

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: SOCIAL & HEALTH CARE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE
DATE: MONDAY, 2 JULY 2012
REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES
SUBJECT: COMMENTS, COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS

1.00 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.01 To inform members about the compliments, representations and complaints received by Social Services for Adults and Children for the year April 2011 to March 2012.

2.00 BACKGROUND

2.01 The NHS and Community Care Act (1990), Children Act (1989 Part III) and the National Minimum Standards and Regulations (2002) for Fostering Services require local authorities to maintain a representations and complaints procedure for social services functions. The Welsh Government (WG) expects each local authority to report annually on its operation of the procedure.

2.02 Feedback in the form of compliments and complaints from service users, their parents or carers can highlight where services are working well or where services need changing. Flintshire County Council wants to learn from this feedback and to improve services for everyone who uses them.

2.03 The annual report contains information about the number and type of compliments and complaints received and also provides details of the activities undertaken by the Complaints Officer to develop the service.

3.00 CONSIDERATIONS

Review of Complaints and Compliments – Social Services for Adults

Complaints – Social Services for Adults

3.1 Eighty nine complaints were received in the year. An increase compared to previous years (76 during 2010-11 and 51 during 2009-10). Ten complaints in the year progressed to Stage 2 of the procedure (four in 2010-11). These statistics should be considered against the number of service users receiving a service: 5,047 during

2011-12 (4,561 during 2010-11).

3.2 Services complained about:

Older People Care Management	11
Older People Day Services	1
Financial Assessment	3
Flintshire Sounds	1
Homecare	24
Hospital Social Work	2
Independent Sector	8
Learning Disability	11
Mental Health and Substance Misuse	6
Occupational Therapy	6
Re-focus Services	3
Physical Disability and Sensory Impairment	8
Residential	5

Older People Care Management

3.3 Eleven complaints about care management issues were considered in the year. Where appropriate complaints were resolved by a re-assessment of needs and resolving communication issues with families.

3.4 Three complaints were dealt with at Stage 2 of the procedure. One complaint concerned care management issues and the provision of services in extra care housing. Parts of the complaint were upheld about provision of information to families and sharing information between Provider Teams and Social Work teams, an action plan was implemented and monitored.

3.5 The second stage 2 investigation centred on the Protection of Vulnerable Adult procedure issues and communication with the family. The complaint was upheld and an action plan is in place to address these issues.

3.6 The third investigation was about support to self funding service users and their families. The action plan is based on developing good practice guidelines.

Older People Day Services

3.7 There was one complaint about access to the Day Centre for a shower; adjustments were made to the equipment and risk assessment completed.

Financial Assessment

3.8 Three complaints were investigated at Stage 1. One a data protection matter but this was not upheld. One person complained about bills

being issued too close together and another about lack of communication. Explanations were provided to both complainants

3.9 Flintshire Sounds

A taxi was late after a session at Flintshire Sounds and the family could not make contact with the Directorate. Office cover arrangements have been strengthened and transport protocols tightened up.

3.10 Homecare

Of the twenty four complaints made about Homecare, twelve related to missed visits. Other complaints included service users having a different expectation as to the service they would receive following discharge, miscommunication about medication which the family were responsible for, a catheter not being fitted properly and a care plan not being followed.

3.11 Improvements to procedures and protocols have been issued and, where relevant, risk assessments revised.

3.12 Hospital Social Work

One complaint was about the information recorded in the Unified Assessment and practice issues were addressed with the social worker. One family were concerned about the discharge arrangements and a plan of action was strengthened to ensure a safe discharge home.

3.13 Independent Sector

Complaints about the provision of homecare by independent agencies included problems with the timing of visits. These were addressed directly by the Agency.

3.14 In residential homes, there was a complaint that raised concerns about staffing levels, but this was not upheld.

3.15 A stage 2 investigation was jointly conducted by Social Services and Health Services. The complaint was about the communication with a family and the recording of health information. The complaint was upheld and the Contracts Monitoring Team monitor the recommendations made.

