

## **SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORT**

Date Written	17 <sup>th</sup> November 2021
Report Author	Gaynor Lewis
Service Area	Complaints
Committee Date	4 <sup>th</sup> January 2022

*To: Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen*

# **Annual Report Social Services Complaints, Representations and Compliments 2020/2021**

## **1.0 SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 Local Authorities are required by the Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014 and the Representations Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014 to produce an Annual Report about the operation of their Social Services Complaints, Representations and Compliments policy and procedures.
- 1.2 This report highlights the key points contained in the Annual Social Services Complaints, Representations and Compliments report, a copy of which is attached as Appendix 1.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 The content of this report is discussed and noted.

## **3.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

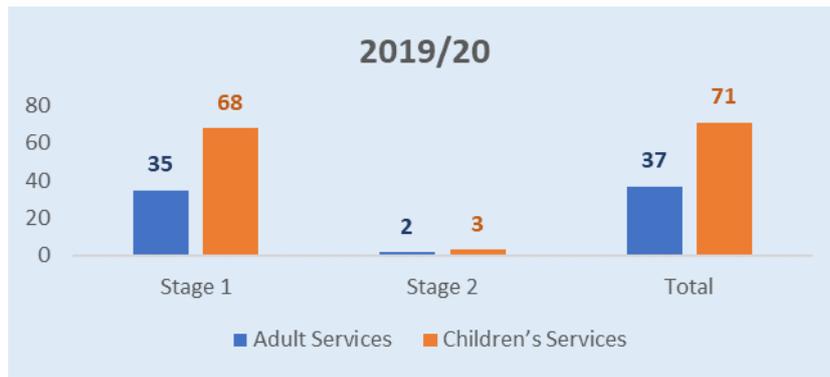
- 3.1 Social Services provide support to the most vulnerable people in our community, often in very difficult situations, and routinely deliver effective services that make a real difference in people's lives. Sometimes, however for a variety of reasons, people will make a complaint about the service they have received.
- 3.2 Local Authorities are required by the Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014 and the Representations Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014 to produce an Annual Report about the operation of their Social Services Complaints, Representations and Compliments policy and procedures.

- 3.3 The Annual Social Services Complaints, Representations and Compliments Report for 2020/21 sets out the department’s performance in relation to how it has dealt with the complaints, representations and compliments it has received.
- 3.4 The report details the number of complaints that were received and dealt with at all the available stages of the policy across both Children’s and Adults Services.
- 3.5 The Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014 and the Representations Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014 guidelines for complaints, representations and compliments by Local Authority Social Services were introduced in August 2014. The regulations introduced a new two stage process and brought the Social Services procedures in line with the Corporate “Model Concerns and Complaints Policy and Guidance”.
- 3.6 The regulations aim to provide streamline complaints arrangements across the public sector and focus on an initial local resolution where the expectation is that the significant majority of complaints would be resolved.
- 3.7 During the coronavirus pandemic, Social Services, like other departments, have adapted their ways of working to ensure services can be delivered in a safe way. This has meant working within a rota and agile working (e.g. working from home).

#### **4.0 WHERE WE WERE**

- 4.1 The annual report for 2019/20 showed that we received a total of 108 complaints.
- 4.2 The table and chart below detail the complaints that were received in 2019/20 across Children’s and Adult Services, over the two stages of the complaints process. 71 of the 108 complaints were received by Children’s Services (68 regarding stage 1 and 3 regarding stage 2). 37 of the 108 complaints were received by adult services (35 regarding stage 1 and 2 regarding stage 2).

