

Children's Social Services

Summary of complaints by theme (2018-19)

Complaints relating to contact (16 complaints)

1. X complained about the contact arrangements with their children at a time when contact was being increased with their father/ex-partner.

A parenting assessment was being completed at the time the complaint was made. The children are now living with their father permanently. Contact with X remains as usual but there will be no increase in contact.

2. X was unhappy they had to have supervised contact with their children when Court had ordered it could be unsupervised.

We sympathised with X's situation as the Court Order clearly stipulates X is allowed unsupervised contact with their child. Unfortunately there is little we can do to assist as this is a civil matter and X was advised to seek legal advice.

3. X complained they were supposed to have contact with their son. When X arrived for the session, X found her son was away on holiday.

We explained we had twice tried contacting X in the lead up to the weekend of contact as X's son was indeed away on holiday. Although the Social Worker hadn't managed to reach X, the person who arranges contact had managed to and X had already agreed to a change in date.

Complaints relating to communication (19 complaints)

4. X complained about the confusion for a forthcoming Review as paperwork wasn't ready. X had also lost faith in her son's Social Worker due to a lack of communication following incidences involving her son.

We apologised for the confusion in the lead up to X's son's LAC Review (the meeting went ahead as planned with X present). Missing paperwork was sent registered post to X. A new Social Worker has been allocated to her son.

5. A young person X complained about the contact arrangements that were put in place for her over Christmas.

We explained contact arrangements had already been agreed and X was to return to her placement on Boxing Day. X didn't inform us of a visit by their step-sister until very

late on Christmas Eve. X chose to stay over at their mum's anyway and not return when originally agreed. The moment has now passed.

6. X complained about our lack of communication with her in the lead up to her daughter being adopted.

We found that during the time X's Social Worker was off sick, we hadn't realised a meeting between X and her daughter's prospective adoptive parents hadn't been arranged as promised. We apologised for the distress and anxiety this must have caused and promised to review our procedures to ensure something similar doesn't happen again.

Complaints relating to a lack of advice or support (13 complaints)

7. The NHS Concerns Team wrote to a number of agencies involved with a family. Among the issues was an alleged lack of timely support in the lead up to the husband/father passing away.

We made several checks with other agencies at initial referrals and found there was enough support being provided to family. We explained our approach with the children was appropriate and sympathising with their present situation. In terms of contact with the family during a difficult time, we believed sensitivity was required in this case and we were reassured by other agencies more familiar with the family they were indeed being supported.

8. X is pregnant and must move out of her father's home due to issues. X feels we are not giving her enough support and we are not actively pursuing the move on her behalf.

There were issues with X not engaging with us early on but matters now appear to be progressing. A property has been identified close by where she lives.

9. X complained that we had failed her and her family by not providing advice and support

We reminded X of the information, advice and assistance we had provided including completing an assessment, agreeing 8 hours direct payment support, signposting for other support and providing a range of information in terms of family support etc.

Complaints relating to the timeliness of our decisions or actions (6 complaints)

10. X complained she received no follow up checks from her Flying Start Health Visitor after her initial five week visit and she didn't feel supported by them.

We confirmed visits were in accordance with policy. We explained as the designated Health Visitor was off sick, the BCUHB's vacancy caseload policy reduces the usual number of visits to essential contacts, which X received as well as telephone support. X was advised to seek G.P. support until their son started to regain weight. A Flying Start worker also visited. We, however, apologised if X felt let down.

11. X complained that despite the care plan stating his children could return home him, they hadn't. X has co-operated with us but the situation has not moved forward.

We discussed with X concerns school had about their daughters' behaviour and academically going backwards. Adult relationships within both sets of maternal and paternal families also fluctuated which has an impact. X remained unhappy but acknowledged the girls would remain with their grandmother for the foreseeable future. The girls have been referred for advocacy.

12. X complained about the length of time it was taking to progress with a conversion to his family home and the uncertainty about moving matters forward. X and their partner look after a number of sibling children.

We apologised for the length of time it had taken to reach this stage. We explained the need for a formal policy to be drawn up and agreed by Members, and a legal agreement for a 'charge' to be made against the home to recover costs should the placement break down. We gave an undertaking that a conversion was needed and monies from Welsh Government had been identified. Acknowledging some matters may be outside our control (e.g. builders), we gave an undertaking for work to be completed by Christmas.

