

AGENDA ITEM No. 20

To: SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE		Subject: COMPLAINTS STATUS REPORT 1 ST APRIL 2002 TO 31 ST MARCH 2003
From: DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK		
Date: 28 th AUGUST 2003	Ref: JD/MM/EK	

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT / INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This report outlines the annual performance of the Social Work Department in the area of complaints and includes statistics and trends regarding complaints.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1. The Social Work Department Complaints Procedure is operated in line with guidance and directions set in the Scottish Office Circular SWSG 5/96. This requires that investigations take place as close as possible to the point of service delivery within a defined timescale. Mechanisms are being developed to ensure that complaints information can be used to inform and improve operational practice.

3. PROPOSALS / CONSIDERATIONS

- 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 50,000 referrals were made to the Department, of these approximately 37,500 were from general Community Care groups and the remainder from Children and Families, and Justice Services. The Department received 126 complaints which represents 0.252% of service referrals. Appendix 1 contains a summary of the statistics.
- 3.2. The complaints procedure is publicised at all Social Work service points. The Complaints Leaflet includes a tear off section with prepaid postage. The complaints procedure for the Care Commission and Local Government Ombudsman Service are also highlighted on a poster, which is displayed in every Social Work unit and office.
- 3.3. The Complaints Procedure for the Department was approved by Committee in 1999 and is currently being reviewed. This review is taking place in tandem with a corporate Best Value Review of Complaints Handling throughout the Council's services.

4. FINANCIAL / PERSONNEL / LEGAL / POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. Within the Social Work Department the remit for monitoring and analysis of complaints regarding local Social Work services has been transferred to the Resources Section, in order to inform the wider appraisal of performance and continuous improvement within the Department.

5. HANDLING OF COMPLAINTS REGARDING REGISTERED AND INDEPENDENT SECTOR SERVICES.

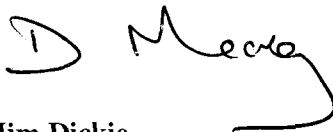
- 5.1. Changes in regulatory arrangements outlined in the Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001 will have an impact on existing guidance and directions relating to complaints handling in the future. Users of services provided by third parties on behalf of Social Work continue to have access to the local authority complaints procedure. Actions arising from this arrangement will remain under the remit of the Monitoring and Standards Section.

6. RIGHTS OF APPEAL

- 6.1. Where any complainant is dissatisfied with the findings of the Social Work Department in respect of the investigation of a complaint and the outcomes of the investigation, they have the option of appeal to the Social Work (Complaints Review) Sub Committee (CRC).
- 6.2. A complainant also has the right to go to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman who may rule on matters of maladministration.
- 6.3. In the year covered by this report no complaints were referred to the CRC or the Ombudsman.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1. The Committee is asked to note the contents of this report and Appendix 1.



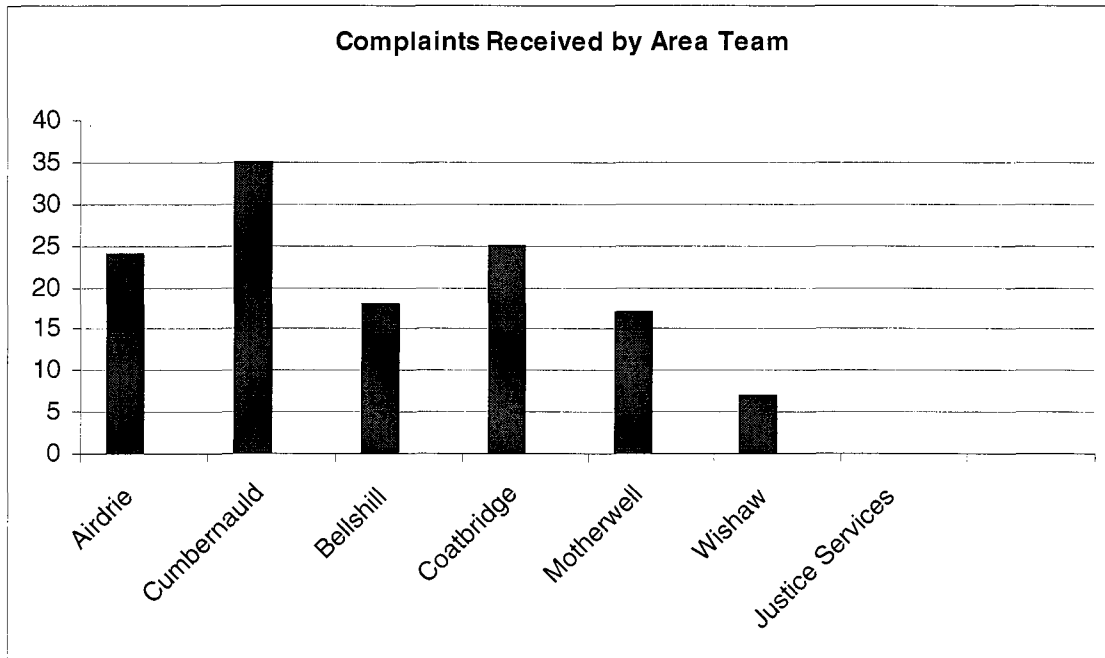
Jim Dickie
Director of Social Work
10th July 2003

