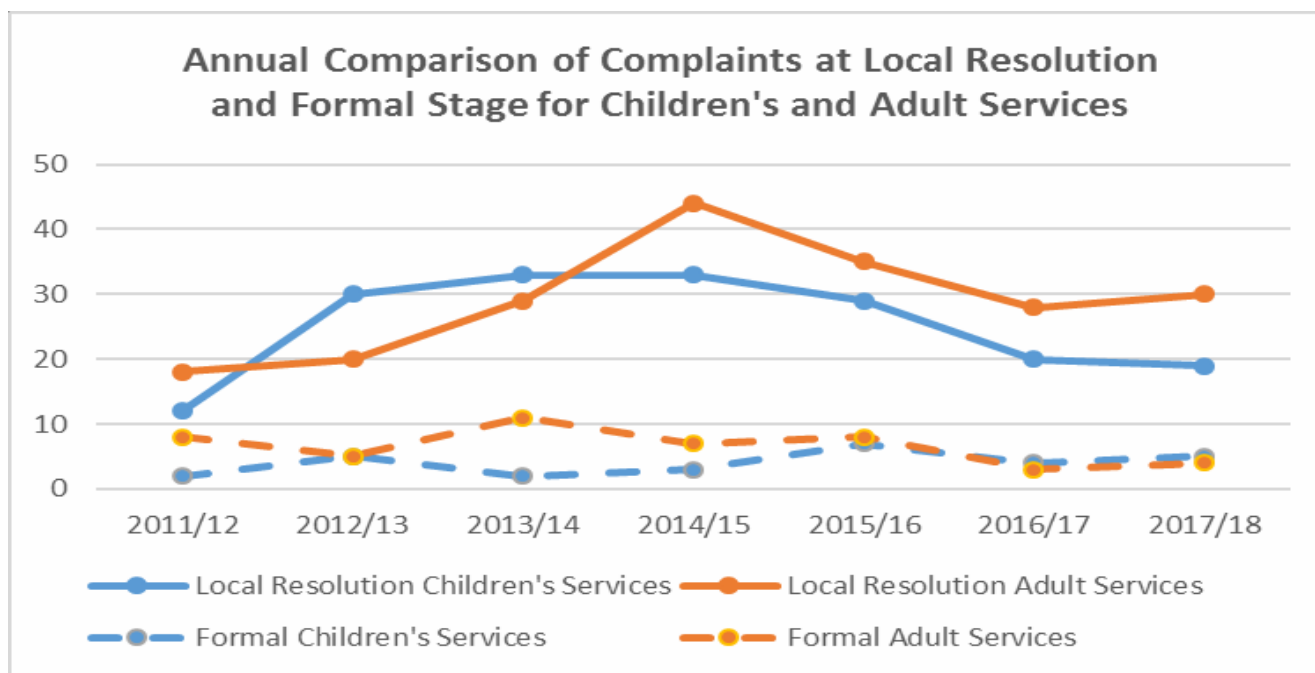
Division	Service area	Local Resolution	Formal Investigation
Children Services	Assessment Team	2	2
	Children in Need	3	0
	Children with Disabilities	5	0
	Quality Assurance	1	0
	Corporate Parenting Team	6	1
	Family Intervention Team	0	1
	Family Placement Team	2	1
	Children's Services Total	19	5
Adult Care	Community Mental Health	3	0
	Adult Safeguarding	2	0
	Managed Care	7	0
	Hospital Discharge Team	1	0
	Learning Disabilities	9	3
	Service Provider	7	1
	Finance	1	0
	Adult Care Total	30	4
	TOTAL	49	9

The total number of complaints managed at local resolution stage during 2017-18 is 49. This compares with 48 complaints in 2016-17, showing consistent levels. The total number of complaints that progressed to formal investigations during 2017-18 is 9, this is an increase of 2 from 2016-17.

As detailed in the table above, 7 Service Provider complaints were received in 2017-18 compared with 8 in 2016-17. There has been a downward trend over the last 5 years in Service Provider complaints.

