

TITLE	Annual Report on the Children and Supporting Families Department and the Adults, Health and Well-being Department's Complaints, Enquiries and Expressions of Gratitude Procedure for 2025-26.
PURPOSE	To prepare an Annual Report on the implementation of the Representations and Complaints Procedure for submission to the Cabinet and Scrutiny Committee for scrutiny and to monitor the arrangements for dealing effectively with complaints received from service users and their representatives
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CABINET MEMBERS	Councillor Dilwyn Morgan Councillor Menna Trenholme
DATE OF THE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	17/09/2026

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In accordance with the Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014 and the Representations Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014 that came into force on 1 August 2014, the Director of Social Services is required to produce an annual report on the way complaints are handled and investigated within the Children and Supporting Families Department and the Adults, Health and Well-being Department. The report is produced by the Customer Care Officers of both Departments, on behalf of the Director of Social Services.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to provide information on the number of complaints received by the Children and Supporting Families Department and the Adults, Health and Well-being Department during the year, the reasons for them as well as the solutions. The report also contains a summary of the lessons learnt and the actions taken regarding the complaints received. There are also details about the number of access to information requests and freedom of information requests received during this period.

2. Context

2.1 Both Departments are required to implement a statutory Representations and Complaints Procedure, in accordance with the Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014 and the Representations Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014. There is a commitment to prepare an Annual Report on the implementation of the Representations and Complaints Procedure for submission to the Council's relevant Scrutiny Committee so that it can scrutinise and monitor the arrangements for dealing effectively with complaints received from service users and their representatives. It is important that a record is kept of the representations and complaints so that the Department can learn lessons from them, as part of the process of improving the services provided. It is good practice to share the annual complaints report with Council members to ensure transparency. The statistics for complaints under the Department's Representations and Complaints Procedure are reported separately to those complaints where a response was provided under the Council's corporate Concerns and Complaints Policy. This enables the Scrutiny Committee and the Cabinet to regularly scrutinise the statistics for complaints.

2.2 The Children and Supporting Families Department's Customer Care Officer is managed by the Assistant Head of Safeguarding and Quality in the Children and Supporting Families Department.

The Adults, Health and Well-being Department's Customer Care Officer is managed by the Department's Assistant Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance.

Although the Officers are based within their departments, it is important to note that the Officers are independent to ensure that complaints are dealt with according to the Social Services Complaints Procedure (Wales) Regulations 2014. The Social Services Complaints Procedure specifically concerns individuals receiving a service from one of the two Departments, or who have the right to represent the service users.

The Customer Care Officers are responsible for:

- Co-ordinating the service's arrangements to comply with the Representations and Complaints Procedure;
- Recording complaints and positive and negative representations from service users and their representatives;
- Monitoring the response to complaints within the timetables determined in the regulations for dealing with complaints under Stage 1 of the procedure;
- Co-ordinating investigations by independent investigators into formal complaints under Stage 2 of the procedure;
- Ensuring that a formal written response is sent along with a copy of the independent investigation report (or a summary of the outcome) to the complainant within 25 working days under Stage 2 of the procedure, and inform the complainant if a delay is anticipated;

- Co-ordinating responses from Social Services to enquiries from the Office of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales regarding complaints about matters relating to the Adults, Health and Well-being Department;
- Monitoring Action Plans to ensure that lessons are learnt from complaints to improve the quality of services;
- Developing the internal Representations and Complaints Procedure;
- Ensuring that information is available to facilitate access to the Representations and Complaints Procedure for service users and their representatives.
- Providing training and support to promote understanding of the Representations and Complaints Procedure among staff of the Adults, Health and Well-being Department.
- The Customer Care Officer for Adults is a member of the Disabled Parking Spaces Panel which is responsible for coordinating the process of assessing applications from the public for designated disabled parking spaces outside their property.

3. Ease of the Complaints Procedure

- 3.1 When a person contacts the Customer Care Officers, regarding dissatisfaction with the Departments' service, then deciding to make a complaint is usually their last resort. The Customer Care Officers focus on facilitating access to the Complaints Procedure so that people are aware of their right to be heard and have a full investigation into their complaint.
- 3.2 To this end, information about the complaints procedure receives considerable publicity and is available in a variety of formats e.g. leaflets, on-line and 'easy to read' versions. All information is available in Welsh and English so that the complainant can choose his/her preferred language. Alternative arrangements such as Braille or other languages are available on request. Advocacy or other support is available to the complainant in their chosen language to assist the progress of the Complaints Procedure. Information leaflets are continuously amended and updated.
- 3.3 In accordance with the arrangements of the complaints procedure, on some occasions, it is not possible to receive a complaint at that time. If there is a current Police investigation, an investigation under the Safeguarding procedure, a current Child Protection investigation, or the matter is being addressed before the Court, we cannot accept the complaint. Receiving such a complaint could disrupt any ongoing investigation that is currently taking place. In such a case, we would advise the complainant of the reasons, and we can begin the complaints process once the investigation has come to an end.

4. Matters recorded as Enquiries

- 4.1 The aim is to respond to every complaint with fairness, impartiality and respect so that the individual is confident that their complaint will be handled professionally and positively, rather than negatively. Often, when

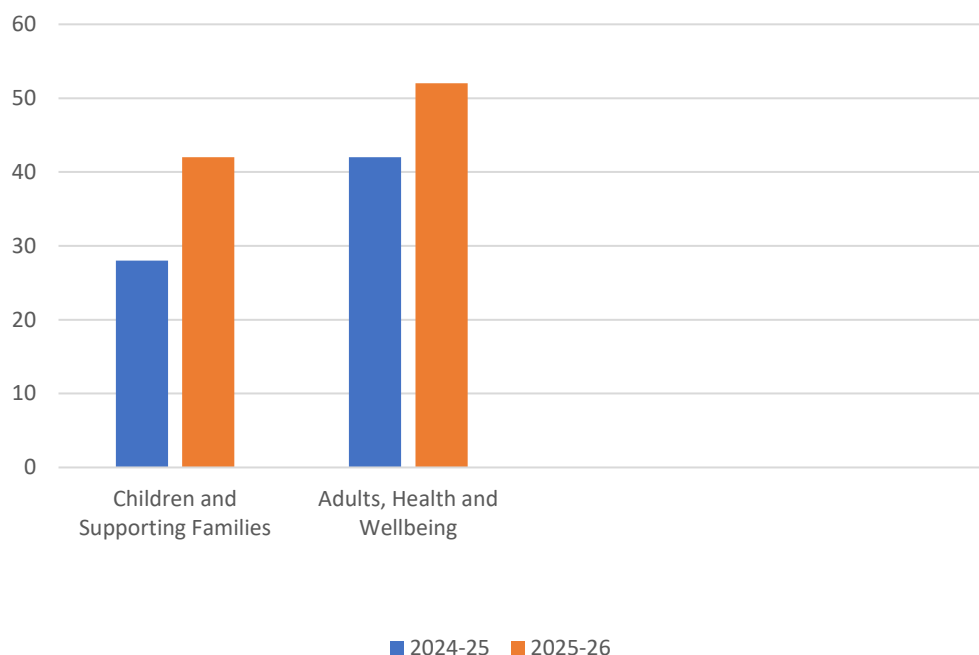
the individual decides not to follow the Complaints Procedure, the matter is dealt with as an enquiry or informal complaint. Another example of this would be a letter from a Member of Parliament or local Councillor who wishes to express dissatisfaction or wants an answer to a specific question.

- 4.2 By responding positively during these initial stages, some matters can be resolved effectively without the need for the Complaints Procedure as this is an opportunity to address any misunderstandings or to respond to enquiries. Without a doubt, this is the best outcome for everyone. See Table 1(a) and 1(b) below for a breakdown of the source of each enquiry and the unit/service that is responsible for responding to that particular enquiry.