3.16 Learning Disability

Complaints raised directly by service users included concerns about staff moving to other projects, communication issues with social workers and issues at day placements. All concerns have been addressed and resolved with full explanations given for any necessary changes to services.

3.17 Complaints raised by families included problems with the taxi service provided for a person to attend their workplace. The Transport

Manager addressed the issue with the taxi firm and the matter is now resolved.

3.18 One family complained that information about finances was shared with members of the support team. On investigation, it was concluded that it was appropriate for this information to be shared in order to help staff provide the right help.

3.19 After an incident in work, a family were unhappy that another service user was attending the same work place. This complaint was not upheld and protocols were put in place to minimise future risks.

3.20 A Stage 2 investigation related to concerns about a 24 hour placement and care management issues. An action plan has been developed and will be monitored via quarterly senior management meetings.

3.21 **Mental Health**

Complaints about mental health services included problems with the mileage allowance for a personal assistant for a client. This was not upheld.

3.22 One person had a complaint about the length of time to wait for a referral. This was investigated and an appointment arranged.

3.23 The mother of a service user had issues about some of the care provided to her son in an independent setting. The communication issues were addressed in an action plan and monitored under contract monitoring procedures.

3.24 Two people complained about incidents when being referred to support services. The problems were discussed and resolution and apology agreed.

3.25 **Occupational Therapy (OT)**

Two complaints were made about the length of time on the OT waiting list.

3.26 A complaint about information on the Unified Assessment form was upheld and the form corrected. Two complaints about the outcome of an OT assessment were not upheld, the services provided were deemed to meet needs.

3.27 **Re-focus Services**

Social Services for Adults commenced a programme of refocusing services in the year with a focus on reablement and the transfer of packages of homecare to the independent sector. Four people complained about the changes to their services. These were not

upheld but protocols were put in place to ensure a smooth transition.

3.28 Physical Disability and Sensory Impairment

A Stage 2 investigation was undertaken in the year. The complainant on behalf of her son complained about a decision made using criteria set by the transport policy. This complaint was not upheld.

3.29 Other complaints at Stage 1 were about access to services and policy interpretation.

3.30 A variety of methods are used to resolve a complaint. These include:

- A meeting with the complainant to discuss the concerns
- A written explanation as to the reasons for a decision
- An apology where appropriate
- Action taken to review a decision
- Independent investigation

Timescales

3.31 The legislation prescribes specific timescales. In 2011/12 at Stage 1 89% of complaints were addressed within 10 working days. All Stage 2 complaints investigations that have been completed in the year were within the prescribed timescale.

3.32 Categorisation of complaints

Using Annual Council Reporting Framework (ACRF) Model

Access to services	14
Care Management and Review	10
Range of services	0
Quality of Service	65

3.33 Compliments - Social Services for Adults

Social Services for Adults received 213 compliments in the year 2011/12. This figure, when compared with 89 received complaints, shows that the service received 140% more compliments than complaints. The number of compliments recorded within each area of work is shown in the table below:

Older People Care Management	23
Older People Day Services	7
Financial Assessment	9
Appointeeship	3
Flintshire Sounds	3
Homecare	13
Hospital Social Work	7

Independent Sector	3
Learning Disability	38
Mental Health and Substance Misuse	24
Occupational Therapy	38
Re-focus Services	17
Physical Disability and Sensory Impairment	16
Residential	12

3.34 Below there are a few examples of compliments provided within each of the service areas. They illustrate the diverse spectrum of services provided, the variety of people's needs and their deep appreciation of the help and guidance provided by Flintshire Community Services.

Older People Care Management

3.35 23 compliments were received for the work of Older People Care Management Teams. Service users and their families also expressed their appreciation of the high quality care provision through schemes such as Living Well and Direct Payments.

'The changes '50+ Forum' has made to my nana are incredible. It has done everything we have tried to do for years.'

Older People Day Services

3.36 Service users and their families expressed 7 compliments about the quality of service provided at day centres such as Llys Gwenffwrdd, Croes Atti and Marleyfield Day Centre.

