



Complete Agenda

Democratic Services
Swyddfa'r Cyngor
CAERNARFON
Gwynedd
LL55 1SH

Meeting

EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE CARE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date and Time

10.30 am, TUESDAY, 6TH NOVEMBER, 2018

NOTE: A BRIEFING SESSION WILL BE HELD FOR MEMBERS ONLY AT 10.00AM

Location

Siambwr Hywel Dda, Council Offices, Caernarfon, Gwynedd, LL55 1SH

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CARE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MEMBERSHIP (18)

Plaid Cymru (10)

Councillors

Menna Baines
Elin Walker Jones
Olaf Cai Larsen
Linda Ann Jones
Peter Read

Alan Jones Evans
Dafydd Owen
Annwen Daniels
Rheinallt Puw
Catrin Elen Wager

Independent (5)

Councillors

Eryl Jones-Williams
Beth Lawton
Angela Russell

Richard Medwyn Hughes
Dewi Wyn Roberts

Llais Gwynedd (1)

Councillor
Anwen J. Davies

Gwynedd United Independents (1)

Councillor
Vacant Seat - Gwynedd United Independents

Individual Member (1)

Councillor
Nigel Pickavance

Ex-officio Members

Chairman and Vice-chairman of the Council

A G E N D A

1. APOLOGIES

To receive any apologies for absence.

2. DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

To receive any declarations of personal interest.

3. URGENT BUSINESS

To note any items that are a matter of urgency in the view of the Chairman for consideration.

4. INSPECTION OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES - GWYNEDD COUNCIL 4 - 27

Cabinet Member – Councillor Dilwyn Morgan

To receive a report on the above (attached).

5. ANNUAL REPORT ON DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS AND INFORMATION REQUESTS BY THE CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SUPPORT DEPARTMENT 2017-18 28 - 51

Cabinet Member – Councillor Dilwyn Morgan

To receive a report on the above (attached).

Agenda Item 4

Meeting	Care Scrutiny Committee
Date	6 November 2018
Subject	Inspection of Gwynedd Council's Children's Services
Author	Sharon Eastlake
Cabinet Member	Councillor Dilwyn Morgan

- 1 The report on the Inspection of Gwynedd Council's Children's Services is presented herewith.

- 2 Members of the Scrutiny Committee are requested to:
 - Scrutinise the Report,
 - Ask the Inspector and Cabinet Member any questions
 - Make any recommendation(s).

Inspection of Children's Services Gwynedd Council

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Introduction

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) undertook an inspection of services for children in Gwynedd during May 2018.

Our approach to the inspection was underpinned by the eight well-being statements and associated well-being outcomes as outlined in the Welsh Government's *National Outcomes Framework for People who need Care and Support and for Carers who need Support* (March 2016). Our approach builds upon the associated local authority quality standards set out in the *Code of Practice in Relation to Measuring Social Services Performance issued under section 145 of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act*. In addition, the inspection considered the local authority's capacity to improve through an analysis of the leadership and governance of its social services functions.

This inspection focused on the effectiveness of local authority services and arrangements to help and protect children and their families. The scope of the inspection included:

- the experience and progress of children on the edge of care, children looked after and care leavers including the quality and impact of prevention services, the effectiveness of decision-making, care and support and pathway planning
- the arrangements for permanence for children who are looked after and children who return home including the use of fostering, residential care and out of local authority area placements
- adherence to fostering service regulation and national minimum standards
- the quality of leadership, corporate parenting and governance arrangements in place to determine, develop and support service sufficiency and delivery particularly in relation to looked after children, care leavers and their families.

While the main focus of the inspection was on the progress and experience of children and young people looked after and care leaver's transition into adulthood, the inspection included a focus on children, young people and their family's engagement with:

- Information, advice or assistance (IAA), preventative services;
- Assessment/reassessment of needs for care and support and care and support planning;
- Child protection enquiries, procedures, urgent protective action, care and support protection plans.

Inspectors read case files, interviewed staff and administered a staff survey, interviewed managers, and professionals from partner agencies. Inspectors talked to children and their families wherever possible. Young people and care leavers attended two focus groups.

Overview of Findings

- We found Gwynedd children's services demonstrated significant strengths and has a committed and stable workforce who are responding to an increasing but manageable workload both in terms of complexity and volume. Staff demonstrated dedication and commitment to promoting best outcomes for children and families.
- The Information Advice and Assistance (IAA) service is an area for ongoing development. The authority had only recently implemented the requirements of the Social Services and Well Being Act (SSWBA) and it recognised that the service needed to be embedded and further developed, informed by learning from operational practice. Work is required in developing how people are informed about services offered by the department, what they can expect and what's available within the community.
- Referrals were responded to in a timely manner, and on the whole we saw effective decision making with conversations held by duty workers in respect of eligibility in line with requirement of the SSWBA. An area for further development is the proactive offer of support with focus on strengthening links with 3rd sector and preventative services.
- Gwynedd Council's supporting families' strategy is being developed and requires greater identification of need/unmet need within the county. Priority should be given to progress this strategy and strengthen preventative services for young people and families. There were recognised gaps in prevention and early intervention across Gwynedd and a lack of awareness of support services available amongst staff.
- Assessments on the whole were timely, responsive to children's emerging needs and of a good quality. We saw examples of assessments which focussed on children's outcomes with clear analysis in balancing risks, strengths and barriers. Where the assessment identified eligible need, a timely care and support plan was developed. The quality of the care and support plans seen was inconsistent and where there had been a significant change in the individuals or family's circumstances assessments were not routinely updated to assist more effective care planning and support.
- Social work staff told inspectors that the timeliness and quality of partners contributions to assessments was generally good. Inspectors saw some effective multi agency partnership working and a commitment to supporting families and maintaining children within their families. We saw examples where the intensive involvement of the children's social worker, the social services edge of care team, and partner agencies had resulted in good outcomes for the child and their family.

- We saw evidence of care and support plans regularly reviewed in collaboration with children, families and partner agencies. There is a need to strengthen the care and support plans to enable children, young people and families to have a clearer understanding of decisions made, and in a format which is easy to follow.
- Looked after Children's Reviews were held in line with requirements; however work needs to be undertaken to strengthen reviewing arrangements for children and young people creating improved experiences of reviews. Some children and young people did not view their review or pathway process positively.
- Keeping children safe was a high priority for Gwynedd children's services. Procedures were robust and timely; staff were confident in their application and took pride in the positive outcomes they achieved for children through their work. Gwynedd Council is seeking to further strengthen performance in focusing on their engagement with families in developing an 'effective child protection model'.
- We saw strong leadership and governance in Gwynedd Council. The corporate parenting board is ambitious to develop best outcomes for looked after children with good support from across the council.
- The head of service led the children's services department with confidence, demonstrated strong leadership and commitment to continuous development. Professional social work expertise is located at this tier of the organisation. The senior management team created a positive, ambitious and supportive work culture. Senior managers within children's services were knowledgeable, experienced and offered stability for the workforce. There had been changes at team manager tier with some managers new to their role.
- On the whole children, young people and families were positive in respect of the support provided by Gwynedd Council. Young people told us they particularly valued honesty and viewed the role of the personal advisors as key in assisting their transition to adulthood.
- The Welsh active offer was fully embedded within the local authority.
- There is a need to strengthen fostering arrangements to ensure children receive consistent positive experiences and improved outcomes when looked after. The availability of foster carers and suitable placements is an area of challenge given the change of profile of Gwynedd's looked after children population with an increase of looked after children living with parents and connected persons and difficulties in finding suitable placements for children with profound needs.

Areas for Development

Access arrangements: Information, Advice and Assistance

1. Address recognised gaps in preventative and early intervention and strengthen the proactive offer of support in developing stronger links with community services, strengthen signposting to agencies along with the development of a range of accessible and available services.
2. Recent developments in IAA need to be underpinned by continued work to facilitate appropriate and timely referrals and involvement with partner agencies.
3. Develop a resource for IAA staff to keep them up to date with local services to enable them to effectively carry out the functions of providing information.
4. Ensure chronologies are used consistently and updated to assist practitioners to access relevant and significant case information in a timely manner to facilitate effective decision making.

Assessment

5. Assessments must be updated following a significant change in circumstances to enable effective care planning and improved engagement with and outcomes for children and young people.

Care and Support and Pathway Planning

6. Further develop reviewing arrangements for children looked after, and offer consistent opportunities for children and young people to meet with the independent reviewing officer (IRO) prior to review. Areas to focus upon include the outcomes the child wants to achieve, having regard to a child/young persons wishes in respect of location of the review, and improvements in the recording of the child's needs and direct work already undertaken.
7. Further develop care planning and engagement with children, young people and carers to ensure consistently developed co produced plans. Children, young people and carers need to be supported to understand decisions underpinning care and support plans.
8. Strengthen fostering arrangements and adherence to regulations. Priority should be given to recruitment of foster carers to enable improved placement choice.

Leadership and Governance

9. Develop stronger quality assurance mechanisms across the department to be assured services provided and commissioned for children and families are timely, of a good quality and deliver good outcomes.

Next Steps

CIW expect Gwynedd Council to consider the areas identified for development and take appropriate action. CIW view that Gwynedd children's services overall provides a good quality service and has the capacity to build on existing strengths. CIW will monitor progress through its on-going engagement activity with the local authority.