*For further information on this report please contact Ronnie Paul, Head of Social Work Resources
TEL: (01698 332023)*

Appendix 1

Figure 1

Complaints Received by Area Team: sets out the spread of complaints across Teams. The total number of complaints received - 126 - is an increase on last year by 36. (126 represents 0.252 % of service referrals.) Factors behind wide variations in numbers of complaints received need not necessarily reflect differing service levels within teams, but may reflect the use of the complaints procedure as a management tool.



Department	Airdrie	Cumbernauld	Bellshill	Coatbridge	Motherwell	Wishaw	Justice Services
126	24	35	18	25	17	7	0

Appendix 1

Figure 2

Complaints Received by Care Group sets out areas of complaint by Care Group. The groups Physical Frailty (Elderly) and Children and Families account for 60% of all complaints received during the year, the represents a proportional increase of 10 % for the previous year (50%). These Care Groups cover 84 of the 126 complaints received

Complaints Received by Care Group

	Department	Airdrie	Cumbernauld	Bellshill	Coatbridge	Motherwell	Wishaw	Justice Services
Unspecified	1	1						0
Children & Families	44	10	19	1	10	2	2	0
Learning Disability	2		2					0
Physical Disability	16	3	1	5	2	5		0
Mental Health	4					4		0
Progressive Illness	3		2	1				0
Physical Frailty (elderly)	40	7	8	7	12	2	4	0
Special Education (child)	4		1	3				0
Vulnerable	1	1						0
Offenders	3	1		1	1			0
Not Appropriate	8	1	2			4	1	0
Totals	126	24	35	18	25	17	7	0

Figure 3

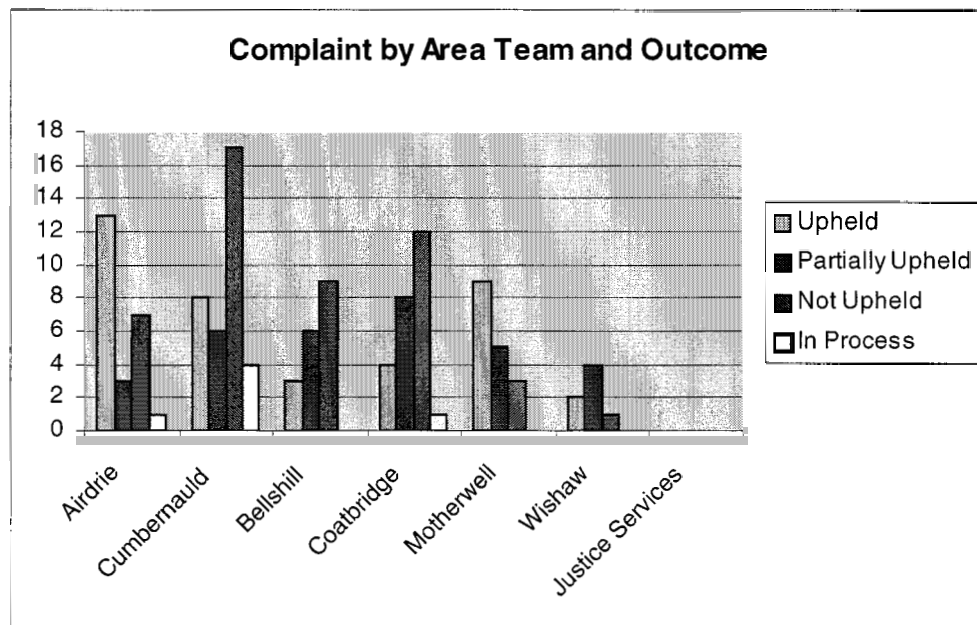
Primary Reason for Complaint sets out the reasons for Complaints being lodged they are similar to previous years except the unspecified, "Other" which shows a significant increase. Action is being taken to ensure that reasons for complaints are specified within returns to enable service improvement where required.

	Department	Airdrie	Cumbernauld	Bellshill	Coatbridge	Motherwell	Wishaw	Justice Services
Resources Unallocated	7	5	1			1		0
Resources Inappropriate	29	6	15		4	2	2	0
Resources Inadequate	23	2	10	4	2	3	2	0
Information Inadequate	3			1	2	0		0
Bad Practice	20	5	1	6	2	4	2	0
Unacceptable Delay	7	1		1	2	3		0
Procedures not Followed	8		1	1	2	4		0
Staff Attitude	20	4	6	3	7			0
Other	9	1	1	2	4		1	0
Totals	126	24	35	18	25	17	7	0

Appendix 1

Figure 4

Complaint by Area Team and Outcome sets out to illustrate the number of complaints upheld, partially upheld, and not upheld by the Team investigating the complaint. There has been an increase in the percentage of complaints upheld, from 23 % (21) in 2001-2002 to 31% (39) 2002-2003. Partially upheld complaints have increased from 14 % (13) in 2001-2002 to 25% (32) in 2002-2003. Complaints not upheld have remained at 39% (49) in 2002-2003.