'The input, attention and stimulation contributed to father's quality of life and attending the day centre became the main focus of his life.'

Financial Assessment

3.37 There were 9 compliments which related to the provision of financial assessments and welfare benefits. Service users and their families expressed their gratitude for professional assistance with necessary procedures and filling in forms.

'Thanks for helping our family sort through the muddle of processes for placement and finances.'

Appointeeship

3.38 There were 3 compliments which related to support and guidance with appointeeship and receivership which provides support to people who are unable to manage their own financial affairs.

'Thanks for the help you gave me. I don't know what I would have done without your guidance.'

Flintshire Sounds

3.39 3 compliments were recorded for Flintshire Sounds which gives

service users with dementia an opportunity to enjoy music and talk to people with similar interests.

'The sessions make the world of difference to my mother. She thinks the world of the coordinator and always speaks of Flintshire Sounds Team in the highest of glowing terms.'

3.40 **Homecare**

3 compliments praised the work of the Homecare Team which provides assistance and promotes independence for service users living at home.

'We wouldn't be able to keep Mum independent without the support of the Holywell Living Well Team. We can't thank them enough for their patience and understanding.'

3.41 **Hospital Social Work**

7 compliments were recorded which related to hospital social work teams who assess the need of people in hospital care and devise appropriate care packages to support them when they leave hospital.

'I would like to express my utmost appreciation of an impressive team effort that has treated my father with utmost care and professionalism and produced a positive outcome in a relatively short time frame.'

3.42 **Independent Sector**

3 compliments were received praising the contributions of independent service providers such as Greencroft Nursing Home and Rhiwlas.

'Rhiwlas Centre can pride itself for having very caring staff, provision of clean environment and professionalism of their nurses.'

3.43 **Learning Disability**

Service users and their families expressed 38 compliments for the Learning Disability Teams. These related to care management and provision of other services such as Supported Living, Day Opportunities, Learning Disability Work Options etc. Others praised care provision in care centres such as Rowleys Pantry, Castle Connections and Orchard Way.

'We can't thank Castle Connections enough for the care and love they have consistently given to our daughter over the years. She adores her work and is so well supported there.'

3.44 **Mental Health and Substance Misuse**

24 compliments related to Mental Health & Substance Misuse care as well as the services provided by Next Steps and Social Links projects.

'On behalf of my family and especially myself, I would like to thank you from the bottom of my heart for your dedication and support through

some very challenging experiences and helping me overcome many obstacles.'

3.45 Occupational Therapy

Service users expressed 38 compliments for the professionalism and dedication of Occupational Therapy Teams often praising the benefits of new adaptations in their home environment.

'Thanks for aids and adaptations that made care for my son at home possible and made our lives more comfortable.'

3.46 Re-focus Services

There were 17 compliments which expressed service users' satisfaction with Reablement and Telecare services.

'Thanks for professional skill and warm human support in the last weeks of my father's life. You gave him back a degree of independence he had lost in hospital.'

3.47 Physical Disability and Sensory Impairment

16 compliments were received for work with service users with Physical Disabilities and Sensory Impairment and the Blue Badge Scheme.

'I really enjoyed working with members of your team who were friendly, helpful and unfailingly cheerful. I would like to express my huge appreciation of your team's approach to equality and diversity in practice. In particular, on a personal note, I was delighted not to have to justify my need to use the accessible lift. My disability is hidden, so I am accustomed to having to explain myself when using accessible facilities.'

3.48 Residential

There were 12 compliments which related to the quality of residential care in care homes such as Llys Gwenffwrdd, Croes Atti and Marleyfield.

'Just a note to thank you all for the wonderful way you all looked after Mum during her stay at Croes Atti. It was very reassuring to know that she was in such capable hands especially in the later days of her life when everyone showed such compassion and kindness towards her. We cannot thank you enough. You are all very special people and we will always be grateful.'

