

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY CUSTOMER RELATIONS MANAGER ON BEHALF OF MANAGING DIRECTOR AND DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES OF BRIGHTER FUTURES FOR CHILDREN (BFfC)

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|-------------------------|---|---------------------|--|
| TO: | ADULT SOCIAL CARE, CHILDREN'S SERVICES & EDUCATION COMMITTEE | | |
| DATE: | 7 JANUARY 2020 | AGENDA ITEM: | 12 |
| TITLE: | ANNUAL COMPLAINTS REPORT 2018-19 FOR CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE | | |
| LEAD COUNCILLOR: | COUNCILLOR TERRY | PORTFOLIO: | CHILDREN'S SERVICES |
| SERVICE: | BRIGHTER FUTURES FOR CHILDREN (CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE) | WARDS: | BOROUGHWIDE |
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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Brighter Futures for Children (BFfC) recognises that there will be occasions when the service provided to children, young people and their families is not to a satisfactory standard or where the customer is unhappy with the service they have received and complaints are made. Complaints are an important source of information to help the company understand where and why changes need to be made to improve the service provided. Children's Social Care, Early Help, Education and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Services in Reading are delivered by Brighter Futures for Children (BFfC), a not-for-profit company which is wholly owned by, but independent of, Reading Borough Council. Through a Service Level Agreement Reading Borough Council's Customer Relations Team handles the administration for complaints and Subject Access Requests.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of complaints activity and performance for Children's Social Care for the period from 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019.
- 1.3 During this period the service received 96 statutory complaints, which is a decrease of 40 (29.4%) over 2017/18. Of the 96 received:

- 19 were resolved through Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) by the Social Care Teams
- 77 progressed to a formal investigation

1.4 During the same period, 11 complaints progressed to a Stage 2 investigation, although these were not all progressions of Stage 1 complaints received in the same period, as some related to Stage 1 investigations carried out in 2017/18.

The Customer Relations Team have continued to raise awareness of the complaints process and in accord with recommendations from Ofsted have in particular worked with operational teams to encourage children and young people to submit complaints where they are dissatisfied with the service they receive. Brighter Futures for Children went live on 3 December 2018.

The Council and BFFC have worked closely to drive improvement in the services for children.

1.5 The 'Children's Social Care Complaints 2018/19 - Summary Report' attached at Appendix A provides an analysis of the data; it explains how complaints are managed and how the learning is used to improve services. This will also be made publicly available through both the Council and \brighter \futures for \children's websites from 10 January 2020.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That the Committee notes the contents of the report and intended actions to further improve the management of representations and complaints in 2019/20 for Children's Social Care.
- 2.2 That the Committee notes the continuing work to raise awareness of the complaints process and encourage its use by children and young people.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

3.1 The NHS & Community Care Act 1990, Children Act 1989, The Children Act 2004, Department of Health and Department for Education Guidance & Regulations require that the Children's Social Care service sets up and maintains a complaints procedure. They also require that Local Authorities operate the procedure within specified time scales and methods of investigation and that a summary of statistical information on complaints and a review of the complaints process are included in the annual report.

4. ACTIVITY

4.1 Brighter Futures for Children operates a 3-stage procedure in respect of statutory complaints about Children's Social Care made by 'qualifying individuals', as specified in the legislation. Qualifying individuals are defined in national guidance as the child or young person, their parent, carer or foster carer or 'anyone who could be seen to be acting in the best interests of the

child'. The timescale for responding to complaints at Stage 1 is 10 working days, which can be extended to 20 working days in certain circumstances. The Customer Relations Manager, who is the designated Complaints Manager for BfFC, also has to be aware of all complaints as they are being dealt with.

- 4.2 The Corporate Complaints Procedure gives an opportunity for those who are not 'qualifying individuals' under the social services legislation, to still be able to complain about Children's Social Care.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

5.1 The Complaints Service provided by the Customer Relations Team contributes to the Service's aims to enhance emotional wellbeing and deliver outstanding services for children in need and those needing protection. It does this by providing an impartial and supportive service to children and families who wish to complain or raise a concern and ensuring that there is learning from complaints. The Customer Relations Team and the Customer Relations Manager will continue to provide this service to the children's company, Brighter Futures for Children, under a service level agreement.

