

NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL

REPORT

TO: Social Work Committee	Subject: COMPLAINTS STATUS REPORT PERIOD 1 APRIL 2000 - 31 MARCH 2001
FROM: Jim Dickie Director of Social Work	
DATE OF COMMITTEE: 24 May 2001	
REPORT AUTHOR: Dennis O'Donnell	
REF:	

1 CONTENT AND PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This annual report outlines the Social Work Department's performance in the area of complaints. Within a wider service context there are relatively few complaints, but those received are often sensitive and complex.
- 1.2 The appendices illustrate a significant decrease in complaints accompanied by an increase in the proportion upheld or partially upheld. There are wide variations in complaints levels noted between Area Teams. Complaints regarding assessments for aids and adaptations have decreased while some increase is noted in relation to residential services for older people.
- 1.3 Current staff training initiatives regarding complaints handling are reported along with the move to incorporate complaints handling and reporting arrangements into a wider Customer Care context.
- 1.4 The report is submitted for noting and for members consideration.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Social Work Department operates its Complaints Procedure in line with guidance and directions set out in Scottish Office Circular SWSG 5/96 which requires that investigations take place as close as possible to the point of service delivery within defined time-scales. Mechanisms are in place to ensure that learning from complaints can be used to inform and improve operational practice.

3 SERVICE CONTEXT IN RELATION TO COMPLAINTS LEVELS

- 3.1 The Social Work Department provides a wide range of statutory and non-statutory services to the population of North Lanarkshire. In the year 2000/2001 approximately 26,600 cases were open. Around 20,000 of these were from general community care groups, 4,000 from services for children or their families and 1,200 from Criminal Justice services.

- 3.2 A total of 85 formal complaints were received in the course of the year relating to assessment and care management, or services provided directly by the Social Work Department. A further 39 complaints were received in respect of nursing home, residential, day care and care at home services provided on behalf of the Department by the Independent Sector.
- 3.3 Complaints received in the current year represent around 0.5% of the total number of people receiving a social work service.

4 IMPROVEMENTS IN HANDLING COMPLAINTS ABOUT DIRECTLY PROVIDED SOCIAL WORK SERVICES

- 4.1 Information on Complaints Handling is now included in induction training for all Social Work staff.
- 4.2 Administrative, residential and day care staff are currently receiving training on informal complaints handling in the context of Customer Care with the emphasis on resolving issues and logging these for the purpose of service improvement and development. Training is planned for a further 30 Officers in relation to investigating serious or complex complaints
- 4.3 Formal and informal complaints returns, and action plans arising from these are submitted to the Monitoring and Standards Manager for central collation and analysis. This provides a further overview of service wide issues which may require to be addressed.

5 HANDLING OF COMPLAINTS REGARDING SERVICES PROVIDED ON BEHALF OF THE DEPARTMENT

- 5.1 Complaints about services provided by third parties on behalf of the local authority remain the responsibility of the local authority. Investigation is managed by the Monitoring and Standards Manager or passed to other registering authorities such as Lanarkshire Health Board as appropriate.
- 5.2 Formal complaints brought to the Department's attention regarding registered residential or day services, are usually investigated by officers from the Registration and Inspection Unit and dealt with under registration procedures.

6 COMPLAINTS FINDINGS

- 6.1 Where any complainer is dissatisfied with Departmental findings following the investigation of their complaint, the option of seeking a review by the Social Work (Complaints Review) Sub Committee if available. No requests to seek such a review have been made this year.

6.2 The Tables and graphs attached as Appendix I illustrate the number, location and nature of complaints received from 01 April 2000 to 31 March 2001, and quantify numbers upheld / partially upheld not upheld, and those addressed with prescribed time scales.

7 CONCLUSIONS

7.1 The context within which Social Work operates, particularly in areas where there are statutory responsibilities, means that some service users may experience a sense of frustration in their dealings with the Department.

7.2 The 85 formal complaints received constitutes a reduction of 23% and should be considered in the context of the 24,000 open cases within the Department during the relevant period.