We have not received any Welsh Language complaints in relation to Social Services.

6.2 The chart below demonstrates the trend analysis for complaints at local resolution and formal investigation stage for both Adults and Children's services.



As the chart above demonstrates, complaints managed at both local resolution and formal stage are consistent with 2016-17 with only minor variations.

7.0 Complaint Handling & Investigation Performance

7.1 The Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014 define the statutory timescales for handling and investigating complaints.

7.2 The table below provides a breakdown of compliance with the following statutory timescales:

- Complaints must be acknowledged within 2 working days;
- Offer of Local Resolution meeting within 10 working days of acknowledgement of the complaint (this can be extended, in exceptional circumstances, by agreement with the complainant). Written response within 5 days of the local resolution;
- The complainant must receive a written response to formal investigations within 25 days of the start date (defined as the date that the content of the formal complaint is agreed in a written record). In exceptional circumstances this timescale can be extended, however, it must be within 6 months of the date that the complaint was received.

Compliance with statutory timescales for 2017-18:

Division	Acknowledgement		Local Resolution		Formal Investigation	
	Local	Formal	Response	Extension	Response	Extension
Children's Services	89%	80%	66%	0	0	100%
Adult Care	86%	75%	89%	100%	0	100%

Acknowledgement of Children's Services complaints within the statutory timescale has decreased slightly from 90% to 89% for the year 2017-18 compared to the previous year. Whereas, acknowledgement of Adult Care complaints has remained at 86% when compared to the previous year.

The percentage of complaints resolved at local resolution stage within the statutory timescale for Children's Services has increased from 85% in 2016-17 to 89% in 2017-18. Whereas there has been a decrease in compliance with the statutory timescale for local resolution responses from 71% in 2016-17 to 66% in 2017-18 for complaints in Adult Care.

7.3 The 9 formal investigations undertaken in 2017-18 have been complex and/or multi-agency complaints and as such it has not been possible to undertake the investigation and agree a written response within the statutory 25 day timescale. In all cases, however, an extension was agreed with the complainant and a written response was delivered within the agreed timescale. This is an improvement on 2016-17, when one case was not met within the agreed extended timescale.

Investigating the complaint and completing the report within the 25 working days is very challenging, however we strive to ensure formal complaints are robust, thorough and comprehensive. We have submitted representations to Welsh Government through the All Wales Complaints Officers Group (AWCOG) representative, in respect of the review of the Social Services Complaints Guidance. These representations have included amending the guidance to afford Local Authorities more control over when they can accept or reject a formal complaint in certain circumstances and the ongoing challenge in meeting the 25 days' timeframe.

7.4 The table below illustrates the variety in the volume of concerns requiring investigation which can be raised in a formal complaint.

Example of complaint outcomes for formal stage complaints:

	Areas of concern	Upheld	Partially upheld	Not upheld	Unable to make a finding
Complaint 1	22	1	3	17	1
Complaint 2	5	1	1	2	1

7.5 The team were reduced to one part-time member of staff for a period of six months during 2017-18, with some additional support provided by management. It is testament to that staff member that acknowledgments, meetings and responses have on the whole been on a par with the previous year or only seen a slight decrease. In terms of Children's' Services there was an increase in the response time from 2016-17 and we want to build on this going forward. As the team are back to full capacity there should be continued improvements in acknowledgement and response times as well as complaints resolved within the period of an agreed extension.

Following a period of successful testing, the Internal Audit system (MKInsight) has been adapted to record and monitor Social Services complaints. This system provides much improved functionality in terms of recording and monitoring complaint handling, including compliance with statutory timescales, as well as recording and following up action plans. This system enables easy extraction of management information for performance monitoring throughout the year.

We have managed to secure four additional investigators to supplement the pool of independent investigators which includes adding investigators with backgrounds in mental health and commissioning. Increasing the numbers of the pool is vital to ensure investigations are not delayed waiting for an investigator to be available and also broadens the breadth of knowledge and experience within the pool.

