

Report To: CCSLT/CFMT
Report Author: Ben Chandler, Complaints Officer
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Title: Customer Feedback Annual Report 2016/2017

1. Introduction

Each year, Social Services' Departments are required to produce an annual report which provides an overview of customer feedback alongside a review of the effectiveness of the complaints process.

The current complaints procedure was launched by Welsh Government on 1st August 2014. The figures presented in this report show our performance during the financial year 2016/17 within the complaints procedure.

The Social Services Customer Connections Team is responsible for dealing with customer feedback i.e. complaints, waiver applications and praise across both Community Support Services (CSS) and Education and Children's Services (children's).

This annual report is divided into sections. Each section will provide an overview as follows:

- Section 2 – summary of activity and core standards
- Section 3 – complaints
- Section 4 – waiver
- Section 5 – praise activity
- Section 6 – Concerns
- Section 7 – Complaint resolved within 24 hours
- Section 8 – Lessons Learned and action taken
- Section 9 – Evaluation of procedure
- Section 10 – Extensions due to exceptional circumstances

The data provided in the annual report will cover three years; this will provide some context in terms of activity and trends.

2. Summary of activity and core standards

Chart 1 summarises the activity over the last three years for complaints, waiver applications and praise. Praise has slightly increased this year, and the number of complaints and waiver applications have increased markedly from last year.

Chart 1: Summary of customer feedback received over three years

All complaints and praise are recorded against one of the Department's seven core standards listed in table 1.

Standard	This means that:
Courtesy & Respect	You can expect to be treated with courtesy and respect. For example, you should be given the name of the person you are talking to, and you should be called by your title unless you ask us not to.
Confidentiality & Privacy	Information about you will be treated as confidential. For example, staff will only discuss your needs with people who need to know, if you do make a complaint only the staff directly involved will know the details.

Information	You should expect to receive leaflets which explain the services you are receiving, or might receive. For example, “Your Voice” and “Moving into a Care Home - A guide for people in Denbighshire”.
Communication	You should expect full communication with staff in the Social Services Department. For example, speaking to the person responsible for your case.
Involvement & Participation	You should expect to be fully involved in discussing the services you are receiving. If you have a carer, he/she will be asked their views and offered a separate assessment.
Staff	Staff assessing needs will produce an identity card, have a relevant qualification and/or experience, and have regular support and training
Response Times	These are times in which responses should be made. For example, services should start at the time agreed, you should receive a copy of the Care Plan.

The majority of both complaints and praise fall into the ‘involvement and participation’ and ‘staff’ core standards and in reality very few complaints or praise are received about ‘response times’. This would suggest that these are the important standards to service users and carers.

3. Complaints

Overall, the number of complaints received during 2016/17 has increased by 70%. Chart 2 illustrates the number of complaints received by each service:

Chart 2: Complaints – 3 year comparison

Corporate complaints are complaints raised about Social Services which fall outside of the statutory guidance, but were dealt with as a complaint.

The number of corporate complaints has remained low in the last 3 years. The number of complaints made against both CSS and Children’s has increased this year back to levels we have seen over previous years.

3.1 What were the complaints about?

The reason for making complaints (measured against the core standard – see table 1) for each year is illustrated in chart 3.

Chart 3: Reason for making complaints – 3 year comparison

Involvement, staff and communication continue to be the 3 main areas of complaint; this is consistent with previous years.

When looking at the nature of complaints by service, chart 4 shows that CSS and Children’s services are receiving complaints in the same areas, involvement being the majority. This is possibly due to our continuing changing practice. Practitioners are now fully adopting practice as per the social services and wellbeing (wales) act, however complaints received would suggest that our citizens are still getting used to how services are now being delivered in partnership. There was also one confidentiality breach this year in community mental health services that was avoidable

Chart 4: Reason for making complaints by service 2016/17

3.2 Acknowledgment of complaints

All complaints were acknowledged within the statutory timescale of 2 working days, unless the complaint was resolved prior to acknowledgement.

3.3 Stage 1 complaints

3.3.1 Outcomes

Chart 5 illustrates the outcome of complaints. Over the last three years, the outcomes of complaints have varied. This year has seen the number of upheld and partially upheld complaints decrease to 41% of complaints (56% last year). This is perhaps due to our citizens finding it difficult to adjust to our new ways of working under the SSWB act and retaining unrealistic expectations of services.

Chart 5 Outcome of stage 1 complaints

3.3.2 Timescales

We have seen performance in dealing with complaints within timescale worsen over the last year to 88%; with CSS achieving 100% within timescale and Children's having 7 complaints beyond timescale. The difficulty Children's services found in dealing with these complaints is some part due to the character of very difficult complainants, and citizens using the complaints procedure to attempt to deflect/obstruct our safeguarding duties

3.4 Stage 2 complaints

Chart 7 shows a breakdown of stage 2 complaints by service for the last three years. This year we have also seen a slight increase in stage 2 complaints. This could be due to the managers responsible struggling to find sufficient time to discuss and agree resolutions at stage 1, this is particularly difficult with more complex cases.

Chart 7 Complaints progressed to stage 2

3.4.1 Outcomes

Chart 8 details stage 2 complaints by outcome. Only 50% of the stage 2 complaints have been upheld or partially upheld. This is because our citizens are still getting used to how services are now being delivered in partnership and do not agree with the changes in practice.