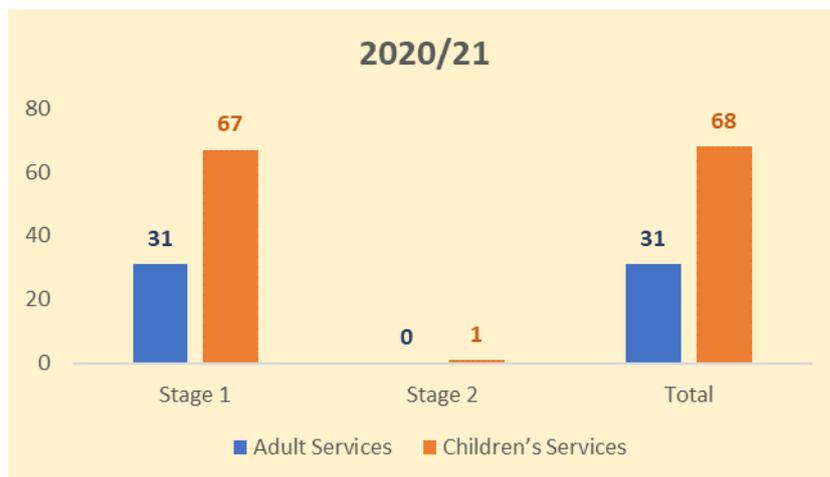
<b>Service Area</b>	<b>Stage 1</b>	<b>Stage 2</b>	<b>Total</b>
Adult Services	35	2	37
Children’s Services	68	3	71
<b>Total</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>108</b>



## 5.0 WHERE WE ARE NOW

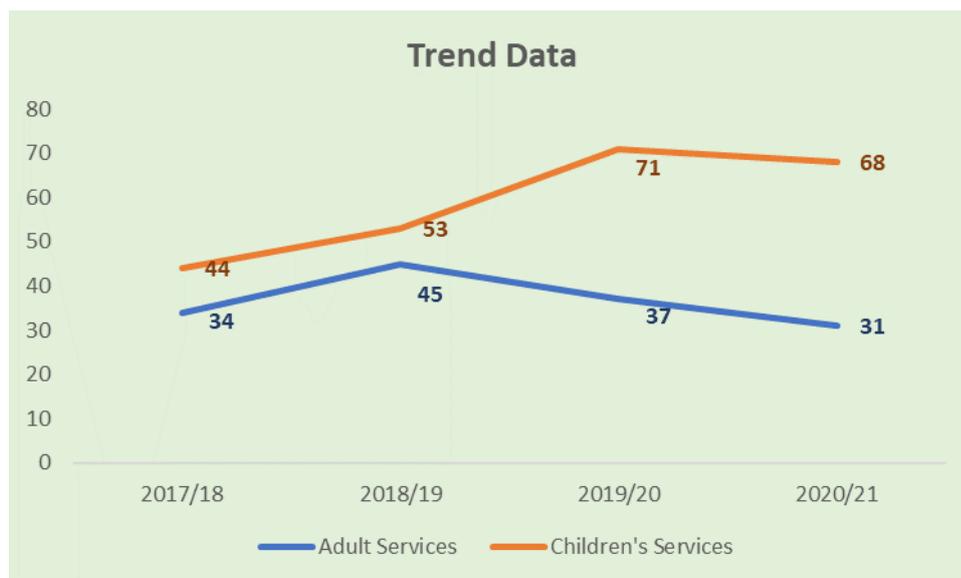
5.1 The annual report for 2020/21 showed that in total we received 99 complaints. This is summarised in the table below. The table and chart below shows the number of stage 1 complaints is 98 (31 Adult Services and 67 Children's Services), but only one stage 2 complaint (Children's Services).

Service Area	Stage 1	Stage 2	Total
Adult Services	31	0	31
Children's Services	67	1	68
<b>Total</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>99</b>



5.2 For comparison purposes, trend data is displayed in the table and chart below. This shows the number of complaints received over the last four years. There is an increase, year on year, from 2017/18 to 2019/20 (from 78 to 98 to 108). But there was a decrease of 9 complaints received between 2019/20 and 2020/21, from 108 to 99.

Service Area	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
Adult Services	31	37	45	34
Children's Services	68	71	53	44
<b>Total</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>78</b>



## 6.0 WHERE WE WANT TO BE

- 6.1 For a variety of reasons, people will make a complaint about the service they have received. It is important that anyone who makes a complaint about our services has a right to be listened to properly with their concerns resolved quickly and effectively. In addition, it is important that Local Authorities learn from these complaints and where necessary use them to identify where services should be changed and improved.
- 6.2 Every effort is made to resolve matters at a local level with the emphasis on achieving successful resolution of complaints. At stage one the Local Authority usually offers to discuss (either face-to-face or by telephone) the matter with the complainant within ten working days to attempt to resolve matters. This approach allows for quick and successful resolution of most complaints.
- 6.3 Complaints received that are progressed to stage two are normally more complex in nature and often contain several components of dissatisfaction that need to be independently investigated.
- 6.4 Our emphasis at all stages is focused on achieving satisfactory resolution of matters rather than upholding or not upholding complaints.