TABLE 1(a) - Enquiries and Informal Complaints received by the Children and Supporting Families Department		
	2024/25	2025/26
<i>Solicitors</i>	1	5
<i>Ombudsman Enquiry</i>	3	5
<i>Local members</i>	1	
<i>Members of Parliament or Senedd/Assembly Members</i>	13	9
<i>Service Users</i>		
<i>Relative</i>	6	23
<i>The Public</i>	4	
<i>Foster Carer</i>		
<i>Other Agent e.g. advocacy service</i>		
Total	28	42

TABLE 1(b) - Enquiries and Informal Complaints received by the Adults, Health and Well-being Department		
	2024/25	2025/26
<i>Solicitors</i>		1
<i>Ombudsman Enquiry</i>		
<i>Local members</i>	1	6
<i>Members of Parliament or Senedd/Assembly Members</i>	12	16
<i>Service Users</i>	1	1
<i>Relative</i>	13	11
<i>The Public</i>	9	11
<i>Advocate</i>	1	3
<i>Other Counties</i>		2
<i>Other Agency</i>	4	
<i>DWP/CIW Staff</i>		1
<i>The Police</i>	1	
Total	42	52

Enquiries and Informal Complaints - 2024/25 a 2025/26



5. Stage 1 - Social Services Statutory Complaints Procedure - Local Resolution

- 5.1 Every effort is made to resolve the complaint so that the complainant and the Department are satisfied. Obviously, a local and early solution is the best outcome for all, and this can be achieved by investing time and effort early on. However, if the complainant decides to lodge a formal complaint under Stage 1 of the Complaints Procedure, the usual procedure is for contact to be made on the telephone, via e-mail or face to face with the complainant or a representative to try and resolve the matter. Over the years, the Customer Care Officers have successfully established close working relationships with the teams, managers and legal service as a means of discussing and resolving matters, which is reflected in the small number of complaints that reach Step 2 of the Complaints Procedure.
- 5.2 On many occasions a concern can be resolved by the end of the following working day, and in those cases, they do not need to be recorded as a formal complaint under Stage 1 of the Complaints Procedure. Instead, they will be recorded as Informal Enquiries and Complaints. In addition, on some occasions, the complainant would state that they do not wish to make a formal complaint under Stage 1 or Stage 2 of the Complaints Procedure.

At other times, the concerns received are related to historic issues and, consequently, they are not eligible for investigation under the Complaints Procedure, albeit some sort of response will be provided when appropriate. In the case of some concerns, it is not possible to respond to them under the Complaints Procedure if doing so would harm legal proceedings or adult protection investigations currently underway. The complainant will be

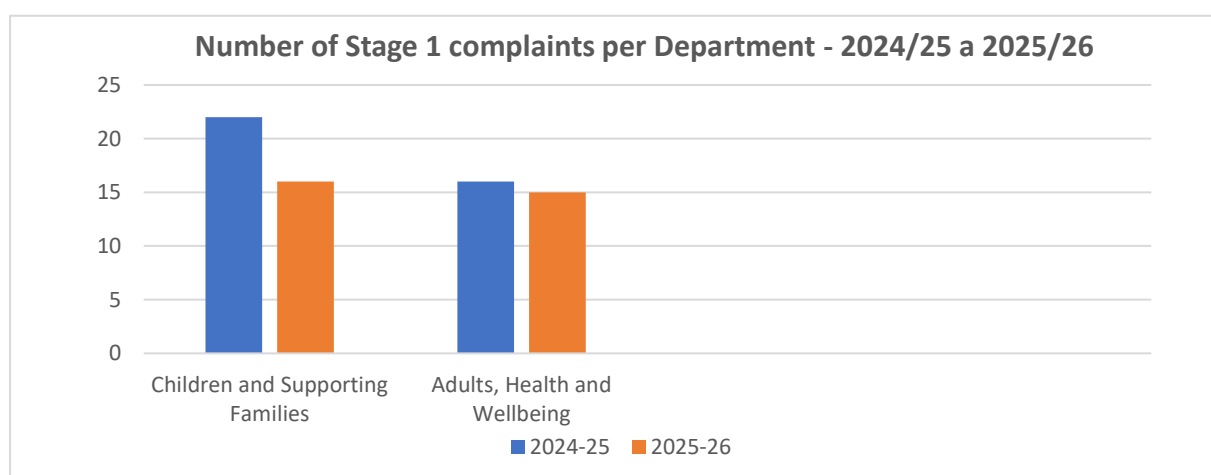
informed of their right to resubmit the complaint once the current case is concluded, if they so wish.

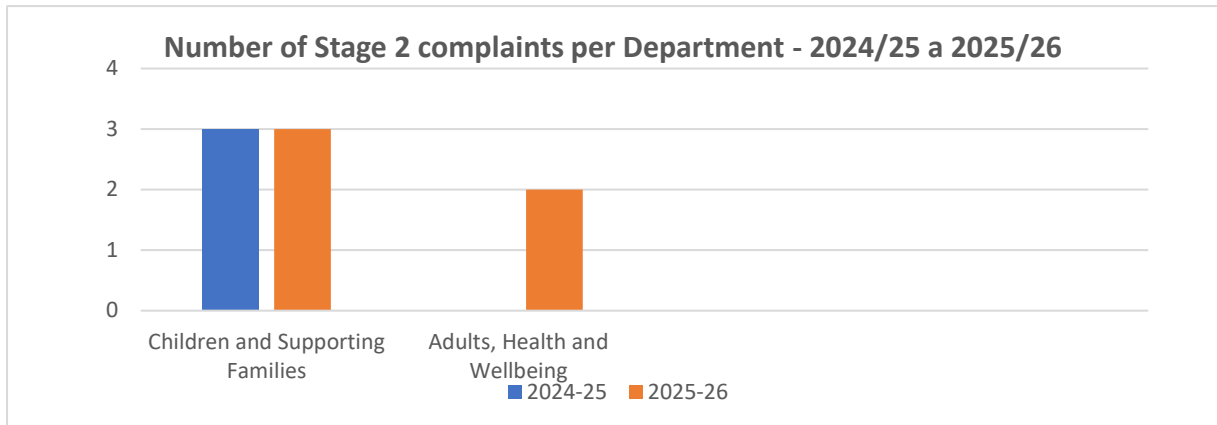
- 5.3 Formal complaints are dealt with under the Social Services statutory complaints procedures. Once a complaint is received, it is sent on to the relevant Team Manager and Assistant Head of Department. The relevant Team Manager or Assistant Head of Department will contact the complainant on the phone to discuss their complaint and try to find a solution. Following this discussion, the Assistant Head of Department will send a letter to the complainant to confirm the discussion. If the complainant does not want to talk on the phone, it is possible to respond in writing only. In accordance with the guidelines, the Department has 10 working days to contact the complainant to discuss their complaint, and then five working days to confirm the discussion by letter.
- 5.4 If the complainant is unsatisfied with the response under Stage 1 of the complaints process, they can ask for the matter to be escalated to Stage 2 of the Social Services Complaints procedure. In accordance with the guidelines, the relevant Department has 25 working days to complete a Stage 2 investigation. In exceptional cases, it is possible to extend the timetable if necessary. It is also important to note that the Complaints Procedure allows the complainant to ask the relevant Department to upgrade their complaint directly to Stage 2 of the Complaints Procedure and choose not to receive a formal response under Stage 1.
- 5.5 **Table 2** below shows the number of formal complaints received by both Departments between 01/04/25 and 31/03/26, with figures from the following year included for comparison. See also **Tables 2(a) and 2(b) below** for a comparison of the numbers of complaints received by both Departments between April 2021 and March 2026.

