

Health and Care Scrutiny Committee

Meeting Venue
Teams Live

Meeting Date
Thursday, 16 December 2021

Meeting Time
10.00 am

For further information please contact
Lisa Richards

lisa.richards@powys.gov.uk



County Hall
Llandrindod Wells
Powys
LD1 5LG

9 December 2021

The use of Welsh by participants is welcomed. If you wish to use Welsh please inform us by noon, two working days before the meeting

AGENDA

1.	APOLOGIES
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To receive apologies for absence.

2.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
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To receive declarations of interest from Members.

3.	DISCLOSURE OF PARTY WHIPS
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To receive disclosures of prohibited party whips which a Member has been given in relation to the meeting in accordance with Section 78(3) of the Local Government Measure 2011.

(NB: Members are reminded that, under Section 78, Members having been given a prohibited party whip cannot vote on a matter before the Committee.)

4.	NORTH POWYS WELLBEING PROGRAMME
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Presentation from Carly Skitt (Assistant Programme Director) and John Thomas (Engagement and Communications Specialist) on the North Powys Wellbeing Programme.

5.	MINUTES
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To authorise the Chair to sign the minutes of the last meeting as a correct record.
(Pages 3 - 10)

6.	ANNUAL REPORT - SOCIAL SERVICES COMPLAINTS, COMPLIMENTS AND REPRESENTATIONS
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To consider the Annual Report of Social Services Complaints, Compliments and Representations.
(Pages 11 - 28)

7.	ACCESS TO INFORMATION
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The Monitoring Officer has determined that category 3 of the Access to Information Procedure Rules applies to the following items. His view on the public interest test (having taken account of the provisions of Rule 14.8 of the Council's Access to Information Rules) was that to make this information public would disclose information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

These factors in his view outweigh the public interest in disclosing this information. Members are asked to consider these factors when determining the public interest test, which they must decide when considering excluding the public from this part of the meeting.

8.	ACCOMMODATION FOR OLDER PEOPLE IN POWYS
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To consider the report of the Portfolio Holder for Adult Services.
(Pages 29 - 106)

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE HEALTH AND CARE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD AT ON WEDNESDAY, 8 SEPTEMBER 2021

PRESENT

County Councillors A Jenner (Chair), S McNicholas, L Rijnenberg, K M Roberts-Jones, D Rowlands, A Williams and J M Williams

Cabinet Portfolio Holders In Attendance: R Powell and MC Alexander

Officers: Alison Bulman, Corporate Director, J Coles, Head of Children's Services
Michael Gray, Head of Adult Services, Jacqueline Pugh, Finance Manager and
Wyn Richards

Other Officers In Attendance:

1.	APOLOGIES
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Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors S Hayes, J Gibson-Watt, L Roberts, G Morgan, E Jones, P Pritchard and from Lisa Richards (Scrutiny Officer)

2.	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
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There were no Declarations of Interest from Members relating to items to be considered on the agenda.

3.	DISCLOSURE OF PARTY WHIPS
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The Committee did not receive any disclosures of prohibited party whips which a Member had been given in relation to the meeting in accordance with Section 78(3) of the Local Government Measure 2011.

4.	MINUTES
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The Chair was authorised to sign the minutes of the last meeting held on 25th June, 2021 as a correct record.

5.	FINANCIAL OVERVIEW AND FORECAST
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Documents Considered:

- Report of the Portfolio Holder for Finance – Financial Forecast for the year ended 31st March 2022 (as at 30 June 2021)

Issues Discussed:

- The Corporate Director (Children and Adults) referred to Appendix A and outlined some of the challenges in achieving the required efficiency savings. Some of the inability to meet the efficiencies are due to the

pressures faced by the service due to increased demand for services and also the ability of staff to focus on transformational projects.

- Adults Services.
 - The Head of Adults Services referred to the cost pressures, both current and future. Current pressures includes loss of income and costs of additional agency staff to meet increase in the number of referrals. It is anticipated that these additional costs would be reclaimed from Welsh Government's hardship fund. There were also additional pressures such as increased carer breakdown; requirement for additional home based respite options; pressures on the community equipment store; additional, alternative community based services.
 - In terms of future pressures there will be uncertainty regarding future needs and potentially increased costs of support for those who used to attend day services. The impact of the pandemic and future hardship funding from Welsh Government is also uncertain. It is believed there will be pressures from winter pressures and a potential increase in demand. There is an issue around the future stability of care providers as well.
 - The potential for additional costs for carers who provide care overnight and sleep in is currently unclear following a recent judicial review, and the judgement is awaited. A potential increased payment to these carers would have an impact on the budget. There has been clarity for external carers but the position for Council staff is awaited.
 - The risk following the ending of furlough at the end of September was highlighted with the ending of the furlough payments being an additional burden.
 - Cost underspends - £234,000 underspend around staffing, also a significant reduction in travelling; £160,000 reductions due to services not occurring due to Covid restrictions.
 - Cost reductions – The target of £5.09m reductions is currently on target with £1.04m being achieved. There are assurances of delivery of a further £3.95m with £0.1m being unachievable due to the invoking of business continuity in March 2020. The budget pressures will be carried forward to the 2022-23 budget.
 - Welsh Government Grant not claimed - £395,000 to cover loss of income and increased agency staff.
 - Mitigating actions – maximising grant underspends and continuing to pursue the strength based approach.
 - The Corporate Director (Children and Adults) commented that in relation to Community Equipment Stores the Services was also seeing some supply chain issues and increases in the price of products. Winter pressures were already occurring with greater demands expected and work was ongoing with Powys Teaching Health Board and PAVO to ensure that there was system resilience plans in place.
 - Another theme was District General Hospitals at alert level 4 with consequent pressures on Social Care to move Powys residents out of hospital as soon as possible.
- Questions:

