

APPENDIX 3: Child and Family Services Complaints and Compliments

1. Total Complaints received during the reporting period

- 1.1 **Table 1** shows total complaints received in 2021-2022 by the complaints team in respect of Child and Family Services with the previous two years' figures for comparison. The number of Stage 1 complaints received for 2021-2022 has decreased by 19% compared to the previous year's figure.
- 1.2 Under the social services complaints policy, the legislative framework allows complainants to immediately request a stage 2 investigation. Through efforts to resolve complaints internally wherever possible, the number of stage 2 complaints in 2021-2022 is six, slightly less of the previous year's figure of seven received.

2. Stage 1 Complaints

- 2.1. A detailed breakdown of the Stage 1 Complaints received by service area is shown in **Table 2**. Complaints need to be acknowledged within 2 working days, and in 82% of cases where complaints proceeded to conclusion, discussions took place within 10 working days, a decrease of 12% on the previous year.
- 2.2 Complaints have been broken down by individual service teams. However, due to continuing changes in the structure of Child and Family Services it is possible that the teams shown below have since been reorganised and may no longer exist as set out. Adjustments will be made to the team names year on year as required to reflect any such changes.

3. Stage 2 Complaints

- 3.1 Complaints are considered at Stage 2 of the complaints procedure either where the Council has not been able to resolve the issues to the complainant's satisfaction at stage 1, or the complainant has requested that the matter be immediately considered at Stage 2.
- 3.2 The social services complaint regulations give an eligible complainant a statutory right to request Stage 2 of the process. Complainants are able to request that their complaint is dealt with directly at Stage 2 should they wish and is not dependent on having been investigated at stage 1 or the outcome at stage 1.
- 3.3 An independent investigator is commissioned for a Stage 2 investigation, overseen by an independent person to ensure the investigation is carried out in a fair and proper way. A formal report is produced and suggests ways to move forward.
- 3.4 **Table 3** provides a summary of the complaints handled at Stage 2 of the complaints process.

- 3.5 The timeframe for dealing with Stage 2 complaints is 25 working days under the Social Services complaints policy, or within a reasonable time agreed with the complainant and with the Director's consent. This may be due to the complexity of a case, or where enquiries could be extensive in order to provide a comprehensive review. Where an extension of time is sought this will normally only be granted with the permission of the Director of Social Services. All investigations in 2021-2022 were subject to extended periods of time.
- 3.6 Whether the complaint is upheld or not, staff work to maintain confidence and a good working relationship with the service user or their representatives.
- 3.7 There were six complaints received in this reporting period that went to investigation at Stage 2. One of these was via the corporate complaint process.
- 3.8 **Summary of Stage 2 complaints:**

Case 1 Child Disability Team

There were 9 complaints made in respect of poor communication, delay in a carers assessment and allocation of social worker amongst other matters. Only one complaint was upheld which was in relation to the delay in a carers assessment.

Case 2 Child Disability Team

There were three complaints made, in relation to CHC funding not being raised sooner, a carer's assessment not being carried out, and not being informed Direct Payments were stopping. All complaints were upheld.

Case 3 BAYS

Six complaints were made by a young person who felt that Social Services did not provide him with the support he needed when leaving school in addition to lack of social work support. Four complaints were upheld in relation to the College not being informed he was a looked after child, delay in notifying a young person advisor, and two problems with communication.

Case 4 Townhill

The complaint was from a mother, via an advocate, about the way in which Children's Services carried out their duties in relation to her children. There were six complaints made, three complaints were upheld which were regarding foster carers not being made aware of mother's medication, a number of different social workers, and poor communication.

Case 5 West Team

This complainant had made several complaints this year regarding Child and Family Services. There were 15 complaints that were investigated, mostly in relation to communication. Two were upheld, which were not replying to emails within the Swansea standard timeframe and inaccurate minutes.

Case 6 Foster Swansea

The complaint was looked at via the corporate complaint route. A foster carer was unhappy with the actions of Foster Swansea. There were eight complaints in total. Only one complaint was upheld in relation to comments made that were not relevant to the family being mentioned in a report.

- 3.9 Where complaints are upheld that information is shared with relevant teams and used to improve services.