1. Access arrangements: Information, Advice and Assistance

What we expect to see

The authority works with partner organisations to develop, understand, co-ordinate, keep up to date and make best use of statutory, voluntary and private sector information, assistance and advice resources available in their area. All people, including carers, have access to comprehensive information about services and get prompt advice and support, including information about their eligibility and what they can expect by way of response from the service. Arrangements are effective in delaying or preventing the need for care and support. People are aware of and can easily make use of key points of contact. The service listens to people and begins with a focus on what matters to them. Effective signposting and referring provides people with choice about support and services available in their locality, particularly preventative services. Access arrangements to statutory social services provision are understood by partners and the people engaging with the service are operating effectively.

Summary of findings

- 1.1. The local authority had worked hard in the context of the SSWBA to reshape its services but at the time of the inspection the IAA service had only been in operation since April 2108. There had been an increased demand upon the children's service with referrals received being greater in 2018 than when previously inspected in 2014. Referrals received by the IAA service are responded to in a timely and appropriate manner. We observed timely and appropriate responses to child protection referrals. We saw staff in the IAA service using the *what matters* conversation and the five steps to eligibility in line with SSWBA guidance.
- 1.2. The active offer of the Welsh language was fully embedded with Welsh being the local authority's language of work. They were able to deliver a service bilingually with the vast majority of the workforce being Welsh speaking.
- 1.3. We found the IAA service was still being embedded and not yet supported by clear eligibility thresholds negotiated with partners. Staff within the IAA service provided proportionate assessments and short term social work involvement to facilitate preventative work. Where longer term involvement or child protection intervention was required, cases transferred to the relevant area teams. We saw evidence of appropriate transfer of cases to teams. We saw seamless transfer of child protection cases from the IAA service to area teams who would undertake the child protection investigations.

- 1.4. We saw that the IAA decision maker would use the business system (WCCIS) to access background information and make informed decisions on incoming referrals. We saw some evidence of children who had been re-referred to the service, and a stronger quality assurance mechanism within IAA is needed to ensure that the information is gathered efficiently to enable effective decisions. WCCIS has only recently been implemented within Gwynedd children's service and we found it difficult to gain an overview of the child with development work to the system still underway to ensure information can be accessed and stored in timely manner. The system was causing some challenges for practitioners across teams, particularly when searching for information. Practitioners told us they were not always confident they had found all the information they might need. The use of chronologies in case files could assist decision makers to make timely and appropriate decisions.
- 1.5. The IAA senior practitioner held strategy discussions in a timely manner on new referrals prior to transferring to a team. We saw evidence of good operational working between the children's services department and the police and some health professionals.
- 1.6. Further work is required to develop the newly established IAA service to enable workers to provide a comprehensive information service to the public. The Family Information Service was a part of IAA and staff members had access to DEWIS, however some staff members were not confident that they had an up to date comprehensive list of information they could draw upon. We did not see information available for callers to the offices on the range of services available in their community and the preventative services provided by the local authority.
- 1.7. It was positive to see a 'team around the family' (TAF) worker as a member of the IAA service whose role would be to respond to referrals and map areas of need and signpost to community and preventative services.
- 1.8. Gwynedd Council has already recognised this deficit and is already taking steps to make improvements. The availability of preventative services and effective signposting to third sector organisations is an area under development underpinned by the 'Supporting Families Strategy' now being driven forward with the recent appointment of a Senior Manager.

2. Assessment

What we expect to see

All people entitled to an assessment of their care and support needs receive one in their preferred language. All carers who appear to have support needs are offered a carers needs assessment, regardless of the type of care provided, their financial means or the level of support that may be needed. People experience a timely assessment of their needs which promotes their independence and ability to exercise choice. Assessments have regard to the personal outcomes and views, wishes and feelings of the person subject of the assessment and that of relevant others including those with parental responsibility. This is in so far as is reasonably practicable and consistent with promoting their wellbeing and safety and that of others. Assessments provide a clear understanding of what will happen next and results in a plan relevant to identified needs. Recommended actions, designed to achieve the outcomes that matter to people, are identified and include all those that can be met through community based or preventative services as well as specialist provision.

Summary of findings

- 2.1. We saw detailed and good quality assessments undertaken in a timely manner. We saw a number of assessments where the child was subject to public law proceedings and these assessments contained a detailed analysis of individuals and families strengths, barriers and risks.
- 2.2. The quality of assessments was generally good and inspectors saw good evidence of children being seen as part of their assessment and their voice being heard. In the best examples assessments were coproduced with the family and included what mattered to them, with analysis focused on potential strengths and risks which supported the identification of both eligible need and appropriate early help. Families understood the outcome of the assessments and next steps. Some families told inspectors that their social workers and edge of care workers took time to listen to them, explained the processes, discussed the assessment findings and that this supported them to understand and make the changes identified. However in other examples families did not have a shared understanding of what would happen next. Whilst assessments were routinely shared in writing with the family and relevant partner agencies staff identified that the format of the assessment document was not easily accessible.
- 2.3. There was evidence that staff had a clear focus on children and young people however the format of the assessment did not always capture the quality of the good work undertaken including direct work as part of the assessment.
- 2.4. We saw little evidence of assessments being updated to inform care planning for children and families in receipt of long term support. Updating assessments when there have been significant changes would

enable a more robust approach in securing and supporting children's long term placement needs and maintaining focus on improved outcomes.

- 2.5. The quality of pathway assessments was variable with review documents in need of more detail in respect of young person's updated assessed need and outcomes. We saw evidence of young people not always engaging with the pathway assessment and planning process and some told us they did not like the current reviewing format. Social workers from the 16 plus team who were newly allocated to the young person undertook the pathway assessments and plans. Young people found the form filling aspect of this process unhelpful at a time when they were experiencing pressures, such as exams.
- 2.6. Some social workers within teams were trained to undertake specialist assessments, such as AIMS (assessment of young people at risk of displaying sexually harmful behaviours), and PAMS (parenting assessment of parents with learning difficulties). We saw evidence of where these assessments contributed to effective care planning. We saw evidence of parent and baby assessments and opportunities offered to parents to demonstrate parenting capacity within the safeguards of parent and baby placements.
- 2.7. The Derwen integrated service undertook all assessments for disabled children including those where there are concerns of risk or potential harm for a disabled child. Inspectors only reviewed a small sample of assessments undertaken by the team but the assessments and resulting plans were generally good quality. The team co worked some cases with the child and family team and found this a valuable source of advice and support particularly in relation to developing their child protection practice. Inspectors noted that the recent addition of a new short breaks unit for children has provided an additional means of supporting families and offering opportunities for positive experiences.

3. Care and Support and Pathway Planning

What we expect to see

People experience timely and effective multi-agency care, support, help and protection where appropriate. People using services are supported by care and support plans which promote their independence, choice and wellbeing, help keep them safe and reflect the outcomes that are important to them. People are helped to develop their abilities and overcome barriers to social inclusion.

Summary of findings

- 3.1. Gwynedd Council has recognised an increase in the number of children placed with family members and under placement with parent regulations and also recognised the challenge in finding suitable placements for children with profound and complex needs.
- 3.2. The local authority has mechanisms in place that ensure looked after children and young people have a timely care and support plan or pathway plans that accords with guidance. Some of the care planning documentation continues to be under development following the implementation of the SSWBA. The quality of care plans were variable and most did not reflect an updated assessment. Some children and young people told us they did not always understand the reason for changes made to their care plans. There is a need to strengthen engagement and direct work with children to enable them to have an improved understanding of their care plans. However, we saw some good examples of care planning undertaken in partnership with families and agencies. We saw evidence of a social worker producing a one page plan for a child to ensure the plan was easy to follow and understand. We also saw evidence of effective care planning within the service where family members, social workers, support workers and agencies worked together to coproduce care plans.
- 3.3. The edge of care team was developed to support children to remain within their families and to return children home following becoming looked after. We saw evidence of the team working intensively with families, alongside social work teams and partner agencies in supporting children to achieve this. We saw evidence of good outcomes where families received intensive support and a multi agency response.

Care Leavers

- 3.4. Some young people told us they greatly valued the support received from their personal advisors, viewing them as 'life savers'. Whilst the service has been configured to provide minimum changes of social workers we heard that some young people would welcome support from the 16 plus team at an earlier stage to prepare them for adulthood and the challenges that came within this transition period.

- 3.5. We found examples of workers demonstrating tenacity in continuing to work with young people regardless of their behaviour and a positive ethos of wanting to help young people achieve their potential.
- 3.6. The local authority worked hard to encourage young people aged 16 -17 to remain looked after until their 18th birthday, and as appropriate in accordance with 'when I'm ready guidance' beyond their 18th birthday. The local authority recognises this transition period can cause anxiety for young people. We saw evidence of supported housing provision for young people, however the authority recognise that the range of supported accommodation options is limited and the need for a strategic approach to enable seamless transition of young people in need of ongoing support from children's to adult services.
- 3.7. Care leavers have access to appropriate education and employment opportunities, including work experience. We found that young people are encouraged and supported to continue their education and training. We also saw examples of young people being financially supported to continue their studies in university settings. We found the 16 plus team to be proactive in making use of specialist professional knowledge from other teams to enhance their learning and provide direction in supporting young people with the challenges they face.