Examples of the complaints received by both Departments are seen in **Appendices 1(a) and 1(b)**.

TABLE 2 Social Services Statutory Complaints Procedure		
CHILDREN AND FAMILIES DEPARTMENT	2024/25	2025/26
<i>Stage 1</i>	22	16
<i>Stage 2</i>	3	3
<i>Corporate Complaints Procedure</i>	0	0
<i>Ombudsman</i>	0	0
Total	25	19
ADULTS, HEALTH AND WELL-BEING DEPARTMENT	2024/25	2025/26
<i>Stage 1</i>	16	15
<i>Stage 2</i>	0	2
<i>Corporate Complaints Procedure</i>	7	4
<i>Ombudsman</i>	0	0
Total	23	21

TABLE 2(a) Social Services Statutory Complaints Procedure - Children					
	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
<i>Stage 1</i>	26	16	13	22	16
<i>Stage 2</i>	3	1	4	3	3
<i>Ombudsman Investigation</i>	0	0	0	0	0
Total	29	17	17	25	19
TABLE 2(b) Social Services Statutory Complaints Procedure - Adults					
	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
<i>Stage 1</i>	29	22	22	16	15
<i>Stage 2</i>	1	1	2	0	2
<i>Ombudsman Investigation</i>	0	0	0	0	0
Total	30	23	24	16	17





6. **Stage 2 - Social Services Statutory Complaints Procedure - Formal Investigation**

- 6.1 Should a complainant wish to escalate their complaint to Stage 2, they would have to provide a full record of the complaint along with any achievable outcomes; this would then form the basis to what we call a Stage 2 Investigation. For both Departments, the investigation is conducted by a person independent of the Council, known as the Independent Investigator. In addition, in a case of a complaint regarding the Children and Supporting Families Department, an Independent Person needs to be appointed. Their role is to meet the complainant, interview relevant staff and read the social care file. Following this, they create a report of their findings along with any recommendations for the relevant Departments. The Departments will then prepare a response to these recommendations to be shared with the complainant.

Both Departments are responsible for funding their own investigations by commissioning an independent investigator, and the independent person when relevant, as a self-employed person. Investigation costs vary according to the complexity of the matter and the time needed to gather the evidence and create the report.

If the complainant remains unhappy after the Stage 2 process, they can ask the Ombudsman to investigate further.

By following the principle of focusing on an early and local solution successfully, and dealing with matters quickly and effectively, the need to move complaints forward to Stage 2 is unusual in Gwynedd. It is understood that Gwynedd leads all other north Wales counties in this regard. It is a clear sign of the commitment of the Customer Care Officers, through the willing cooperation of the relevant staff in each individual case, to resolve every complaint in an effective and timely manner.

- 6.2 During 2025/26, the Children and Families Department received three requests to escalate a complaint to Stage 2 of the Social Services Statutory

Complaints Procedure. An analysis of the three Stage 2 Investigations is included in **Appendix 1(a)**.

During 2025/26 two complaints for the Adults, Health and Well-being Department were moved to Stage 2 of the Social Services Complaints process. Please see **Appendix 1(b)** for further details.

7. Investigations into complaints received by the Public Services Ombudsman

- 7.1 If the complaint is not resolved at the end of an investigation under Stage 2 of the Complaints Procedure, the complainant has the right to refer the case to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, or the Welsh Language Commissioner, or the Equality and Human Rights Commissioner, depending on the nature of the complaint.
- 7.2 A complainant has the right to contact the Ombudsman at any point, but the Ombudsman usually expects the complainant to go through the complete complaints process before they will look at the matter. Therefore, the Ombudsman would refer the complainant back to the Department to try to solve the complaint locally.
- 7.3 No new investigation by the Ombudsman's office in 2025/26 was received by either Department during the period of this report.

8. Complaints about services jointly provided with the Health Board

- 8.1 A joint complaints protocol exists for Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board and the six Local Authorities in north Wales. No joint responses to complaints under this protocol were submitted during 2025/26.

9. Adherence to the Statutory Complaints Procedure Response Timeframe

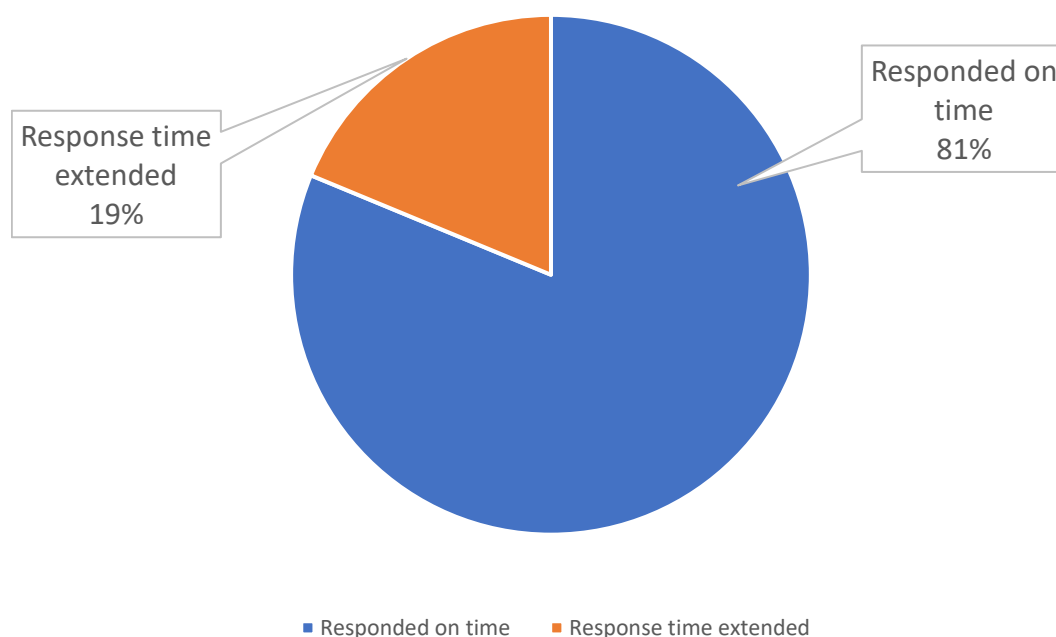
- 9.1 The Local Authority has a duty to provide information on the way it investigates and deals with complaints within the timeframe noted in the Guidelines and Regulations. Once a complaint is received, the relevant manager or senior practitioner will offer to contact the complainant to propose a meeting/phone call within 10 working days to discuss the complaint and seek a resolution. Then, we will write to the complainant within 5 working days of the discussion to confirm the terms of the complaint resolution.
- 9.2 The Adults, Health and Well-being Department was able to respond to 94% of Stage 1 complaints within this timeframe during 2025/26. The Children and Supporting Families Department was able to respond to 81% of complaints within the same timeframe during 2025/26.
- 9.3 The reasons for any late responses were mainly related to the complexity of the complaint in question, and the research needed to be undertaken to be

able to provide a full response. Absences due to illness, annual leave, etc., of the Customer Care Officer and staff involved in the complaint also have a significant impact on the ability/inability to adhere to the response timeframe.

The timeframe for providing a written response confirming the outcome of the discussion is very tight, namely 5 working days. Nonetheless, most complainants do receive a response within the timeframe or have agreed to extend the timeframe.

