

NAME OF COMMITTEE	Meeting of Gwynedd Council's Cabinet
DATE OF MEETING	30 March 2021
TITLE OF ITEM	Annual Report on dealing with complaints and information requests by the Children and Family Support Department for 2018/2019
PURPOSE	To give an overview of the complaints and information requests received during 2019/2020
AUTHOR	Marian Parry Hughes, Head of the Children and Family Support Department
CABINET MEMBER	Councillor 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 Children and Family Support Department. 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 actions taken on the complaints received. Details are also included about the number of information requests and freedom of information requests received during this period.

2. Context

- 2.1 The Customer Care Officer deals with complaints, information requests and freedom of information requests throughout the year for the Children and Family Support Department.
- 2.2 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 located within the Department, it is important to note that the Officer is independent to ensure that complaints are dealt with according to the Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014. The Social Services Complaints Procedure specifically relates to individuals who receive a service from the Department or who have the right to represent 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 Complaints Procedure so that complainants are aware of their right to be heard and have their complaint fully investigated.
- 3.2 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 a complaint during 2019/2020			
	Welsh	English	Total Complaints
Stage 1	4	31	35
Stage 1	1	2	3
Ombudsman		1	1

4. Matters recorded as Enquires

- 4.1 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 or clear communication.

TABLE 1. Enquires and Informal Complaints received 2019/2020		
	2018/19	2019/20
<i>Solicitors</i>	4	
<i>Ombudsman</i>		2
<i>Local Member</i>	1	
<i>Members of Parliament or Assembly Members</i>	6	16
<i>Service Users</i>	1	
<i>Relatives</i>	30	16
<i>Members of the Public</i>	3	
<i>Foster Carers</i>		
<i>Other Agents e.g. advocacy service</i>		1
Total	45	36

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 Department 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 a discussion over the telephone or face-to-face with the complainant or representative in order to attempt to resolve the matter.
- 5.2 An analysis of the Stage 1 complaints dealt with in 2019/2020 can be found in Appendix 1.

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

- 6.1 Should a complainant wish to escalate their complaint to Stage 2, they 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. The Department then prepares a response to these recommendations for the complainant.
- 6.2 During 2019/2020, we received three applications to escalate a complaint to Stage 2 of the Social Services Complaints Procedure was received. The analysis of this complaint can be found in **Appendix 2**.

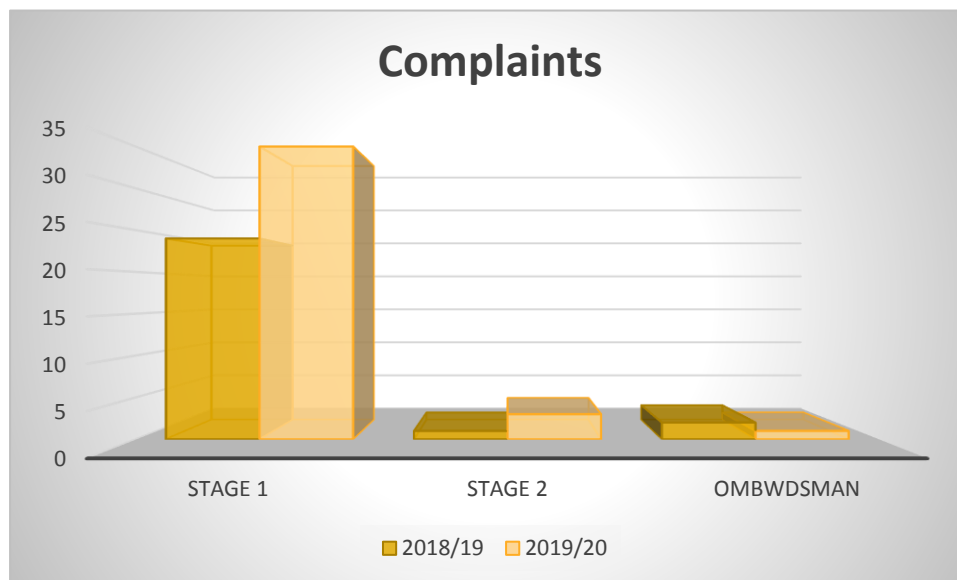
7. Complaint transferred to the Public Services Ombudsman

- 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.
- 7.2 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, they have 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
- 7.3 Two enquiries were received from the Ombudsman during 2019/2020. The Ombudsman contacted to ascertain if the individuals had exhausted the complaint procedure and to receive comments on the matter. In both cases, the individuals had not presented a complaint to the Department. The Ombudsman advised the individuals to present their complaint directly to the Department to begin with. Should the individuals continue to be dissatisfied following this they would be able to contact the Ombudsman at this stage.
- 7.4 During 2019/20, we received the conclusion to an Ombudsman investigation that began during 2018/19. The complainant escalated their complaint to the Ombudsman following a Stage 2 investigation under the Social Services Complaints Procedure, which ended in 2017/18. The complainant was unhappy with the Departments response to the Stage 2 investigation amongst other matters. Please see Appendix 3 for further details.