<p>What is the £100k unachieved cost reduction relate to.</p>	<p>This relates to the staffing structure with any significant management of change proposals not being possible due to business continuity.</p>
<p>Cost pressures due to day centres not being open of £168,000 – will this cost pressure be taken into account when the future of day service provision is being considered as this cost will have a knock on impact together with the social and personal impact that the closure of day centres may have had on residents.</p>	<p>All pressures are currently being accounted for in terms of Integrated Business Planning in Adult Services. The Portfolio Holder advised that a wide ranging review will be undertaken following the pandemic to see what worked and what did not.</p>
<p>When Community equipment is required is it all provided as part of a package free or is it means tested. Have we asked families who have received equipment previously to return that equipment if no longer required.</p>	<p>The provision of equipment depends on the financial assessment undertaken and whether someone has eligible needs. There is a certain amount the Council can charge up to £100 per week but that depends on the individual's financial circumstances. Community equipment would be part of a care and support plan. The Council does look to recycle equipment as far as possible, but it is uncertain how proactive the council currently is in approaching families to get equipment returned. The Corporate Director advised that an all Wales amnesty for the return of equipment was being proposed.</p>
<p>Day Centres – it is hoped that there will be robust and meaningful consultation regarding the future of day centres.</p>	<p>The Portfolio Holder indicated that service users will need to be asked what they want and need following the pandemic. The types of service that service users may require, or the way it is delivered, may have changed as a result of the pandemic. The Corporate Director advised that the Service needed to engage with the population of Powys as a whole and at an individual level. The Service has found creative ways of supporting people over the past eighteen months. Currently the service is providing an outreach service to service users, with services provided in a different way in communities. This is why conversations on an individual basis</p>

	are so important to determine what current and future service users will require.
How will the service consult with those service users who cannot speak for themselves.	The Corporate Director indicated if a service user could not speak for themselves, for example if they lacked capacity, the Service would be looking to provide advocacy support for individuals to make sure that their views are known or taking best interest decisions. The Corporate Director assured the Committee that there are mechanisms to ensure that individuals' voices were heard.
Sleep-in staff and potential pressures on budgets. If this is resolved and staff have an additional payment, will it ease the pressures on staffing. Will it incentivise people to come into the service.	The Service does not have sufficient detail to respond in the meeting, but a more detailed response can be provided following the meeting. The Corporate Director indicated that the budget pressure related to a risk of retrospective payments having to be made. Anything that changes terms and conditions of any staff, Council or agency, will assist in attracting people into the market.

- Children's Services
 - In quarter 1 it was identified that there was £1.2m increased costs of children in the Council's care, a £200,000 increased cost due to demand in short breaks, £60,000 from general support to families.
 - It is difficult to identify future pressures as the position for families due to the pandemic is more uncertain than normal and therefore it is difficult to predict the impact on the Service's budget. However, the Service is committed to working with families to keep children at home, where this is in the child's best interests.
 - In relation to the £1.2m additional costs for placements, the placements team has had to be strengthened to meet the increased demand with available placements being limited for a variety of reasons such as a positive Covid cases in a home causing that home to close for a period.
 - There is a sustained increase in demand at the front door (between 30% and 50%) with most of that being managed through early help. The support received from the Council to bolster the early help and prevention services has been a benefit to the Service in the current circumstances as these services reduce the numbers of children coming into care.
 - Cost reductions - £1.5m savings has been delivered by working with children and over time reducing the intervention required by individuals. It is anticipated that the remaining £1.7m can be delivered as well. However it is difficult to deliver the savings

around shared costs with continuing care, which are costs shared with Powys Teaching Health Board.

- The Service is working to deliver a balanced budget. Grant funding is received during the year. Powys is able to influence the National agenda in relation to what the additional funding could be used for.
- The Portfolio Holder for Adult Services advised that one current challenge related to the care of people with substance abuse problems which was a joint project between the Council and Health. Double the numbers of people have come forward this year for rehabilitation and the Council is not able to provide all the services and relies on its partners to provide those services. Services for people with substance misuse problems may be a subject which the Committee may wish to review in future.

- Questions:

<p>In terms of undeliverable savings, there have been issues in the past in getting Powys Teaching Health Board to contribute to services. Is this a common issue with Health Authorities or just in Powys.</p>	<p>The Corporate Director advised that work is ongoing locally to agree an operating procedure. It is recognised that the council and the Health Board do not always have the same understanding in relation to for example guidance, so work is ongoing in partnership with health to resolve these issues. Work has commenced in Adult Services and will be commenced in Children's Services relating to continuing care for children. New guidance has been issued which takes effect from November and a gap analysis is being undertaken on current provision and the requirements of the new guidance.</p> <p>The Portfolio Holder for Children's Services advised that this is an issue for all authorities and has been raised at the Social Care Policy Group which is attended by both Portfolio Holders.</p>
<p>How does Powys Children's Services compare with other authorities in Wales as everyone must be in a similar position. Are there more issues in rural areas than urban areas.</p>	<p>There is no comparative data across Wales. There is a sustained increase in demand generally with an increased complexity in issues.</p> <p>The Corporate Director advised that most authorities are facing additional challenges with additional demand and workforce challenges. What is unknown is how Powys compares in terms of budget with other Councils.</p>
<p>Is there any hope that the increased demand that has been seen recently</p>	<p>The increased demand has been impossible to predict. In March 2020</p>

<p>will reduce as we return to a new normal.</p>	<p>demand was quieter, in June 2020 it increased by 30% and that increase has sustained and recently increased again. There are no current signs that the demand will settle down and in fact may increase now that schools have reopened. This demand is not a one-off but recurring support for individuals and families.</p>
<p>Does the Council have a response ready for any further increased demand.</p>	<p>The Council is responding to all its priorities and moving staff to ensure that priorities are covered which is challenging with limited staff, and prioritising social worker availability. The Corporate Director advised that the Health Board had been approached with regard to providing mutual aid for Children's Services.</p>
<p>How many Social Care staff are furloughed, are they still on furlough. Is it as helpful having untrained staff working within the Service, is this adding pressure to the trained staff. Was the Service happy with the programme of activities for disabled children which was run over the Summer, and was the uptake good and value for money.</p>	<p>The Portfolio Holder for Children's Services asked if the queries could be forwarded to her by email for a response. These activities were optional and not part of the Summer of Fun activities for children and young people. The Corporate Director indicated that a response regarding staff furloughed could be provided following the meeting. Whilst it is not as helpful to have untrained staff assisting the Service, the Service is grateful for all the support it is receiving from across the Council, which removes administrative tasks from Social Workers and allows them to optimise their time with service users. The Portfolio Holder for Adult Services advised that staff were furloughed where their role was not required at present as the service was not operating. However, these staff were usually redeployed to undertake other tasks rather than being furloughed. No Children's Services staff have been furloughed.</p>

Outcomes:

- It was suggested that a local press release is issued (as well as the national message) about the amnesty for the return of equipment that was no longer required. In addition it was suggested that this should be a joint press release with Health as it was believed that some equipment was being sent to recycling sites for disposal.
- That the Committee consider the Continuing Costs of Care and Substance Misuse at a future meeting.

6.	MID WALES GROWTH DEAL
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The Committee noted that as there were a number of Members who could not attend the meeting, and the need for the appointment to be from the Independent Group, it was agreed that consideration of the item be deferred and that nominations from Independent Group Members be sought by email.

7.	WORK PROGRAMME
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The Committee noted the Work Programme.

September - the Committee would be considering the Model of Care and Safer Accommodation. In October.