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 6.1 Information about the complaints process is provided verbally to service users via the Social Care Teams and Independent Reviewing Officers as well as the Customer Relations Team. Leaflets on the procedures are widely distributed and available in a variety of formats and languages on request.
- 6.2 In all Children Looked After care reviews and all Child Protection conferences, the Chair always specifically mentions the complaints process so that our most vulnerable children are regularly reminded of their right to complain and a leaflet is given out. Service users are also able to register a complaint via the web, text, the Mind Of My Own App, e-mail direct to the Customer Relations Team, in person, by phone and in writing or via an advocate.
- 6.3 The Brighter Futures for Children website has a direct link to the complaints service and the Customer Relations Team has published the details of the Customer Relations Manager and the BfFC advocacy provider Reconstruct. The Customer Relations Team also work closely with Healthwarch Reading organisations who all offer a free help line support to children in care and carers who may wish to complain and require assistance.
- 6.4 Translation services are provided for complainants whose first language is not English and advocacy support is available for young people who wish to make a complaint.

7. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 The Customer Relations Manager will ensure that the statutory complaints process is accessible to all customers regardless of their race, gender, disabilities, sexual orientation, age or religious belief.
- 7.2 The statutory complaints process is designed to ensure that any concern or issue faced by vulnerable children and their carers is addressed in a timely and impartial manner.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The Statutory foundation for the Children's Social Care Services Complaints Procedures are The Local Authority Social Services Act (1970), The Children Act (1989), The Children Act (2004), The Human Rights Act (1998), The Adoption and Children Act (2002) and The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (2006).
- 8.2 It is a requirement of the Department of Health's Standards and Criteria for Complaints Management for Children's Social Care that an annual report on complaints activity is presented to a public meeting.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no Capital or Revenue implications arising from this report.
- 9.2 **Value for Money** - The Council's Customer Relations Team provides value for money in effectively discharging the complaints process for BFfC by attempting informal resolution of complaints and also ensuring that most statutory complaints are resolved within the Stage 1 process so that expensive Stage 2 investigations and Stage 3 Panels are minimised.
- 9.3 **Risk Assessment** - There are no specific financial risks arising from this report.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1 'Getting the Best from Complaints' Government Publication, August 2006

CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE COMPLAINTS for Brighter Futures for Children 2018/19 SUMMARY REPORT

Introduction

This is a summary report of the data for Statutory complaints received by Brighter Futures for Children (BFfC) for the financial year 2018/19 when the number of complaints received has decreased compared to the previous year. This report will also be made available to the public through the Reading Borough Council (RBC) and BFfC websites following agreement of the report at the Committee Meeting on 8 January 2020.

In addition to the quality of service provided there are many factors that can affect the number of complaints received such as satisfaction, customer expectations, awareness of the complaints process, and the extent of promotional activity. Therefore a high number of complaints should not be interpreted simply as meaning the Council is providing a bad service, whilst at the same time a low number of complaints should not be interpreted as meaning people are satisfied with the service.

When interpreting the meaning of the statutory complaints statistics it is important to take into account not just the number received but the number and proportion that are upheld.

Brighter Futures for Children welcomes feedback through the complaints process which, as well as providing the opportunity to identify where services have not been provided as they should be, also provides customer insight and helps identify any deficiency in practice, policies and procedures. It is from these that the Service and those who work within it can continue to learn and improve practice and service delivery.

Statutory Complaints Procedure

Complaints dealt with through the statutory procedure involve three stages.

At Stage 1, complaints are investigated and responded to by a manager in the relevant service area.

If the complainant feels that the issues they have raised remain unresolved, they have the right to progress their complaint to Stage 2. Consideration of complaints at Stage 2 is normally achieved through an investigation conducted by an Investigating Officer and an Independent Person. The Independent Person is involved in all aspects of consideration of the complaint including any discussions in the authority about the action to be taken in relation to the child. At the conclusion of their investigation the Independent Person and the Investigating Officer prepare independent reports for adjudication by a senior manager (usually the Deputy Director of Children's Social Care).

Where Stage 2 of the complaints procedure has been concluded and the complainant is still dissatisfied, they are eligible to request a review of the Stage 2 investigation of the complaint by a Review Panel at Stage 3. The Panel must consist of three independent people.