7.3 Arrangements for receiving and addressing complaints will continue to be kept under review. Staff training, further developments in the operation of the informal complaints system and the provision and implementation of actions plans will also continue to contribute to improvements in practice in the coming year.

7.4 The Department's continuing commitment to raising standards through improving services and performance should, over the longer term, continue to achieve a reduction in the level of complaints. Measures described above should assist in identifying areas which require to be addressed and in the development of the complaints procedure as a quality assurance tool.

8 RECOMMENDATION

8.1 Committee is asked to note the contents of this report,

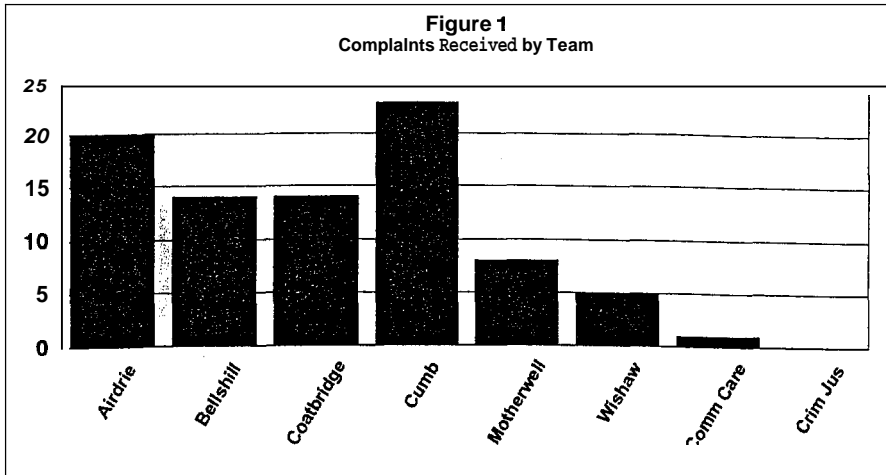
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Jim Dickie
Director of Social Work
17 May 2001

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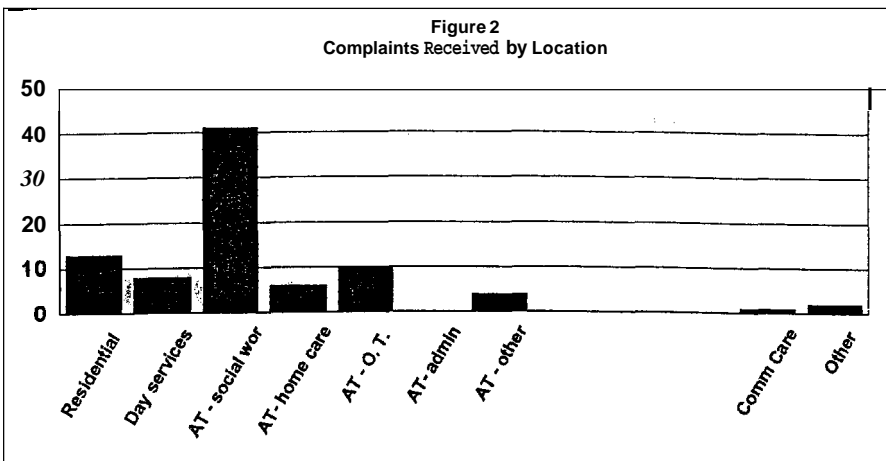
APPENDIX 1



Team / Service	Complaints
Airdrie	20
Bellshill	14
Coatbridge	14
Cumb	23
Motherwell	8
Wishaw	5
Comm Care	1
Crim Jus	0
Total	85