4.0 Complaints made to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (PSOW)

- 4.1 The remit of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales is to identify whether a member of the public has suffered hardship or injustice through maladministration, or identify where services have fallen below a reasonable standard. There is an obligation for a report to be produced on any investigation the Ombudsman accepts. Section 27 of the Ombudsman's legislation details when a report could be made public. Further details of the role of the PSOW can be found at: <http://www.ombudsman-wales.org.uk>

- 4.2 The PSOW has produced the Annual Letter for 2021-2022, containing details of complaints across Wales. Six Children Services cases were referred to the Ombudsman this year, none of which were investigated by the Ombudsman.

5. Reasons for complaints and their outcome

- 5.1 Further analysis of the reasons for complaints is shown in **Table 4**. Whilst service users have unique and complex individual circumstances, complaints have been grouped under 'best fit' generic headings for reporting purposes.
- 5.2 Wherever possible, lessons are learnt and improvements are made to service delivery when a complaint is upheld. 15% were found to be justified/partly justified this year, which is 17% lower than the equivalent figure for 2020-21, though the number of complaints received has decreased slightly.
- 5.3 This year the figures for the Penderry and Valley team both have a high amount of complaints. With regard to the Penderry team, 11 relate to the same case. With regard to the Valley team there were a number of parents who submitted additional complaints after each one had been resolved.

6. Advocacy

- 6.1 Advocacy services exist to represent children's views and feelings when dealing with organisations. Social Services engage in statutory arrangements to ensure that Looked After Children or Care Leavers have access to an advocate. National Youth Advocate Services are available to provide the support.
- 6.2 The Complaints Officer will work with groups and organisations providing advocacy services, to address issues and promote the provision of assistance to service-users through the complaints process. Effective engagement with

advocacy services empowers more individuals and groups to make use of the complaints process at the earliest opportunity.

7.0 Compliments

- 7.1 Child and Family Services have received around 100 compliments over the course of the year. Set out in **Table 5** are some examples of the compliments which have been passed to the complaints team this year in relation to Child and Family Services. The individual staff members have been made aware of the compliments concerning them as has the Head of Service and the Director.
- 7.2 As well as substantial acknowledgements of thanks from service users that are given to staff at the point of service delivery, service users, relatives or friends can convey their appreciation more formally through the Comment or Compliment process.
- 7.3 Many complaints are often accompanied by compliments for other elements of service provision.
- 7.4 Compliments received are an equal reflection of individual and team efforts and Child and Family Services teams should be encouraged by their successes having regard to compliments received.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 All costs incurred in dealing with complaints are covered within existing budgets.
- 8.2 External Independent Investigators and Independent Persons may be appointed to deal with some complaints in accordance with legislation. The cost to the Council of providing this service in 2021-2022 for Child and Family Services was £11,018.75, similar to 2020-2021 costs.

Appendices: Appendix A – Statistical Data Tables

Appendix A – Statistical data in Tables

Table 1 - Total number of complaints received by Complaints Team				
	Year	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Service Requests		12	19	18
Corporate Social Services Stage 1		13	33	23
Social Services Stage 1		123	108	91
Corporate Social Services Stage 2		0	4	1
Social Services Stage 2		7	3	5
Ombudsman		11	12	6
Totals		166	179	143

Table 2 – Stage 1 Social Services complaints by Service Area	Total
Bays	6
CCARAT-IAA	9
Child Disability Team	1
Contracting	1
Evolve	1
Family Support	1
Foster Swansea	2
Friends & Family	4
LAC	10
Other agency	4
Penderry Team	15
Safeguarding Team	2
Swansea East	1
Swansea Valley Team	8
Swansea West Team	10
Townhill Team	14
Ty Nant	1
Unknown Teams	21
Western Bay Adoption Agency	3
Total	114

Table 3 – Total Stage 2 complaints by Service Area		
Service	Outcome	ID
Child Disability Team	Partially Justified	00257728
Child Disability Team	Justified	00259651
BAYS	Partially Justified	00258933
Townhill	Partially Justified	00260298
Swansea West Team	Partially Justified	00263780
Foster Swansea	Partially Justified	00256338

