

To: SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE		Subject: COMPLAINTS STATUS REPORT PERIOD 01 APRIL 2001 TO 31 MARCH 2002
From: JIM DICKIE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK		
Date: 22 August 2002	Ref: DOD/EOC	

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1. This report outlining the Social Work Department's annual performance in the area of complaints and outlining pending changes in to the processes for dealing with complaints is submitted for noting and for Members' consideration.
- 1.2. In the wider context of Social Work services in North Lanarkshire there are relatively few complaints. Those received are often complex and require sensitive handling.
- 1.3. Analysis of complaints trends is set out in the Appendix

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. This 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 complaints information can be used to inform and improve operational practice.

3. SERVICE CONTEXT AND FINDINGS

- 3.1. The Social Work Department provides a wide range of statutory and non-statutory services to the population of North Lanarkshire. In the current year approximately 30,000 cases were open with around 22,000 of these being from general community care groups and the remainder from Children and Families, and Criminal Justice Services.
- 3.2. The complaints procedure is publicised at all Social Work service points. Leaflets include a stamped addressed tear-off slip for ease of use by social work service users.
- 3.3. A total of 90 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. These complaints received represent around 0.3% of the total number of people receiving a Social Work service.
- 3.4. The Appendix illustrates that the number of complaints received and complaints patterns are broadly similar to the previous year. A number of complaints about an identical concern in two residential homes have been treated as single complaints. Complaints relating to assessment and provision of Aids and Adaptation have decreased markedly. The proportion of complaints upheld or partially upheld has reduced by around 10% in the past year to 57% of the total complaints investigated.

4. CONTINUED IMPROVEMENTS IN HANDLING COMPLAINTS ABOUT DIRECTLY PROVIDED SOCIAL WORK SERVICES

- 4.1. Staff training initiatives regarding complaints have been incorporated into General Customer Care training and into induction training for all social work staff in order to raise awareness and improve services.
- 4.2. Further training is being planned in the coming year for officers involved in the investigation of serious or complex complaints.
- 4.3. The remit for monitoring and analysis of complaints regarding local authority services is transferring to the Performance Review Section in order that this may be considered in the wider context of the performance of the Department.

5. HANDLING OF COMPLAINTS REGARDING REGISTERED AND INDEPENDENT SECTOR SERVICES

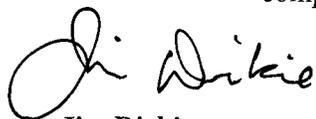
- 5.1. Changes in regulatory arrangements outlined in the Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001 will have an impact on existing guidance and directions relating to complaints handling in the coming year. For the present time users of services provided by third parties on behalf of the Department will continue to have access to the local authority complaints procedure and actions arising from that arrangement will remain under the remit of the Monitoring and Standards Manager.
- 5.2. The Care Commission now has authority to investigate complaints brought to their attention about registered services, including local authority residential and day services. Protocols to share information and findings about complaint investigations will be developed in the coming months.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 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 is available. No requests to seek such a Review have been made this year.
- 6.2. In view of a recent finding in the English High Court, guidance has been issued by the Scottish Executive indicating that the composition of Complaints Review Committees was incompatible with Article 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights in terms of independence and impartiality. This matter is currently under consideration.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1. Committee is asked to:
 - (i) note the contents of this report
 - (ii) require the Director of Social Work to bring forward further reports on changes in complaints management arrangements.

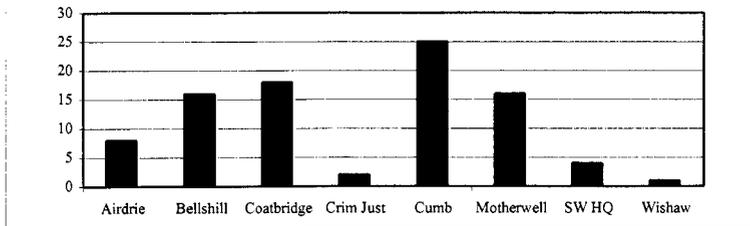


Jim Dickie
Director of Social Work
7 August 2002

For further information on this report please contact Dennis O'Donnell, Monitoring and Standards Manager TEL: (01698 332058)