3.49 Review of Complaints and Compliments – Social Services for Children

Complaints – Social Services for Children

54 complaints were received in the year, an increase compared to

previous years (42 in 2010 -11 and 52 2009-10). This is against a backdrop of 821 referrals received during the year (there were 606 referrals for 2010-11).

3.50 Three complaints progressed to Stage 2 of the complaints procedure (independent investigation), the lowest number since the procedure was revised in April 2006. This reflects the time and effort spent to try and resolve issues at Stage 1. One Stage 2 complaint about the Department's handling of a family's case was either mostly or partly upheld. The other two Stage 2 complaints were made late in the period and their outcomes are not yet known.

3.51 Three Stage 3 Panel Hearings were also held this year, though the issues considered were from complaints made late in 2010 – 11 (i.e. the previous year).

Two complaints at Stage 3 were partly upheld and action plan has been implemented to meet the recommendations made. The other Stage 3 complaint was not upheld.

3.52 Services complained about:

Childcare Fieldwork	38
Resources (Family Placement and Family Adolescent Support Team)	4
Children's Integrated Disability Service (C.I.D.S.)	7
Private Care Provider	2
Child Care Panel	2
Safeguarding Unit	1

3.53 **Childcare Fieldwork**

Thirty eight complaints were considered in the year. Their themes included: a lack of communication, disputes between parents, a lack of support for grandparents and complaints about the professionalism of social workers.

3.54 Resolutions included face to face meetings with the relevant Team Manager or Service Manager, and ensuring service users were fully aware of where matters were up to with regard to their particular case and understood what was happening in future. Apologies were made where the quality or level of service fell below expectation.

3.55 **Resources**

The four complaints related to the content of an assessment, carers not properly washing disabled child's feeding tubes and a lack of communication. These issues were resolved by revising existing training and commissioning an independent review of a case.

3.56 **Children's Integrated Disability Service (C.I.D.S.)**

The seven complaints ranged from issues around assessment, lack of support and driveway access issues. These were resolved by

explaining the Department's eligibility criteria, assessments were ongoing and options were still being explored.

3.57 Private Care Provider

Two complaints were received from two sets of parents who didn't believe foster placements were meeting their respective sons' needs. It was explained work was ongoing to find another placement and recent review confirmed existing placements were meeting their needs.

3.58 Child Care Panel

Two complaints were made by families of a child with a disability complaining against decisions made by child care panel. Both cases were reviewed and explained alternative in-house short break provision was to be explored before considering out of county alternatives.

3.59 Safeguarding Unit

A complaint was made by the parents of a looked after young person that their son had expressed concerns and nothing was done about it. However the young person concerned had not made any complaints nor raised any issues at their review – an advocate had also been appointed to help speak on their behalf.

3.60 Methods Used to Resolve Complaints

A variety of methods are used to resolve a complaint. These include:

- Meeting with the complainant to discuss their concerns and resolve them there and then, face to face.
- Providing a written explanation as to the reasons for a decision taken.
- Taking action in light of any decision reached.
- Referring the complainant for an independent Stage 2 investigation.

3.61 All complainants receive an apology where the quality or level of service has fallen below expectation.

Outcomes

3.62 Learning from complaints is important and we use the findings and outcomes to inform policy and practice in delivering services. Examples of action taken on issues raised as a result of complaints to Social Services for Children include:

- Reviewing existing processes in relation to social work visits at schools and discussing courses of action with Police if no further action following a child protection investigation
- Revising training for staff in the areas of managing difficult situations and feeding children with a disability via Mic-key tubes.

3.63 **Timescales**

There has been an improvement with regard to responding to complaints within a ten day timescale. 70% were responded to compared with 57% last year. Some of the delays in responding were unavoidable (e.g. staff availability etc.), but continued improvement is needed in this particular area.