Long term Planning

- 3.8. The local authority, including social workers, managers and independent reviewing officers, viewed permanency for looked after children and young people as a priority. We saw evidence of early planning, good case management and management oversight, including panel arrangements ensuring that all children and young people have a permanency plan that is timely, relevant, and effective and accords with guidance. We saw evidence of appropriate scrutiny of care plans within the public law outline (PLO) panel minutes where decisions were made in respect of thresholds to commence pre care proceedings work and final care planning. The use of Section 76, (SSWBA) voluntary accommodation has declined and is used when children require short term accommodation. Where longer term plans are required, these plans are undertaken as part of public law proceedings, where a Guardian is appointed to uphold the rights of the child.
- 3.9. The local authority demonstrated it was committed to successfully returning children and young people home where it was in their best interests. Where the plan for the child or young person was to return home there was evidence of purposeful work to help the family change so it was safe for the child to return to the family. Workers were proactive in offering opportunities for children to remain with parents.
- 3.10. The local authority has ensured that the role of the IRO is recognised and understood by managers, staff and partners. IRO's have the independence, and capacity to monitor the performance of the local

authority as a corporate parent, however greater rigour is required to ensure that the reviewing process is robust; child focused and challenges areas in need of improvement to uphold children's rights. We found the IRO quality assurance functions were not embedded within a strong quality assurance framework, with reports being produced upon demand and not as part of a formal arrangement. We saw evidence that IRO's were able to challenge compliance, drift, and the effectiveness of agencies contributions to the plan; however this was viewed by inspectors and some staff members as an area in need of strengthening. IRO's are confident in that they have clear pathways to escalate issues as appropriate to managers, officers and members.

- 3.11. Looked after children reviews were held in line with guidance, however there is a need to strengthen reviewing arrangements for children looked after in offering children and young people consistent opportunities to meet with the reviewing officer prior to review. This would provide opportunity to have regard to a child/young person's wishes in respect of location of the review; an improved record of the child's needs, strengths and risks, areas of direct work undertaken; child's voice and desired outcomes within reviewing documents. We heard that some children and young people did not regard reviews held in schools positively, however some reviews continued to be held in schools. In a sample of reviewing documentation seen by inspectors the voice, views and wishes of the child were insufficiently recorded and greater detail was required to capture current need and risks, and work undertaken in order to monitor progress. We saw little written evidence of life story work being undertaken with children within reviewing documentation.

Placement choice, stability and wellbeing

- 3.12. The decision to place a child away from their home authority was based on a thorough assessment and analysis of the child's needs. We found that Gwynedd Council's considerations and actions when making an out of area/out of Wales placement met regulatory requirements. Panels were appropriately constituted with decisions being timely, well informed, recorded and endorsed by a nominated officer. The local authority adhered to the requirements to notify the receiving authority that a child is moving to their area and to assess the adequacy of resources to meet the child's need before the placement is made to ensure that the child's care, health and educational needs will continue to be met as soon as they begin to live outside their home area, and with minimal disruption. The local authority also had good arrangements in place in relation to notifications they received from placing authorities.
- 3.13. We saw evidence that finding suitable placements for young people was problematic. Social workers told us some placements were made because they were the only option available, not because they were the best choice of placement for the child. The lack of choice means contingency planning is not always possible and limits the social worker's ability to make the best plans for children. We saw an example

of a child placed with extended family in line with their wishes and an example of a child being placed in an emergency within a placement which did not fully match their needs. Finding longer term placements which fully matched children and young people's needs was a difficult task. We saw examples of children placed with parents which on the whole were delivering good outcomes, requiring intensive support to manage risk levels. Good practice and risk management was evident with the workforce pulling together and going over and above when situations arose where young people required intensive support. This was particularly evident when the workforce was attempting to maintain children within their placements.

- 3.14. Gwynedd Council has a placement commissioning strategy which identifies key priorities to address the needs of looked after children and recognises that there has been significant change in the profile of looked after children. 25% of looked after children live with parents; of the 64% placed within fostering arrangements 27% are with friends and family, with 5% placed in residential care. Gwynedd Council is working with its regional partners to find solutions with regards to placement sufficiency and availability of bespoke specialised placements to meet the needs of children and young people where there are difficulties in finding suitable placements. This area of work is in need of urgent progression to enable improved outcomes and appropriate placement choices for looked after children.
- 3.15. There is a need to give greater priority to fostering recruitment with the fostering team having a growing demand for viability assessments and connected person assessments. Focus is required to strengthen working arrangements within the team to ensure adherence to regulations.
- 3.16. We saw effective partnership working with education and health services in securing good outcomes for children in need of care and support. We saw an example of the education department securing support of a full time teacher to work with a child who had been excluded and reintegrated back into education. We saw a clear pathway enabling children who are looked after to access emotional health support and opportunities for foster carers to access support and consultation with the community adolescent mental health service (CAMHS) when looking after children with complex emotional and behavioural needs.

Participation

- 3.17. On the whole workers promoted children and young people's voice and work in a child centred manner; however this was not always reflected within records. We saw the need for stronger engagement with young people when changes were made to care planning to aid a greater understanding of decisions made.
- 3.18. Looked after children would value opportunities to meet with other looked after children. This opportunity has not been available to children

in recent times and an area Gwynedd Council are looking to develop. There was a young person who attended the corporate parenting board to represent young people's views.

- 3.19. Gwynedd Council's complaints policy is clear and easy to follow and evidence was seen of managers being proactive at responding to and resolving issues at early stages. Some young people told us they did not know how to make a complaint, however we did see evidence during our inspection of a young person's views being heard and complaint responded to in a timely and appropriate manner. The local authority need to ensure that all children receiving social work support are fully aware of how to make a complaint.
- 3.20. Advocacy is actively offered to children and young people within Gwynedd, however finding a Welsh speaking independent visitor was considered challenging. We saw evidence of Gwynedd Council having a positive relationship with advocacy providers and having a good understanding of the importance of the services. The number of children taking up the offer of advocacy remains low and a particular focus for the local authority is evaluating their performance in this area. Gwynedd Council are looking at the range of forums available to engage with young people and recognise this is an area of ongoing development.

4. Safeguarding

What we expect to see

Effective local safeguarding strategies combine both preventative and protective elements. Where people are experiencing or are at risk of abuse neglect or harm, they receive urgent, well-coordinated multi-agency responses. Actions arising from risk management or safety plans are successful in reducing actual or potential risk. People are not left in unsafe or dangerous environments. Policies and procedures in relation to safeguarding and protection are well understood and embedded and contribute to a timely and proportionate response to presenting concerns. The local authority and its partners sponsor a learning culture where change to and improvement of professional performance and agency behaviours can be explored in an open and constructive manner.

Summary of findings

- 4.1. Safeguarding was prioritised within the department and workers were focused on ensuring children and young people were safe. We saw skilled, competent and supported workers performing well in meeting children and young people's need to be safeguarded. Child protection enquiries were timely and thorough, informed by decisions made in a strategy meetings held in accordance with guidance and good practice. Findings and decisions in relation to significant harm were clear and resulted in action, including urgent action needed to protect children and young people. Child protection enquiries were led by a suitably qualified and experienced social worker. We saw evidence of timely responses to child protection referrals and good liaison with partner agencies during the investigation process.
- 4.2. Risks and vulnerability were known to the authority, including in relation to such behaviours as going missing, substance misuse, offending, exploitation, trafficking, risk taking behaviours and new technologies. Generally, proactive action was taken to mitigate harm or potential harm and such behaviours received a well co-ordinated response that reduced risk of harm. In several cases reviewed inspectors saw evidence of effective multi agency working and intensive support provided to families in cases where there were risks of significant harm. In these cases good outcomes were achieved with children returning home to parents. Significant work was undertaken to maintain children with their parents and although this was not always possible in all cases good outcomes were achieved with children often remaining within the extended family.
- 4.3. The local authority has a clear approach to risk assessment and the relationship between risk management and child protection pathways are well defined. The effectiveness of the plan on the child's safety and well-being was evaluated as part of the child protection conferencing review process and included the young persons' view of their plan. We saw evidence in one case where the children's views were listened to and incorporated into planning with good outcomes achieved when

children returned home to parents successfully. In some cases a stronger quality assurance mechanism could have strengthened the quality of safety plans.

- 4.4. 'Effective Child Protection' was a recent innovation within Gwynedd children's services and was being piloted within child protection conferences. This is an emerging model that concentrates on four key elements of conversations, thresholds, change and measurement. Training has been delivered for social workers in holding collaborative conversations and developing awareness in the way language is used. The model attempts to measure outcomes by the use of scaling with clear focus on change.
- 4.5. We saw evidence of robust planning and interventions where child protection risks had been identified. There were effective multi agency core groups held in a timely manner and use of PLO panel meetings to assist in care planning and determining level of risk. PLO meetings were chaired by a senior manager and represented by team managers across the department, legal advisor, resource providers and relevant partners. We saw evidence of effective engagement as part of this process along with intensive work undertaken by edge of care team, social workers and partners to mitigate risks and achieve good outcomes. Progress was reviewed in a timely manner within the PLO process.

5. Leadership, Management and Governance

What we expect to see

Leadership, management and governance arrangements comply with statutory guidance and together establish an effective strategy for the delivery of good quality services and outcomes for people. Meeting people's needs for quality services are a clear focus for councilors, managers and staff. Services are well-led, direction is clear and the leadership of change is strong. Roles and responsibilities throughout the organisation are clear. The authority works with partners to deliver help, care and support for people and fulfils its corporate parenting responsibilities. Involvement of local people is effective. Leaders, managers and elected members have sufficient knowledge and understanding of practice and performance to enable them to discharge their responsibilities effectively.