complaints Patterns

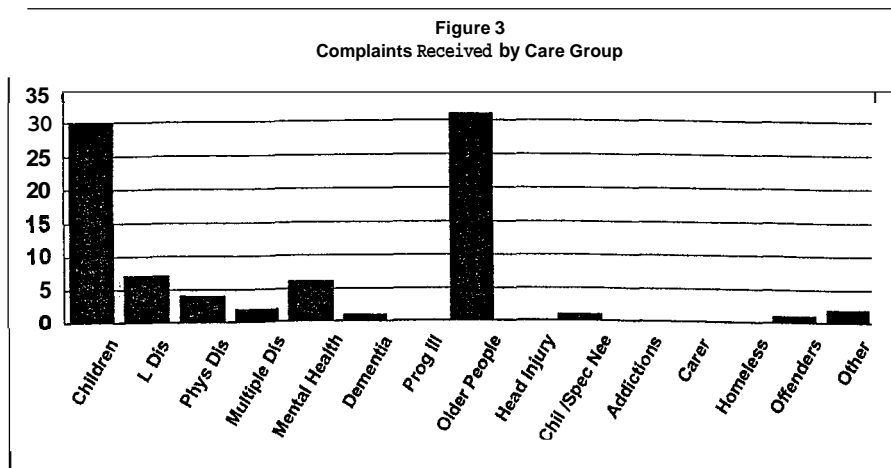
Figure 1 sets out the spread of complaints received at various service points including Area Teams, Community Care (Hospital/ Merryston Care Base) and Criminal Justice Services. A decrease from 110 to 85 complaints is noted with Motherwell experiencing the greatest decrease. Factors behind wide variation in complaint levels need not reflect poor comparable service performance, but may reflect efforts to develop the Complaints Procedure into an accessible tool for service users.



Residential	13
Day services	8
Area Team Social Work	41
Area Team Home Care	6
Area Team OT	10
Area Team Admin/Clerical	0
Area Team - Other	4
Community Care	1
Other	2
Total	85

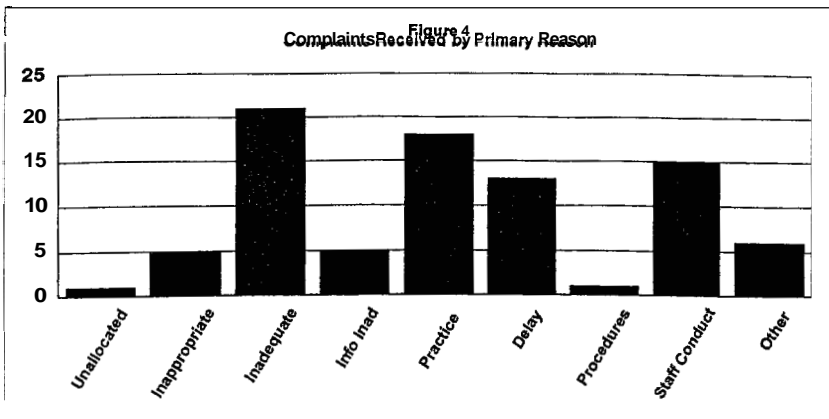
Locus of Complaints

Figure 2 sets out the main areas of service where complaints were raised. The pattern is broadly similar to the previous year's findings apart from Area Team Social Work Services where there is an increased proportion of complaints rising from 35% to 48%.



Care Group	Complaints
Children	30
L Dis	7
Phys Dis	4
Multiple Dis	2
Mental Health	6
Dementia	1
Prog Ill	0
Head Injury	0
Chil /Spec Need	1
Addictions	0
Carer	0
Homeless	0
Offenders	1
Other	2
Total	85