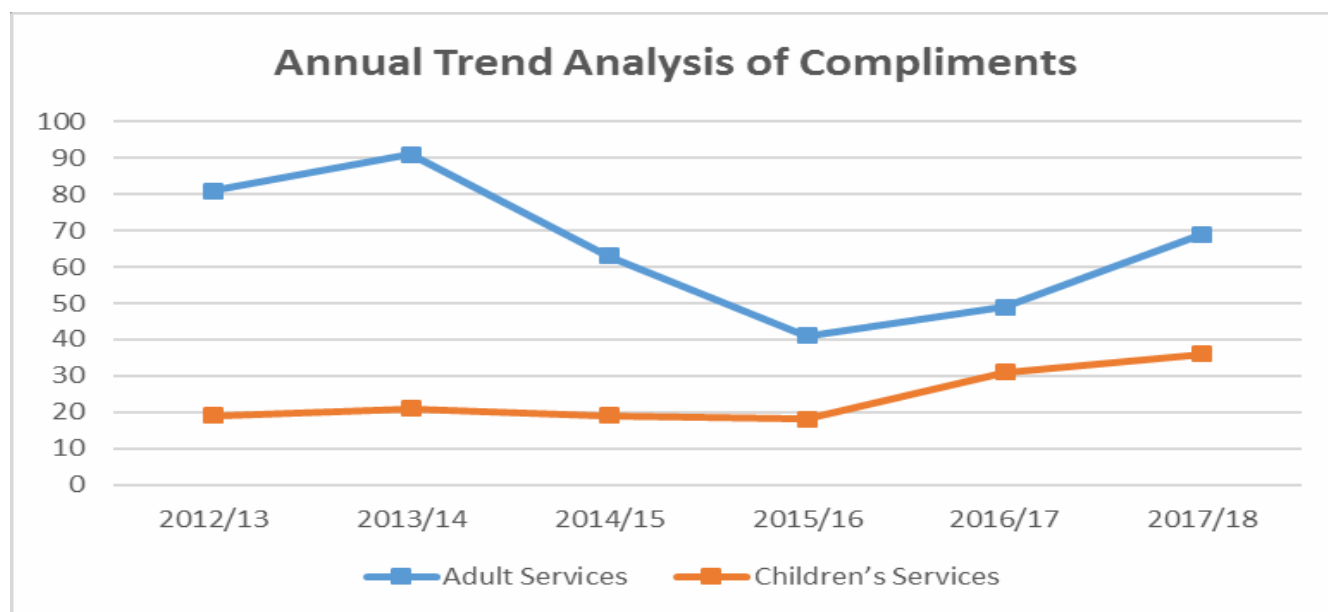
7.4 Service Provider Complaints:

The Local Authority commissions residential and domiciliary care for service users. Service users are able to make a complaint about the service provided to them directly to the provider or via the Local Authority. There were 7 complaints received directly about service providers during 2017-18, a reduction in 1 compared to the previous year 2016-2017. These complaints are about individual providers and 6 were resolved informally. One complaint was escalated to formal stage and investigated in 2018-19.

The Complaints Team continues to work closely with the Quality Assurance and Commissioning Teams to ensure that concerns raised are dealt with appropriately. This ensures that any trends or concerns resulting from service provider complaints can be picked up and dealt with swiftly and pro-actively. A representative from the Complaints team attends the Quality Assurance Group to assist in monitoring provider performance in addition to quality and safeguarding concerns. Complaints in relation to service providers are reported to the group to monitor any issues and to share best practice.

8.0 Compliments

8.1 During 2017-18 Social Services received 107 compliments (105 for Adult and Children's services combined and 2 for the Director of Social Services). This has increased from 80 received during 2016-17. The chart below demonstrates the trend analysis over the last 6 years:



As the chart demonstrates, there has been a steady increase over the last two years in compliments received for both Children's Services and Adult Care. It should be noted that the drop in compliments for Adult Care in 2014-15 is mirrored by the increase in complaints received for Adult Care for that year (see graph in 6.2 above). Service restructures in the Directorate during 2015-16 could reflect the increase in performance in terms of both reduced complaints and increased compliments.