In April 2019, the Ombudsman expressed that the family continued to be unhappy and wanted to make a further complaint against the Department. The Ombudsman therefore decided to conduct a further investigation. The conclusion of this investigation was received during 2019/20. We are still waiting for the Ombudsman's final decision on this matter. Please see Appendix 3 for further details.

During 2019/20 following Stage 2 investigations, 2 complainant contacted the Ombudsman's office, as they were not satisfied with the conclusion of the independent investigating officer's report. The Department shared all relevant information with the Ombudsman's office whilst also noting that the Department had accepted the report in full. Confirmation was received from the Ombudsman's Office that they would not be conducting an investigation.

TABLE 2 Social Services Statutory Complaints Procedure		
	2018/19	2019/20
Stage 1	24	35
Stage 2	1	3
Ombudsman	2	1
Total	27	39



As seen above. The amount of Stage 1 complaints have increased. I feel this is in response to the judgement received from the Ombudsman’s Office regarding the form of categorising and recording complaints. Before receiving the Ombudsman’s response, a number of the Stage 1 complaints would have been treated as enquiries or informal complaints, because as a Department we try to work with families to discuss and find a way forward. This approach has worked very well over the years and have been able to find resolutions successfully. Even though this work continues, we now log the matter as a Stage 1 complaint rather than an enquiry/informal complaint.

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 2019/2020						
Stage 1 (total – 35)						
<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>
35	0	35	31	31	4	15

Stage 2 (total – 3)			
<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>
3	2	0	1

9. Learning Lessons and Identifying Trends - see Appendix 1

- 9.1 The Customer Care Officer prepares quarterly reports discussing the number of complaints received during the quarter along with the way they are dealt with. These reports are an opportunity to analyse and discuss every complaint received during the quarter and to learn in order to continuously improve the service the Department provides throughout the year.

Complaints Trends - Children and Family Support Department

- 9.2 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.
- 9.3 Unfortunately, because of the nature of social care work, tension or conflict with families is an unavoidable at times. 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 the Department.
- 9.4 It is fair to note that it is difficult to see whether there are definite trends or themes in the complaints received during 2019/2020, as each complaint tends to be unique to each case. In accordance with the Complaints Procedure, the Team Manager or Senior Manager will 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 satisfied.
- 9.5 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.

9.6 **Communication**

During 2019/2020 there was again a tendency in complaints being made due to a lack of clear or consistent communication with families. It is clear that clear and consistent communication is important; the way things are explained to families from the outset is critical in ensuring that they understand why the Department does what it does, what the Department is able to offer and why, in some cases, it is not possible to offer any service at all. It is also important to note that the expectations of families in receiving updates and responses to enquiries made by them to Social Workers is extremely high, and in many cases is unattainable. That is to say that families often expect an immediate response if they contact the Department, and can become annoyed if the relevant Social Worker is unable to respond to them within a few hours that day, even when the matters is not urgent.

Parent Expectation

9.7 This trend is seen annually in the complaints made against the Department. It can be 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/intervention, 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.

9.8 When such complaints are made, full investigations will be carried out and in the majority of cases there will be clear evidence that the Department has acted appropriately and in accordance with a protocol.

Vexatious complainants

During 2019/20, we have dealt with several individuals who reach the criteria of vexatious complainants. There have been several individuals who contact the Department on a daily basis; this can be on some occasions several times a day. In some instances, we have seen certain individuals contacting several members of staff within the Department daily by phone or email and expecting to receive a response straight away. On one occasion, we have had to write to a written warning regarding his behaviour towards members of staff. In the end we had to take health and safety steps to restrict how the individual contacted the Department. The Department instructed him to use email only. I believe this trend to continue into 2020/21.