	Department	Airdrie	Cumbernauld	Bellshill	Coatbridge	Motherwell	Wishaw	Justice Services
Upheld	39	13	8	3	4	9	2	0
Partially Upheld	32	3	7	6	8	5	4	0
Not Upheld	49	7	16	9	12	3	1	0
In Process	6	1	4	0	1	0	0	0
Totals	126	24	35	18	25	17	7	0

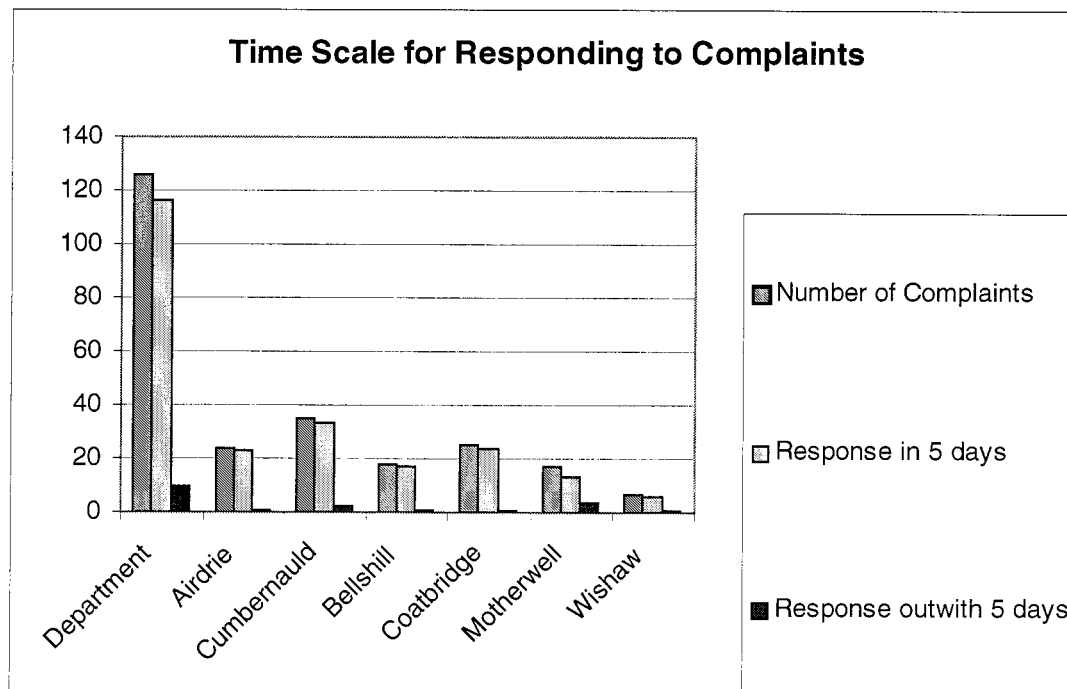
Appendix 1

Figure 5

Timescale for responding to Complaints sets out to illustrate the timescale taken to respond to complainants and the number of complaints resolved or interim letters posted within the timescale indicated in the Customer Service Charter. More than 90% of complaints are acknowledged within 5 days, however the proportion of complaints resolved or interim letters issued within the 28-day timeframe is significantly lower (69%). When compared with previous years the final / interim response timescale shows a significant improvement, previously 44% of complaints were completed or an interim letter sent. It should be noted that this improvement took place when there was a significant increase in the number of complaints being handled, from 90 in period 2001-2002 to 126 in the current period 2002-2003.

Timescale for Responding to Complaints

	Department	Airdrie	Cumbernauld	Bellshill	Coatbridge	Motherwell	Wishaw	Justice Services
Total Complaints	126	24	35	18	25	17	7	0
Responded to in 5 days	116	23	33	17	24	13	6	0
Responded outwith 5 days	10	1	2	1	1	4	1	0
Not Complete	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0



Appendix 1

Figure 6

Timescale for Final or Interim Letters: sets out to illustrate the timescale for resolving complaints or to correspond with the complaint by way of an interim letter. Due to the complexity of some of the complaints received it is not always possible to comply with the necessary timescales. Whenever this is the case, efforts are made to provide interim letters and reports.

Timescale for Final or Interim Letter

	Department	Airdrie	Cumbernauld	Bellshill	Coatbridge	Motherwell	Wishaw	Justice Services
Total Complaints	126	24	35	18	25	17	7	0
Final Letter in 28 days	87	22	30	13	5	14	3	0
Final letter Outwith 28 days	33	1	4	5	20	0	3	0
Not Complete	6	1	1	0	0	3	1	0