APPENDIX 1

Figure 1
Complaints Received by Team

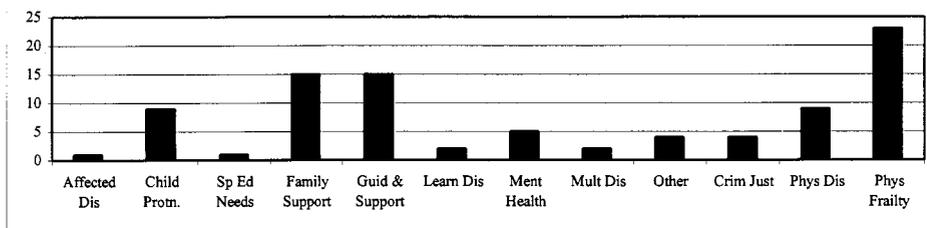


Airdrie	Bellshill	Coatbridge	Crim Just	Cumb	Motherwell	SW HQ	Wishaw
8	16	18	2	25	16	4	1

Complaints Patterns

Figure 1 sets out the spread of complaints across Teams including SW HQ which has responsibility for Merryston Care Base / Hospital services. The total number of complaints received (90) is roughly in line with the previous year when 85 complaints were received. 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.

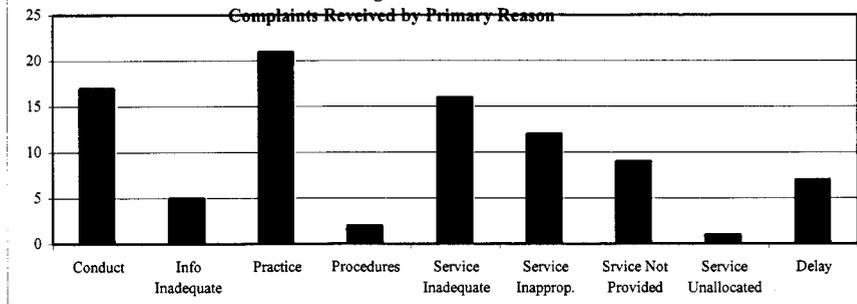
Figure 2
Complaints Received by Care Group Category



Affected Dis	Child Prot.	Sp Ed Needs	Family Supp	Guid & Supp	Learn Dis	Ment Health	Mult Dis	Other	Crim Just	Phys Dis	Phys Frailty
1	9	1	15	15	2	5	2	4	4	9	23

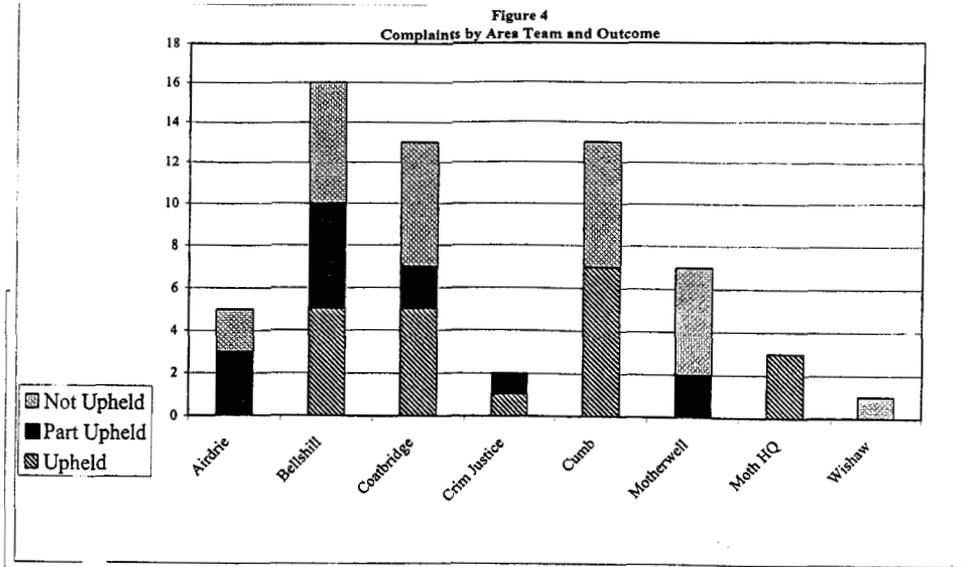
Figure 2 sets out areas of complaint by Care Group Category. Direct comparisons with the previous year are not possible due to some differences in categorisation relating to use of the SWIS complaints module for statistical analysis. There has been a slight increase in the proportion of complaints received in relation to Children and Family Services and a slight reduction in those relating to Physical Frailty (older people).