10. Training and Staff Awareness

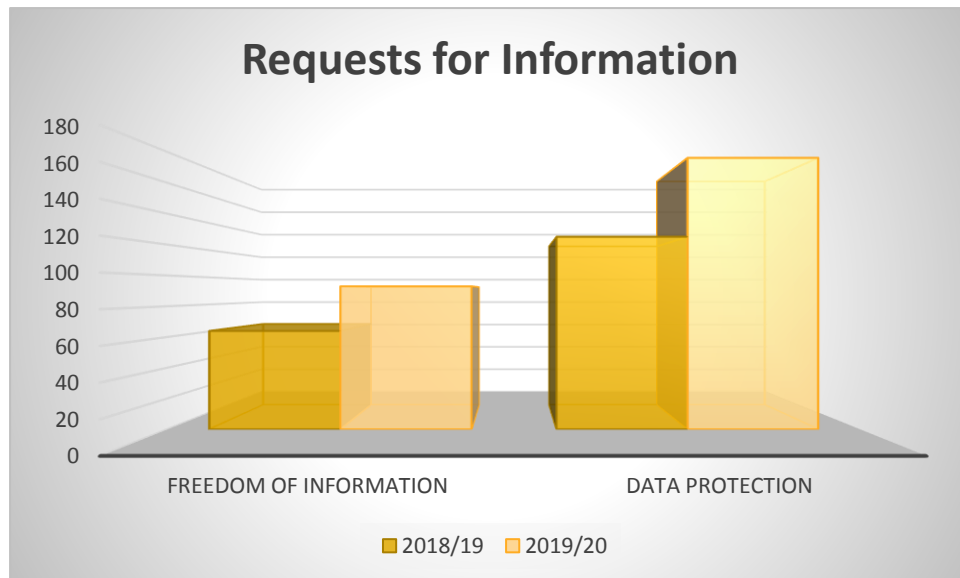
10.1 An important part of the Customer Care Officer's duty is to provide advice and training to the Department's officers about the Complaints Procedure so that staff members are fully aware of the procedure and are confident with their role.

- 10.2 The Customer Care Officer is always available to discuss any specific cases with the Department's officers and also to provide advice about the best way to deal with enquiries or complaints against the Department.
- 10.3 Specific training sessions on the Social Services Statutory Complaints Procedure have taken place during 2019/20 to raise awareness of the Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014 with staff. The training sessions were arranged following a recent recommendation from the Ombudsman following a complaint investigation. The Department were aware that the Government had intention to update the guidelines and therefore waited before arranging the training sessions. However, more recently we have come to understand that the Government do not have an intention to review the guidelines at this time and therefore we proceeded to complete the recommendation and arranged the training sessions.

11. Other Duties

- 11.1 The Children and Supporting Families Customer Care Officer also deals with information requests in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 1998 / Data Protection Act 2018. The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018 were introduced on 25 May 2018, resulting in some changes to the procedures for dealing with information requests.
- 11.2 Access to information requests under the Data Protection Act 1998 / Data Protection Act 2018 are made by individuals, the Police, Solicitors, the Health Board and other Local Authorities. In accordance with the Act, there are specific timescales to adhere to, and the response timetable has become much more challenging since the introduction of the new Act in May 2018.
- 11.3 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.
- 11.4 It is also the duty of the Customer Care Officer to co-ordinate responses to freedom of information requests under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

	2018/19	2019/20
Requests under the Freedom of Information Act 2000	64	93
Requests under the Data Protection Act 1998 / Data Protection Act 2018	125	176
Total	189	269



12. Expressions of Gratitude - see Appendix 4

- 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. A further analysis of these expressions of gratitude has been included in Appendix 4.

TABLE 6. Expressions of Gratitude during 2019/2020

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13. Action Plan for 2020/2021

- 13.1 For the year ahead, the Customer Care Officer will continue to respond to any enquiries and complaints that will be received by the Children and Supporting Families Department under the Complaints Procedure. Considering the increase in the number of complaints received over the past year, I anticipate that this increase will continue.
- 13.2 Work on the new information leaflet has been completed and the leaflet has been printed. During 2020/21 the Customer Care Officer will ensure that the information leaflet will be distributed and raise awareness within the appropriate teams. We hope to design posters to go alongside the leaflet during the year to come.
- 13.3 Further work will also take place to try to encourage staff across the Department to contact the Customer Care Officer to share any compliments and 'thank you' they receive. There is a feeling at the moment that staff do not feel it is appropriate to share compliments, the Customer Care Officer is eager to change this.