Social Services Statutory Complaints Procedure - Children and Supporting Families Department - Response Performance 2025/26						
Stage 1 (total - 13)						
<i>Complaints received within 12 months of the incident</i>	<i>Complaints received 12 months after the incident</i>	<i>Acknowledged within 2 days</i>	<i>Discussion to resolve within 10 days</i>	<i>Decision announced within 5 days</i>	<i>Response time extended</i>	<i>Average number of days extended</i>
16	0	16	13	13	3	5
Stage 2 (total – 3)						
<i>Number acknowledged within 5 days</i>	<i>Number of responses received within 25 working days</i>		<i>Number deferred under exceptional circumstances</i>		<i>Number completed within 6 months</i>	
	0		3		3	

**Performance Response to Stage 1 Complaints
Children and Supporting Families - 2025/26**



Social Services Statutory Complaints Procedure - Adults, Health and Well-being Department - Response Performance 2025/26

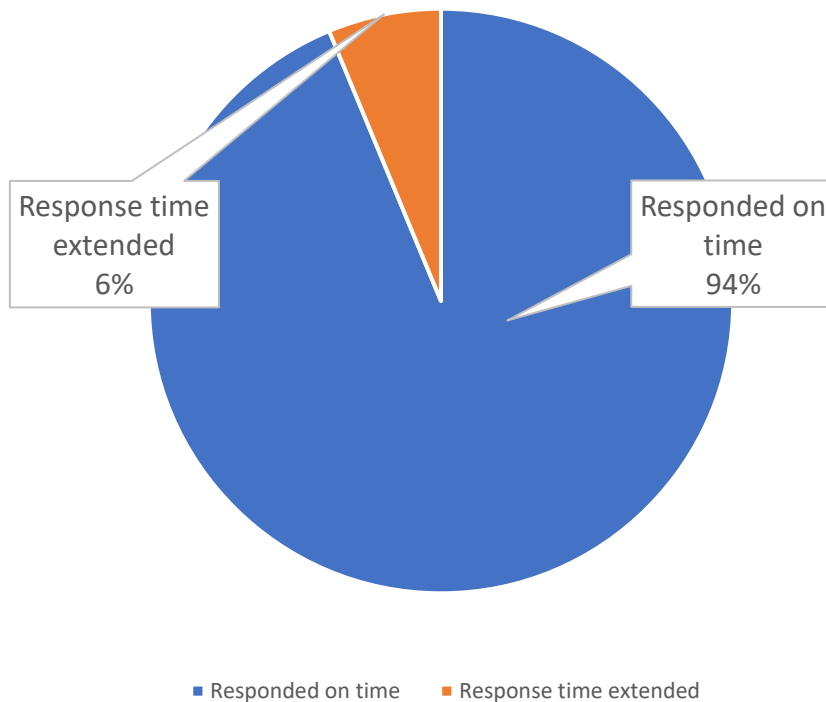
Stage 1 (total - 16)

<i>Complaints received within 12 months of the incident</i>	<i>Complaints received 12 months after the incident</i>	<i>Acknowledged within 2 days</i>	<i>Discussion to resolve within 10 days</i>	<i>Decision announced within 5 days</i>	<i>Response time extended</i>	<i>Average number of days extended</i>
15	0	15	15	14	1	16

Stage 2 (total - 2)

<i>Number acknowledged within 5 days</i>	<i>Number of responses received within 25 working days</i>	<i>Number deferred under exceptional circumstances</i>	<i>Number completed within 6 months</i>
2	0	2	2

**Performance Response to Stage 1 Complaints
Adults, Health and Wellbeing - 2025/26**



10. Cyngor Gwynedd's Corporate Complaints Procedure

- 10.1 Some matters that are beyond the remit of the Social Services Complaints Procedure are dealt with under Gwynedd's Corporate Complaints Policy. Complaints that are handled under the Corporate Complaints Procedure mainly relate to matters that are not associated directly with the care services that the Departments offer under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014.
- 10.2 Seven complaints were received this year by the Adults, Health and Well-being Department that were addressed under the Council's Corporate Complaints Procedure. More information about these complaints is available in **Appendix 2**.

11. Learning Lessons and Identifying Trends

Learning Lessons

- 11.1 Quarterly reports on dealing with complaints are presented to the Management Teams of the Children and Supporting Families Department and the Adults, Health and Well-being Department. This is an opportunity for the Assistant Heads to analyse every complaint and to discuss and learn to improve the service provided to Service Users.
- 11.2 The Management Teams include the lessons learnt in their amended work plans and any training needs are identified. The current lessons to be learnt log is administered by the Customer Care Officers. The log is regularly distributed amongst the Assistant Heads of Department to notify them of the lessons that have been identified. The log will be updated with any information about actions taken in connection with the lessons to be learnt. It is hoped that this will be a more effective way of identifying lessons and ensuring that improvements are implemented.

Complaint Trends - Children and Supporting Families Department

- 11.3 The Children and Supporting Families Department works daily with a wide range of different families. Some families come to the Department's attention through a direct request for assistance, for example, if their child is disabled. Most families come to the Department's attention because of concerns for a child or young person's health and safety.
- 11.4 Due to the nature of the Department's work, particularly in the field of social work, disagreements or tensions with families can arise from time to time. Social Workers often must make complex and difficult decisions in the best interests of children and young people, and those decisions will not always match the expectations or wishes of families. The Department recognises and respects the right of individuals to express dissatisfaction and to use the formal complaints procedure when they feel it is necessary to do so.

- 11.5 It is fair to note that it is difficult to see whether there are definite trends or clear themes in the complaints received during 2025/26, as each complaint tends to be unique to each case. In accordance with the Complaints Procedure, the Team Manager or the Assistant Head discusses the complaint with the complainant. Through discussion, the Team Manager can respond to matters directly and most cases are resolved over the phone; it is clear that this way of dealing with complaints works. In most cases, the complaint stems from a misunderstanding and miscommunication. Once the matters are fully explained, most of the time, the complainant will be happy.
- 11.6 It is important to note that many individuals who contact the Customer Care Officer initially do so while feeling upset, frustrated or dissatisfied about a decision or misunderstanding. In the vast majority of cases, giving them the opportunity to discuss their concerns with the Customer Care Officer and then with the relevant Team Manager leads to a better understanding of the situation and resolves the matter to their satisfaction, without the need to proceed with a formal complaint.

Vexatious Complaints / Difficult Individuals

- 11.7 We operate in a sensitive and challenging field, where decisions must be made in the best interests of children and young people to ensure their safety and well-being. In some circumstances, this can lead to disagreements or tensions with families, especially when action is needed to protect a child in a way that does not align with the parents' wishes or expectations. As a result, the service at times encounters individuals who are facing high levels of emotion, anxiety or frustration, which can present challenges in terms of communication and case management.

One of the most prominent trends seen during 2025/26, which was also seen in 2023/24 and 2024/25, was the increase in the number of individuals who lodge persistent complaints and remain dissatisfied despite extensive efforts to address their concerns.

In many cases, detailed responses were provided through the informal complaints process (Stage 1) or through formal independent investigations (Stage 2). However, some individuals continued to disagree with the results and it was not possible to resolve their concerns to their satisfaction.

Often, an increasing level of frustration was seen as the issues progressed, and this can lead to additional challenges in managing correspondence and maintaining constructive relationships with the individuals involved. In some cases, the nature and size of the correspondence have also increased the pressure on the service's resources.

In some cases, individuals have publicly shared sensitive information, made serious claims about the service, or directed threatening comments to staff. The Council has corporate policies in place to manage unreasonable or

unacceptable behaviour, but the threshold for their implementation is high and staff often face extended periods of challenging contact before deploying these.

At times, issues have had to be referred to Health and Safety arrangements, and warning letters have been issued to clarify that such behaviour is unacceptable. Striking a balance between individuals' right to complain and the need to safeguard staff and maintain statutory services is an ongoing challenge.

The Department welcomes complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve services. However, in a small number of cases, the complaints process was seen to be used to try to influence professional decisions rather than to express concerns about the service provided. It is important that the process continues to support accountability and improvement, without compromising the service's ability to act in the best interests of children and young people.