Summary of findings

- 5.1. Gwynedd Council's vision and ethos of 'Ffordd Gwynedd' and 'putting the people of Gwynedd at the centre of everything they do' was recognised and understood by the workforce and reflects the ethos of the SSWBA.
- 5.2. Lead member and other elected members demonstrated commitment to delivering good quality children services with a strong corporate parenting ethos extending across the council. We saw evidence of enthusiasm shown by the lead member in championing children services corporately. The chair of the corporate parenting board and lead member for children had spent time in meeting social work teams and held regular meetings with the head of service and quality assurance officer in order to have a greater understanding of the department's challenges and strengths. Gwynedd Council's corporate parenting board is supported by the chief executive who chairs one of the work streams to develop better experiences and outcomes for looked after children. There was a revised corporate parenting strategy which underpinned the need to develop work streams to strengthen the performance of the corporate parenting board.
- 5.3. It is important that continued priority is afforded to children's services, including looked after children and care leavers to enable the department to drive on improvements for children and families in light of rising numbers of cases, complexity of work, and changes seen in profile of looked after children.
- 5.4. We saw evidence of member oversight in driving forward the supporting families strategy. Currently early work is being undertaken in mapping need with the view of developing the preventative and early intervention services within the county. Prevention is a recognised area where development is required and an area in need of priority. Gwynedd covers a large geographical area which has vast rural areas which adds to the complexity of delivering accessible services to all children and families.

- 5.5. Gwynedd Council has a stable, skilled and experienced workforce, with most people having worked for the local authority for many years. The senior management team was well established and regarded with confidence by the workforce. There was evidence of Gwynedd Council 'growing their own' skilled workforce having links with a university and providing good opportunities for ongoing training and development. We had an overwhelming response from the workforce following a staff survey sent in connection with the inspection, which was reflective of a workforce engaged in continuous improvement.
- 5.6. Overall, staff were positive about their experience of working for the local authority and valued being able to practice in Welsh. An area of recognised strength amongst the workforce was the good operational working relationships between teams, departments and external agencies. Examples of these were evidenced extensively within the case files reviewed.
- 5.7. The workforce said they felt supported by managers and were able to raise concerns as they arose. Teams were led by strong operational managers. There had been staff movement between teams with some recent changes where some teams had relatively new team managers and senior practitioners who were all offered management training. The head of service had a good oversight of the service and knew her workforce well. She had knowledge of the children and families supported by the service and direct oversight of all children subject to Public Law Orders and placed with parents. The head of service uses a variety of means to maintain oversight including regular conversation with her staff and a range of panels.
- 5.8. There is a need to strengthen quality assurance mechanisms in order to assure that placements commissioned for children looked after are of a good quality and deliver good outcomes. Attention is required in strengthening quality assurance in the areas of IAA and reviewing processes in respect of children on the child protection register and children looked after.
- 5.9. Supervision policy and documentation was clearly understood by staff and good supervision practice was seen across the department. We saw evidence of the authority's expectation that preparatory work would be undertaken by workers and managers prior to timely supervision sessions with workers valuing the opportunity supervision gave to review cases.

Methodology

Fieldwork

We undertook 9 days of fieldwork activity

We selected case files for tracking and review from a sample of cases. In total 49 case files were reviewed; of these 15 were followed up with tracking interviews with social workers and family members and 4 were subject to a tracking focus group which involved multi agency partners.

We interviewed, children, parents and relatives.

We interviewed a range of local authority employees, members, senior officers, Director of Social Services and the Chief Executive.

We interviewed a range of partner organisations, representing both statutory and third sector.

We reviewed a sample of 6 staff supervision files.

We reviewed 185 staff survey results.

We reviewed supporting documentation sent to CIW for the purposes of the inspection.

We looked at a sample of complaints that were made about children' services.

Inspection Team:

Lead Inspector: Sharon Eastlake. Supporting Inspectors: Christine Jones, Kate Young, Sian Roberts.

Acknowledgements

CIW would like to thank the following people who gave their time and contributed to this inspection; children and young people, parents and carers, staff, managers and members and partner organisations.

Agenda Item 5

NAME OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	Care Scrutiny Committee
DATE OF MEETING	6 November 2018
TITLE OF ITEM	Annual Report on dealing with complaints and information requests by the Children and Family Support Department for 2017/2018
PURPOSE	To give an overview of the complaints and information requests received during 2017/2018
AUTHOR	Dafydd Paul, Senior Manager Safeguarding and Quality
CABINET MEMBER	Dilwyn Morgan

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In accordance with the Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014 and the Representations Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014 that came into effect on 1 August 2014, the Director of Social Services is required to produce an annual report on how complaints are handled and investigated within the Service. The report is produced by the Customer Care Officer on behalf of the Director of Social Services.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to provide information on the number of complaints received by the Children and Family Support Department during the year, the reasons for them and the solutions. The report also contains a summary of the lessons learnt and the action taken on the complaints received. Details are also included about the number of information requests received during this period.

2. Context

- 2.1 The Customer Care Officer deals with complaints and information requests throughout the year for the Children and Family Support Department.

The Customer Care Officer for the Children and Family Support Department is managed by the Senior Safeguarding and Quality Manager within the Children and Family Support Department. Although the Officer is placed within the Service, it is important to note that the Officer is independent to ensure that complaints are dealt with according to the Social Services Complaints Guidelines. The Social Services Complaints Procedure specifically relates to individuals who receive a service from the Department or who have the right to advocate on behalf of a service user.

3. Access to the Complaints Procedure

- 3.1 Individuals contact the Customer Care Officer to express their dissatisfaction with the Department's service, and deciding to make a complaint is usually their last resort. The Officer concentrates on ensuring access to the Social Services Complaints Procedure so that complainants are aware of their right to be heard.

Information about the Complaints Procedure receives considerable publicity and the information is available in a variety of formats e.g. leaflets, 'easy read' leaflets and on-line. All the information is available in English and Welsh so that the complainant can choose his/her preferred language. Alternative arrangements such as Braille or other languages are available upon request. In addition, advocacy or other support is available to the complainant in his/her chosen language in order to assist as the Complaints Procedure progresses. Information leaflets are continuously amended and updated.

Complainants' chosen language when making an enquiry/complaint during 2017/2018			
	Welsh	English	Total Complaints
Enquiries and Informal Complaints	16	39	55
Step 1	6	13	19
Step 2		1	1
Ombudsman		0	0

4. Matters recorded as Enquires

- 4.1 The aim is to respond to every complaint with fairness, impartiality and respect so that the individual is confident that his/her complaint will be handled professionally and positively, rather than negatively. Often, when the individual decides not to pursue the formal Complaints Procedure, the matter is dealt with as an enquiry or informal complaint. Another example of this would be a letter from a Member of Parliament or local Councillor who wishes to express dissatisfaction or wants a specific answer to a question.
- 4.2 By responding positively during these initial steps, some matters can be effectively resolved without the need for the formal Complaints Procedure as this is an opportunity to deal with any misunderstanding or to respond to enquiries. Without a doubt, this is the best result for everyone. One of the most prominent themes seen when dealing with enquiries and informal complaints is misunderstanding between individuals, such as lack of communication.

TABLE 1. Enquires and Informal Complaints received 2017/2018	
	<i>Children and Family Support</i>
<i>Solicitors</i>	4
<i>Ombudsman</i>	0
<i>Local members</i>	2
<i>Members of Parliament or Assembly Members</i>	16
<i>Service Users</i>	0
<i>Relatives</i>	25
<i>The Public</i>	4
<i>Foster Carers</i>	0
<i>Other Agents e.g. advocacy service</i>	4

<i>Other Counties</i>	0
<i>Social Worker</i>	0
<i>Information Commissioner</i>	0
Total	55

5. Stage 1 - Social Services Statutory Complaints Procedure - Local Resolution

- 5.1 Every effort is made to resolve complaints so that the complainant and the Service are satisfied. Clearly, a resolution is the best result for everyone and this can be achieved by investing time and effort early on. However, if the complainant decides to lodge a formal complaint, the usual procedure is to have telephone or face to face meeting with the complainant or representative in order to attempt to resolve the matter. Over the years, the Customer Care Officer has successfully established close working relationships with the teams, managers and legal service as a means of discussing and resolving matters, and this is reflected in the small amount of complaints that reach Stage 2 of the Complaints Procedure.

It is fair to say that, since the implementation of the Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014, there has been a clear trend over the past four years as, during this time, only one complaint has been escalated to Stage 2. This is due to the professionalism of the Team Managers and Senior Managers in dealing with complaints. They understand the importance of a local resolution and, when discussing directly with complainants, they are able to address issues as soon as possible. This ensures that the Department is able to continue working with the family for the benefit of the child/young person.

An analysis of the Stage 1 complaints dealt with in 2017/2018 can be found in **Appendix 1**.

6. Stage 2 - Social Services Statutory Complaints Procedure - Formal Investigation

- 6.1 By following the principle of focusing on a successful early and local resolution, complaints do not, usually, need to be escalated to Stage 2 - Formal Investigation of the Complaints Procedure to resolve disputes / problems / issues. Compared with other Local Authorities in North Wales, the Children and Family Support Department at Gwynedd Council is extremely successful in dealing with Stage 1 complaints, whilst a higher proportion of complaints in other Authorities are escalated to Stage 2.
- 6.2 Should a complainant wish to escalate his/her complaint to Stage 2, he/she would have to provide a full record of the complaint along with any desired outcomes; this would then form the basis of what we call a Stage 2 Investigation. The investigation is conducted by two people who are independent to the Council, known as the Independent Investigating Officer and Independent Person. Their role is to meet with the complainant, interview relevant staff and read the social care file. They subsequently create a report

of their findings along with any recommendations for the Department. It is the Department's responsibility to respond directly to the complainant about the content of the report.

