



To:
**Councillor Andrea Lewis,
Cabinet Member for Service
Transformation**

**Councillor Louise Gibbard
Cabinet Member for Care
Services**

*Please ask for:
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am:*

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Scrutiny

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4 April 2023

BY EMAIL

Summary: This is a letter from the Service Improvement and Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel to the Cabinet Member for Service Transformation and Cabinet Member for Care Services. The letter concerns the meeting held on 14 March 2023 and the Annual Complaints Report 2021/22. This letter does not require a response.

Dear Councillors Lewis and Gibbard,

On the 14 March, the Service Improvement and Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel met to discuss the Annual Complaints Report 2021/22. The Panel are grateful to you both and relevant officers for attending to discuss and answer questions. Our observations focused on the following areas.

You reflected the challenges faced by the pandemic that affected 2021/22 and in particular Social Services where complaints were suppressed during 2020/21 but then dramatically increased post lockdown. This was mirrored with the Ombudsman's reports who saw a 47% increase across the whole of Wales. You also shared reasons for the delay in launching the new IT system was due to prioritising payments to support residents and support businesses and updated us that it will go live as soon as possible.

Corporate Complaints

We were informed that Stage one (informal) corporate complaints increased by 8% on the previous year and stage two complaints were up by 16%. It was reported that corporate requests for service were up significantly by 24% and a significant increase in corporate comments which were up by 38%. Welsh language complaints remain relatively low.

OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY / TROSOLWG A CHRAFFU

SWANSEA COUNCIL / CYNGOR ABERTAWE

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We asked if there was any data that records complaints response times and were informed this data is available and is reported to the Governance and Audit Committee which we have since received a copy of.

We also asked for more information regarding the complaints relating to Communications and Customer Engagement which has increased, this information was not available at the meeting but your officers will send this in due course.

We asked if there is any data held that looks at year on year trends to see comparisons further back than the previous year, your officer said it would be possible to include this in subsequent reports in the future.

Adult Social Services

In regards to Adult Social Services stage one complaints were up by 11% and stage two only have an increase of 1 complaint on last year's figures. Justified complaints were up by 53% which you explained related to service delays and pressures, particularly relating to arranging assessments or care packages and staff pressures including external providers. You reported that this has been a challenge across Wales and the UK.

Child and Family

The officer reported that Child and Family Services showed a decrease in stage one complaints which went down by 19% and stage two complaints were down by 1 complaint on last year.

Ombudsman Complaints

Your officer shared with us the Ombudsman's annual letter which reports 71 received complaints, down from 73 in the previous year. In regards to these complaints 76 were closed during 2021/22. Of this 76, 10 received intervention. Of the 10 that received intervention, 6 had early resolution of voluntary settlement and 4 were upheld. Comparing to the previous year, 67 complaints were closed and 9 received intervention, of these 9, 5 had early resolution and 4 were upheld. So overall this is similar to the previous year.

We were pleased to hear that in response to complaints when appropriate, the complaints team hold discussions with Heads to Service and Principal Officers looking at the nature of complaints and any trends or frequency to look for potential improvements.

In addition, regarding complaints to the Ombudsman, 25 of the 71 complaints received were for Planning and Building Control and Roads and Transport, again we have requested more information on these which will be provided by your officer.

Compliments

We were also pleased to hear about the 360 corporate compliments received in this year of which includes 96 for Adult Services and 100 for Child and Family.

We value the importance of compliments and recognise there is as much to learn from examples of good practise as from complaints.

Your Response

We are interested in any thoughts you may have on the contents of this letter but in this instance, we require no formal written response.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Holley', with a stylized flourish at the end.**Councillor Chris Holley**

Convener, Service Improvement and Finance Scrutiny Performance Panel

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