October - it was hoped to recommence the Working Groups. Complaints and the Customer Charter would be reviewed as an online exercise as well as the annual report.

November – Shared Lives Scheme and Warden Service.

Meeting ended 15:39

County Councillor A Jenner (Chair)

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Health & Social Care Scrutiny Committee

16th December 2021

Report Title:	Annual Report 2020/21 Social Services Complaints, Compliments And Representations Report
Lead Officer:	Daniel Harper – Customer Care Officer – Daniel.harper@powys.gov.uk
Key Issues in the report highlighted by Lead Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Annual Complaints report for consideration by Scrutiny Committee as per the Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014. - The portion of complaints resolved as enquiries has risen, whilst the overall number of complaints remains consistent to the previous year. - Complaints dealt with under the formal procedure are growing in complexity. - Communication remains a key theme at the heart of almost every complaint and has been more evident throughout the pandemic.

Key Feeders (tick all that apply)	Strategic Risk		Cabinet Work Plan		Corporate Plan	
	Director / HoS Key Issue		External / Internal Inspection		Service Business Plan	
	Existing Commitment / Annual Report	X	Performance / Finance Issue	X	Suggestion from Members	
	Suggestion from Public		Referral from Council / Committee		Partnerships	
	Impacting Public / other services					

Scrutiny Impact (tick all that apply)	Policy Review		Performance		Pre-Decision Scrutiny	
	Informing Policy Development		Evidence Gathering		Strategic Issue	
	Risk		Corporate Improvement Plan / Strategic Equality Plan		Finance	
	Service Plan		Partnerships			
Other (please specify)	For Information and discussion under the Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014 and Section 81.1.d of the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011 (as amended 2021)					

Suggested scrutiny activity	Committee's Role: To note the contents of the Annual Social Services Complaints, Comments and Compliments Report.
On what specific elements of the report would scrutiny comment add value	To Scrutinise section 7 and 8 of the report covering the ambitious work plan for 2020/21 and the work plan for 2021/22.

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ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21
SOCIAL SERVICES
COMPLAINTS, COMPLIMENTS
AND REPRESENTATIONS REPORT



1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 It is a statutory requirement for Local Authorities to have in place a representations and complaints procedure for Social Services under the Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014 and the Representations Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014 and the associated guidance.
- 1.2 Each Local Authority is required to produce an annual report concerning the operation of its representation and complaints procedure.
- 1.3 This Annual Report provides information about the operation of the Social Services representation and complaints procedure between 1st April 2020 and 31st March 2021. The report contains information about the number and type of complaints received and provides details of the activities undertaken during this period to develop the service.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Our approach is based on “Getting it right” first time and if not, then “Putting it right” as soon as possible.
- 2.2 An effective complaint handling system is one that provides confidence that complaints are dealt with effectively through the following three steps:
 1. Arrangements for enabling people to make complaints are customer-focussed, visible, accessible, and valued, and supported by management.
 2. Complaints are responded to promptly, handled objectively, fairly, and confidentially. Remedies are provided where complaints are upheld and there is a system for review.
 3. There are clear accountabilities for complaint handling and complaints are used to stimulate and mandate (as appropriate) organisational improvements.
- 2.3 The Council’s Social Services Complaints Procedure seeks to empower service users or those eligible to speak on their behalf to voice their concerns in relation to the exercise of Social Services functions.
- 2.4 The Complaints Team are committed to ensuring that concerns raised are listened to and resolved quickly and efficiently. Lessons learned from this process are fed back to relevant teams and used, wherever possible, to improve future service delivery.
- 2.5 Similarly, Social Services in the Council adopts a positive attitude towards complaints and views them as valuable feedback, to assist in the development and improvement of services.
- 2.6 The aim is to resolve complaints at the earliest opportunity and teams are encouraged to be proactive in achieving this goal.
- 2.7 Where someone has been deemed ineligible to utilise the Social Services Complaints Procedure, in accordance with the guidance, the Complaints Team will endeavour to aid informally in order to provide best service to the complainant. The Complaints Team keep account of these contacts, and these are referred to throughout this report as “enquiries”.
- 2.8 Where a complaint relates to a young person, a care leaver or an adult who requires support to engage in the complaints process, the Local Authority has a duty to provide information about advocacy services and to offer help in obtaining an advocate to support them through the complaints process.

- 2.9 Effective engagement with advocacy services enables more individuals and groups to make use of the complaints process at the earliest opportunity.
- 2.10 Experience indicates that complainants who opt to use the services of an advocate, tend to have more of an understanding of their circumstances, their rights, and the Authority's responsibilities. Additionally, in the majority of cases individuals are able to reconcile their feelings about the situation through an advocate and resolution is more speedily achieved, often without pursuing a formal complaint.

3 COMPLAINTS TEAM SYSTEM

- 3.1 Expected benefits of an online complaints system, introduced in 2019/20, have not been fully realised. Reasons for this include:
- a) Staffing changes to the Complaints Team due to staff absence.
 - b) Staffing and team structure changes within the service areas, leading to a number of system changes to reflect the new teams.
 - c) Delay in review of the Complaints Policy and associated guidance on complaint handling.
 - d) Issues with staff accessing the system and finding it easier to respond to complaints in a word-processed letter form.
- 3.2 The team recruited a Customer Care Officer who commenced in post in September 2020, the aim of the temporary post to the end of March 2021 was to put in place mechanisms for learning from complaints and compliments. The role was to also improve customer care across the whole of the service and develop the Customer Care Charter. Parts of this work were successful, however due to absence in the team, the role was required to cover the Complaints Officer function from December 2020.
- 3.3 Administrative support to the Complaint function has been temporarily increased from 0.5 FTE, the Complaints Administrator to 1 FTE Complaints Administrator from the end of January 2021 to the end of September 2021. This additional support has and will allow the Customer Care Officer to undertake the work of the Complaints Officer and undertake limited customer care work.
- 3.4 'get.sorted@powys.gov.uk' received 4,694 emails, equivalent to 18 emails a day to during 2020/21.
- 3.5 This is an increase from 2,619 emails in 2019/20, equivalent of 10 emails per day.

4 SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS OF COMPLAINTS AND ENQUIRES.

- 4.1 It is important to remember that an increase or decrease in the number of complaints does not necessarily reflect a change in the standard of service provided. An increase may indicate the positive view that is taken towards complaints, together with the fact that people are more well-informed about how to make a complaint.
- 4.2 The following graphs show that the number of complaints rose this year compared to 2019/20 but were less than the number of complaints in 2017/18 or 2018/19. As can be seen from Figure 1. The percentage share of informal enquiries continues to grow. Enquiries are the main way in which concerns are resolved.
- 4.3 Complaints in general continue to be more complex and involve a number of service areas or themes and consequently, often take longer to investigate and resolve.
- 4.4 Responding to enquiries takes up a considerable proportion of the Complaints team time. Unlike formal complaints which are passed onto the relevant team manager to address and resolve, most enquiries are dealt with directly by the complaints staff, who work to understand and clarify concerns, liaise with relevant teams for information and resolution.