- 6.3 During 2017/2018, one application to escalate a complaint to Stage 2 of the Social Services Complaints Procedure was received. The investigation has ended and a comprehensive report was provided to the complainant. However, the complainant decided to refer their complaint on to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales during the summer of 2018. This complaint will therefore be reported in the 2018/2019 annual report.

An analysis of the Stage 2 complaint dealt with in 2017/2018 can be seen in **Appendix 2**.

7. Complaint transferred to the Public Services Ombudsman

- 7.1 Every individual has the right to complain directly to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales at any time during the complaints procedure if they are unhappy with the service provided by the Department.

Usually, if the complaint has not already been dealt with under Stage 1 of the Social Services Complaints Procedure, the complaint will be referred back to the Department in an attempt to resolve the complaint locally. If the individual is still dissatisfied after that, he/she has the right to escalate the complaint to Stage 2 of the Social Services Complaints Procedure or return to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales or the Welsh Language Commissioner or the Equalities and Human Rights Commissioner, depending on the nature of the complaint, so that an enquiry can be held.

- 7.2 One Ombudsman enquiry continued from 2016/2017. The complainant contacted the Ombudsman as they were unhappy with the Department's response in relation to the decision to refuse to escalate their concern to Stage 2 of the Social Services Complaints Procedure. A full explanation of the situation was provided to the Ombudsman along with documentation that was relevant to the complaint. A response was received from the Ombudsman at the end of April 2018, therefore the result will be reported in 2018/2019 annual report.

TABLE 2 Social Services Statutory Complaints Procedure 2017/2018	
<i>Children and Family Support</i>	
<i>Step 1</i>	19
<i>Step 2</i>	1
<i>Ombudsman</i>	0
Total	20

8. Adherence to the Statutory Complaints Procedure Response Timetable

- 8.1 The Local Authority has a duty to provide information on how it investigates and deals with complaints within the timetable noted in the Guidance and Regulations.

TABLE 3 Social Services Statutory Complaints Procedure Response Performance 2017/2018						
Stage 1						
<i>Complaints received within 12 months of the incident</i>	<i>Complaints received 12 months after the incident</i>	<i>Acknowledged within 2 days</i>	<i>Discussion to resolve within 10 days</i>	<i>Decision announced within 5 days</i>	<i>Response time extended</i>	<i>Average number of days extended</i>
19	0	19	15	14	5	28*
Stage 2						
<i>Total acknowledged within 5 days</i>	<i>Total of responses received within 25 working days</i>		<i>Total deferred under exceptional circumstances</i>		<i>Total completed within 6 months</i>	
1	0		1		0	

*It should be noted that the average number of days extended is higher than usual for 2017/2018 because one complaint, namely GC/4200-17, took 110 working days to be fully resolve. The average number of days complaints extended for the four other complaints was 7.5 working days.

9. Learning Lessons and Identifying Trends - see Appendix 1

- 9.1 A report on the way complaints are dealt with is produced every quarter and shared with the Head of the Children and Family Support Department. This is an opportunity to analyse and discuss every complaint and to learn in order to improve the service the Department provides.
- 9.2 **Complaints Trends - Children and Family Support Department**

The Children and Family Support Department works daily with a wide range of different families. Some families come to the Department's attention through a direct request for assistance, for example, if their child is disabled. Most families come to the Department's attention because of concerns for a child or young person's health and safety.

Unfortunately, because of the nature of social care work, tension or conflict with families is an unavoidable. Social Workers have to make very difficult decisions, and families are not always happy. The Department understands and accepts that families can be dissatisfied, which can then lead them to make a formal complaint against a Social Worker. It is the relevant Team Manager who identifies whether there are grounds for the complaint, and tries to reach a resolution as soon as possible for the benefit of the child/young person.

9.3 **Unhappy with the Social Worker**

A number of complaints received over the past year involved Social Workers, mainly because individuals were unhappy with Social Worker's actions and decisions. A number of complaints were also received because of a lack of clear communication between the Social Worker and the individual/the child's family.

There is no clear theme in regards to the complaints made against Social Workers; every complaint is unique to the case. In accordance with the Complaints Guidance, the Team Manager will then discuss the complaint with the complainant. By discussing the complaint, the Team Manager is able to respond to matters directly and most cases are resolved over the phone; it is clear that this way of dealing with complaints works. In the majority of cases, the complaint stems from a misunderstanding and miscommunication. Usually, once matters have been fully explained, the complainant will be willing to carry on working with the Social Worker for the benefit of the child.

It is clear that communication is important; the way things are explained to families from the outset is critical in ensuring that they understand why the Service does what it does, what the Service is able to offer and why, in some cases, it is not possible to offer any service at all.

9.4 **Complainants and Parent Expectation**

It is difficult to respond to complaints by families that feel the Department should be doing more to support them, or who believe they should be receiving more services/contact, or who believe their children should be returned to their care. Parents' expectations of what the Department is able to offer is high, if they feel they have been failed in any way by the Department, they lodge a complaint.

It is also very important to note, on a number of occasions when a complainant initially contacts the Customer Care Officer, they are highly emotive - they could be angry or concerned about a decision or a misunderstanding. In most cases, the complainant will be satisfied once they have been given the opportunity to discuss their concern with the Customer Care Officer, first of all, and then with the relevant Team Manager, and are happy with the outcome of these discussions.

9.5 **Hafan y Sêr**

Two Stage 1 complaints and a number of enquiries were received during the year about Hafan y Sêr, the new Short Break Unit in Penrhyndeudraeth. These complaints were specifically about the delay in opening the new unit. Developing the new unit was, by its nature, a substantial project and, unfortunately, a number of unforeseen obstacles arose as the project unfolded. Reflecting on this project, and considering other similar projects in future, perhaps the project management arrangements should be considered and whether a specific project manager is needed for a development on this scale.

The unit has since opened; thus, we do not anticipate any further complaints of this nature about the unit.

10. Training and Staff Awareness

- 10.1 An important part of the Customer Care Officer's duty is to provide training for staff about the Social Services Complaints Procedure so that staff members are fully aware of the procedure and are confident with their role.

During 2018/2019, it is anticipated that a refresher training will be held for the Service's staff on the Social Services (Wales) 2014 Complaints Procedure Regulations.

Welsh Government is currently in consultation to create a new complaints procedure which better corresponds to the principles of the Social Services and Well-being Act (Wales) 2014. Once the Government has approved the new guidance, further training will be arranged for all the Department's staff.

11. Other Duties

- 11.1 The Children and Supporting Families Customer Care Officer not only deals with complaints and enquiries, but also with information requests in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 1998. These requests are made by the Police, Solicitors, the Health Board, Local Authorities and individuals. In accordance with these Acts, there are specific timetables which must be adhered to. Determining what information is appropriate to be released is work that demands skill and can be emotionally challenging at times. The Officer who deals with information requests can spend long hours on some of the more complex requests the Department receives. This means that a great many hours are spent ensuring that the information requests are responded to within the specified time.
- 11.2 The number of information requests made under the Data Protection Act 1998 in 2017/2018 was higher than the number of requests made during 2016/2017. The reason being that the Crown Prosecution Service now requires the Police to apply to Social Services for information in every case involving a child/young person. This trend is anticipated to continue during 2018/2019 with the introduction of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) on 25 May 2018.

TABLE 5. Information requests during 2017/2018

Requests under the Freedom of Information Act 2000	63
Requests under the Data Protection Act 1998	168

12. Expressions of Gratitude - see Appendix 3

- 12.1 It is also important to recognise and record the expressions of gratitude that we have received from our service users and their families.

TABLE 6. Expressions of Gratitude during 2017/2018	62
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13. Action Plan for 2018/2019

- 13.1 During the coming year, the Customer Care Officer will continue to respond to any enquiries or complaints made against the Children and Family Support Department under the Complaints Procedure. When considering that there has been an increase in the number of complaints made against the Department in recent years, it is anticipated that this trend will continue. It must therefore be ensured that every enquiry or complaint received by the Department continues to be considered fully, and that the lessons to be learnt from every case also receive comprehensive attention in order to contribute and improve the service provided.
- 13.2 Following discussions with the Inspectors from Care Inspectorate Wales during their recent inspection of the Children and Family Support Department, there is an intention in 2018/2019 to begin recoding if the complaints received by the Department are upheld or not. Although it is not a requirement to records this, this information will be useful to understand more about the type of complaints made.
- 13.3 With the introduction of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018 at the end of May 2018, it is anticipated that there will be an increase in the number of information requests made to the Department.
- 13.4 The Customer Care Office began using a new version of the Respond computer recording system in June 2018. This system is used to register every case and will be upgraded this year. The aim is to develop this new system to improve the way the lessons learnt from complaints are monitored and addressed.
- 13.5 There are also plans in place to produce a new information leaflet on the Social Services Complaints Procedure specifically for the Children and Family Support Department.