- 6.5 All complaints are unique in their own right and often contain several elements of dissatisfaction to be addressed. This is particularly relevant at the formal stage, hence the reason why the majority of stage two complaints are part upheld - some components being recognised, while others not agreed.
- 6.6 Communication issues including failure to respond within appropriate timescales to messages and failure to update customers on decisions continued to be a theme through this reporting period.

## **7.0 WHAT WE NEED TO DO NEXT**

- 7.1 Social Services provide support to the most vulnerable people in our community, often in very difficult situations, and routinely deliver effective services that make a real difference in people's lives. Sometimes, however for a variety of reasons, people will make a complaint about the service they have received. It is important that anyone who makes a complaint about our services has a right to be listened to properly with their concerns resolved quickly and effectively. In addition, it is important that Local Authorities learn from these complaints and where necessary use them to identify where services should be changed and improved.
- 7.2 Whilst we do our very best and work hard to resolve complaints within the statutory timescales it is however acknowledged that some complaints can be complex, sensitive and difficult to resolve and that this is not possible on all occasions. It is important to note that an over emphasis on quick resolution within performance indicator timescales could detract from ensuring that full and proper consideration is given to complaints and that at times to achieve a successful resolution to the complaint it is necessary to take longer to investigate than the set timescales.
- 7.3 Timescales will be continued to be monitored to improve and promote adherence to statutory legislation and increase the timeliness of responses at stage one.
- 7.4 Social Services continue to adopt a positive attitude towards complaints, we continue to learn from complaints and view complaints as a valuable form of feedback, which assists in the development and improvement of services. While not all complaints are upheld they do, however, provide useful information in respect of the way services are delivered. They provide us with the opinions of our customers and also provide opportunities to learn lessons where a service has fallen short of expected standards.
- 7.5 Like all other Councils in Wales, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council are facing the challenge of providing effective, efficient and economical services that give value for money. However, despite the increasing challenges faced by public services, in general, the number of complaints received is relatively small in comparison to the nature of the services provided.
- 7.6 Social Services will continue to provide for the needs of the community, achieving the Council's vision and strategic aims for the future. The needs of the population are changing and we will continue to learn and develop from complaints and compliments. Services have continued to experience high levels of demand,

reflecting the levels of disadvantage and the challenges faced by a significant number of families living in the County Borough. The Social Care Complaints Procedure provides citizens with an essential, effective way of communicating their concerns so that levels of customer satisfaction can be increased and our services continue to improve.

## 8.0 CONTRIBUTION TO WELLBEING OBJECTIVES

8.1 This report contributes to all four of our well-being objectives (see table below) by supporting the Council to address complaints and continuously improve how our services are delivered. This is particularly true in the case of the Best Start and Living Well objectives. This in turn supports how the Council delivers against local and national goals.

### National Goals



### Five ways of working



### Local Objectives and Outcomes

Well-being Theme	Objective	Primary Outcome
 <b>Best Start</b>	Children and young people get the best start to life and are equipped with the skills they need to be successful learners and confident individuals.	Improve the educational outcomes for all children and young people
 <b>Working Life</b>	People feel supported to develop the skills required to meet the needs of businesses, with a developing, safe infrastructure which makes Merthyr Tydfil an attractive destination.	Developing the environment and infrastructure for businesses to flourish
 <b>Environmental Well-being</b>	Communities protect, enhance, and promote our environment and countryside.	Maximise efficient use of materials and resources by means of the waste hierarchy
 <b>Living Well</b>	People are empowered to live independently within their communities, where they are safe and enjoy good physical and mental health.	Ensure people are able to live independently and safely within their communities

**LISA CURTIS JONES**  
**CHIEF OFFICER (DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES)**

**COUNCILLOR TONY ROGERS**  
**CABINET MEMBER FOR SOCIAL SERVICES**

**BACKGROUND PAPERS**

<b>Title of Document(s)</b>	<b>Document(s) Date</b>	<b>Document Location</b>
Social Services Complaints Policy	10 <sup>th</sup> September 2014	Unit 5
<b>Does the report contain any issue that may impact the Council's Constitution?</b>		No