APPENDIX 1 - EXAMPLES OF COMPLAINTS AND OBSERVATIONS DURING 2019/20						
Ref	Short Description	Stage	Team	Response	Lessons to be learnt	Basis for the complaint:
GC/06275-19	A parent wanted to make a complaint regarding Derwen Service. They did not feel they had been listened to as a parent. They wanted the Service to work with them hand in hand to manage the situation. The parent did not want to continue receiving service from Derwen.	Stage 1	Derwen Service	The Derwen Service Team Manager called the parent. It became clear that the parent was having difficulty coping and following discussion it was agreed that everyone would work together in order to stabilise the situation and assist the parent. This was confirmed with the parent by letter.		
GC/06716-19	A parent wanting to make a complaint against her child's Social Worker. The parent believed the Social Worker had given her incorrect information over the phone, which lead the parent to worry. In addition, the parent felt the Social Worker had broken confidentiality.	Stage 1	Arfon Children's Team	A letter was sent to the parent by the Senior Operational Manager explaining the situation and apologising for any confusion caused. The complainant was not satisfied with the response received and asked for the matter to be escalated to Stage 2 of the complaints process. Please see Appendix 2 for further information.	At the time, the Department did not feel there was a lesson learnt at this point. See conclusion of the Stage 2 for further information.	The parent felt very strongly that she had received incorrect information from the Social Worker and that confidentiality had been broken. Therefore, there was basis for the complaint.
GC/07015-19	Parents contacted wanting to make a complaint regarding the Social Worker due to lack of communication. They also felt that the Social Worker did not answer their calls.	Stage 1	Arfon Children's Team	The parents did not want to discuss their complaint with the Senior Operational Manager. Therefore, a letter was sent in response to this complaint. The parents received a full response noting although the Social Worker does respond to every message or phone call that we accept the parent's feelings and the Social Worker will work with them to communicate better in the future.	Work with the family to identify communication needs.	The family did not feel the level of communication was enough and therefore there was a basis for their complaint.

GC/06996-19	A parent contacted wanting to make a complaint against the Social Worker. The parent did not like working with the Social Worker, and felt that the Social Worker was not listening and changing what was said. The parent wanted a change in Social Worker.	Stage 1	Arfon Children's Team	The Team Manager contacted the parent over the phone to discuss the matter. Following discussion, the parent decided that they would be happy to continue working with the Social Worker and no longer wanted to continue with the complaint. The complaint was withdrawn.	No specific lesson to learn from this complaint. Continue to ensure clear communication.	There was no basis for this complaint.
GC/07889-20	Complaint received from foster parents. They were unhappy that the Social Worker had decided to begin 'Life Story Work' with the children in their care. The foster carers did not feel that the Social Worker listened to them regarding the matter as they felt they knew the children better.	Stage 1	Dwyfor Children's Team	A response was sent to the foster carers by letter along with an invitation to meet with the Team Manager and Social Worker to discuss the matter. It was explained that the 'Life Story Work' had been agreed during a LAC Review meeting and the importance of beginning the work with the children whilst they had support around them. It was agreed that the work would begin with NSPCC leading.	No specific lesson to learn. A decision was made jointly during a LAC Review meeting with all parties present.	There was no basis for this complaint.
GC/08226-20	A complaint from a father regarding the Social Worker and Team Manager. The father believed the Department was against him and refused to assist him with gaining a house in the area. The father also believed that the Department was not assisting him in gaining contact with his children.	Stage 1	Dwyfor Children's Team	A response was sent to him by letter. The parent also received a warning letter regarding his threatening behaviour towards staff. There were several reasons for the Social Workers decision and we cannot comment on these within this report. The parent received a full response by the Senior Operational Manager and the Department continue to work in line with the Court Order.	No lesson to be learnt. The Department are working in line with the Court Order.	No basis for this complaint.