APPENDIX 1 - EXAMPLES OF COMPLAINTS AND OBSERVATIONS DURING 2017/18						
Ref	Brief Description	Category	Stage	Unit / Team	Outcomes	Lessons to be learnt
Children and Supporting Families Department						
GC/3912-17	A mother has been in touch wanting to make a complaint against the Support Workers' Manager, Children's Team. The mother felt as though the Manager did not understand her current situation and believed he had decided to end contact. Mum did not want to discuss her complaint, she wanted a response by letter.	Lack of communication Contact Issues	Stage 1	Support Services	<p>The Senior Operational Manager sent a letter apologising if the mother felt that the Manager did not understand her situation and noted that this had never been his intention.</p> <p>He also noted that it would be better if mum discussed any concerns about contact directly with the Social Worker only; this would avoid any confusion as it was the Social Worker who was responsible for managing cases and making decisions about them, not the Support Services Manager.</p> <p>The letter was sent and the matter closed.</p>	It needs to be clear that it is the Social Worker's responsibility to make decisions in a case and the role of the Support Service is to ensure appropriate arrangements in accordance with the Care and Support Plan. Although the Manager does have a role to play, it is not the Support Service's decision to end contact arrangements.
GC/3926-17	A father wanted to complain about a Social Worker's attitude. He felt as though the Social Worker had taken against him and was siding with the children's mother. Dad also felt that some things the Social Worker had told him were unacceptable. Dad was being supported by his Key Worker in making the complaint. Dad was very eager to meet the	Staff Performance	Stage 1	Dwyfor Children's Team	A meeting was set up between dad, the Key Worker, the Team Manager and the Social Worker. The complaint was discussed during the meeting and Dad was very satisfied with what was said. Dad shook hands with the Social Worker at the end of the meeting and he was happy to work with him	This complaint emphasises the challenges faced by Social Workers when seeking to manage private care cases and contact disputes. A number of child protection concerns were raised by the parents and the Social Worker managed these.

	Team Manager to discuss his complaint face to face.				for his daughter's sake. The complaint was resolved and the matter closed.	A meeting was initially arranged between the complainant and the Team Manager, then between the Team Manager, the complainant and the Social Worker, where the complexities of care cases were discussed. The complainant was satisfied that the Social Worker had tried to provide appropriate advice in order to ensure his daughter's safety.
GC/3960-17	<p>Mum wanted to make an official complaint against the Social Workers' Manager at Derwen and the Social Worker.</p> <p>She said that a Case Conference had been arranged without her consent, that she was not happy that Derwen wanted to put her child's name on the Child Protection Register, she wanted her son's case to be closed to Derwen.</p>	Lack of communication	Stage 1	Derwen	The Derwen Service Manager sent mum a letter. In the letter it was explained that Derwen had a duty to ensure the needs of the child were met in a positive way. The letter confirmed that the Social Worker had sat down with mum to go through the minutes of the Case Conference and should she wish to discuss these further, the Derwen Service Manager would be happy to meet her. Since receiving the letter, mum has been working with the Social Worker and so the matter has been closed.	It was felt that there were no specific lessons to note for this complaint since it involved decisions that had to be taken.
GC/3971-17	Mum has been in touch wanting to make a complaint about the Derwen Service. The Service had promised that the referral for modifications	Staff Performance	Stage 1	Derwen	Mum has spoken with the Senior Executive Manager on the phone. The Service has promised to provide full	The Service needs to try to ensure service continuation arrangements during workers'

	<p>would be submitted in January. This had not happened. The OT had been off sick and mum asked why other options had not been explored in the meantime.</p> <p>The OT had returned to work - mum did not feel she was being prioritised as was promised.</p>				<p>answers to all of mum's questions, and ensure that the OT visits her as soon as possible. The Senior Operational Manager sent a letter in response.</p>	<p>absences. Unfortunately, there is no such resource at present.</p>
GC/3972-17	<p>Nain had been in touch as she was very dissatisfied with the attitude of her grand-daughter's Social Worker. She wanted a new Social Worker as soon as possible. She felt the Social Worker's attitude was appalling, that he was a liar, that he played tricks and was bullying her grand-daughter. Her grand-daughter was afraid of him.</p>	Staff Performance	Stage 1	Meirionnydd Children's Team	<p>The Senior Manager and Team Manager have spoken to Nain on several occasions about this matter. A new Social Worker has been allocated to the case and the Team Manager has sent a letter to Nain addressing the complaint.</p>	<p>This complaint is connected to complaint GC/3979-17.</p> <p>This complaint emphasises the challenges facing Social Workers when managing complex care cases in which members of the extended family are being assessed as family carers.</p> <p>We are aware that Kinship Carers are asked to work very closely with the Local Authority and this can, at times, put them in a difficult position as they comply with decisions made by the Court which obligates them to act against members of their family.</p> <p>The complainant wanted to change the Social Worker. The Team Manager and the Senior Manager attempted to resolve the matter in an informal way, meeting to discuss the matter with the complainant on</p>

						several occasions. The complaint was successfully resolved and a new Social Worker was allocated to the case.
GC/3979-17	A phone call from nain and taid who were very dissatisfied with a Social Worker. The Social Worker had left a highly confidential message on their answer phone, and they felt that his attitude over the phone the following day had been appalling and had frightened them.	Staff Performance	Stage 1	Meirionnydd Children's Team	The Team Manager spoke to the family on the phone about this matter on several occasions. This complaint involves the same Social Worker as complaint GC/3972-17; a new Social Worker has, therefore, been allocated to the case. The Team Manager will respond to the complaint through letter.	<p>This was a difficult complaint to resolve, mainly because several members of the extended family had been in touch and had had discussions with different Officers within the Service. It was, therefore, difficult to follow the thread of the complaint and deal with matters that arose.</p> <p>An attempt was made to resolve the complaint in an informal way, through telephone discussions between the complainant and the Team Manager and Senior Manager, along with meetings between the Head of Department and Team Manager. As a result of the complexities, it was resolved to change the Social Worker as it was clear the working relationship had broken down and that it would be difficult for the worker to manage the case.</p> <p>The Team Manager acknowledged that the Social Worker's decision to leave a long telephone message was</p>

						inappropriate and that some of the information shared with them about the fostering process was factually incorrect. The Social Worker also recognised this and ensured that he would learn more and gain a greater understanding of the process involving Kinship Carers.
GC/3984-17	A young person making a complaint through advocacy. She did not feel as though she knew who would provide services for her in future, she did not feel that the 'Life Story' work had been completed. She wanted a meeting, with her advocate present, to discuss matters face to face.	Lack of communication	Stage 1	16+ Team	A meeting was arranged with the young person, the advocate, the 16+ Team Manager and the Social Worker. All the points were discussed with the young person, she accepted what was explained to her. The Service has sent a letter after the meeting to confirm what was discussed.	Effective communication must be ensured when implementing individual plans with young people. The team is also reliant upon information from the children's teams when transferring from one team to another. Receiving comprehensive information as part of the transfer is critical. The Department will review the team's transfer arrangements.
GC/4008-17	A parent who was very dissatisfied with the Social Worker has been in touch. The parent felt as though the Social Worker had breached confidentiality in divulging personal information about her with mum's sister. Mum was also concerned about her daughter who was living with her sister and concerned that there were drugs at the house. She wanted a new Social Worker for her case.	Lack of communication	Stage 1	Arfon Children's Team	The Team Manager contacted mum to discuss the complaint, in accordance with the guidelines. After further discussion, it became clear that mum was unhappy that her daughter was living with her sister, and it transpired that it was she who had shared information about her mental health with her sister. Mum was satisfied and happy to continue working with the Social Worker.	The Team Manager contacted the complainant to try to discuss the complaint informally. The complainant was of the opinion that the Social Worker had breached confidentiality by discussing a number of issues with her daughter's carers. The Team Manager attempted to ensure that mum was aware of the reasons why certain details had needed to be shared in order to explain why

						her daughter was being cared for by other carers and what had to happen to ensure a successful reinstatement.
GC/4094-17	A parent, dissatisfied with the delay in providing residential service at the Short Break Unit in Penrhyndeudraeth, had been in touch.	Developing Service Provision	Stage 1	Short Break Unit	The complainant was offered a meeting but refused the invitation. S/he wanted a response through letter and a response was sent by the Head of Department. The complainant received an explanation for the delay and an apology. Unfortunately, the registration process takes some time.	Developing the Unit was, by its nature, a substantial project. In future, project management arrangements should be considered and whether a specific project manager is needed for a development on this scale.
GC/4106-17	This complaint was partly due to the fact that mum was expecting two Social Workers to give her daughter a bath, only one turned up. No one had let mum know. Another incident happened during one of the summer groups. Mum arrived with the child and asked who would be supporting her daughter for the day. The staff did not know who. After half an hour of discussions and phoning the office, it was still not clear who would be supporting the child. Mum decided to take her home as she did not feel her daughter was safe. The little girl was very sad as she had missed out on a party with everyone else.	Staff Performance Lack of communication	Stage 1	Derwen Service	Mum received a full response from the Derwen Service Manager apologising for the incident; mum was not very happy but she accepted the response on this occasion.	Clear lessons about communication. It shows how important it is that the Service communicates effectively with parents in order to ensure the best service for service users.
GC/4126-17	The first complaint involves lack of communication between the Derwen Support Service Manager	Lack of communication	Stage 1	Derwen Service	The family had a meeting with the Derwen Service Manager and the Support Service	Clear lessons about communication. It shows how important it is that the Service

	and the family. Appointments changing, unfamiliar Support Workers arriving at the house and appointments being missed.				Manager to discuss their complaint. Derwen acknowledged the need to improve communication and has, therefore, promised the family that they will work to ensure that this does not happen again. The family was satisfied with the response.	communicate effectively with parents in order to ensure the best service for service users.
GC/4200-17	Complaint by a child's mum about a Social Worker. Mum was very dissatisfied about the way the Social Worker had dealt with the issues of her daughter's case over the year e.g. passport matters, lack of communication etc.	Staff Performance Lack of communication	Stage 1	Meirionnydd Children's Team	The Team Manager discussed the matter with the Social Worker, mum was not satisfied with the response. Arrangements were made for mum to meet the Senior Operational Manager to further discuss her complaint. During the meeting it was agreed that the Senior Manager would investigate and prepare a response for mum. Mum was satisfied with these steps.	A number of meetings were held between the Team Manager, the Senior Manager and the complainant to try to resolve this complex complaint. The main issue involved the Social Worker's failure to complete a task in an appropriate and timely manner. This failure caused a great deal of distress for the family. The Service carried out a comprehensive investigation into this failure and apologised to the family for the failure and the affect it had on them. Other matters arose about case management responsibilities and expectations whilst investigating this complaint. Some of these issues remain unresolved, and we are awaiting further response from the complainant.