Figure 3
Complaints Received by Primary Reason



Conduct	Info Inadequa	Practice	Procedures	Service Inade	Service Inapp	Srvice Not Pr	Service Unall	Delay
17	5	21	2	16	12	9	1	7

Figure 3 illustrates the primary reason from complaints received. The pattern is similar to the that of the previous year. A number of complaints were received from residents in relation to faulty heating and draughty windows in a residential home, and from a group of young people in a residential setting. In each case these have been treated as one complaint in order to avoid distortion of the figures.



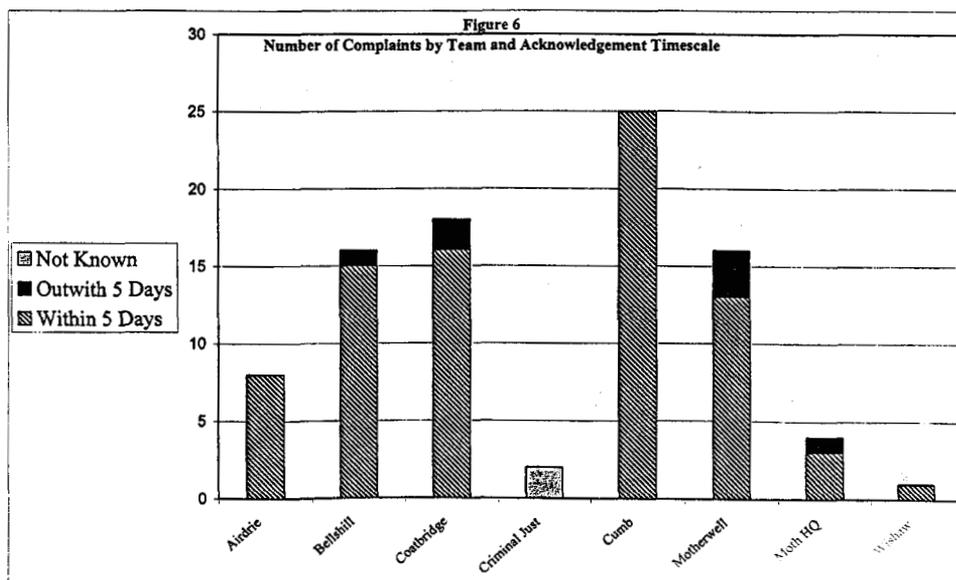
	Airdrie	Bellshill	Coatbridge	Crim Justice	Cumb	Motherwell	Moth HQ	Wishaw	TOTAL
Upheld		5	5	1	7		3		21
Part Upheld	3	5	2	1		2			13
Not Upheld	2	6	6		6	5		1	26
Not Known	3	0	5		12	9	1		30

Figure 4 illustrates the number of complaints upheld / partially upheld and not upheld. Complaints fully or partially upheld formed some 57% of complaints received where the outcome is known. This is a reduction on the previous year where the figure was an exceptionally high 68% but is more in line the general trend over the last few years. Complaints are considered to be partially upheld if even only one aspect of the complaint is substantiated.

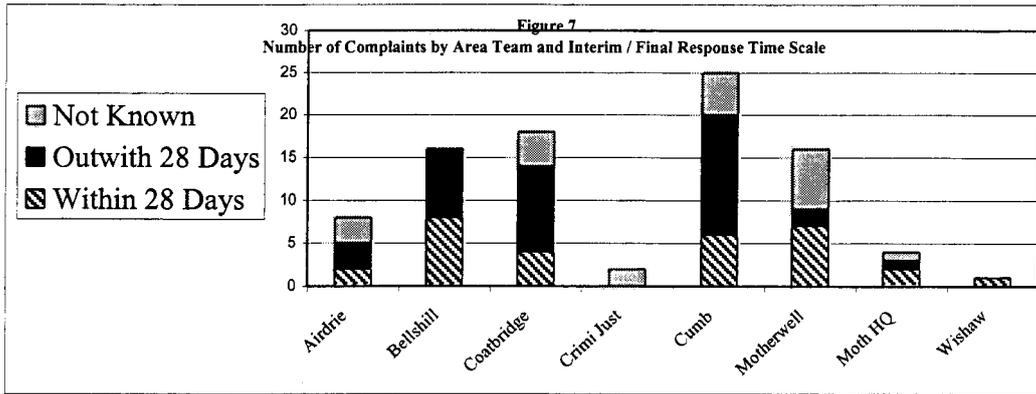
Figure 5
Upheld and Partially Upheld Complaints by Team and Care Group