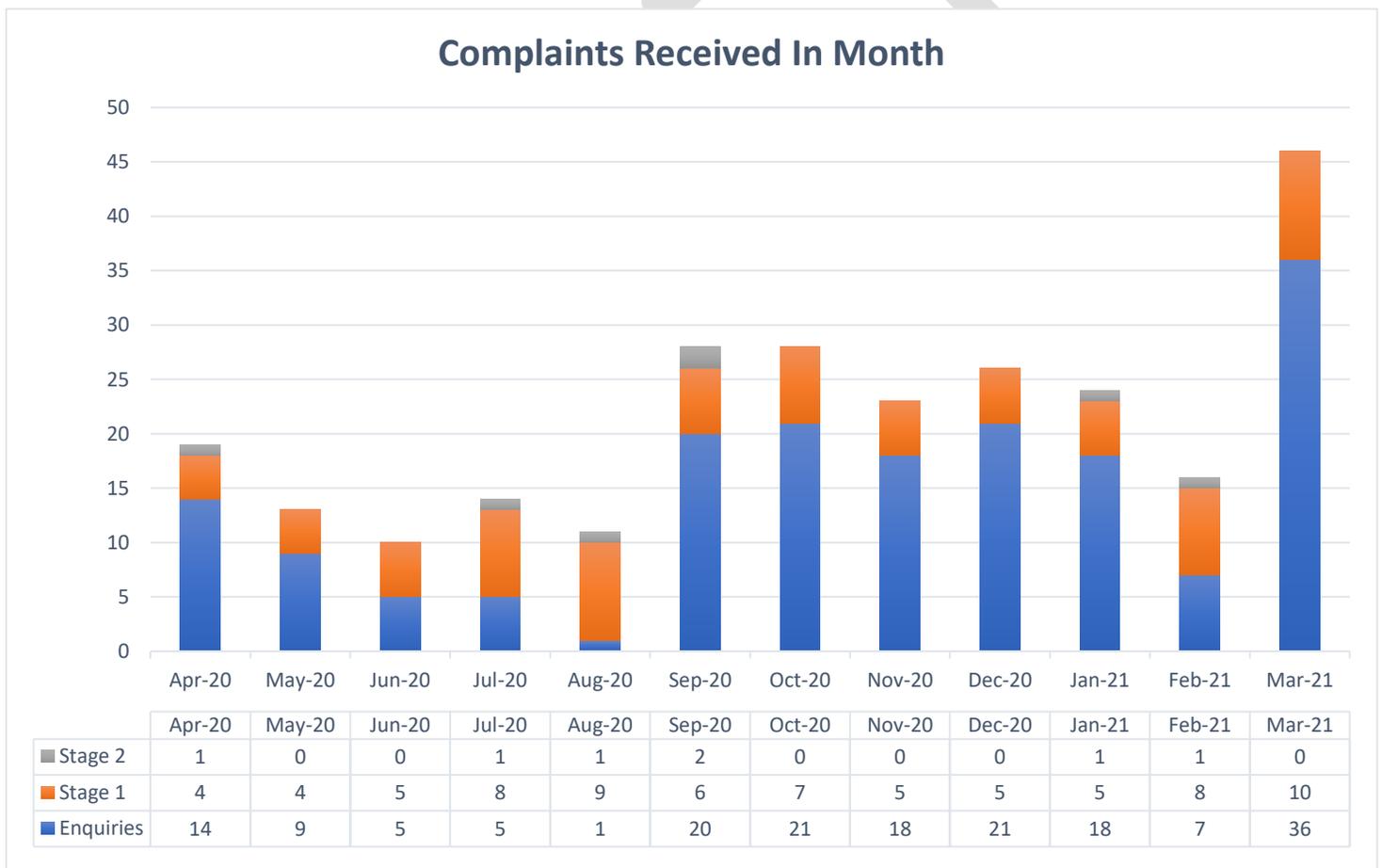


Figure 1 Complaints Received in Month 2020/21

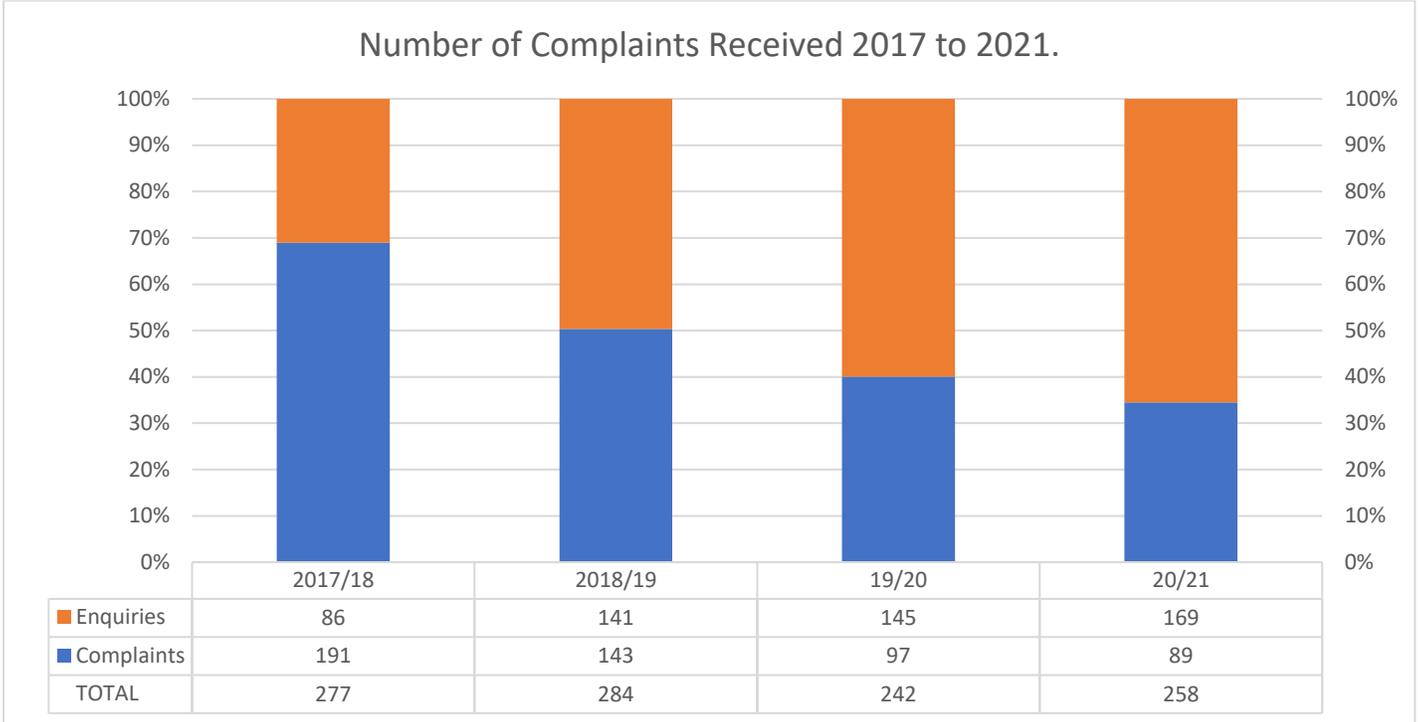


Figure 2 Number of Complaints 2017 to 2021

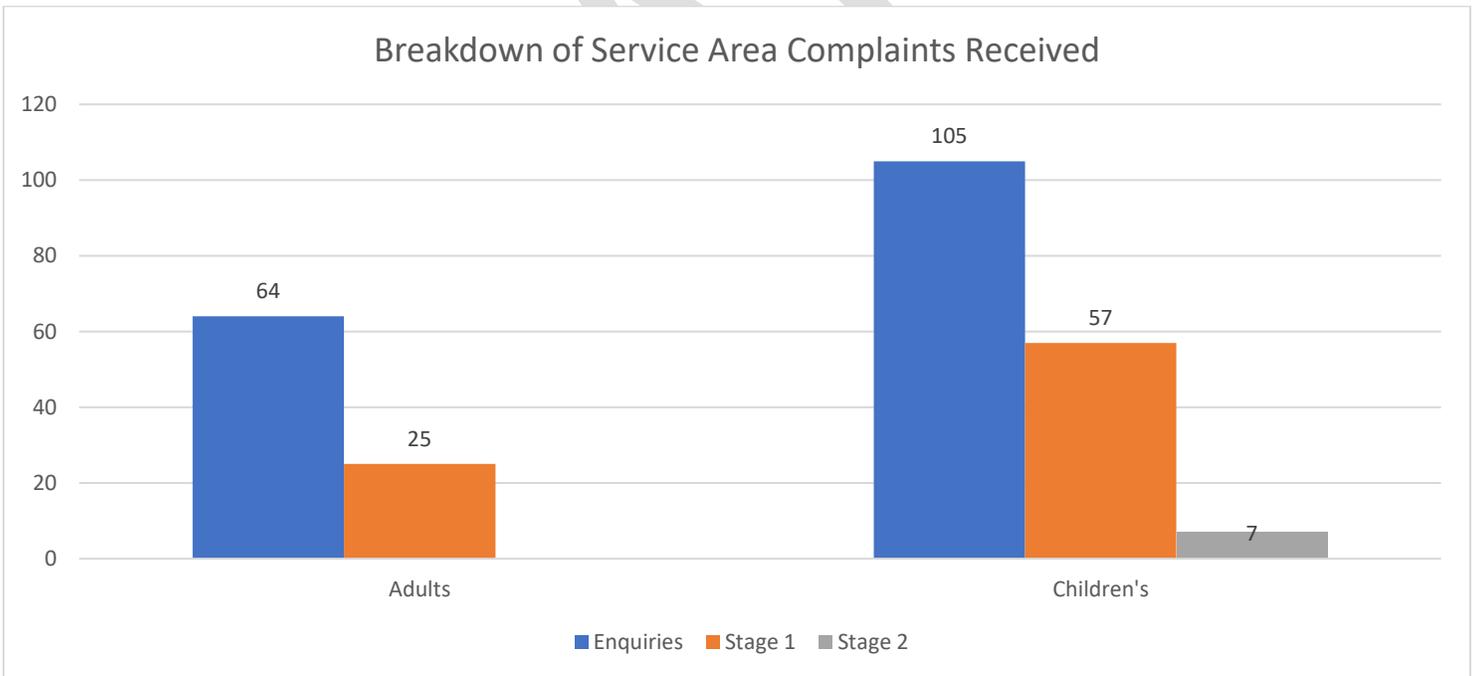


Figure 3 Breakdown of Complaints Per Service

4.5 Children’s Services received the majority of the complaints as shown in Figure 3. This is expected given the nature of the work undertaken in Children’s Services. At its broadest level, Children’s statutory duties centre around ensuring that children are kept safe and protected from harm and Adult Services centre around supporting people to live as independently as possible, doing what matters to them, as well as working to safeguard adults at risk.

- 4.6 Putting these complaints into context, Children’s Services received 54 complaints per 1,000 children open to them. Adults received 6 per 1,000 adults open. For the whole service this was 17 complaints per 1,000 open referrals.
- 4.7 It should be noted that a number of the complaints will be double/triple counted as they are included in each stage of the complaints process that they triggered in the year. However, not all complaints at Stage 2 will have been in Stage 1 in this year. Similarly, not all stage 1 complaints will have been dealt with as an enquiry initially.
- 4.8 Table 1 shows the outcome of complaints, half of Adult’s and just less than half of Children’s complaints were partially upheld, this means that there were elements of the complaint that were upheld but that not every element was upheld.

Table 1 Stage 1 and 2 Complaint Outcomes

Complaint Outcome	Upheld	Partially upheld	Not Upheld
Adults	6 [23%]	13 [50%]	7 [27%]
Children’s	11 [27%]	17 [41%]	13 [32%]
Total	17 [25%]	30 [45%]	20 [30%]

- 4.9 Stage 2 Complaints were all partially upheld, with at least one element of each complaint found to be upheld or partially upheld. There has also been a reduction in Stage 2 complaints from 9 in 2019/20 to just 7 in 2020/21.
- 4.10 As complaints are received, they are given a theme, this is usually the most prominent element. Table 2 shows the breakdown of these themes across the service areas, total for social services and the percentage share of complaints. Figure 4 shows the total number of complaint themes received visually. It is clear to see that **quality of service** and **staff issues** were the highest emerging themes.