8.2 Example of a compliment to Adult Care:

"I met with a client yesterday on the ward in South Pembs hospital - Mrs X was very keen to compliment the social worker for their support when working with Mrs X in the past. Mrs X felt that the social worker has always been very helpful and very friendly when speaking with her and she really appreciated this."

8.3 Example of a compliment to Children's services:

"I just had to say thank you for all the support given to me this last few months. I have had help from so many people, all of whom have given me time to moan and where available physical help. I feel that it is often not acknowledged when the staff in the Foster Care team put themselves out to help both the children and the carers. I for one had a really supportive team working around me and my child."

9.0 Public Service Ombudsman for Wales

9.1 During 2017-18 there have been 13 Social Services complaints referred to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, this is an increase from 8 for the year 2016-2017. Of these complaints 11 related to Adult Care and 2 related to Children's Services.

In terms of the outcomes of these complaints, 5 have been early resolution/voluntary settlements, 6 were not investigated and 2 were out of scope. Outcomes have included offering an apology to the affected party and organising a meeting to resolve issues. In one case the recommendation to offer financial recompense for the accidental loss of a customer's personal items was accepted.

At the time of writing this report we have not received the final Annual Letter from the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales. This letter when released will show comparative data across Wales.

10.0 Reflections of the last year

10.1 Summary of activities during 2017-18:

- Monthly meetings are held the Director and Heads of Service to advise of outstanding complaints, any Ombudsman cases and ongoing action plans.
- Continued involvement in the Quality Assurance Group, sharing practice information regarding providers.
- The team has completed testing of a new system to record complaints and has moved to this from April 2018.
- Complaint training for providers has been concluded.
- Successfully recruited 4 new independent investigators.
- Greater emphasis on early resolution and close working with managers to address issues. This has been in terms of potential complaints as well as local resolution stage.
- An easy read version of the complaints leaflet has been produced.
- The Local Complaints Working Group has been re-established, comprising of Pembrokeshire, Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion to share best practice and training opportunities and ideas.
- Attendance at a specific All Wales Complaints Officers Group meeting which invited the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales and his team to ask questions of their service and build relationships with the Ombudsman officers.
- Attendance at the Public Service Ombudsman's Away Day which focused on the new Ombudsman's Bill and their thematic paper 'Ending Groundhog Day: Lessons in Poor Complaint Handling'.
- Engagement with Looked After Children regarding complaints process.
- Attendance at service provider engagement event with Commissioned Services.
- Attendance at the Social care whole service event.
- Submission of comments to Welsh Government regarding current legislation and how it can be strengthened and improved.

11.0 Learning Lessons

- 11.1** Recommendations resulting from investigations are recorded in an action plan for monitoring purposes to ensure prompt actions is taken. The majority of actions during 2017-18 related either to making an apology or to sending reminders to staff regarding policy or process.
- 11.2** During the last year a number of service changes have been implemented as a result of recommendations from complaint investigations. Some examples being:-
- Working with Pembrokeshire People First to develop an easy read version of our debt advice leaflet as a direct result of a complaint action plan
 - Review of information sharing protocol with the Adoption Service
 - Development of an easy read complaints factsheet for the public

12.0 Focus for the coming year

- 12.1** The focus for 2018-19 is to build on the improvements and also;
- Continue to develop the close working relationships with Social Services teams
 - Further improve complaint response times for complaints, both at local resolution and formal investigation stage
 - Social Services complaints will be recorded on MKI going forward. This will improve the overall management of complaints with mechanisms to monitor timescale compliance, recommendations and action plans more effectively
 - Continue involvement in the All Wales Complaints Officers Group and the local complaints group comprising of Pembrokeshire, Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion to share best practice and training opportunities.