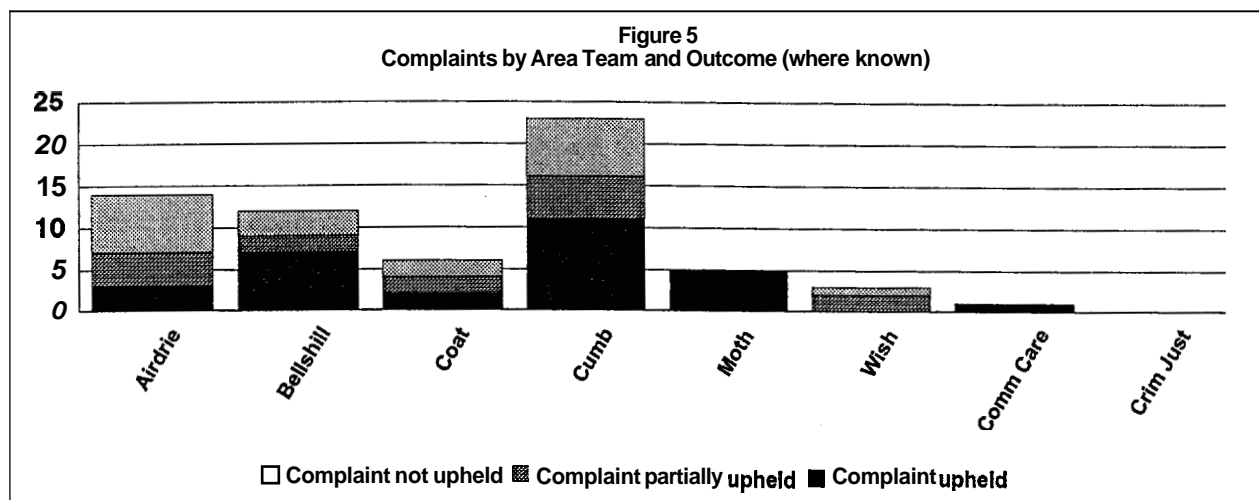
Figure 3 sets out areas of complaint by Care Group. Again the general pattern is similar to last year although complaints about Children and Family Services have increased in proportion from 24% to 35%. Efforts to raise awareness of the Complaints Procedure among young people may account for this rise.



Primary Reason	Compl
Resource Unalk	1
Resource Inappropriate	5
Resource Inadequate	21
Information Inadequate	5
Practice Issues	18
Unacceptable Delay	13
Procedures not Followed	1
Staff Conduct	15
Other	6
Total	85

Nature of Complaints

Figure 4 illustrates the primary reasons for Complaints. The pattern is similar to last year with the exception of Resource Inadequate which has increased as a proportion of complaints received. Several of these relate to the condition of buses transporting service users, and to the fabric of buildings.



	Airdrie	Bellshill	Coat	Cumb	Moth	Wish	Comm Care	Crim Just
Complaint upheld	3	7	2	11	5	0	1	0
Complaint partially upheld	4	2	2	5	0	2	0	0
Complaint not upheld	7	3	2	7	0	1	0	0

Outcomes

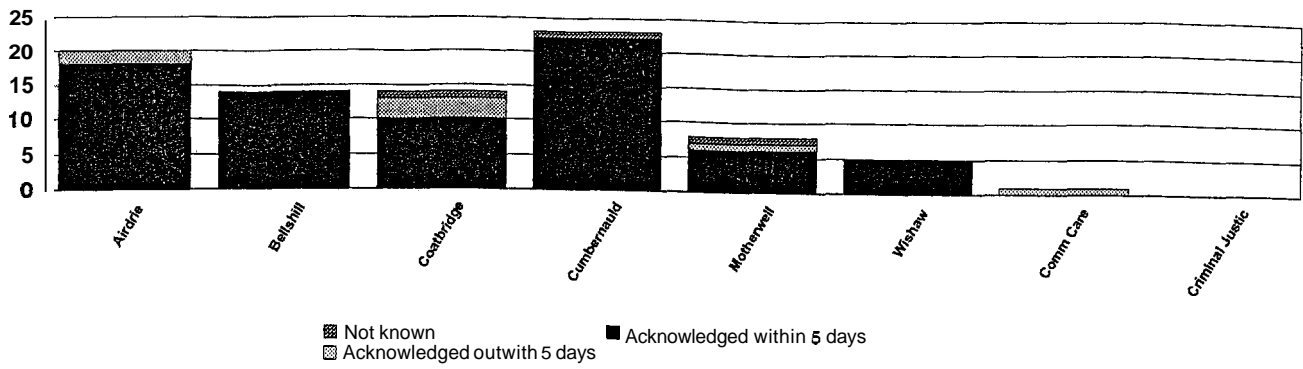
Figure 5 illustrates the percentage of those complaints wholly or partially upheld, or not upheld. The percentage of upheld / partially upheld has increased significantly from 55% to 68%. Complaints are deemed to be partially upheld if any aspect of the complaint is found to be substantiated, even if this is not the main focus of the complaint. Findings may reflect increased efforts to resolve complaints informally where possible, diverting these from formal procedures.