GC/4276-17	Mum had been in touch wanting to lodge a complaint against a Social Worker; she had tried to get in touch with her several times and none of her phone calls had been returned. Mum felt that the Service was doing her son a disservice and was very keen to discuss the matter with a Manager.	Lack of communication Staff Performance	Stage 1	Derwen Service	The Derwen Service Manager contacted mum. It transpired that this had been a complete misunderstanding. Mum had changed her contact number and the Social Worker had, therefore, been trying to get in touch on the wrong number. Mum apologised for the bother she had caused. It was explained that it had been no bother and that she was welcome to get in touch again if she was dissatisfied with anything in future.	It was felt that there were no lessons to be learnt here as the complaint had stemmed from a misunderstanding and that mum was satisfied.
GC/4291-17	Dad getting in touch wanting to make a formal complaint against a Social Worker. He was unhappy with the Social Worker's attitude. He felt as though the Service was working against him rather than with him.	Staff Performance	Stage 1	Dwyfor Children's Team	The Team Manager and Senior Operational Manager discussed the matters with dad over the phone. The issues changed to being operational ones and the Service, therefore, no longer needed to deal with them directly. Matters continued to develop with the case, and the Team Manager is monitoring the issue.	The Team Manager and the Senior Manager contacted the complainant on several occasions in an attempt to resolve the complaint in an informal manner. The complainant was unhappy as he had not had enough time to prepare for the Initial Case Conference and to read the report. The Team Manager apologised for this, and the importance of coordinating and timetabling with the Social Worker was discussed. The complainant was also of the opinion that the Social Worker had given him poor advice regarding the contact arrangements with his children. The Team Manager

						<p>was of the opinion that the Social Worker had shared appropriate advice considering the circumstances. The complainant requested a new Social Worker for the case, but the Team Manager did not believe this to be necessary.</p> <p>This complaint emphasises the challenges facing Social Workers in trying to manage child protection concerns involving allegations of abuse against parents.</p>
GC/4296-17	A parent wanted to make a formal complaint and express disappointment that the Short Break Unit would not open in January 2018 as promised.	Developing Service Provision	Stage 1	Short Break Unit	A meeting was arranged between the complainant and the Senior Short Break Unit Manager and the Short Break Unit Manager to discuss the complaint and the current situation. During the meeting, the situation was fully explained to the complainant along with the reasons for the delay. The complainant was very pleased to receive the explanation and understood the situation. The complainant was satisfied with the response and the complaint was closed.	Developing the unit was, by its nature, a substantial project. In future, project management arrangements should be considered and whether a specific project manager is needed for a development on this scale.
GC/4373-17	Dad got in touch to make a complaint against a Social Worker. Contact arrangements had been changed without his knowledge and he was very dissatisfied with this.	Contact Issues	Stage 1	Arfon Children's Team	A discussion was held over the phone between the Team Manager and dad. It was explained to him that a new contact plan had already been sent to him explaining the	The Team Manager contacted the complainant on several occasions to try to resolve the complaint in an informal way.

					<p>contact arrangements. It was arranged that a new copy of the contact plan would be sent to him. The complainant was satisfied with the response and the complaint was closed.</p>	<p>The complainant was unhappy that he was not aware of his children's contact arrangements. The Team Manager explained that a copy of the contact timetable had been sent to him, but the complainant held firm that he had not received them and had not, therefore, agreed to the arrangements. The Team Manager agreed to send him another copy of the plan. The complainant was happy with this and the complaint was resolved successfully.</p> <p>Following this incident, arrangements have been put in place to ensure that Social Workers contact the complainant before contact arrangements are changed to ensure he is fully aware of the arrangements.</p>
GC/4390-17	<p>Mum got in touch to make a complaint about the minutes of the Child Protection Conference and the fact that those minutes had not yet been sent to her.</p>	Reviews	Stage 1	<p>Child Protection Conference; Safeguarding and Quality - Meirionnydd</p>	<p>The complainant and her advocate met the Chair of the Child Protection Conference to further discuss her complaint and to further explain some matters. Another letter was sent to confirm what was discussed at the meeting and the complaint was closed.</p>	<p>This complaint involved the accuracy and timeliness of sharing the minutes of a Case Conference.</p> <p>The Chair discussed the delay with the complainant. The complainant was satisfied with this and did not wish to take the complaint any further. It was agreed that some matters involving accuracy would receive further attention.</p>

GC/4422-17	Complaint by mum against an Independent Review Officer. Mum was dissatisfied as the Officer had promised that additional contact would be arranged with her daughter, but she did not hear anything about this for some months despite trying to contact the Officer time and again. Mum was eager to discuss the matter with the Officer's manager.	Reviews	Stage 1	Statutory Reviews; Safeguarding and Quality - Dwyfor	A telephone discussion was arranged between the complainant and the Senior Manager; additional elements were added to the original complaint, including dissatisfaction with the arrangements with the LAC Statutory Reviews and contact arrangements. The Senior Manager sent a letter addressing every aspect of the complaint, no further response was received from the complainant after this.	<p>This was a difficult complaint involving tensions between involved parties over contact arrangements and the failure to resolve problems without the input of Social Services.</p> <p>Several complaints arose during the process of resolving this complaint; the actual problems were confirmed and actions put in place in time for the next Review.</p> <p>Some problems that may arise when reviews are held in two parts were highlighted, such as decisions being made at the initial meeting that then create a disadvantage for the second meeting. Such arrangements are frequently challenged; but, sometimes, there is no alternative because of threats or disputes between parties.</p> <p>The matters raised as part of this complaint were discussed in the follow-up Review; but, unfortunately, it was not possible to resolve the matter relating to conducting one Review.</p>
GC/4565-17	Nain had contacted a Senior Operational Manager to express her dissatisfaction that one Social Worker had shared incorrect information with her grand-daughter	Staff Performance Lack of communication	Stage 1	Dwyfor Children's Team	The Team Manager investigated the complaint and several telephone conversations were held with the complainant. A decision	The Team Manager contacted the complainant on several occasions to try to resolve the complaint in an informal manner. This complaint

	<p>about arranging contact. Nain felt that this had caused additional strain on her relationship with her grand-daughter at a difficult time.</p>				<p>was reached that the case would be transferred to a new Social Worker.</p>	<p>emphasises the challenges facing Social Workers in managing complex care cases when members of the extended family are being assessed as Kinship Carers.</p> <p>A decision was made to allocate a new Social Worker to the case. The complainant was satisfied with this and the complaint was closed.</p>
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APPENDIX 2 - EXAMPLES OF STAGE 2 COMPLAINTS DURING 2017/2018						
Ref	Brief Description	Category	Stage	Uned / Team	Outcomes	Lessons to be learnt
Children and Supporting Families Department						
GC/3936-17	Mum and step-dad had been in touch wanting to make an official complaint about an Assessment completed on their son and the subsequent results as their son had been assessed as not being eligible for support from the Department. The family wanted their complaint to be investigated by someone independent to the Council. It was not possible to investigate this complaint under Stage 1 of the Complaint's procedure. Therefore, the complaint was escalated to be investigated under Stage 2.	Service provision	Stage 2	Dwyfor Children's Team	<p>A Stage 2 Investigation was conducted by an Independent Investigator and an Independent Person, where six specific complaints were investigated. The Independent Investigator was of the opinion that the six complaints were upheld.</p> <p>The investigation commenced in June 2017 and an Independent Investigator and an Independent Person were appointed to investigate the complaint. Unfortunately, in July 2017, because of an injury, the original Independent Investigator was forced to withdraw from the investigation.</p> <p>A new Independent Investigator was appointed to investigate the complaint soon after and the investigation recommenced in the second half of July 2017. This led to delays in the investigation Process, and some of the investigation's various stages had to be repeated, such as interviews. Unfortunately, there were a number of obstacles during the</p>	<p>A number of recommendations were made within the final Stage 2 Report as the Independent Investigating Officer believed that all six complaints made by the family were upheld.</p> <p>The Department has completed the action that arose from the recommendations made in the Investigation Report, and the matter was referred to the Council's Information Manager. This brought the Stage 2 process to an end.</p> <p>Following an investigation by the Information Manager, an element of the recommendation was referred back to the Department to review. The Department dealt with this matter in accordance with the Complaints Procedure as a new Stage 1 complaint as this element of the original complaint investigated in Stage 2 had not previously been investigated.</p> <p>Unfortunately, the family remained dissatisfied with the result of the Stage 2 Investigation and were also unwilling for the matter which still had not been resolved to be</p>