The Statutory Children's Social Care Complaints process encourages the complainant and BFfC to consider Alternate Dispute Resolution (ADR) at every stage of the complaints process. This means resolving a complaint or concern informally through a face to face meeting or telephone discussion. Entering into ADR does not restrict the complainant's right to request a formal investigation at any stage. It is the complainant's right to request the presence of the Customer Relations Manager at any face-to-face meeting.

Summary of Compliments and Complaints Activity, Quality Assurance & Learning

There has been a slight decrease in the number of complaints received compared to the previous year. The top three themes for complaints continue to be Service Provision, Staff Conduct and Communication.

Examples of complaints recorded as Service Provision are where the parent or carer may disagree with the content of an assessment or care plan proposed for a child or young person, there has been concerns from parents or carers about contact arrangements with their looked after child or child or young person being unhappy about the move to a different placement.

Staff conduct complaints are recorded as such when complaints are received around specific individual members of social work staff.

Communication complaints are mainly about the customer/young person not being notified in advance of contact arrangements, staff not returning telephone calls or responding to emails.

This report details information for the past year, analysis of the data, quality assurance and information on service developments as a result of learning from complaints.

Under the current monitoring system, information about complaints received directly by teams is reported to the Customer Relations Manager upon receipt. This is to ensure that the Customer Relations Manager is aware of all current complaints in order to monitor their progress and highlight cases that can be resolved through Alternate Dispute Resolution (ADR) to Team Managers and senior staff.

Quality Assurance

The Customer Relations Team carry out checks of all complaint responses to ensure the quality of the response and that the language and terminology used is made easy for the complainant to understand, particularly if the complaint is from a child or young person. Statistics indicate 100% of responses were checked by the Customer Relations Team before being sent out. The findings and recommendations are shared regularly with Directors and operational managers. The Customer Relations Manager

and her Team are also available to the complainant and the investigator for advice on best practice during the complaint investigation, but remain impartial.

The Customer Relations Manager delivers training on investigating and responding to statutory Stage 1 complaints and also on the Corporate Complaints Procedure. The Customer Relations Manager also attends Team Meetings to provide training and advice to front line staff. Training is now available online also; this can be accessed by all social care staff through the Council's Training Department. Take up of this on-line training has been very low. Two training sessions for operational managers were arranged and the first was completed in November 2019, the second session is scheduled for February 2020

The Customer Relations Team promotes the Social Care complaints service on behalf of BFFC. Promotional activity has included outreach work to external groups, publicity material for staff, children and young people and close links with Healthwatch Reading. Parents or carers with learning difficulties or other needs will be signposted to local charitable advocacy providers.

The Customer Relations Team has also improved processes to ensure upcoming responses are discussed and monitored at weekly meetings. BFFC Directors and the Senior Leadership Team get a weekly update report on all complaints which are live and under investigation. BFFC staff are in more regular contact with the Customer Relations Manager and her team and are aware of their processes which has led to improved joint working for the benefit of the complainant.

Monthly reports of the Service Level Agreement are provided to BFFC Contract Manager. Quarterly reports are prepared for the Council's Management Team (CMT), and the Senior Leadership Team for BFFC.

Support Network

The Customer Relations Manager participates in the Southern Region Complaints Managers' Group and is the current Vice Chair of the group and as such also attends the National Complaints Managers' Group. Both groups continue to support Customer Relations and Complaints Managers in sharing good practice, both nationally and locally. Where cases are complex the Customer Relations Manager often seeks advice and guidance from Legal Services and the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman's advice line.

Learning from Complaints

In 2018/19 these were the learning areas and below each one the progress made on these actions is noted:

- Recruitment and Retention of Social Workers: Stabilising the social workforce is a priority; as this leads to continuity for children and families and prevents delay and drift in care planning for children. Brighter Futures for Children have focussed on recruitment to all vacant social work posts; albeit also filling the posts with agency social workers. Filling all vacant posts has led to less delay for children; although the focus remains on permanent recruitment of social workers. A further focus has been on developing an Induction Programme for

all new social workers - permanent or agency. This enables a staff to have a positive start with BfC and enhances retention rates. Reducing caseloads also increase staff retention. A Principal Social Worker was appointed in February 2019. This post led on developing a learning and development offer to new and existing staff; inclusive of a career pathway which will further aid retention of social workers and valuing our staff.