Table 4

Reason for Complaints and their outcome Stage 1

	Totals	Justified	Not Justified	Partially Justified	Not Pursued	Not Eligible	Withdrawn	Refer to Safeguarding	Local Resolution	Impasse	Concurrent Investigation	Directed to another forum	For Information Only	Matter in court	Department to action / monitor	Referred for a new assessment	Not taken up	Escalated to stage 2	Unknown	Not investigated -historical
Breach of confidentiality	1											1								
Child protection conference	0																			
Child protection concerns	2							2												
Delayed assessment	3	1	1											1						
Delay in service after assessment	1	1																		
Disagree with rules set	2		1		1															
Dissatisfaction with contact	9		2				1							6						
Dissatisfaction with assessment	5	1	0	1										3						
Excessive waiting time	2	1	1																	
Failing to respond to correspondence	1																			
Failure to action info	2		2																	
Financial errors	1				1		1													
Financial issues	0				1															
Lack of consultation	1				1															
Lack of support	5	1	2		1							1								
Not following policy/procedure	0																			
Poor Communication	6	2	3										1							
Staff Attitude / Misconduct	3		1									2								
Unhappy with action taken	47	3	17	1	9	6	1	1				4	1	4						
Unhappy with decision	2	1												1						
Unhappy with level of service	11	4	4		2							1								
Unknown complaints	10				10															
	114	15	33	2	26	6	3	3	0	0	0	9	2	15	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 5 – Examples of Compliments Received from service users and outside agencies

Teams	Nature of Compliment
LAC	X has been praised for supporting some very complex and tricky contact needs for two children. The mum was very complimentary of x, said how "lovely" she was and how well she felt she was doing a good job as the children's social worker. She was pleased that the children liked her and that she got involved with the games and fun at the children's contact with her.
Valley	A Primary School Headteacher has shared her thanks for X's support and work on a particularly difficult case. Her input with the family has made a huge difference. Thank you for making such a positive difference with this family.
East Team	A note written by 10- and 11-year-old siblings to Social Worker X who worked with the girls initially through a very difficult child protection process, supported the family to enable them to be reunited safely in line with their wishes. They said: "Thank you so much for helping us. We will never forget about you. We really like you. It was really nice meeting you."
Penderry	A hospital Consultant Community Paediatrician shared special thanks to Child and Family Services Practice Lead X saying "I wanted to thank you all for your valuable contribution to our work. You are all highly valued members of our team safeguarding children living in our patch.
East team	Message of praise sent to Child and Family social worker X at the point of case closure and how what you do for families shows social work to be a caring profession there to help and support families through difficult times. The family member said: "Thank you for being a lovely social worker and showing me that lots of horror stories you read about Social Services are not true. Thank you for your help."
West Team	X has received thanks from a member of the support network of a family she is working with. There are some complex dynamics within this family, which make it difficult to engage and support. The family were really impressed with her approach and commitment to developing positive working relationships and by how creative she is in her thinking around this.
Safeguarding	Project Lead with Parent Advocacy PAN West Glamorgan has thanked X for taking part in the PAN conference. Your suggestion in the panel about the active offer of parent advocacy at the earliest stages for parents made a strong impact. We can see today the example of professionals supporting parents to play their part. We're building the foundations for the future and are most appreciative of your support."

Townhill	Social Worker X received a direct address from the Judge in a recent Final Hearing. The Judge complimented her on her well written, in-depth statements, Family Network Meetings, Safety Plans, and contact trajectory over the last year.
Single Point of Contact	X and X have been praised for their work with a child. The child's dad said thanks for your working so well with this family. At times, contact has been difficult, and you have remained professional and shown great understanding throughout. Your hard work has clearly paid off and shines through in dad's email to you.
IRO	X has been praised by a mum with a longstanding history of social services. She said: "I wanted to thank you for your advice and support yesterday - it totally did seem everything you said was from an angle that I hadn't experienced before with talking to a social worker. It felt as if I was talking to a family member. So, thank you once again it means a lot."
IIAA Domestic Abuse Hub	X and X have been praised for the life changing work they are doing through the Domestic Abuse Hub Equilibrium programme. A service user said: "The Equilibrium course changed my life. Myself and my children are now thriving as a result of this turn around in our lives."