Complaints and Enquiries Trends - Adults, Health and Well-being Department

11.10 The Customer Care Officer is part of the Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Unit (Adults) and has a close relationship with the Care Monitoring Officers and the Safeguarding Officers. This is essential to share information to identify Safeguarding cases. Sharing information about any complaints received regarding the care of individuals in residential homes is useful to identify broader care issues in those organisations which will require further investigation by the Monitoring Officers.

11.11 A variety of complaints and enquiries on different themes were received during the year, and one particular theme emerged.

During Quarter 3 this year, one complaint and one enquiry relating to the emergency contact telephone number recording arrangements were received from the Telecare Service, and their partner Galw Gofal, on the Telecare system. The need to review the system was recognised to ensure that contact details in an emergency are up to date for all service users.

The Service, in conjunction with Galw Gofal, intends to introduce the following improvements:

- Ensure that all Telecare users who do not currently have emergency contact details on their file are contacted to give them the opportunity to provide a name and contact number, if they wish. It is not necessary for users to provide anyone else's contact number in an emergency, but it is intended to ensure that the opportunity to do so is communicated to the users and their families.
- Where the Department holds another person's contact details for service users, the Service will contact the user to confirm if they want these contact details to also be used as an emergency contact

on the Telecare system. At this point the user continues to have the right to refuse to have an emergency contact on the system, but great emphasis will be placed on the benefits of having a recorded emergency contact number.

- Establish a new process of monitoring cases where a service user has not recorded the details of anyone else, we can contact in an emergency by contacting them regularly to ensure they are aware and happy that no one else has been named as a contact. The 'welcome letter' from Galw Gofal has already been updated to highlight the importance and benefits of recording emergency contact details.
- Ensure that details of how to contact the Service to update emergency contact details are provided to new users at the start of the service.
- Ensure that front-line staff working with Telecare service users (Social Workers, Occupational Therapists, etc.) recognise the need to notify the Telecare Service if they encounter a situation where the details of the person who needs to be contacted in an emergency need to be changed.

The Telecare and Galw Gofal Service has already made significant progress to establish the above arrangements.

12. Training and Staff Awareness of the Complaints Procedure

- 12.1 Providing training to staff about the Complaints Procedure is an important aspect of Customer Care, so that staff members are fully aware of the procedure and are confident about their role within it. The Customer Care Officers are always available to discuss any specific cases with the Departments' staff members and offer advice on the best way of dealing with enquiries or complaints against the Department. An e-learning session for all staff members in both Departments has been developed to ensure that staff are fully aware of the complaints procedure and the expectations on staff during the process. We will monitor the numbers undertaking the training and will target staff members who have not completed this.

13. Other Duties

- 13.1 The Adults, Health and Well-being Department's Customer Care Officer is a member of the Disabled Parking Spaces Panel, which is responsible for coordinating the process of assessing applications from the public for designated disabled parking spaces outside their property. A panel meeting is convened and includes staff from the Environment Department to assess each application. Currently, the Adults Department funds 11 parking spaces every year which costs around £4000 in each case. The demand for this facility has increased greatly during recent months and means there is now a waiting list due to the low number of disabled parking spaces that are available every year.

The Adults Customer Care Officer is responsible for ensuring that application forms are up-to-date and correct, and is responsible for receiving enquiries over the phone, by letter and e-mail. The Customer Care Officer is responsible for the entire process of recording the receipt of applications and their outcomes, co-ordinating Panel meetings, and communicating application results by letter following each Panel meeting.

- 13.2 The Children and Supporting Families Customer Care Officer also deals with access to information requests in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 / Data Protection Act 2018. The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018 were introduced on 25 May 2018, and as a result, there were some changes in the way access to information requests is dealt with. The Adults, Health and Well-being Department has an Administrative and Information Officer who is responsible for receiving and responding to these requests.
- 13.3 The access to information requests under the Data Protection Act 1998 / Data Protection Act 2018 are made by individuals, the Police, Solicitors, the Health Board as well as other Local Authorities. In accordance with the Act, there are specific timetables to adhere to, and the timeframe for responding has become much more challenging since the new Act was introduced.
- 13.4 Determining what information is appropriate to be released is work that demands skill and can be emotionally challenging at times. The Officers who deal with information requests spend long hours on some of the more complex requests that the Departments receive. This means that a substantial number of hours are spent ensuring that information requests are responded to within the specified time.
- 13.5 It is also the responsibility of the Children and Supporting Families Department's Customer Care Officer to co-ordinate responses to freedom of information requests under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. The number of requests under the Data Protection Act 1998 have increased over the last year. We are seeing an increase in requests from the Police, other Agencies and subject access requests, the reason for this increase is unclear.

The number of information requests received by both Departments can be seen in **Tables 5(a) and 5(b) below**

TABLE 5(a) - Information requests - Children and Supporting Families			
	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Requests under the Freedom of Information Act 2000	88	68	59
Data Protection Act 1998 / Data Protection Act 2018 Requests	228	244	283
Total	316	312	342

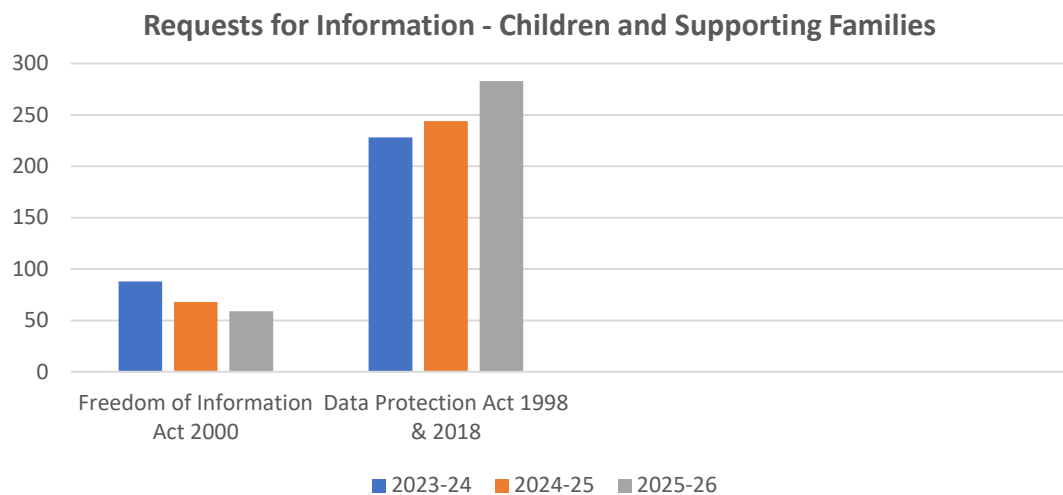
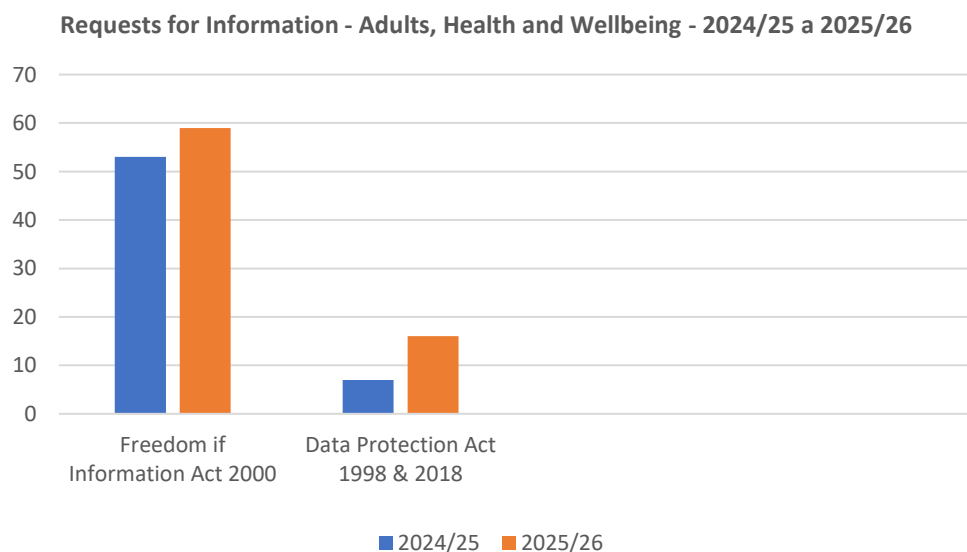