Figure 6: Upheld and Partially Upheld complaints by Area Team and Client Group

	Airdrie	Bellshill	Coatbridge	Cumbernauld	Motherwell	Wishaw	Comm Care	Crim Just	Total upheld / partially upheld	Total outcome known	category upheld
	number	number	number	number	number	number	number	number			part upheld
Children & Families	3	1	2	3	3	1	0	0	13	21	61.9%
Learning Disability	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	3	6	50.0%
Physical Disability	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	100.0%
Multiple Disability	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.0%
Mental Health	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	2	4	50.0%
Dementia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0.0%
Progressive Illness	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Older People's Services	3	5	1	12	1	0	0	0	22	25	88.0%
Head Injury	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Children with special needs	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	100.0%
Addictions	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Carer	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Vulnerable Homelessness	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Offenders / Victims	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	100.0%
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0.0%
Total	7	9	4	16	5	2	1	0	44	64	68.8%

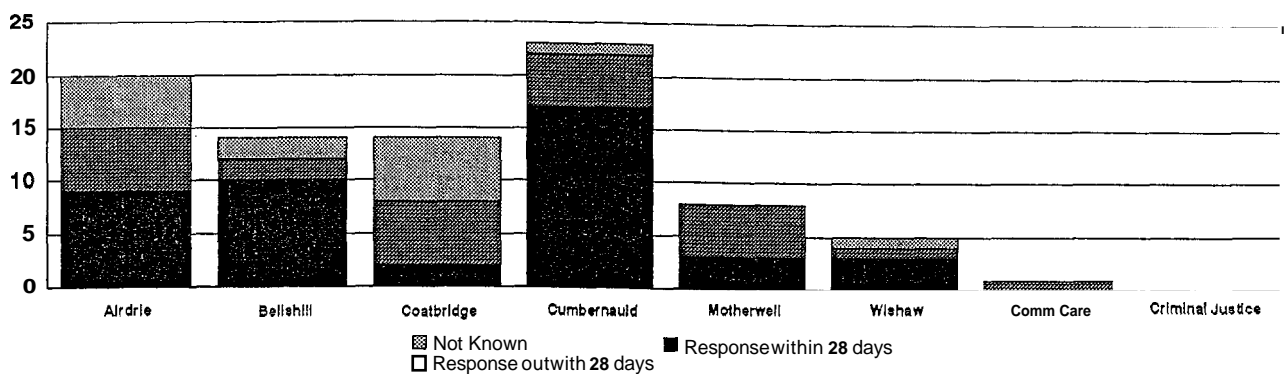
Figure 6 sets out the number of complaints upheld/ partially upheld in relation to areas of client service and primary reason for complaint. These are broadly in line with the previous year's figures, with Children and Families and Older People's Services attracting most upheld/ partially upheld complaints. Examples relating to Children and Families include complaints about staff changes within a Children's Unit and advice provided in relation to Adoption Procedures. The relationship between Unacceptable Delay and Equipment and Adaptation Services is illustrated in this figure.

Figure 7
Number of Complaints by Area Team and Acknowledgement Time Scale



	Airdrie	Bellshill	Coatbridge	Cumbernauld	Motherwell	Wishaw	Comm Care	Criminal Justice	Total	% known
Acknowledged within 5 days	18	14	10	22	6	5	0	0	75	91.5%
Acknowledged outwith 5 days	2	0	3	0	1	0	1	0	7	8.5%
Not known	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	3	
Total	20	14	14	23	8	5	1	0	85	100.0%
% within 5 days	90.0%	100.0%	76.9%	100.0%	85.7%	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	91.5%	