- Improvement of the quality of practice is one of the 6 priority areas for Brighter Futures for Children. The focus has been on enhancing practice around assessment, visiting children and intervention through direct work with children. Management direction and oversight is also a priority area and supervision practice has also been strengthened through practice and compliance monitoring. Auditing and quality assurance practices are further supporting the learning and quality of supervision.

The DfE guidance asks for the Council or its representative, such as BfC, to ensure that we report the learning and service improvements implemented as a result of complaints. Some learning was pertinent to individual workers and led to bespoke advice and training. Some learning was shared in reminder to all staff regarding good practice and some learning led to review of services and processes.

Some individual and staff learning included:

Complaint received about a Team Manager not being aware of the complaint procedure.

The Customer Relations Manager attends the Senior Leadership Team meeting every quarter and has planned two complaints training workshops for Team and Assistant Team Managers. In the meantime a process document has been sent to all managers to refer to and they have been advised to access the online training course.

Complaint received about lack of clarity around transition planning for disabled Service Users aged 18 - 25 years old from BfC to Adult Social Care.

The social care service, for Service Users aged between 18 and 25 transferred from (BfC) Children's Social Care to Adult Social Care in July 2018. Allocated Social Worker to support the young person, keep them and their carers informed about the transfer.

Complaints received about the lack of information and processing of carers assessments for carers of disabled children.

Where there is a Social Worker from Children and Young People's disability team the assessment is given to the worker to include in the single assessment.

If the carer needs support and the child is under 18, the carer is advised to contact the Children's Single Point of Access Team for review.

The online application form will be revised to make this clearer for all and avoid parents sending in carers assessments to adult services where the cared for is under 18.

Complaints and concerns provide essential and valuable feedback from our customers. Listening to customers and reflecting on examples of where we have not got it right can reveal or highlight opportunities for improvement (for example, a deficiency in practice, communication or service delivery). Even if a complaint is not upheld, lessons can be learnt from that complaint with service developments and improvements as a result. The complaints process and the feedback gained is an integral part of the quality assurance process, which feeds into the development and monitoring of services.

Once a complaint is investigated, the Investigating Officer (IO) will complete a Learning Action Plan for complaints which have been upheld or partially upheld and which may have recommendations to the services about improving services; these are collated by the Customer Relations Team for reporting purposes and shared with BfFC senior managers.

BfFC recognises the need to improve the timescales for responding to complaints. Two-weekly reports have been provided to the Head of Communications & Marketing who shares this with other senior managers and highlights deadlines and responses needed, which has allowed for better tracking of the timeliness of complaints. This remains a priority area to be improved.

Complaints Activity Statistics

In the year 2018/19, Children's Social Care received 96 statutory complaints, which is a decrease of 40 (29.4%) compared to the 136 received in 2017/18.

To give this some context, in 2018/19, 2,765 children in total were referred to Children's Social Care. The number of statutory complaints represents 3.47 of the total number of referrals for the service last year.

We also received 11 requests for a complaint to be progressed to Stage 2 during this period. These complaints are not included in the reporting statistics for this report, as they are deemed to be duplicates of the Stage 1 complaint for reporting purposes.