Complaints relating to disagreements with our decisions or actions (13 complaints)

13. X complained although her daughter isn't 19 until September, daughter can't access advocacy at a time when she is going through options for college etc.

The Advocacy provider explained that given daughter's disability and her communication difficulties, she would be unable to instruct their Advocate. Instead non-instructed advocacy would be used to work with her. The provider would use a Watching Brief Approach and observe daughter in a series of settings. At this point in time, there is nothing for an Advocate to observe, but if alternative options are being considered, support can be reviewed.

14. X complained of our involvement in their daughter's case and our 'heavy-handedness'

We reminded X that she had abducted her daughter and taken her outside the E.U. The Police became involved and her maternal uncle stepped up and agreed at very

short notice to fly out to repatriate her which he did do. Daughter stayed with her uncle. This was all done under the auspices of a Section 47 safeguarding investigation. X was advised to seek legal advice.

15. X complained we were ending their son's direct payments which they had been in receipt of for several years.

We explained the direct payment was originally made in 2014 after X's son had returned home from hospital extremely poorly so family could have time for themselves. Son's health has greatly improved over the years, he no longer needs social work intervention and he no longer meets the criteria for services as he has no permanent disability. Diana Nurses will continue to be involved however. We agreed to maintain the direct payment over the school summer holidays.

Complaints relating to staff (16 complaints)

16. X complained a Social Worker was unprofessional toward them and they don't believe the Social Worker is impartial.

We apologised if the Social Worker's actions and behaviour were perceived as unprofessional, but a difficult conversation had to take place. We offered a change in Social Worker but X confirmed they wanted to work with us and the Social Worker will continue as planned. We explained our duty to ensure children are seen alone whenever possible.

Complaints relating to our processes (17 complaints)

17. X complained gifts they had purchased for their son's birthday had to be seen by social work staff. We weren't being consistent as we had waived seeing presents X had bought at Christmas time for his children.

We apologised and acknowledged we should have followed the Schedule of Expectations at Christmas time. The sheer number of presents was overwhelming and given the busy period in the lead up to Christmas, we waived seeing the presents. The Schedule will be followed by all parties in future.

18. X shared her negative experience with the kinship care / fostering process and the emotional and financial impact this had upon her. We had approached X to act as a carer but after a period of several months of assessments, we had recommended another set of carers instead of X.

This was a complicated and emotive case. We confirmed we were supportive of X as a carer during a large part of the process. X had a very positive assessment, demonstrated she could work well with the Local Authority and set aside any personal family issues. The final decision was finely balanced and the child's potential life

journey was central to discussions between staff. It was concluded the other set of carers should be the long term carers for the child, with continued involvement through contact from X. This decision was taken in the days leading up to the Court Hearing and a personal home visit was arranged beforehand to explain our decision.

19. X complained about the number of changes in Social Worker for their autistic son. The worker had been changed again and Court proceedings were due to start in the next three months. It takes time for their son to build trust in people.

We apologised that X's son had experienced a number of changes in Social Worker over the last couple of years. This is down to his Social Workers changing jobs and moving on which is outside our control. However, a Social Worker was always allocated which was our priority. We explained the case is now in the Court arena and it is the Permanency and Court Team's role to manage cases that are in legal proceedings. However, X's son's previous and current Social Worker will work together to ensure an effective handover after the Court Hearing.

Complaints relating to foster placements (4 complaints)

20. Young person X complained their pocket money is not in line with their age and current needs. X's foster carers receive the proper amount on their behalf but they do not give X the full amount as they are concerned what X will spend their money on. This is not a justifiable reason to withhold money.

We reviewed the money X received and increased it to the appropriate level. The money was not backdated as their foster carers had spent money on X in the preceding weeks by way of phone payments and ad-hoc money when X requested it. There were also additional concerns about X accessing additional monies.

21. X complained that a female she doesn't know contacted her via social media with some information about her baby daughter and also disclosed her placement address. The female concerned lived in the same foster placement with X's baby daughter.

From the information we had the foster carers were not the source of any leak. The source was a young person who had been in the same placement as X's daughter. The young person will have overheard discussions about daughter as they were caring for her. However the carers have been spoken with and reminded about ensuring their private conversations are not overheard by others in their home.

22. X receives no reassurances from us or their daughter's placement about being out late at night.

The home reassured X their daughter is never out late at night on the streets or at parties whilst in their care. They have a strict routine for times when daughter is out with friends during the evening.