

To: SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE		Subject: COMPLAINTS STATUS REPORT 1 <sup>st</sup> APRIL 2003 TO 31 <sup>st</sup> MARCH 2004	
From: DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK			
Date: 28 <sup>th</sup> October 2004	Ref: JD/MM/EK		

### 1. Purpose of Report/Introduction

This report outlines the annual performance of the Social Work Department in the area of complaints and includes an analysis of 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.
- 2.2. 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 18,510 referrals were made to the Department, of these approximately 12,470 were from general Community Care groups and the remainder from Children and Families, and Justice Services. The Department received 141 complaints which represents 0.76% of service referrals. Appendix 1 contains a summary of the statistics.
- 2.3. 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. A new revised "Complaints" leaflet and form has been designed and distributed to all social work offices during the year 2003.04.
- 2.4. The Complaints Procedure for the Department 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.
- 2.5. Within the Social Work Department the remit for monitoring and analysis of complaints regarding local Social Work services sits with the Resources Section, in order to inform the wider appraisal of performance and continuous improvement within the Department.

### 3. Financial/Personnel/Legal/Policy Implications

- 3.1. HANDLING OF COMPLAINTS REGARDING REGISTERED AND INDEPENDENT SECTOR SERVICES.  
Changes in regulatory arrangements outlined in the Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001 continue to have an impact on existing guidance and directions relating to complaints handling. 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 fall within the remit of the Monitoring and Standards Section.

3.2. RIGHTS OF APPEAL

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).

3.3. A complainant also has the right to go to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman who may rule on matters of maladministration. Registerable services can be the subject of complaint to the Care Commission.

3.4. In the year covered by this report no complaints were referred to the CRC or the Ombudsman.

**4. Recommendation**

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



**Jim Dickie**  
**Director of Social Work**  
**9 September 2004**

For further information on this report please contact R. Paul, Head of Social Work Resources on telephone 01698 332023

Figure 1

**Complaints Received by Area Team:** sets out the spread of complaints across Teams. The total number of complaints received -141 is an increase on last year by 15 (141 represents 0.76% of service referrals dealt with during the period of this report).

Total Number of Complaints Received	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04
	90	126	141

Factors behind wide variations in numbers of complaints received need not necessarily reflect differing service levels within teams, but may reflect the use and application of the complaints procedure as a management tool.

COMPLAINTS RECEIVED April 2003-March 2004	Department	Airdrie	Cumbernauld	Bellshill	Coatbridge	Motherwell	Wishaw
Number of Complaints	141	18	57	7	5	38	16

Figure 2

Figure 2 sets out areas of complaints by Care Group. The groups Physical Frailty (Elderly), Children and Families and Physical Disability (which has shown a significant increase for previous years) make up more than 70% of complaints received by the department.

Care Group	Department	Airdrie	Cumbernauld	Bellshill	Coatbridge	Motherwell	Wishaw
Children & Families	35	7	22	2		2	2
Learn. Dis	9	1	2		1	4	1
Physic. Dis	27	2	11	3	1	8	2
Multiple. Dis	1					1	
Mental Health	8		3			4	1
Dementia	2					2	
Limit L/T Illness	2					2	
Progress. Illness	2					2	
Physic. Frail 65+	40	5	15	2	2	11	5
Head Injuries	1						1
Child Spec Ed.Needs	1	1					
Vulnerable Home	1		1				
Offenders/Victims	7	2	1			2	2
Not Relev. \Appro.	5	1	2		1		1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>141</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>15</b>

Figure 3

## Primary Reason for Complaint

Reason	Department	Airdrie	Cumbernauld	Bellshill	Coatbridge	Motherwell	Wishaw
Resource allocated	19	1	12			6	
Resource appropriate	10		3		1	5	1
Resource inadequate	37	4	10	3	1	15	4
Information inadequate	4	1	3				
Bad practice	25	4	13	2		5	1
Unacceptable delay	16	8	1			5	2
Procedures not followed	2	1				1	
Staff attitude	17	2	9	1	1	2	2
Other	21	2	6	1	2	4	6
<b>Totals</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>16</b>

Figure 4

**Complaints by Area Team and Outcomes** sets out to illustrate the number of complaints upheld, partially upheld and not upheld by the Team investigating the complaint. Four complaint investigations remain unresolved.

Outcome	Department	Airdrie	Cumbernauld	Bellshill	Coatbridge	Motherwell	Wishaw
Upheld	36	10	13	2	1	2	8
Partially upheld	32	3	5	2		18	4
Not upheld	69	5	36	3	4	18	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>15</b>

**Figure 5**

**Timescale for responding to complaints** sets out to illustrate the timescale taken to respond to complaints and the number of complaints resolved or interim letters posted within the timescale indicated in the Customer Service Charter. More than 92% of Complaints are acknowledged within 5 days, the proportion of complaints resolved within the 28 time frame is 78%

	Department	Airdrie	Cumbernauld	Bellshill	Coatbridge	Motherwell	Wishaw
Number of Complaints	141	18	57	7	5	38	16
Number Responded to in 5 days or less	131	18	55	7	4	36	11
Number Responded to in more than 5 days	10		2		1	2	5
Final/ Interim in less than 28 days	111	12	49	6	3	30	11
Final/ Interim more than 28 days	30	6	8	1	2	8	5