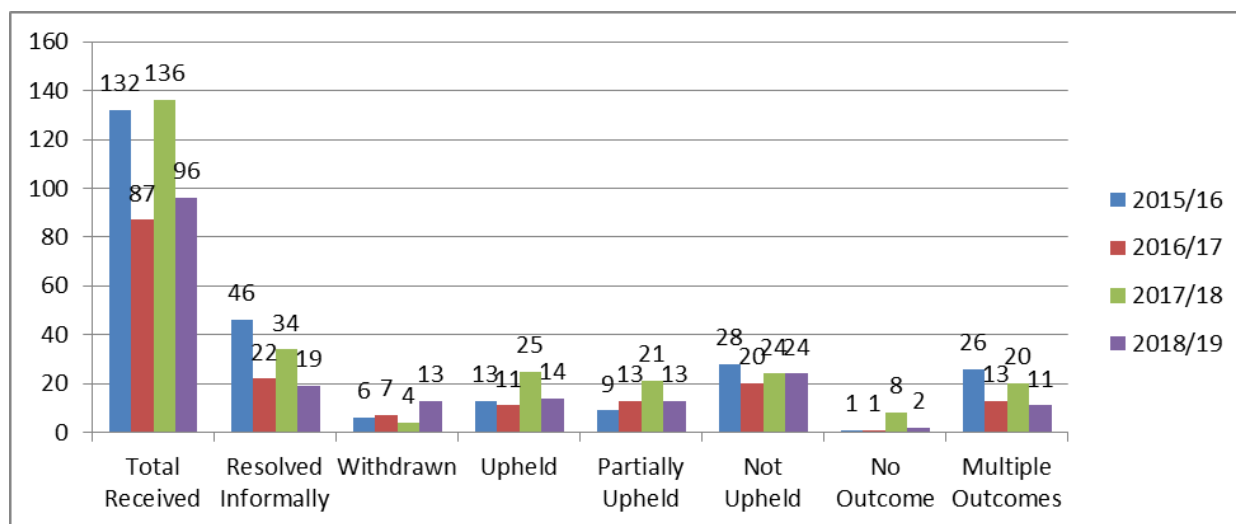
Of the 96 complaints received, 19 (19.8%) were resolved as representations informally through Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) by the Social Care Teams.

13 (16.9%) of the remaining 77 complaints were withdrawn by the complainant following a resolution with the service after the investigation had commenced, leaving 64 which were investigated at Stage 1 to an outcome.

Of the 64, 26 (40.6%) were responded to within timescale, and 38 (59.4%) complaints were responded to over timescale. The decline in the timeliness of complaints responses is attributable to the company being in a state of adjustment following a

number of management changes. This has had a knock on impact to responsiveness to complaints. Going forward with more Senior Leadership Team oversight and training for all Team Managers and Assistant Team Managers, we hope to improve on the response times.

Of the 64 complaints investigated to an outcome, 14 (21.9%) were recorded as Fully Upheld, 13 (20.3%) as Partially Upheld, 24 (37.5%) as Not Upheld, and 2 (3.1%) as having no recordable outcome. The remaining 11 (17.2%) were complaints with multiple strands where several outcomes were recorded.



Total number of Stage 1 complaints (including those resolved by Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) and eventually withdrawn) received in the last 5 years

| Year | Number of complaints received | % Increase against previous year | Number of cases referred to Children’s Services | % of complaints against referrals |
|---------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| 2013/14 | 81 | 6.5 | 1,698 | 4.77 |
| 2014/15 | 86 | 6.17 | 1,489 | 5.78 |
| 2015/16 | 87 | 1.2 | 3,078 | 2.83 |
| 2016/17 | 132 | 51.7 | 3,169 | 4.16 |
| 2017/18 | 136 | 3.03 | 2,717 | 5.01 |
| 2018/19 | 96 | -29.4 | 2765 | 3.47 |

Outcomes for those Investigated to a completion (excluding those resolved via ADR and those eventually withdrawn)

| Outcome | Number | % of Total |
|-------------------|-----------|------------|
| Upheld | 14 | 21.9 |
| Partially Upheld | 13 | 20.3 |
| Not Upheld | 24 | 37.5 |
| No Outcome | 2 | 3.1 |
| Multiple Outcomes | 11 | 17.2 |
| Total | 64 | 100 |

Timescales

| Total Investigated to an Outcome | In Timescale | % of Total | Over Timescale | % of Total |
|----------------------------------|--------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|
| 64 | 26 | 40.6% | 38 | 59.4% |

| Total Resolved Informally | In Timescale | % of Total | Over Timescale | % of Total |
|---------------------------|--------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|
| 19 | 15 | 78.9% | 4 | 21.1% |

The average response time for the 26 Stage 1 complaints responded to in timescale was 15 working days.

Of the 38 Stage 1 complaints responded to over timescale, 21 (55.3%) were responded to in 20 working days or fewer. These are still deemed to be over timescale, as the agreed timescale for these was 10 working days. The average response time for all of the 38 complaints over timescale was 23 working days.