APPENDIX 2 - EXAMPLES OF STAGE 2 COMPLAINTS DURING 2019/2020						
Ref	Short Description	Stage	Team	Response	Lessons to be learnt	Basis for the complaint
GC/07307-19	This complaint was escalated directly to Stage 2 of the complaints procedure. This was a complaint by a parent following the conclusion of a Section 47 child protection investigation. The parent believed that there was no basis for the investigation, and did not agree with the Social Worker's recommendations.	Stage 2	Dwyfor Children's Team	An independent investigation was held by an independent investigating officer and an independent person. There were 4 aspects to the complaint. The investigation concluded that there no basis for 3 aspects. It was noted that there was partial basis for 1 aspect. The Department accepted the report and the recommendation.	Ensure that information is available to parents regarding the S47 investigation.	There was partial basis for this complaint.
GC/05252-18	Complaint from a parent who believed that the Social Worker's report was one sided and unprofessional. The parent wanted the report re-written. The parent felt that the Service had failed the family when the baby was born, and did not provide the Service that was needed.	Stage 2	Referral Team	An independent investigation was held by an independent investigating officer and an independent person. The conclusion of the investigation was to partially upheld the complaint. The Department accepted the report and agreed to implement the recommendation.	Lesson learnt has been taken from the recommendation. The importance of ensuring that names of individuals can be identified clearly within reports.	There was partial basis for this complaint
GC/06716-19	Complaint from a parent who believed the Social Worker had given incorrect information, which led to worry. Also, felt that the Social Worker discussed the case with a family member, which broke confidentiality. It was agreed that the matter be escalated to Stage 2 and an independent investigating officer and independent person was assigned to conduct a Stage 2 investigation.	Stage 2	Arfon Children's Team	The report received from the independent investigating officer found in favour of the complainant. No recommendations were given within the report as the independent investigating officer felt that the Department has already provided the complainant with a full apology during Stage 1. The Department provided the complainant with a further apology within the Stage 2 response.	Lesson learnt is the importance of communication and ensuring that this communication is clear in order to avoid any miscommunication.	There was a basis for this complaint.

APPENDIX 3 – EXAMPLES OF COMPLAINT TRANSFERRED TO THE PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN DURING 2019/2020

Ref	Short Description	Response	Lessons to be learnt
GC/4997-18	<p>During the end of 2018/19, the Ombudsman announced an investigation into a further complaint introduced by a family of a young person with autism. This investigation looked specifically at services that were available to individuals with autism. The investigation also addressed the Department's decision to refuse to accept and complete the recommendations set out during the Stage 2 investigation into this matter.</p> <p>The Department received the Ombudsman's final report during June 2019. The Ombudsman found in favour of the complainants and gave the Department recommendations. The Ombudsman asked the Department to apologise formally to the family for any distress caused and provide redress of £500. Another recommendation asked the Department to review Derwen Service eligibility criteria to ensure that it was in line with the Social Services Act and the Equality Act. The last recommendation asked the Department to look at the pathway within the Children's Service in relation to Autism.</p> <p>The Department agreed to the recommendations and accepted the report in full.</p>	<p>The Department accepted the recommendations from the Ombudsman. The Department sent a letter to the family apologising along with the redress of £500.</p> <p>The Department have reviewed the Derwen Service eligibility criteria; the latest copy is available on the Council's website. We have ensured that it is in line with the Social Services Act and the Equality Act. The Ombudsman's office have confirmed that this recommendation is completed.</p> <p>In order to look at autism in its entirety within the Children's Department, the Department have appointed an individual who specializes in autism to review the Departments arrangements. Unfortunately, the timeframe has slipped due to several reasons. The first reason was the individual's availability; he was unable to start straight away due to other commitments. Work began in January 2020, with the hope of completing the work by the end of March 2020. Unfortunately, the situation of the country and restrictions that came into place at the time resulted in a delay with the work.</p> <p>We can confirm that the report is now complete (September 2020). The Department have accepted the report in full. We will now move forward to create a work programme</p>	<p>Following a further investigation from the Ombudsman in 2018/19, the Department has identified that there are clear lessons to be learnt.</p> <p>Before receiving the two investigations by the Ombudsman's office the Department had very little experience of working with them.</p> <p>In order to ensure that matter receive a full response and that we are successful in responding to the Ombudsman. In the future, we will need to ensure that we understand clearly, what the Ombudsman expects of us.</p> <p>During this investigation, as a Department we have responded to the Ombudsman enthusiastically with the readiness to complete the recommendation in full. At times, we have responded to the Ombudsman and received an unfavourable response noting that we have not completed the recommendation as requested.</p> <p>It is clear that the Department have interpreted the Ombudsman's request in a different way than was expected of us. This has caused misunderstanding on occasion between the Department and the Ombudsman.</p>