	Airdrie	Bellshill	Coatbridge	Crim Just	Cumb	Motherwell	Moth. HQ	TOTAL
Affected Dis					1			1
Child Protec		2				1		3
Family Supp	1	3	5					9
Guid & Supp					2			2
Learning Dis						1		1
Mental Health		2						2
Mult Dis		1						1
Crim Just				2				2
Phys Dis			1					1
Phys Frailty		4	1		4		3	12
TOTAL	3	10	7	2	7	2	3	34

Figure 5 sets out the number of complaints upheld / partially upheld in relation to areas of client service. In line with previous years Children and Family Services and Older People Services attracted the highest number of upheld / partially upheld complaints. Complaints in the former category included poor information provided at a Children's Hearing, and in the latter category included poor condition of the fabric of a residential establishment.

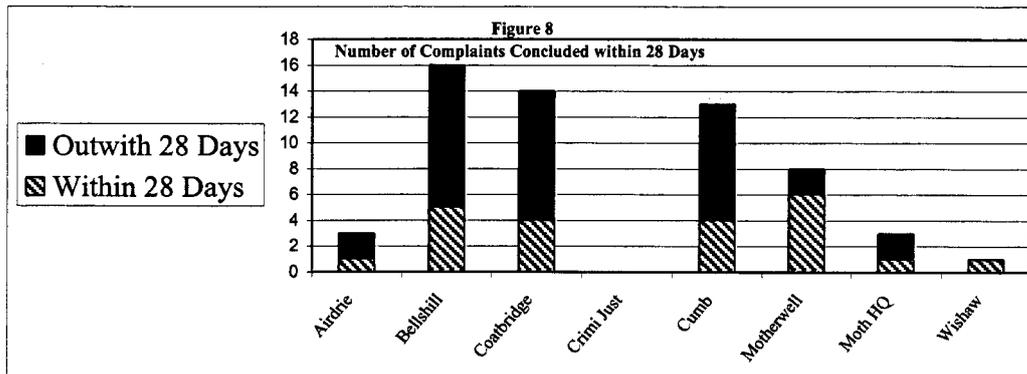


	Airdrie	Bellshill	Coatbridge	Criminal Just	Cumb	Motherwell	Moth HQ	Wishaw	TOTAL	%
In 5 Days	8	15	16		25	13	3	1	81	92%
Out 5 Days		1	2			3	1		7	8%
Not Known				2					2	



	Airdrie	Bellshill	Coatbridge	Crimi Just	Cumb	Motherwell	Moth HQ	Wishaw	TOTAL	%
In 28 days	2	8	4		6	7	2	1	30	44%
Out 28 Days	3	8	10		14	2	1		38	56%
Not Known	3	0	4	2	5	7	1		22	

Figures 6 and 7 illustrate the Department's performance in responding to target scales for acknowledgement within 5 days and interim / final response within 28 days. Acknowledgement time scales are in line with the previous year at 92%. There has been a marked drop in performance relating to interim / final responses from 63% to 44%. This may reflect the disruption during the period of the Departmental restructuring when managers key to the process changed or were not in post.



	Airdrie	Bellshill	Coatbridge	Crimi Just	Cumb	Motherwell	Moth HQ	Wishaw	TOTAL	%
In 28 Days	1	5	4	0	4	6	1	1	22	38%
Out 28 Days	7	11	14	2	21	10	3	0	68	62%

Figure 8 shows the number of complaints totally concluded within 28 days. The proportion concluded outwith this time scale demonstrates the complexity of the issues which require to be addressed in the context of Social Work Services.