

<b>NAME OF SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b>	Care Scrutiny Committee
<b>DATE OF MEETING</b>	6 November 2018
<b>TITLE OF ITEM</b>	Annual Report on dealing with complaints and information requests by the Children and Family Support Department for 2017/2018
<b>PURPOSE</b>	To give an overview of the complaints and information requests received during 2017/2018
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## **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.

<b>Complainants' chosen language when making an enquiry/complaint during 2017/2018</b>			
	<b>Welsh</b>	<b>English</b>	<b>Total Complaints</b>
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.

<b>TABLE 1. Enquires and Informal Complaints received 2017/2018</b>	
	<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
<b>Total</b>	<b>55</b>

## **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.

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

## 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.

<b>TABLE 3 Social Services Statutory Complaints Procedure Response Performance 2017/2018</b>						
<b>Stage 1</b>						
<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*
<b>Stage 2</b>						
<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	<b>63</b>
Requests under the Data Protection Act 1998	<b>168</b>

## 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.

<b>TABLE 6. Expressions of Gratitude during 2017/2018</b>	<b>62</b>
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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**

<b>Ref</b>	<b>Brief Description</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Stage</b>	<b>Unit / Team</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Lessons to be learnt</b>
<b>Children and Supporting Families Department</b>						
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	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.  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.  The letter was sent and the matter closed.	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.

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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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<b>APPENDIX 2 - EXAMPLES OF STAGE 2 COMPLAINTS DURING 2017/2018</b>						
<b>Ref</b>	<b>Brief Description</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Stage</b>	<b>Uned / Team</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Lessons to be learnt</b>
<b>Children and Supporting Families Department</b>						
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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<b>APPENDIX 3 - EXAMPLES OF APPRECIATION DURING 2017/18</b>			
<b>Ref</b>	<b>Brief Description</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Unit / Team</b>
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

Annual Report of the Children and Family Support Department; Complaints and Information Requests 2017/2018

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