		<p>deriving from this report. As part of this work, we will ensure that the work programme is coherent with the current Welsh Government's review. We have updated the Ombudsman regarding the report. We are now waiting for the Ombudsman to inform us if we have completed the recommendation in full.</p> <p>The matter is still open with the Ombudsman's office at this time and the conclusion of this investigation will be included further in our Annual Report 2020-21.</p>	<p>Moving forward, we have learnt an important lesson. At the first point of contact, we need to ensure that we read and understand the report and recommendations. If any questions arise, we need to have an open dialogue with the Ombudsman's office to confirm the steps needed to complete the recommendations in full. Beyond this, we need to continue to keep in contact with the Ombudsman's office to discuss any problems or difficulties arising that could affect our ability to conform to timescales.</p> <p>This will ensure that we can avoid any misunderstanding in the future.</p>
GC/3257-15	<p>In our annual report 2019/20, we discussed an investigation by the Ombudsman to a complaint by parents, which was originally received in 2016/17. Following a long period of communication with the Department regarding several matter relating to service provision for their son who was 15 years old at the time.</p> <p>During Quarter 2 2016/17, the complainant contacted the Ombudsman to complain regarding the Department's decision not to escalate their complaint to Stage 2. They did not believe that their complaint had been processed correctly. The Ombudsman contacted the</p>	<p>The Ombudsman found in favour of the complainants.</p> <p>The Ombudsman gave the Department 6 recommendations. The Department completed 5 of the recommendations within the timeframe noted by the Ombudsman during 2018/19. One recommendation continued to 2019/20.</p> <p>The Ombudsman asked the Department to arrange training sessions on the Social Services Complaints Procedures to all staff members within the Department. This recommendation slipped for several reasons. Firstly, the Department became aware that the Welsh Government were</p>	<p>In our annual report 2018/19, we noted several lessons learnt from this complaint. The Department continue to identify lessons from complaints and take matters seriously. We hope to use what we have learnt during the period of this complaint to improve our processes.</p> <p>The matter relating to training is an example of the difficulties arose, as the Department did not communicate any potential delays and barriers effectively with the Ombudsman's office. This is reflected in our lessons learnt in GC/4997-18.</p>

	<p>Department asking for any relevant documentation that would assist their investigation.</p> <p>The Department received a quick response from the Ombudsman informing that they would not be taking the matter further as they believed the Department to have followed the statutory complaints procedure correctly by not escalating the complaint to Stage 2 as the complainants had received a comprehensive response under Stage 1.</p> <p>However, during Quarter4 2016/17, the Department received further correspondence from the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman had changed their original viewpoint and therefore instructed the Council to escalate the complaint to Stage 2 of the complaints procedure.</p> <p>The Departments viewpoint did not change and therefore the Ombudsman decided to change their original decision and a further investigation would take place by the Ombudsman's office.</p> <p>The final report was received by the Ombudsman during Quarter 1 2018/19.</p>	<p>reviewing the Social Services Complaints Procedure. The Department therefore held back before starting the training sessions with the expectation of training staff with the reviewed guidelines in place. However, we received news that the Government decided not to continue with the review at this stage.</p> <p>The Ombudsman were not satisfied with the steps taken by the Department to complete the recommendation. In order to avoid any further delay and due to the workload of the officer within the Department, an external training officer was identified to conduct the training sessions on our behalf. Due to the trainer's lack of availability, this lead to further delay. We can confirm that the sessions have taken place and this confirmed with the Ombudsman's office who have confirmed that the recommendation was completed in October 2019.</p>	
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	Following this investigation (GC/3257-15) and further correspondence from the complainants the Ombudsman decided to conduct a further investigation. See above GC/4997-18.		
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APPENDIX 4 - EXAMPLES OF APPRECIATION DURING 2019/2020			
Ref	Short Description	Category	Unit / Team
GC/08199-20	"I wanted to thank you both for the support that you have given to XX and his family over the years that we have been working together. I hope that XX achieves his hopes and ambitions in the artistic world which would not have been possible without you."	Thank you	Derwen Service
GC/06539-19	"Thank you sincerely for your motivating words. Everyone has worked really hard to make this work for X. Your team equally have been amazing. No words to describe Sian Tecwyn's dedication and motivation towards the transition between the home environment and RESPITE services. She has been truly amazing to work with, and proves that by working together does provide best outcomes."	Compliment	Hafan y Sêr
GC/0	"I've just read through this. Appears like a good plan of action under the circumstances. I don't have anything to add except thanks to all the staff who work alongside XXX in Hafan y Ser and to all those who have made these sessions possible. Thanks again and have a really great weekend."	Thank you	Hafan y Sêr
GC/06508-19	"And upon it being recorded that the Court was assisted by the Section 7 report and was grateful to Ms Taylor for her sensitivity and appropriateness in how she conducted the matter. The Court requests that this Order be referred to Ms Taylor's superiors"	Compliment	Arfon Children's Team
GC/08203-20	"Dear Linda, Thank you for being my good social worker and looking after me. Love from XXXX" (Card from a child)	Thank you	Dwyfor Children's Team