Table 2 Breakdown of Complaint Themes during 2020/2021

Theme	Children	Adults	Total Number of Complaints	% Share Total of complaints
Assessment	6	7	13	5%
Communication	22	9	31	12%
Failure To Carry Out Agreed Actions / Services	8	6	14	5%
Financial	9	17	26	10%
Other	16	10	26	10%
Policy & Procedure	8	5	13	5%
Quality Of Service	31	28	59	23%
Staff Issues	52	18	70	27%
Standards	5	1	6	2%



Figure 4 Visual breakdown of complaint themes

- 4.11 Staff Issues was the most prominent theme, complaints under this theme generally mean a member of staff have been named and the complainant is dissatisfied with the service from that worker. It can also include complaints about changes in staff including turnover of social workers. Children’s services still have a considerable, but reducing number of Agency Social Workers, which impacts on worker continuity.
- 4.12 Quality of Service relates to where there is no standout point, and the complaint covers multiple areas. The last 6 months of the year has seen an effort to minimize the complaints placed under this theme given its broad meaning.
- 4.13 Communication is still recognised across the service as an issue, it is important to note that complaints under ‘Staff Issues’ may include poor and lack of communication. Whilst there has been an overall reduction of complaints about communication, it is still an area of much improvement as it makes up the bulk of enquiries and a contributing a factor of complaints in other themes.
- 4.14 It is important to note that the global pandemic has had an effect on complaints, with the number of complaints slightly reducing during the first lockdown, with comments about communication being a recurring theme throughout the year, usually focusing on a perceived lack of communication or misunderstandings when what traditionally might have been discussed during a home visit, was now being discussed over the phone or in virtual meetings, making it difficult to judge non-verbal communication.
- 4.15 It is important to acknowledge complaints in a timely manner, this was recognised and a slight change in recording from November 2020 to the end of March 2021 has allowed for the collection of this data, as such the data below is reflective from 1 November.

- 4.16 During this period, Children’s Services received 27 Stage 1 complaints, which were on average acknowledged in 3 working days. 17 of the 27 were acknowledged within the statutory time scale, 4 took more than 5 working days.
- 4.17 Adult Services received 14 stage 1 complaints, which were acknowledged in an average of 5 working days, 4 were acknowledged within 2 working days, 5 took longer than 5 working days.

5 COMPLIMENTS

5.1 Table 3 shows the breakdown of compliments the service has received over the last 3 years. The overall number of compliments have increased over the last 3 years; however, the number of compliments for Adult Services has reduced by around a quarter compared to the previous year, and Children’s Service have quadrupled the number of compliments since last year.

Table 3 Break down of Compliments 2017 to 2021.

Compliments	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Children’s	14	14	61
Adults	126	130	93
Total	140	144	154

- 5.2 It should be noted there has been a concerted effort within Children’s Service to officially record compliments. At the same time, it would seem there has been a reduction in Adults Services officially recording compliments.
- 5.3 It is clear that the individuals who have taken the time to submit formal compliments are clear about the value, and positive impact that services have had on them and their loved ones, clearly highlighted in the sample of compliments presented below.

5.4 EXAMPLE OF CHILDREN’S COMPLIMENTS

Team	From	Compliment:
Through Care	Parents	To A Thank you for everything you have done for us this year. You have helped us both to get through a particularly challenging year! Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.
Integrated Disability Service / Care and Support / Adults with Disabilities	Parents	During the call, Mr A expressed how grateful he was for the tremendous work undertaken by various members of staff who have worked with his family over recent months. In particular, he mentioned the fantastic work undertaken by [Social Worker] as well as the kindness and assistance from [Senior Manager] and [Senior Manager]. He feels his family have been listened to and that members of staff in Powys truly care about those whom they support.

Through Care	Parents	I have to be grateful and appreciate our present social worker, as from past experience and constant let down from social services my hope in a social worker who actually cares who actually takes the job seriously with compassion empathy thought and consideration was gone until [Social Worker], myself and my children would like to thank him for handling such a complicated intense case with the goal to help and improve our situation. I really am grateful for his commitment and consideration to reading all our information which must take real determination and commitment and for the sake of other families who come involved with social services etc I pray there are more social workers with such true hearts who want to help resolve and improve people lives.
Assessment	Mother	The report written by [Social Worker] is incredible, [Social Worker] and [Well-Being Worker] were awesome and inspired me in many ways. [Social Worker] took so much time and thought to understand who I am and how much I adore my children. I can now see this from reading her reports over and over. [Social Worker] was close to my children and was calm and loving with her approach, [Well-being Officer] was awesome with her positive vibes and I really do miss having them around
Support for Families North	Parent	[Parent] said she feels so indebted to the help she has received from the early help team but especially me ([Wellbeing Officer]) "you have been a massive help ; you are not the usual support no judgement. You believed in me and helped me see I can and will succeed in make my own positive life choices. Too many are judgmental, if all workers were like you `we 'wouldn't feel threatened. You have always been honest and fair giving me solid support
Support for Families South	Parent	[Wellbeing Officer], I just do not know where to start. This time last year I and [Partner] were lost and finding [Child] ways very challenging not knowing what direction to go in and how to deal with certain situations. To hear your [Age] year old son say he hates himself the way he feels and would rather not be here was completely heart breaking and soul destroying but we knew it was time and we needed to ask for help which is the hardest thing for parents to do as it makes you feel helpless and failures which me and [Partner] both felt. It was the best thing we ever did!! You came into our lives and changed everything for the better. Not only did you help [Child] cope with his emotions and how he felt about himself massively you have helped us a family. We cannot thank you enough for your hard work and dedication. [Child] is no longer lost and neither are me and [Partner]. We are 100% happy again and we are all so close now it is amazing. We have our [Child] back and it is all thanks to you. We had very little support from the school to start with but again you helped and changed that and [Child] became happier in school again and doesn't come home angry anymore. We really cannot thank you enough.