Main Theme of ALL complaints received during 2018/19

(NOTE: This includes all complaints resolved informally and investigated at Stage 1, plus on-going complaints, but DOES NOT include complaints investigated at Stages 2 & 3, as these themes are duplicates of Stage 1)

| Theme of Complaint | Number | % of Total |
|-----------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Assessment | 1 | 1.04 |
| Communication | 10 | 10.42 |
| Discrimination | 1 | 1.04 |
| Financial Issue | 2 | 2.08 |
| Inaccuracies in Report | 2 | 2.08 |
| Lack of Support | 1 | 1.04 |
| Quality of Service Provided | 72 | 75 |
| Staff Conduct | 7 | 7.3 |
| Total | 96 | 100 |

Who the complaint was received from

| Who Made the Complaint | Number | % of Total |
|--|-----------|------------|
| Advocate | 4 | 4.17 |
| Carer | 8 | 8.34 |
| Child / Young Person | 7 | 7.29 |
| Extended Family (Grandparents / Aunts & Uncles, Etc) | 8 | 8.34 |
| Other | 1 | 1.04 |
| Parent | 65 | 67.7 |
| Sibling | 2 | 2.08 |
| Solicitor | 1 | 1.04 |
| Total | 96 | 100 |

The majority of complaints are from the birth parents who disagree with social care involvement and outcomes from assessments, care plans and wish to challenge a professional decision. Complaints of this nature are inevitable, however high quality record keeping, clear communication with a clear distinction between fact and opinion reduces the opportunity for dispute.

Complaints received by Team

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Access & Assessment Team | 15 |
| Access & Assessment Team 1 | 2 |
| Access & Assessment Team 2 | 1 |
| Access & Assessment Team 4 | 1 |
| Children in Need Team | 1 |
| Children & Young Persons' Disability Team (CYPDT) | 11 |
| Court Team | 5 |
| IRO/QA Team | 1 |
| LADO | 1 |
| Leaving Care Team | 5 |
| Children Looked After Team | 18 |

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|
| Children Looked After Team 1 | 3 |
| Children Looked After Team 2 | 4 |
| Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) | 1 |
| Safeguarding Team | 9 |
| Safeguarding Team 1 | 5 |
| Safeguarding Team 2 | 4 |
| Safeguarding Team 4 | 3 |
| School Admissions Team | 2 |
| SEND Team | 1 |
| Total | 96 |

The three areas which received the highest number of complaints were the Children Looked After Teams with 25 (26.04%), the Safeguarding Teams with 21 (21.9%), and the Access & Assessment Teams with 19 (19.8%). This can mainly be attributed to the challenging circumstances in which these particular services work in and the volume of their direct contact with the customers.

Methods used to make a complaint

| Method | Number | % of Total |
|---------------|-----------|------------|
| E-mail | 31 | 32.3% |
| Feedback Form | 2 | 2.08% |
| In Person | 1 | 1.04% |
| Letter | 13 | 13.54% |
| Telephone | 35 | 36.46% |
| Webform | 14 | 14.58% |
| Total | 96 | 100 |

The above demonstrates that the complainants have a number of methods they can use to contact the Customer Relations Manager with their complaints.

Demographic Information

| Ethnicity | Number of complaints received | % of Total |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------|
| Asian Other | 0 | 0 |
| Black African | 1 | 1.04 |
| Black British/African | 1 | 1.04 |
| Black British Caribbean | 5 | 5.2 |
| British Asian | 3 | 3.1 |
| Mixed Black & White | 0 | 0 |
| Mixed Black African & White | 0 | 0 |
| Mixed Black Caribbean & White | 0 | 0 |
| Mixed Other | 0 | 0 |
| Not Stated | 54 | 56.25 |

| | | |
|---------------|----|------|
| Other | 0 | 0 |
| Pakistani | 0 | 0 |
| White British | 31 | 32.2 |
| White Irish | 0 | 0 |
| White Mixed | 0 | 0 |
| White Other | 1 | 1.04 |
| Total | 96 | 100 |

For Equality Monitoring purposes in 2018/19 Officers have been encouraged to seek personal demographic information from people who make a complaint to help in assessing if there are groups of people who are proportionally complaining more or less and to explore the possible reasons. We have found that people who complain do not always wish to state their ethnicity.

The offer of the Translation Service and Easy Read versions of complaint responses are made available by the Customer Relations Manager to those complainants that need these.

Complaints from Young People Involving Advocates

Between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019, 8 complaints were received from Young People, of which 2 were received via the advocacy provider.