3.64 **Categorisation of Complaints**

Using the ACRF model, complaints can be categorised into the following areas:

Access to services	4
Assessment	3
Care management and review	29
Quality of services	18

3.65 **Compliments – Social Services for Children**

Social Services for Children recorded 69 compliments in the year 2011/12 from families and the Courts and additional 15 compliments relating to the work contributions to the Youth Justice Service. They were in the form of cards and letters or praise expressed during Court proceedings. This figure, when compared with 54 received complaints, shows that the service received 55% more compliments than complaints. The number of compliments recorded within each area of work is shown in the table below:

Childcare Fieldwork	31
Resources (Family Placement and Family Adolescent Support Team)	30
Children's Integrated Disability Service (C.I.D.S.)	6
Safeguarding Unit	2

3.66 Below there are a few examples of compliments provided with each of the service areas. They illustrate people's deep gratitude for the tireless work of staff as well as appreciation of their professional advice and support.

3.67 **Childcare Fieldwork**

31 compliments were received for the work of Childcare Fieldwork Teams and their professional engagement with families and young people.

'I never got the chance to thank you for helping me escape my past. I will never forget what you did for me and my children... I am now living the life I always dreamed of and the children are all thriving. None of this would have happened if it was not for you and your team. From

the bottom of my heart, thanks for giving us back our lives.'

3.68 Resources

Service users and their families expressed 30 compliments about the quality of service provided by Resources Teams who deal with issues of fostering and family interventions.

'Your support kept my four grandchildren together, which in my opinion was the best thing for them. I just want to say a big thank you. As God only knows where the children would be now...'

3.69 Children's Integrated Disability Service (C.I.D.S.)

There were 6 compliments which related to the support provided by Children's Integrated Disability Service.

'I do not have any time for people who disregard social services and have negative views about their work. I have always found Social Services extremely helpful. I cannot fault the services I have received from Children's and Adult's since I was born in 1981.'

3.70 Safeguarding Unit

2 compliments praised the professionalism and dedication of Safeguarding Unit Team who work in the area of child protection and provision of independent reviews.

A Councillor paid tribute to a member of the Safeguarding Unit Team, saying that 'She displayed exemplary skills in dealing with this matter...'

3.71 Other Developments

Both Complaints Officers represent the Authority as part of the All Wales Complaints Officers Group and the North Wales Complaints Officers Group. The latter group has adopted a broad, common framework across the region to ensure better consistency and improve existing processes, e.g. recruiting and the payment rates for independent investigators, and a central database to hold their records.

3.72 The Welsh Government has produced a consultation paper: 'Making Things Better'. The paper explores proposed changes to managing complaints about Social Services in Wales, including the removal of Stage 3 (Independent Review Panel) and the role of the Care and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales (C.S.S.I.W.) in dealing with complaints about residential homes and people who self-fund. Officers responded to the consultation paper. Officers will draft a further paper to Scrutiny once it is confirmed by Welsh Government what these changes will be.

3.73 Following a service review within the Planning, Performance and Partnerships Team, the complaints service has been revised. One Complaints Officer and one Complaints Assistant will oversee complaints across Social Services for Adults and Children. There were previously two Complaints Officers across Social Services for Adults and Children respectively, though these two officers also covered other duties. It is anticipated that the dedicated service will provide greater consistency, be more responsive to service users and provide a better advisory service for managers.

4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS

4.01 That Members note the contents of the annual report

5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.01 The total cost of investigations for the year for Social Services for Adults was £12,602. The total cost of the three independent stage two investigations for Social Services for Children is not known at the time of writing as two are currently ongoing.

5.02 Complaints involving Social Services for Children are commissioned to independent Investigating Officers and an Independent Person, as set out in the Children Act, 1989. Social Services for Adults have used staff from other parts of their Service to investigate complaints, though there has been a recent shift to commission the services of independent investigators.

6.00 ANTI POVERTY IMPACT

6.01 No direct impact

7.00 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

7.01 No direct impact.

8.00 EQUALITIES IMPACT

8.01 The Directorate uses complaints to inform its ongoing programme of equality impact assessments.

9.00 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.01 No direct impact.

10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED

10.01 None required

11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN

12.00 APPENDICES

12.01 None

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT) 1985
BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Documents: 'Listening and Learning'
Welsh Assembly Government
April 2006

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