Chart 8 Stage 2 complaints by outcome

3.4.2 Timescales

This year, 100% of stage 2 complaints that have been completed, were dealt with within agreed timescale. One stage 2 investigations was extended due to circumstances beyond our control (see section 10 for more details).

Chart 9 – Stage 2 complaint timescales

3.4.3 Stage 1 and 2 outcomes

Chart 10 below shows the difference in outcomes between the last 3 years. It is apparent that much more complaints are going through the procedure and resulting in being not upheld. This further suggests that citizens are struggling to get used to our changing practice as per the social services and wellbeing (wales) act.

Chart 10 – All outcomes 3 year comparison

3.4.4 All Timescales

As shown in chart 11 below, there has been an increase in complaints dealt with beyond the statutory timescale. The complaints officer and responsible managers have worked hard to ensure that complaints are dealt with as soon as possible, however it is a struggle for managers to find sufficient time to discuss and agree resolutions, especially when the complainant is difficult and does not engage with the complaints process.

Chart 11 – All timescales 3 year comparison

4. Concerns

Concerns are issues raised that did not meet the criteria for the statutory complaints procedure or valid verbal complaints that were dealt with within 24 hours. These issues were generally resolved informally.

Chart 7 Concerns 2016/17

5. Complaints resolved within 24 Hours

Within the complaint legislation, any verbal complaints that are resolved by the close of the next working day, to the satisfaction of the complainant should not be recorded as a complaint. Such complaints are recorded as concerns.

	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Adults	6	9	7
Children	6	18	6

CSS dealt with 7 out of 41 valid complaints within 24 hours = a reduction in complaints of 17%.

Children's dealt with 6 out of 34 valid complaints within 24 hours = a reduction in complaints of 18%.

6. Waiver applications

The table below shows the number of waiver applications received over the last year has increased significantly.

Year	Waiver
2014/15	16
2015/16	12
2016/17	27

7. Praise

The table below shows the number of items of praise received over the last three years. Praise has increased slightly this year.

Year	Praise received
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2014/15	267
2015/16	159
2016/17	172

Like complaints, praise is measured against the core standards (see table 1). The number of items of praise received has increased slightly this year, with a significant number of staff being individually praised. Chart 12 shows the praise received.

Chart 12 Items of praise received

8. Lessons learned and action taken

When complaints are upheld, partially upheld or potential improvements are identified, action plans are drawn up of the changes need to be made. Action plans are monitored until all the actions have been completed.

8.1 Areas of improvement

For the majority of complaints, the improvements made can be very specific to the service users involved. There are however examples of changes implemented that will improve practice or processes across the service, some examples are:

- Following a complaint, improvements were made within our Reablement service. Keyworkers are now allocated to cover individual citizens, the keyworkers are to work on opposite shifts to each other [dependent on how many calls per day], and this has allowed us to limited the amount of different staff visiting a citizen and ensure consistency of care.
- A new Community Support Services case recording procedure is now in place, complaints around case recording greatly helped shape and improve our policy in this area.
- There has been a new protocol produced for the paediatric equipment board following a complaint regarding delays in ordering specialist equipment.
- A full suite of informative literature has been produced to provide advice and guidance to parents, carers and young people about Children's Services. This has been achieved in response to feedback from parents about not fully understanding the services and the processes involved.

8.2 Areas of weakness

- **Staff Attitude:** A difficult area in complaints, due to the nature of Children's service's involvement, parents often use the procedure to attempt to deflect safeguarding investigations. Phone calls and explanations from practice leaders have resolved many of these issues.
- **Communication:** Communication remains the largest common factor in complaints, some communication issues have occurred in many of the complaints received this year.
- **Changing Practice:** Many of the complaints received this year are regarding our involvement/assessment, due to our continuing changing practice. Practitioners are now fully adopting practice as per the social services and wellbeing (wales) act, however complaints received would suggest that our citizens are still getting used to how services are now being delivered in partnership.

- **Lack of domiciliary care provision:** This has been recognised as a national problem, this has been the main issue within several complaints for us this year.

9. Evaluation of procedure

Feedback received has indicated that staff are very pleased with the discussion element at stage 1 of the procedure; people feel that this has helped to resolve matters more quickly.

Feedback has shown that staff involved have found it difficult to deal with unreasonable or obstructive complainants within the procedure. If complainants do not make themselves available for discussions, moving the complaint forward has proved difficult. Staff have also raised concerns that complainants always have the right to a stage 2 investigation. This causes concern in circumstances when a complainant has unrealistic expectations of the service. This results in costing the service money and scarce resources by having to arrange an independent investigation for a complaint, even if further investigation has no chance of resolving the issue.

Overall feedback has shown that responsible managers are struggling to find sufficient time to discuss and agree resolutions at stage 1 and then also produce a written response.

10. Extensions due to exceptional circumstances

There have been 1 extension required due to exceptional circumstances. The extension has been agreed by the Director of Social Services and the complainant was also kept fully informed and agreed to the extension.

1. We were unable to appoint a suitable investigator straight away, the first four most suitable choices were unavailable. The decision was taken to appoint the investigator that was available soonest, which caused a delay of 2 weeks, rather than use a less suitable investigator.