5.5 5.5 EXAMPLE OF ADULTS COMPLIMENTS

Team	From	Compliment:
Provider Services	Family of Individual in Supported Living	<p>To all the Staff at Summerfield</p> <p>Thank you for all the wonderful support, care and love you have given Chris throughout a very challenging year.</p> <p>We hope you have a Peaceful and Joyful Christmas and a Happier and Prosperous New Year</p> <p>With love and best wishes</p>
Provider Services	Family of individual with Dom Care	<p>Greetings [Social Worker]</p> <p>With regard to our telephone conversation of 29 December I would like to express both [Client] and my appreciation with regard to the Care of Duty staff, namely the Carers, provided by Powys County Council and managed so well by yourself.</p> <p>At almost 95 years old and after a bout of falls and illness, [Client] has realized that she can no longer manage her home or herself on her own and it is now necessary to get help. Due to the Covid 19 pandemic her local family are unable to offer any practical help, it is hoped that this situation will be rectified once the vaccines start rolling out. As you are aware, her daughters live abroad.</p> <p>Fortunately, the help she now needs has come in the form of your Carers; lovely ladies one and all, who have been so kind and caring, both to and for her, these past weeks, especially over Christmas. I can say, without fear of contradiction, had it not been for their help the week prior to Christmas, [Client] would have most definitely ended up in hospital.</p> <p>The Carers, along with assistance from a couple of Norah's friends have ensured as far as possible that [Client] care is holistically given. Whilst we appreciate the 'limited' amount of time available on each call often means that the carers are running over their allocated time schedule. We hope as time goes by that they, both the Carers and [Client], will settle into a mutually rewarding pattern whereby each will understand what is expected of the other and vice versa. This will allow the Carers to stay within the parameters set by their schedules and [Client] to know what to expect from each call.</p> <p>The Carers are careful and courteous when dealing with [Client] requests, which, at present can be plentiful. As time goes by, I'm sure [Client] will take on board exactly what the Carers duties are and keep within that regime. For the time being though, it's a learning process for all concerned.</p> <p>Please pass our heartfelt thanks on to your ladies. Let them know just how appreciated they are and what an essential function they fulfil within our community. Without them, many older people's lives would be an absolute misery.</p>
Adults with Disabilities	Mother of Individual	<p>[Client] told me that she was very pleased with all of the support [Social Worker] has provided. She asked me to record a compliment and to wish her well. She told me "She is absolutely superb. we really appreciate all she has done. we love her to bits".</p>

6 CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT AND LEARNING

- 6.1 The Complaints Team and Quality Assurance Officers continue to work closely together to identify themes and any repeating or significant areas of concern. These helps inform the work around quality assurance to improve practise and promote best practise that comes to the service by compliments.
- 6.2 The link between Complaints Team and Quality Assurance Officers is important to ensure we take on board what people like about our service from compliments and learn lessons where we have made mistakes. It is also important to look at why individuals made a complaint, regardless of the outcome.
- 6.3 Since November 2020, officers from both teams meet monthly to discuss the closed complaints from the previous month. This has contributed to a monthly focus on communication, and consideration on how managers could be supported differently to respond to concerns before a complaint is made.
- 6.4 However, more work needs to be done to ensure we report on lessons learnt and actions to managers so that they can take the appropriate action within their team as a result of a complaint.
- 6.5 It is recognised that agreed actions from Stage 2 Complaint responses and Ombudsman reports could be better monitored, this is an action being taken forward for 2021/22 to ensure learning is embedded in the service.
- 6.6 Training offered by the Complaints Standards Authority on investigation skills has been taken up by 24 investigators across Children’s and Adults, with further sessions planned in May 2021. This training will help the service respond more consistently to complaints and in line with best practice recognised by the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales.
- 6.7 Children’s Service Induction since April 2020 has included an overview of the complaints process. During the year 46 members of new staff had been through the induction sessions. Plans will be developed to undertake similar sessions in the Adult Services staff induction.

7 UPDATE ON 2021/22 IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Complaint Area	Improvement / Outcome	Update
Customer Care Charter	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Customer Care Charter which has been developed through co-production with key stakeholder groups including service users, carers, partners, and officers of Powys Social Care. 2. The Charter clearly identifies and sets out for individual clients, their families, and residents in Powys what they should expect from their contact and engagement with Powys Social Care. 3. The Charter provides staff with a clear, consistent, and comprehensive framework for engaging positively with individual clients, their families, and residents in Powys. The Charter will be the overarching framework which contains relevant policies, leaflets, training, guidance, and other resources to support our practitioners, managers and business partners improve our engagement and responsiveness when providing social care services and support. 	<p>The Customer Care Charter at the end of March 2021 was in its final draft, this work did not commence until September 2020, when the Customer Care Officer commenced in post. A final draft was in place and being consulted on by the middle of December. The charter was developed following data analysis of complaints received in the team, keeping a watching brief on open complaints, and interviewing a range of partners on the issues they pick up both with them and from their clients.</p> <p>All this information formed the final 5 principles, with guidance for staff on what good looks like and linked to the Professional Code of Conduct.</p> <p>Work is still left on producing the appropriate cabinet report and communications plan, this was placed on hold following the interim Complaints Officer return to their substantive post in January, leaving the Customer Care Officer to step in from December to ensure the complaints function was covered.</p>
PCC - Social Care Complaints Policy:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Clear Policy for Clients and Powys residents with Easy Read and Child focussed versions. 2. Clear Policy and Guidance for Powys officers. 	<p>A Customer Care and Policy Manager was recruited in Q3 2020/21 and officially commenced in Q4 2020/21. This policy was scheduled for review in Q1 2021/22 to be delivered in Q2 with relevant guidance.</p>
Social Care Complaints Leaflet	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Clear Leaflet for Clients and Powys residents with Easy Read and Child focussed versions. 2. Clear Leaflet and Guidance for Powys officers. 	<p>New leaflet was finalised in Q3 2020/21 and is now being used.</p> <p>Guidance on complaint handling is complete and awaiting launch with the revised policy.</p> <p>A more informative complaints webpage is being planned to provide more information online about the complaints process, this will be completed in Q2 2021/22.</p>
Social Care individual complaint file recording and templates	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Clear log and timeline of contact/correspondence. 	<p>An improved system of complaint monitoring has been implemented, this allows for better updating of actions within each complaint, timeliness of complaint handling and ensuring correct recording of the complaint on the</p>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Set of letter templates to ensure consistency of responses. 3. Aide-Memoire to ensure all steps/stages are followed in a systematic way. 	<p>complaint handling system. A weekly meeting across the complaints team ensures each complaint is discussed and no complaint is missed or left to drift without discussion or escalation.</p> <p>New template letters and reports have been devised to promote consistent responses.</p> <p>A guide to complaint handling has been devised and is being sent to staff investigating complaints, but requires formal sign off, with the reviewed complaints policy.</p>
<p>Corporate Unacceptable Customers Conduct Policy</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Clear Policy for Clients and Powys residents 2. Clear Policy and Guidance for Powys officers. 3. Clear communication to Powys residents and PCC staff so we are all clear about expectation of behaviour and conduct from and to each other. 	<p>An Unacceptable Customer Conduct policy was devised and launched in Q2 2021, to make staff and member of the public aware of unacceptable behaviour and outline the available actions for the Council to take where there is repeated and serious unacceptable customer conduct. A referral form is in place for managers to complete where needed for appropriate actions to be agreed. The policy has been used a small number of times to remind residents of appropriate and acceptable conduct when dealing with Council staff.</p>
<p>Policy into Practice workshops</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Social Care Managers and staff will be clear, competent, and confident in discussing these Polices with clients and their families and in ensuring our practice adheres to these standards and requirements. 2. These workshops will include: Complaint’s response writing, Having Difficult Conversations & Managing Expectations. 3. An “Aide Memoire/Check list” is being developed for discussion at these learning events to ensure that staff are clear about key standards and stages they need to adhere to and evidence in order to undertake a transparent, thorough, and timely investigation to manage and respond to complaints on behalf of the Local Authority. 	<p>Policy into Practice Sessions were held in August 2021 to support managers with policies and ensuring we continually look at promoting clients using their voice through the complaints system and what is appropriate complaint handling.</p> <p>These sessions developed the initial guide to complaint handling, which has been revised and updated and is seen as a live document to be reviewed as best practise into complaint handling is learnt about.</p>