TABLE 5(b) - Information requests - Adults, Health and Well-being		
	2024/25	2025/26
Requests under the Freedom of Information Act 2000	53	59
Data Protection Act 1998 / Data Protection Act 2018 Requests	7	16
Total	60	75



14. Expressions of Gratitude

- 14.1 As well as responding to concerns, complaints and other representations from service users, their families, and members of the public, it is also crucial that we acknowledge and record the expressions of gratitude we receive from our service users, families, members of the public and from staff from other agencies.

In addition to the thanks and commendations recorded by the Adult Customer Care Officer on the RESPOND recording system, we are aware that many thanks, gifts, etc., have been presented to staff at the Council's residential care homes. These come mainly from families of service users who wanted to show their appreciation to staff for taking such great care of their relatives.

Examples of these compliments and thanks can be seen in **Appendix 3**.

NUMBER OF EXPRESSIONS OF GRATITUDE DURING 2025-2026 - ADULTS, HEALTH AND WELL-BEING					
Adults Service (including Area Teams, Learning Disabilities Team, Mental Health Team and Occupational Therapy)	Internal Provider (Domiciliary care and residential)	Business and Finance	Telecare	Customer Care and Safeguarding	TOTAL
26	40	1		1	68

NUMBER OF EXPRESSIONS OF GRATITUDE DURING 2025-2026 - CHILDREN AND SUPPORTING FAMILIES	
	TOTAL
	63

15. Work Plans for 2026/27

- 15.1 The Customer Care Officers will continue to respond to concerns, enquiries and complaints by following the Welsh Government Social Services Complaints Procedure, ensuring that the lessons to be learnt from every case are addressed regularly and in a timely manner by the Departmental Management Team. Continue to monitor actions that take place to develop the service.
- 15.2 The Customer Care Service Officer will continue to chair the North Wales Customer Care Officers Group (NWCOG) for the coming year. It is intended to hold meetings every three months.
- 15.3 Further work will also be completed to try and encourage workers across both Departments to contact the Customer Care Officers to share any thanks or

complimentary observations they receive. There is currently a sense that staff members feel that it is not appropriate to share some observations, but the Customer Care Officers are eager to change this.

- 15.4 Encourage the staff to complete the e-learning training session to ensure that they are fully aware of the process and are familiar with the steps needed to take during the process.
- 15.5 Unfortunately, due to a lack of capacity within the Customer Care Officer of the Children and Family Support Department's role, and the significant number of information requests received, it has not been possible to add anything new to the work plan for the coming year.

Recommendations from the Social Services Complaints Task and Finish Group

- 15.6 Following the submission of the annual report last year to the Care Scrutiny Committee, it was decided to form a Social Services Complaints Task and Finish Group to discuss issues relating to the complaints procedure in greater detail. The Customer Care Officers joined in the discussions, and a meeting of the Task Group took place on 27/02/26. The two main aims of the Group were to:
- ensure that members understand the complaints handling arrangements and to receive concise information on all complaints received during 2024/25.
 - gain a better understanding of the reasons behind an individual's choice to lodge complaints in English and to explore whether there is a way to encourage more to complain through the medium of Welsh.
- 15.7 The following decisions were made by the Group to receive attention from the Customer Care Officers and other departments:
- a.** To ask the Cabinet Member for Children and Supporting Families and the Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Well-being to correspond with the Welsh Government to express concern that guidance on handling complaints has not been updated since 2014 and that no appropriate consideration has been given to social media as a means for complainants to submit complaints.
 - b.** To reconcile the information presented in tables in future social services complaints reports to reflect the situation in a comprehensive and up-to-date manner.
 - c.** To recommend that the relevant Cabinet Member reviews the corporate complaints recording form and its format and amend it to be more like Social Services complaints recording forms to promote and increase the accessibility of Welsh-language forms. This recommendation applies to the Corporate Services Department.
 - ch.** To ask departments dealing with complaints to note on the complaint recording forms that the Council can be contacted via social media. This recommendation also applies to the Corporate Services Department.
 - d.** To ask the Council to consider ways of receiving complaints from carers.

- 15.8 Work has already begun on recommendation **(a)** by AWCOCG (All Wales Complaints Officers' Group) of which the Customer Care Officers are members. Work has begun at a national level to submit suggestions to the Welsh Government to consider reforming the Social Services complaints system. Customer Care Officers have taken the opportunity to contribute suggestions for changes to the complaints procedure by submitting responses to a survey of our experiences of implementing the procedure on a day-to-day basis. The group's chair is working on drafting a report of the survey results to be submitted to the Welsh Government for consideration when the complaints guidance is updated in due course. The AWCOCG group believes that presenting a comprehensive document like this will be more effective than individual Councils putting forward suggestions for changes.

With reference to recommendation **(b)**, the information submitted by both Departments in the tables of this report this year has been reconciled.

Referring to recommendation **(d)**, we can confirm that the Adults, Health and Well-being Department has comprehensive information for carers on a dedicated webpage on Cyngor Gwynedd's corporate website. In addition, a copy of the complaints leaflet, which contains information on how to make a complaint, is provided to carers as part of an information pack following receipt of an assessment of their needs as carers. We will ensure that information on how to complain/compliment is highlighted on this webpage.

16. Statistics on the use of Welsh and English when responding to complaints and enquiries

16.1 The Customer Care Officers respond to enquiries and complaints in the chosen language of the enquirer or complainant. See the relevant figures on the use of both languages in the tables below.

Complainant's selected language to make an enquiry/complaint during 2025/2026 – Adults, Health and Well-being Department			
	Welsh	English	Total
<i>Informal Enquiries and Complaints</i>	22	30	52
<i>Stage 1</i>	7	8	15
<i>Stage 2</i>	1	1	2
<i>Corporate</i>	2	2	4
<i>Ombudsman</i>	0	0	0

Complainant's preferred language to make an enquiry/complaint during 2025/2026 – Children and Supporting Families Department			
	Welsh	English	Total
<i>Stage 1</i>	5	11	16
<i>Stage 2</i>	0	3	3
<i>Corporate</i>	0	0	0
<i>Ombudsman</i>	0	0	0

APPENDIX 1(a) – EXAMPLES OF COMPLAINTS AND COMMENTS FROM THE DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND SUPPORTING FAMILIES DURING 2025/26

Reference	Brief description	Stage	Team	Response	Lessons to be learnt	Grounds for the complaint?
GC17655-25	A complaint received from a parent about a lack of support for their child including a lack of co-ordination for this support.	Stage 1	Derwen	Matters had changed in the family's circumstances during the complaint and as a result, a second assessment was required. The Department wrote to the parent to explain this and ensure that the assessment process would assist in identifying needs and the support needed.	There was no specific lesson in this case.	A service was in place, and due to circumstances, this needed to be revisited. There were no grounds for the complaint but the Service accepts the parent's comments, and this will be discussed in detail during the new assessment.
GC17706-25	Complaint received from a parent, who was not happy with the Social Worker. The complainant felt that the Worker was not following the Court's contact plan and felt that this was not in the best interests of the children.	Stage 1	Arfon Children's Team	The Department corresponded by letter with the parent with a full response explaining the clear rationale for the decisions that had been made. The Department acknowledged that the situation was extremely difficult for the complainant and offered the options available for them when moving forward.	There was no specific lesson in this case.	There were no grounds for the complaint as the Department followed the Court's plan while also always considering the voices of the children.
GC18227-25	A complaint from a parent that the service did not provide all the information needed.	Stage 1	Arfon Children's Team	The Head of Department phoned the individual to discuss and apologised that full information had not been shared. The Department also offered to meet with the complainant for further discussion. The complainant did not accept the offer of a meeting. Therefore, the Department wrote to him to confirm the conversation and to apologise.	There was no specific lesson in this case.	Although information was shared, full information was not shared with the individual. Therefore, there were partial grounds for the complaint.