				<p>investigation Process. The Department had to hold meetings with the Independent Investigator to try to correct a number of mistakes within the draft reports. Unfortunately, most of the evidence presented was disregarded.</p> <p>The investigation Process was severely delayed as a results of these difficulties. The final Report was not released to the Department or the family until 20 February 2018. The Department's response was sent to the family on 16 March 2018.</p>	<p>investigated further by the Department. The family referred the whole complaint on to the Ombudsman during summer 2018.</p> <p>Several lessons have arisen from this investigation. Due to the original investigator sustaining an injury, a new investigator had to be appointed promptly from the regional list of investigators. We have raised the shortage of experienced investigators available who have expertise in specific areas with our regional colleagues within the field of complaints. This shortage continues and is still causing problems when appointing investigators for Stage 2 investigations.</p> <p>As the commissioner of independent investigations, it is essential that any report that is published in the Council's name is factually accurate. In this case, the need for accuracy caused difficulties between the Council as the commissioner, the Investigator and the family in question. We also sought advice from our regional colleagues when trying to resolve these issues to ensure that we were consistent and fair in our response.</p>
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APPENDIX 3 - EXAMPLES OF APPRECIATION DURING 2017/18			
Ref	Brief Description	Category	Unit / Team
GC/3922-17	"To Sam and Nia. Thank you for all the help and assistance you have given us as a family. We would not have been able to get this far with out your help and Rachel's. Thank you from the mum of a five year old boy and three year old girl."	Thank you.	Arfon Children's Team
GC/4033-17	"Thank you very much Mari. You've worked hard to get us where we are now. I don't know what we would of done without you."	Thank you.	Gyda'n Gilydd
GC/4034-17	"It's been good to have someone to talk to, to be listened to and not ignored. I know it sounds stupid, but it's been good to talk to someone who doesn't judge you. And for someone to take all the small things and sort them out, like stuff with CCG. That's made such a difference to me"	Thank you.	Gyda'n Gilydd
GC/4071-17	"I wanted to let you know how impressed I have been with the work carried out by David (David Owen, Manager 16 Plus Team) in preparing XXXX for leaving Woodlands where he had lived for four years... I cannot recall another boy leaving with anywhere near as much preparation work done by their Social Worker." Lesley Stone, Registered Manager for Woodlands Limited	Thank you	16 Plus Team
GC/4097-17	"I would like to formally acknowledge the exceptional work we witnessed from Heidi (Heidi Rylance, former manager of Arfon Children's Team 2) and her team. "Having personally attended her strategy meetings, I witnessed first hand her robust decision making, effective risk management and professionalism. Since then, having worked with her on a number of serious cases as a Patrol Inspector, District Inspector and now Det Chief Inespector, including one where social workers were being intimidated as child care proceedings were ongoing. I noted again her unwavering commitment and dedication for the protection of children."	Thank you	Arfon Children's Team
GC/4184-17	"You've been amazing. You helped me climb a ladder to get help from a dark hole. You say you're not an expert on anything but you are an expert on listening and not judging. You saved me on that day and supported me to ask for help. I wouldn't have asked for help otherwise and I don't know where I'd be by now. You showed us how to get help for different things. I'd definitely recommend Gyda'n Gilydd to anyone finding things difficult."	Thank you	Gyda'n Gilydd
GC/4192-17	"I found the Service to be excellent in every way. Thank you."	Thank you.	Integrated Families Support Service
GC/4194-17	"Helped get my family back. Helped me and my anxiety and build my confidence. Wouldn't change anything, amazing agency."	Thank you	Integrated Families Support Service
GC/4195-17	"Just a card to say thank you to the three of you as all of you help us out so much, when we first started working with IFSS I was a little bit worried that it would just	Thank you.	Integrated Families Support Service

	be like more social workers in my life ... you have really helped me and I don't know where we would be without all the help and support we have received from IFSS."		
GC/4218-17	Parent attending the Nurturing Programme: "The course has really opened my eyes to finding new tips instead of feeling stressed and irritated with them (the children), I feel more patient and less stressed"	Thank you.	Flying Start
GC/4221-17	Parent attending the Confidence Building course "Helped me understand you can be yourself and not what others want you to be. Fun, Helpful, made me realise you don't have to be liked by everyone"	Thank you	Flying Start
GC/4316-18	"Your approach really worked with me and you actually managed to get me to trust you (something no other social worker has managed to do in 15 years) and that's because you trusted me... "Your approach really worked with me and you actually managed to get me to trust you (something no other social worker has managed to do in 15 years) and that's because you trusted me... "I hope I never have to work with Social Services again but if the day ever does come I will definitely be fighting for you as our Social Worker again! Thanks for proving you aren't all emotionless robots who just take peoples children away and working as a team with me not against me."	Thank you	Meirionnydd Children's Team
GC/4320-17	"Excellent service from start to finish. We will miss the Team when moved to the Adult Service."	Thank you.	Derwen
GC/4321-17	"Derwen has been very helpful and supportive with us. All the Social Workers from start to finish have been excellent."	Thank you	Derwen
GC/4322-17	"Without a doubt my granddaughter would never have achieved her wish to live with a foster family had it not been for the help and support from her Social Worker, Heledd Williams. Heledd has been a constant source of support the entire time XXXXX was on her caseload."	Thank you	Meirionnydd Children's Team
GC/4392-17	"Thank you all for the support and willingness you have all given me over the past decade - and a bit. You've all given me so much help financially, mentally and emotionally. Through your efforts I am able to stand on my own two feet in my own flat and actually call myself a man... "To the rest of social services, support workers, rest-bite carers, guardians, advocates, CAMHS, and everyone who has helped me. You're amazing. You have helped me grow, adapt and actually look forward to see what the future has	Thank you	16 Plus Team

	<p>in store for me, you have allowed me to improve the way I look at life and when I have a family in the future I'll tell them of the help I got when they're older and say how Social Services changed my life. You are amazing people who do amazing work from helping us with things like school work to helping us find a home. When I came to XXXX life seemed miniscule with no possible help whatsoever, but then I was introduced to these new schemes and plans that have helped me grow.</p> <p>Thank you all so much as an individual you all mean the world to me and because of it here I am on my own two feet with all my GCSE's, passed all the A-levels I took and now studying a Health and Social course in order to fulfil my ambitions in life. Thank you all so much. Best wishes."</p>		
FGC/4415-17	<p>"Just a short e-mail to thank you for your work with this case - especially to Catrin and Christine who have supervised most of the contacts. Their thorough report helped so much when I was preparing the work for the court! Both have been so flexible with the arrangements...</p> <p>"I think everyone in the Dolgellau Team would agree with me - we would be lost without Christine and Catrin's support in Meirionnydd and we very much appreciate them!"</p>	Thank you.	Meirionnydd Support Services
GC/4444-17	<p>"I thought I would just email you to let you know that when I chaired XXXX review earlier this month XXXX shared with me that she is very happy with the service she has received from the Local Authority over the past 3 - 4 years.</p> <p>"XXXX has felt supported throughout her time caring for XXXX and apart from a few issues with contact she is very happy the service and has had a positive experience of working with all who have been involved with the family over the years."</p>	Thank you	Fostering Team
GC/4448-17	<p>"I would just like to thank you for everything. You have gone way and beyond for us as a family and we can't tell you how grateful we are to you. Your boss is very lucky to have you as a member of the team bechod you're amazing. Thank you x"</p>	Thank you	Gyda'n Gilydd
GC/4449-17	<p>"Thank you for your help. It was a pleasure meeting you. You made us feel so relaxed and you're so down to earth. We are new to the area and you helped us settle in."</p>	Thank you	Gyda'n Gilydd
GC/4450-17	<p>"Thank you for helping me through a difficult time.. I've come out feeling much stronger, being able to contact services and asking for help."</p>	Thank you.	Gyda'n Gilydd
GC/4451-17	<p>"The past 6 weeks have been horrendous - I would not be alive without you supporting me".</p>	Thank you	Gyda'n Gilydd
GC/4507-17	<p>"Thank you for being there for us, for understanding and for holding our family together."</p>	Thank you	Arfon Edge of Care Team

GC/4557-17	I am writing to you about Sarah Owen (Social Worker). I have met Sarah many times and she has been helping my family through some very difficult times. I wanted you to know what a lovely lady she is. Sarah has gone above and beyond to help me, nothing has been too much trouble for her, she is honestly one of the most kindest, genuine, helpful ladies I have ever known. Sarah has never judged me and always had time to really listen to what I had to say. She is extremely knowing and always tried to help me with whatever I asked of her. I honestly cannot think enough good things to say about Sarah. She is a fantastic social worker and I will always be grateful to her."	Thank you	Arfon Children's Team
GC/4588-17	Mother and Maternal Grandmother spoke highly in regards to Jamie's (Jamie Haydon, Social Worker) intervention. They said that he had been very supportive, understanding and had shown them a great deal of empathy which they were clearly very thankful of.	Thank you	Dwyfor Children's Team
GC/4595-17	<p>"Very grateful for the help I have received. It has helped myself and my children very much.</p> <p>"Gyda'n Gilydd helped us so much. Supported us as a family... provided amazing help and supported us through difficult time... service is excellent. Thank you".</p>	Thank you	Gyda'n Gilydd
GC/4599-18	Their experience of working with Gwynedd SSD had been very positive and they felt supported during a time when their experience of other agencies had been quite negative.	Thank you	Arfon Children's Team