<p>GOSS – Corporate Complaints recording & performance system.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improve information, flow, content of the 3 views in GOSS: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i) Members of the Public making complaints, compliments, and comments ii) Complaints Administrators iii) Officers assigned to investigate complaints. 2. Improved oversight, alert and management of complaint responses including key stages and sign offs required for Stage 2 and Ombudsman compliance 3. Improve Performance and alert to areas of poor/ not completed actions. 4. Improve reporting through inclusion of Action Plan requirements for any complaints Stage to enable oversight, monitoring /reporting of completion and alert if not completed. 	<p>Improvements to the GOSS Complaint system have been implemented with only team names outstanding at the end of Q4 2021/22. Full roll-out to staff to encourage use of the GOSS system did not commence in 2020/21, this was due to a surge in complaints, which limited capacity to deal with matters that was not a complaint, including producing system guidance for staff.</p> <p>Work on encouraging staff to use the system will take place in 2021/22.</p>
<p>Weekly Management of Complaints meetings</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improved oversight and management of complaints function including scrutiny of adherence to Welsh legislation and PCC Policies. 2. Improved oversight and management of all complaint stages, steps, and actions via internal working tracker. 3. Improved co-ordination between officers with responsibility for complaints. 4. Improved and timely resolution of barriers to complaints responses and escalation as required. 5. Assuring customer focus in engagement with and responses to people making complaints. 	<p>Weekly meetings continue to monitor all active complaints and agreeing next steps where complaints are stuck in the system for whatever reason improving the customer journey when making a complaint.</p> <p>Barriers identified during these meetings are then directly feedback to managers at all levels to provide appropriate support.</p>
<p>Quarterly Complaints summary for Senior Managers</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Senior management oversight of activity, issues, and responsiveness to complaints. 2. Senior management holding services and ourselves to account. 3. Ensuring Quality Assurance cycle in services, polices and practice 	<p>A monthly performance report was sent out which looked at complaints per team, response time to complaints, number of complaints, complaint area and number of compliments. Senior Managers find these reports useful with positive feedback.</p> <p>Monthly meetings with the Quality Assurance Officer for each service area are held, which</p>

		<p>looks at the closed complaints and their response from the previous month to identify any learning or quality issues to be taken forward in audits and training.</p>
<p>Management of Stage 2 Investigations</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.Ensuring eligibility to instigate Stage 2 Complaint. 2.Current CVs of all Independent Investigators. 3.Recruitment of extended network of Investigators. 4.Clear process for matching complexity of complaint with subject expert knowledge and experience of Investigators. 5.Management /tracking of budget and expenditure on Stage 2 Investigations. 6.Allocation of named senior officer to ensure delivery of any/all required actions agreed, following the completion of Stage 2 process, working in liaison with the Complaints Team. 	<p>There is no discretion when a stage 2 complaint has been requested; however, where alternative resolutions are possible these are explored first, such as discussing the stage 1 response in detail and agreeing further actions has removed the need for a Stage 2 investigation.</p> <p>CVs for the current and new Investigators have been obtained.</p> <p>An Additional 3 Independent investigators were added to the pool during 2020/21.</p> <p>CVs are routinely reviewed prior to the allocation of a complaint, as well as understanding the investigators experience to ensure appropriate allocations.</p> <p>Expenditure was not routinely tracked during 2020/21 due to staff and management changes but will be looked at during 2021/22.</p> <p>This will be put in place during Q2 of 2021/22, due to changes within the complaints team.</p>
<p>Review of resources and capacity</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.Ensuring that we have the right level of dedicated management capacity to drive and deliver these improvements. 2.Ensuring we have the right resource to embed customer care across all service areas which strengthens the cohesion, consistency and impact of the individual functions already working on customer care. 	<p>Management capacity is still stretched, for a number of reasons, however the response to complaint handling by all managers has improved over 2020/21, despite an increase in the complexity and number of complaints.</p> <p>Resource was discussed during Q4, with children’s services to identify how enquiries could be dealt with prior to reaching the complaints team, we anticipate this to be in place during 2021/22</p>

8 2021/22 IMPROVEMENT PLAN

8.1 During 2021/22, we will put in place the following improvements:

Area Of Work	Outcome
Outstanding 2020/21 Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Completion of the Customer Care Charter. 2. Completion of the Social Services Complaints Policy Review and Complaint Handling Guide. 3. Completion of Complaints Webpage & Leaflet, including leaflet being sent out to teams to ensure old stock are disposed of. 4. Roll-out of GOSS System for staff to review and respond to complaints. 5. System of monitoring Stage 2 and Ombudsman actions to ensure compliance.
Improved Complaint Handling	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Further Increase of Independent Investigators and Independent Persons to increase skill and knowledge range of investigators and ensure impartiality. 2. Continued roll-out of Ombudsman training to Managers who handle complaints to promote consistency in complaint handling across the service. 3. Promotion of the Complaint Handling Guide and templates to staff who are complaint handling to promote consistency, and 'Investigate Once, Investigate Well'.

9 CONCLUSIONS

- 9.1 There has been a slight increase in the overall number of complaints received by Social Services, but a continuing decline in the number of formal complaints being investigated, this shows that our proactive approach is dealing with complaints before the escalate, however we recognise that our response to enquiries need to be timelier.
- 9.2 Improvements as a result of complaints are continuously being reviewed to ensure that individuals receive the best service consistently and that learning opportunities from enquiries are being acted upon as quickly as possible to provide a better customer experience.
- 9.3 Overall, this has resulted in fewer stage 2 complaints being received during 2020/21. Complaints taken up by the Ombudsman for investigation have also fell to just 2 complaints being investigated of the 10 received by the Ombudsman, with 4 of those having been made prematurely.
- 9.4 There is still work to be done to learn from our lessons and ensure individuals know when they can make a complaint, and teams proactively respond to individuals who may not be happy with the service they receive.
- 9.5 We are confident that governance, oversight, and assurance to "Get it right" first time and if not, "Putting it right" as soon as possible is in place and working more effectively this year than last, and next year will improve further.

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