GC18605-25	A complaint from a parent about issues relating to an occupational therapist's assessment and that no adaptation work could proceed until that assessment had taken place.	Stage 1	Derwen	The Service Manager telephoned the complainant to discuss her complaint, and she confirmed that she would discuss all concerns with the Occupational Therapist and Social Worker. The Manager assured the complainant that any information required to start the adaptation work would be shared with the relevant agent as soon as possible.	There is no specific lesson, but it is important to remember the importance of communication.	There was a delay and so there were grounds for the complaint.
GC17995-25	A complaint from a parent about a lack of support for their child and requesting an urgent review of the situation.	Stage 1	Children Referrals	The Department wrote to the parent explaining that they understood that it was a difficult time for them and that a Social Worker had been appointed to the case and wanted to arrange a visit as soon as possible to start the assessment process. The Department provided advice on any emergency within the letter and gave an assurance that all aspects would be addressed within the assessment.	There is no lesson in this case.	There were no grounds as the Social Worker was in place and had already started the assessment process. Nevertheless, as a department we accept that families are feeling under pressure and want things to move forward as quickly as possible.
EXAMPLES OF STAGE 2 COMPLAINTS DURING 2025/26						
GC17626-25	We received a complaint from an individual; the individual had raised 9 points during the Stage 2 investigation. These ranged, e.g. feeling there were child protection concerns, lack of organisation during contact and unhappy with the care plan.	Stage 2	Arfon Children's Team	The Department identified an Independent Investigator and Independent Person to investigate the complainant's complaints. The Investigators met with the complainant to give them an opportunity to discuss the matters in person. The Investigators had full access to all the information relating to the case and they interviewed the relevant staff.	There were no recommendations in this case. The investigation confirmed that the Department held appropriate child protection investigations with no evidence of the children being at	There were no grounds for the complaint.

				Out of all the points the Investigators partially accepted two points. They did not accept the other 7 points. In terms of the points that were partially accepted, there were no recommendations, and the Investigator noted that his report would answer the complainant's question on this matter.	risk. It was noted that evidence supported that staff worked with stakeholders and provided opportunities for the complainant to give their opinion. There was no evidence that the Department was not completely transparent with the complainant.	
GC18418-25	Complaint from parents about issues relating to a child protection investigation. There were 12 points being investigated, e.g. the parents were not informed of the investigation in a timely manner, there were no grounds for the child protection investigation, incorrect/misleading information on file.	Stage 2	Arfon Children's Team	The Department identified an Independent Investigator and an Independent Person to investigate the complaint. They met with the complainants and received full access to all relevant information as well as interviewing staff as part of the investigation. Out of the 12 points, 1 point was accepted, 3 were partially accepted and 8 were not accepted. The Department accepted the report in full and prepared a response and action plan to ensure that the recommendations in the report were completed.	Lessons had been identified and these had been achieved through the completion of the action plan following fully accepting the report. The action plan had been confirmed by the Head of Department as part of the process.	There were grounds for the complaint.

GC18687-25	The Department received a complaint from an individual, who was unhappy with the Department for making contact and sharing information under child protection arrangements. The individual felt that the action taken was racist against him.	Stage 2	Children Referrals	The Department identified an Independent Investigator and an Independent Person to investigate the complaint. They met with the complainants and received full access to all relevant information as well as interviewing staff as part of the investigation. They investigated 5 points and in this case no point was accepted. The investigator had identified that the Department had taken appropriate action at the request of the Police and there were no grounds to the complaint.	There were no lessons to be learnt in this case.	There were no grounds for the complaint.
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APPENDIX 1(b) – EXAMPLES OF COMPLAINTS AND COMMENTS FROM THE ADULTS, HEALTH AND WELL-BEING DEPARTMENT DURING 2025/26

Reference	Brief description	Stage	Team	Response	Lessons to be learnt	Grounds for the complaint?
GC17918-25	Service User wanted to apply for a grant for adaptations to their property but was unhappy that there was a waiting list for an assessment from an Occupational Therapist to make the application.	Stage 1	Occupational Therapy Team	An apology had been provided along with information that additional temporary staff were being employed to try and bring the numbers on the waiting list down. Had offered an assessment within 4-6 weeks.	There was no specific lesson in this case.	There were grounds for the complaint, and the Service recognises that the waiting list for needs assessments by an Occupational Therapist (and other teams) can be frustrating for potential service users. The Department continues to work hard to try to bring down the remaining numbers.
GC18298-25	Service User's family dissatisfied with certain aspects of one of the carers' behaviours towards their relative and alleged lack of empathy.	Stage 1	Domiciliary Care (Internal Provider)	A full investigation and discussions have taken place with the relevant staff. Full response provided.	There was no specific lesson in this case.	There were no grounds for the complaint.
GC18346-25	A Service User's relative raised concerns about the long time that had elapsed before domiciliary care could be provided so that their relative could come home from hospital. Required an explanation and resolution as soon as possible.	Stage 1	Community Resources Teams	An apology and a full explanation had been provided. Resolution achieved within a short time after receipt of the complaint.	There was no new specific lesson in this case.	There were grounds for the complaint as there had been a long delay before domiciliary care could be arranged so that the individual could come home from hospital.

GC18511-25	Family of former service user expressed disappointment they received the final invoice for domiciliary care costs less than a week after their relative had died.	Stage 1	Income and Well-being Unit (Business and Finance)	A full response and apology had been provided for this error. Measures put in place to try and ensure that this does not happen again.	Carefully consider the circumstances of each case when sending final invoices for care where the service user has died. There are some cases where families have requested an invoice shortly after the service has ended. Income and Well-being Unit Manager to ask staff to consider if a reasonable delay is needed before sending final invoices out.	There were grounds for the complaint. Response provided and lessons to be learnt recorded.
GC18986-25	A service user's relative claimed that information on their relative's assessment form was incorrect and misleading. Wanted to amend the information on the form.	Stage 1	Adult Learning Disability Team	Information on the form has been reviewed by the Team but did not agree that it needed to be amended. Full response provided.	There is no lesson to be learnt in this case.	No grounds for the complaint. Following a review, it was determined that the information was accurate, current and a fair reflection of the circumstances at the time.