The Customer Relations Manager also meets teams and managers to reinforce the importance of capturing verbal complaints. Staff are encouraged to record and analyse comments or concerns, as many children’s and young people’s issues are resolved this way rather than using the complaints process. If the young person is unhappy but does not wish to make a formal complaint the Customer Relations Team also offers to try to resolve matters informally.

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

Between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019 the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) received 3 representations from dissatisfied service users for issues relating to Children’s Services, This is the same as the previous year. 1 of these cases was for BfC and Adult Social Care which the Ombudsman investigated and found no maladministration. The other 2 cases had not progressed through the Statutory Complaints Procedures so were rejected by the Ombudsman as premature.

Benchmarking

Attempts to collate information from our statistical neighbouring authorities have proven to be difficult over the years. However through the Southern Regional Complaints Managers group which the Customer Relations Manager is a member of, she has obtained the following information. This should not be used as a direct comparison as the size of the authority and the number of referrals to Children’s Services would differ to that of Reading. Also it is worth noting that each authority

record their data and report in different formats.

Complaints investigated & outcomes for other local authorities :

| Local Authority | Number of complaints investigated | Number of Complaints upheld or partially upheld | Number of Complaints not upheld | Withdrawn/rejected or ongoing/other |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Reading Borough Council | 96 | 27 | 24 | 13 |
| West Berkshire | 146 | Not available | Not available | Not available |
| Bracknell | 107 | 36 | 56 | 15 |
| Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead | 38 | Not available | Not available | Not available |
| Bournemouth | 46 | 13 | 30 | 3 |
| Southampton City Council | 66 | 37 | 24 | 5 |

Subject Access Requests (SARs)

The Customer Relations Team process all SARs which relate to closed Children’s Social Care cases. The live cases are all dealt with by the relevant Social Care Team.

In 2018-19 the Customer Relations Team received 32 requests for records relating to closed cases. Of these 32, 15 were not progressed due to either no records being held or a lack of further contact from the requestor. Of the remaining 17, 3 were processed within the 30 day timescale, and 14 were processed over timescale. The main reason for the requests being processed over timescale was due to the size of the files the team had to redact. In all cases the Customer Relations Team kept in regular contact with the requestor to ensure that they were kept up to date on the progress of their request.

Compliments

The Customer Relations Team now own the logging of compliments for Children’s Services and the directorate as a whole. Staff are reminded and encouraged to pass on all compliments to the Customer Relations Team’s generic mailbox.

23 compliments were recorded for Brighter Futures for Children between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019; this an increase of 6 from the 17 received in 2017/18. These were received by the following Teams:

- Children’s Action Teams (CAT) - 1
- Children & Young Persons’ Disability Team (CYPDT) - 1
- Fostering/Family Placements - 3

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Court Team | | 2 |
| LADO/IRO Team | | 4 |
| Safeguarding Teams | - | 8 |
| Child In Need Team | - | 1 |
| Customer Relations Team & Safeguarding Team | | 1 |

The number of compliments recorded has risen compared to the previous year. There is good work being carried out across the Service and staff are encouraged to feed back compliments received.

Contact Information: How to make a complaint

Some complaints can be sorted out by discussing your problem with your Social Worker or a manager. If you want to make a complaint, you can contact the Customer Relations Team, phone, letter, in person or by email. Telephone the Customer Relations Manager (Complaints & Representations) on 0118 937 2905 or e-mail:

socialcare.complaints@reading.gov.uk. Or contact BFfC by e-mail:complaints@brighterfuturesforchildren.org

If you wish to make your complaint to us in writing, our address is:

Customer Relations Team
Reading Borough Council
Floor 2 North Front
Civic Offices
Bridge Street
Reading
RG1 2LU

You can also text us with your complaint, type SPKUP & your message to 81722. Your complaint will be recorded and if we can't sort out the problem immediately it will be passed for further investigation and action. The Customer Relations Team can take your complaint over the telephone and explain the complaints procedure in more detail or send you a leaflet explaining how to complain. The leaflet is also available in Council buildings or via the Brighter Futures for Children's website (www.brighterfuturesforchildren.org). You can also use these contact details to tell us if you have a concern (but do not want to make a complaint) or if you want to make a compliment about a service.