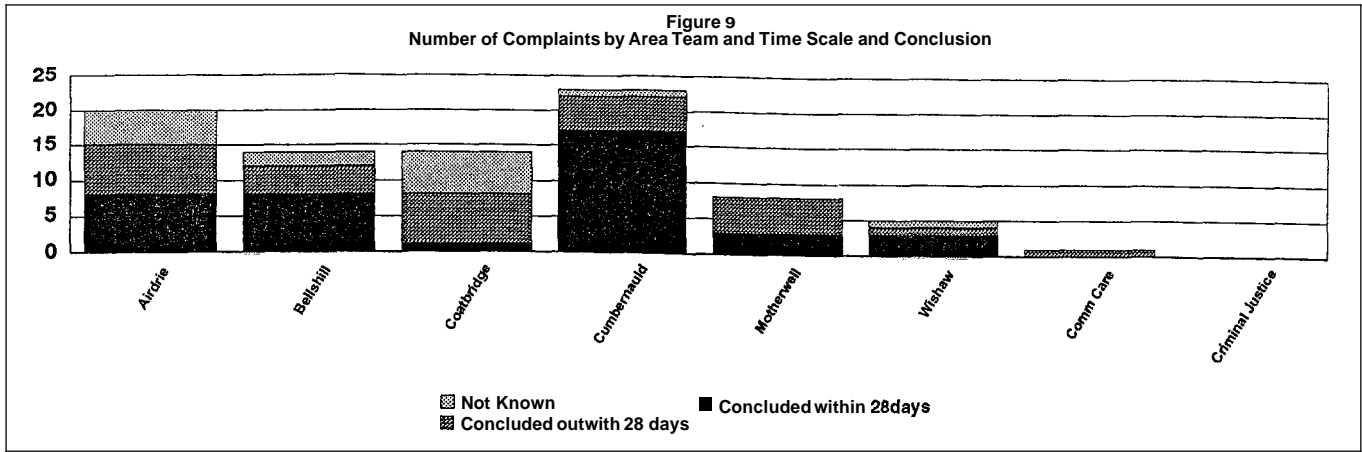
Figure 8
Number of Complaints by Area Team and interim / Final Response Scale



	Airdrie	Bellshill	Coatbridge	Cumbernauld	Motherwell	Wishaw	Comm Care	Criminal Justice	Total	% known
Response within 28 days	9	10	2	17	3	3	0	0	44	82.9%
Response outwith 28 days	6	2	6	5	5	1	1	0	26	37.1%
Not Known	5	2	6	1	0	1	0	0	15	0.0%
Total	20	14	14	23	8	5	1	0	85	100.0%
% within 28 days where outcome known	80.0%	83.3%	25.0%	77.3%	37.5%	75.0%	0%	0.0%	82.9%	

Response Time Scales

Figures 7 and 8 illustrate the Department's performance in responding to the target scales for acknowledgement within 5 days and interim/final response within 28 days. There is a wide variation in performance between individual teams. An overall improvement from 85% to 91% is noted in relation to acknowledgements while the performance in relation to interim/final responses remains the same.



Complaints received by Area Team and Time scale for conclusion

	Airdrie	Bellshill	Coatbridge	Cumbernauld	Motherwell	Wishaw	Comm Care	Criminal Justice	Total	% outcome
Concluded within 28 days	8	8	1	17	3	3	0	0	40	57.1%
Concluded outwith 28 days	7	4	7	5	5	1	1	0	30	42.9%
Not Known	5	2	6	1	0	1	0	0	15	0.0%
Total	20	14	14	23	8	5	1	0	85	100.0%
% within 28 days where outcome known	53.3%	66.7%	12.5%	77.3%	37.5%	75.0%	0%	0.0%	57.1%	

Figure Q shows the number of complaints totally concluded within 28 days. The proportion concluded outwith 28 days demonstrates the complex of issues which require to be addressed in the context of Social Work Services.

INDEPENDENT SECTOR

Figure 10: Independent Sector Complaints

	2000/2001		1999/2000	
	Number	%	Number	%
Residential	9	23.1%	11	32.4%
Day Care	1	2.6%	23	87.6%
Care at Home	4	10.3%		
Supported Living	1	2.6%		

Figures relating to other Independent Sector providers involved in Care at Home and Supported Living are now being logged although no figures are available for comparison