EXAMPLES OF STAGE 2 COMPLAINTS DURING 2025/26						
GC16355-24	A service user's family raising concerns about aspects of care received in a residential care home owned by the Council. A Stage 1 response had been provided, and the complaint had progressed to Stage 2.	Stage 2	Residential and Day Care (Internal Provider)	The Department identified an Independent Investigator to investigate the complainant's complaints. The Investigators met with the complainant to give them an opportunity to discuss the matters in person. The Investigator received full access to all information relating to the case and interviewed the relevant staff. The complainant was provided with a copy of the final report, along with a letter of response from the Department to the recommendations recorded therein.	The investigation acknowledged that the individual had received standard care from the home but that some aspects could be strengthened. Among these lessons were improving methods of communicating with families, ensuring timely and consistent recording of information, and ensuring that staff were aware of the importance of recording individuals' property lists in the care home.	It was agreed that there were partial grounds for the complaint.
GC18147-25	A member of the public raised a complaint about the process followed by a multi-disciplinary Safeguarding Panel to investigate allegations against him. Wanted the investigation to be conducted again.	Stage 2	Safeguarding and Quality Assurance Team	The Department identified an Independent Investigator to investigate the complaint. They met with the complainants and received full access to all relevant information as well as interviewing staff as part of the investigation.	No recommendations were received as a result of the Stage 2 investigation.	There were no grounds for the complaint.

	Complaint had commenced in Stage 2 and was awaiting the investigation outcome.			The Department received the full report and prepared a response.		
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APPENDIX 2 – Examples of Corporate Complaints – 2025/2026 – ADULTS, HEALTH AND WELL-BEING DEPARTMENT

Reference	Brief description	Stage	Team	Response	Lessons to be learnt	Grounds for the complaint?
GC18265-25	A Service User dissatisfied with aspects of the adaptations made to their bathroom through an Adaptations Grant. Complaint dealt with under the corporate procedure as the Housing and Property Department leads on this work.	Formal Complaint	Housing and Property (Grants and Adaptations) Department Occupational Therapy Team	A home visit made on 30/09/25 to discuss the matter and a second visit with Grants staff took place on 14/10/25. A formal response following the second visit. A solution had now been proposed.	There was no specific lesson in this case.	It was agreed that there were partial grounds for the complaint. A solution had been proposed to rectify the bathroom adaptations
GC/19365-26	An External Provider dissatisfied with the way in which the Adult Department determines the level of fees that should be paid to the company to provide services on behalf of the Council.	Formal Complaint	Commissioning and Contracts Team (Business and Finance)	The matter had been dealt with under the corporate system as it was a business matter and does not relate to any provision of service to a particular individual. Full response provided.	There was no specific lesson in this case.	No grounds for the complaint

APPENDIX 3 – EXPRESSIONS OF GRATITUDE AND PRAISE – EXAMPLES FROM 2025/2026

Dear Heidi and Sally, As the 2025/26 academic year draws to a close, I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank you and your team for your continued support and valuable collaboration with our school over the past year. The positive relationship between our organisations has been key to ensuring the best possible experiences for our pupils. We greatly appreciate your commitment, professionalism, and the positive impact you have had on our school community. We look forward to continuing our partnership in the coming year, building on the strong foundations already in place. With our sincere thanks once again, and best wishes for a successful summer and a well-deserved rest. Headteacher of Ysgol Hafod Lon.”	Thank you	Dwyfor and Meirionnydd Children’s Team
“Just a quick email to say it was lovely working with you on the XXXX case. I want to say what a great job you have done working this case. It is clear how much work you have put in and how much of your time it has required. Your Court paperwork made my job very easy. It was very well written and clear. Please pass this email onto your manager so that they can see your hard work has been recognised. Hopefully will get to work with you again soon. (Social Care Wales)”	Thank you	Dwyfor and Meirionnydd Children's Team
“I am writing to sincerely thank you for all the support, guidance and understanding you have shown us during this very challenging time. These past months have been incredibly difficult, and your patience, compassion and professionalism have meant more to us than I can express. I am especially grateful for the support and advocacy you provided through the process. Your belief in us and your willingness to give us the opportunity has made a life changing difference to us all. Knowing that you listened to us, supported us and treated us with respect helped us stay strong during moment that felt overwhelming. Your dedication to your work and to our family did not go unnoticed, and I will always be thankful for the role you played during this time. Thank you again for everything you have done. Your support has truly meant the world to us. With Sincere gratitude. Thank you”	Thank you.	Children’s Team

Learning about neurodivergence, and specifically autism has been a huge help to us. Knowing what we know now about the differences that can present and how we as a family can meet those needs has been invaluable. We've had to re-wire our own brains away from traditional parenting and how we have been brought up. Before starting our sessions with you it felt like my brain was full of knots, over the course of the sessions those knots have slowly been untangled, and I'm now able to connect those loose strings together. The best metaphor I can come up with on our current situation is that our son is like a spider that's trying to get out of the sink with the tap running, I now know how to support him to create that 'web' to get himself back up. Thank you so much for spending time with us, your knowledge on neurodiversity and your support has been invaluable and has changed our lives"	Thank you	Autism Team
"Support has been brilliant and has been a great help to us as a family"	Thank you	Team Around the Family
"I will be going to the Trilogy nightclub for the first time ever tonight. It will be great to be able to be in a nightclub atmosphere with the great well-being team Llwybrau Llesiant. I would like to thank the amazing crew for all the work they are doing to arrange different activities and sessions. Without them there would not be such excellent opportunities to have in the first place. Thank you very much! "	Thank you	Well-being Pathways Team (Adult Learning Disability)
I am contacting you regarding my mother. She has recently moved from BM to BS. I just wanted to pass on my gratitude to Nia and make you aware of how wonderful and supportive she has been. Mum's dementia has deteriorated significantly and moving to a different care home had always been a huge concern due to my worries of how it would affect her. Nia dealt with everything so sensitively and kept me updated throughout. She shows wonderful empathy. The move was arranged so quickly, and she is now very settled in the new home. Please pass on my thanks and gratitude."	Thank you	Adults Service (Community Resources Team)
"I am writing to you to express our sincere thanks as a family to the carers of Cyngor Gwynedd, under the able guidance of Rowena Cowell, who looked after my father at his home for a number of years until his death in mid-January 2026. Words cannot adequately express the extent of our debt and thanks to your wonderful carers. They were so caring, patient, friendly and firm when needed (and this was needed sometimes!). We marvel at the dedication of the	Thank you	Domiciliary Care (Internal Provider)

carers and their amazing ability in dealing with X and also in communicating with us as a family when needed. X always appreciated the visits, company and friendship of the carers. I will refer to the work of the carers in my tribute to my father at his funeral service in Aberystwyth, referring to them as 'angels', and that is no exaggeration. They deserve respect, commendation and praise, and we wish them all the best in their vital work caring for the elderly in their homes. Rowena Cowell's unbeaten leadership must also be commended. She was wise, willing to give her advice and very effective in advocating for my father when needed."		
"Quite often, we are sure you receive emails from people complaining about the services offered by Gwynedd Council Adults and Children Services. Well, this email is the exact opposite, we want to highly commend all the staff at Plas Maesincla Caernarfon. My Mother spent over six very happy years at Plas Maesincla, having previously resided at Plas Pengwaith for three years, again well loved and cared for. Sadly, my mother passed away peacefully at the grand age of 105 years. We live 100 miles away and over the years, have been comforted and reassured that my mother was receiving love and excellent care, throughout her time at Plas Maesincla. Nothing was too much trouble for the staff; they are the most caring and dedicated people we have come to know. Not only did they love and care for my mother, they looked after us when visiting, through some dark times with her health failing over the last six months, in particular. So, we decided that a big "Thank you and Well Done' should be said to all at Plas Maesincla and that you in should be aware of what wonderful staff you have there. With our thanks and gratitude"	Thank you	Residential and Day Care (Internal Provider)
"A word of sincere thanks for the tender and kind care that Mum received in her home at the end of her life. Her wish was to be at home. That was made possible, but it wouldn't have been possible without your help and support. It was so valuable to have that support through the medium of Welsh, by women from Llŷn, at the heart of her community. We will be forever grateful"	Thank you	Domiciliary Care (Internal Provider)