

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

20TH JULY 2016

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD – STAFF GUIDE

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY TO THE CABINET

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to consider the current Staff Guide and to discuss how it could be amended and adapted to suit Elected Members needs when reporting compliments and complaints.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

- 2.1 Members provide comment as appropriate on the Staff Guide (which is attached as Appendix 1 to the report)
- 2.2 Instruct officers to amend the guide following Members comments and report back a draft version of an ‘Elected Members’ guide to the board.

3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To provide Elected Members with guidance and assistance when reporting compliments and complaints.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 At the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Board on the 11th April, 2016 members were provided with details of the staff guide to ‘Communicating with Councillors, AMs and MPs’.
- 4.2 Following discussions it was resolved that the guide be formally presented at the next meeting of the Board to discuss how it could be amended and adapted to suit Elected Members needs

4.3 The Staff Guide is attached as appendix 1 to this report

5 CONCLUSION

5.1 An Elected Member guide to reporting of compliments and complaints will assist both Members and officers in this area, and can be utilised as part of the 'Corporate Parenting Induction programme' previously agreed by the Board, for any new members, in light of the forthcoming elections.

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COMMUNITY AND CHILDREN'S
SERVICES GROUP**

**Staff guide to communicating with Councillors,
Assembly Members and Members of Parliament.**

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AUTHOR'S TITLE:	Complaints and Quality Assurance Manager
DATE OF POLICY:	May 2015

Staff guide to communicating with Councillors, Assembly Members and Members of Parliament.

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INTRODUCTION

There are occasions when service users who are dissatisfied or unhappy with the Service's they receive from the Community Services or Children's Services Divisions make contact with their local Councillor, Assembly Member and/or Member of Parliament. Service users may also request the support of their Local Councillor as an advocate to clarify progress or to determine their entitlement to services. Both types of enquiry will result in the relevant division having to provide a verbal or written response that identifies our involvement with a service user.

The function of monitoring the correspondence from Local Councillors, Assembly Members and Members of Parliament is one that is managed within the Representation and Complaints Unit; all enquiries made on behalf of constituents are logged and monitored to inform service delivery in the same way that complaints and compliments enable us to do.

When providing information, the principles of the Data Protection Act 1998 will apply and information should only be given on a 'need to know basis'. In most circumstances the provision of specific information is unnecessary and a summary of involvement will suffice.

To ensure appropriate information is given, all communication with Local Councillors, Assembly Members and Members of Parliament must be managed by the Complaints and Representation Unit.

PROCESS FOR RESPONDING TO ENQUIRIES

Local Councillors

All written enquiries from Local Councillors should be passed to the Representation and Complaints Unit along with the relevant manager's draft response, within 10 working days. The final response should be sent no later than 15 working days from the date of receipt.

Local Councillors who make direct telephone contact with a team should be advised to contact the Complaints and Representation Unit as a first point of contact.

The Complaints and Representation Unit will promote its role and contact information to Councillors through the Member Induction scheme and other existing arrangements i.e. Corporate Parenting Board, Scrutiny Committee.

Assembly Members or Members of Parliament

A.M or M.P enquiries are normally received by the secretary for the Group Director where they are acknowledged and passed to the Representation and Complaints Unit. The Unit then gathers the relevant information and draft a response on behalf of the Group Director.

If a Team Manager or Senior Officer receives an enquiry from an A.M or M.P they must forward to the Group Director's secretary immediately. Where a request from an A.M or M.P is received via a Local Councillor then the Councillor should be advised of the appropriate process.

Enquiries from Assembly Members and Members of Parliament can only be responded to in the name of the Group Director.

All enquiries will be monitored to ascertain whether the issues raised can inform the improvement of services or service delivery.

Inappropriate requests for information

Staff should be aware that not all requests for information or enquiries are appropriate and care should be taken to ensuring that the principals of the Data Protection Act are adhered to at all times.

Only enquiries on behalf of service users or their advocate/representative should be responded to. Where it is uncertain that the Councillor is acting as a representative then reasonable checks should be made to ascertain the legitimacy of the enquiry.

It is not appropriate for a Councillor to enquire in the following circumstances:

- On behalf of a service user's neighbour or general member of the public without the knowledge of the service user.
- Requesting information on details of criminal convictions.
- A request for a constituent to be given access to services where there is no assessed need or where an eligibility criteria is not met/established.
- Request for a constituent to bypass normal processes and procedures to access services.
- Where the enquiry is in relation to a member of the Councillors family. These matters should be dealt with through the Care Management Process.

This list is not exhaustive and each enquiry should be considered on an individual basis.

The Representation and Complaints Unit can be contacted on 01443 425450/425457.