

## Complaints, Compliments & Comments

### How to let us know what you think about Children's Services in Reading

Reading Borough Council has a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of Reading children who are in need. This may be because of their own behaviour, their family circumstances or because they have a severe disability.

We are always looking for ways to improve our services and raise standards - you can help us by letting us know what you think about the services you receive. We value all feedback whether it is a complaint, comment, compliment or suggestion.

There are a number of ways you can tell us what you think:

#### 1. Let us know when we do well

If you think a member of staff (or a team) has been particularly helpful and deserves special recognition please let us know - positive feedback helps us share and promote good practice.

With your permission we will publish your comments in our staff newsletter so that we can ensure that everyone gets to know when someone has done well.

You can let us know when you are pleased with our service or a member of staff has done well by contacting the Team Manager or the Customer Relations Team.

#### 2. Tell us what we can do better

When you talk to your friends and family about us you probably say what you think we should do to make our services better - why not tell us too?

Your comments and ideas can help us change the way we do things for the better - sometimes the simplest suggestion can make the biggest difference. We can't promise to use every suggestion we get, but we do promise to listen and use what we can.

If you have ideas about how we can improve please talk to the staff working directly with you or the Team Manager.

#### 3. Take part in consultations

We consult with service users regularly to find out what you think of our services and ideas for developments. We do this by:

- sending satisfaction surveys to a number of service users selected at random
- organising discussion groups for children, young people, parents and families using services
- talking to service user groups (such as people registered on the Children's Needs Index)

If you are asked to complete a survey or take part in a discussion group please take the time to join in - your views can make a real difference.

#### **4. Tell us if things go wrong**

We always try to deliver good quality services but we know that sometimes things go wrong. If this happens it is important that you tell us as soon as possible. We see complaints as valuable feedback which helps us to improve our service. Please be assured that we will not treat you less favourably or withdraw services because of a complaint.

Generally complaints should be about matters which have happened within the last 12 months although in some cases we can accept complaints that are older than this. If you are not sure please discuss your complaint with the Customer Relations Team.

#### **Our Complaints Process:**

The law says that the Council must have a straightforward complaints procedure to make it easy for you to complain. Our three stage complaints process ensures that your concerns are investigated thoroughly and fairly. However, please be aware that we may not be able to investigate anything which is currently subject to court proceedings or tribunal hearings.

#### **STAGE 1: Let us know something is wrong**

If you are unhappy with the service we provide or the way you have been treated by a member of staff please tell us straight away. Once we know something isn't right we can start to sort it out or at least explain why we can't do things differently.

The easiest and quickest way to let us know there is a problem is to tell the staff working with you, their manager (for contact details see your Care Plan) or, if you prefer, contact the Customer Relations Team.

We will look into your complaint and talk to you to agree a way forward.

Although we aim to complete this stage within 10 working days sometimes this is not possible. If this is the case we will let you know how much longer we need but this should be within 20 working days.

#### **STAGE 2: Making a further complaint**

If you aren't happy with our response you can ask us to look into your complaint again. You can either contact the person who dealt with your initial complaint or the Customer Relations Team.

We will ask someone who has no previous connection with you, or the staff working with you, to investigate your complaint again. They will look at the files, talk to everyone involved and produce a written report with recommendations.

The Head of Children's Services will then decide what action we should take (if any) and confirm this to you in writing.

We aim to complete this stage within 25 working days of receiving your further complaint. However we can extend this to up to 65 working days if it isn't possible to investigate fully within this time.

#### **STAGE 3: Taking your complaint to a panel**

If you still think we haven't dealt with your complaint properly you can ask for a review.

An independent Panel made up of three people who don't work for the Council will look at the way your complaint was handled. The panel will hear from everyone involved and then produce a report with their recommendations about what should happen next (we will send you a copy).

The Director of Children, Education and Early Help Services will consider these recommendations, decide what action to take and confirm their decision to you in writing within 28 days of the panel hearing.

## The Ombudsman

The Panel is the last stage of our complaints process. If you are still not happy with the outcome you can contact the [Local Government Ombudsman](#). The Ombudsman provides an independent, impartial and free service investigating complaints about services provided by the Council.

You can contact the Ombudsman at any stage of the complaints process but, in most cases the Ombudsman will ask you to give the Council a chance to deal with your complaint before they investigate.

## If you need help to complain

If you would like help with your complaint please ask our Customer Relations Team to find you an advocate.

An advocate is someone who doesn't work for the Council who has been specially trained to make sure children and young people like you can express their views and are listened to.

If you prefer you can ask a family member, friend or worker you trust to be your advocate. If they haven't been an advocate before we can ask one of our trained advocates to help them give you the support you need.

## Contact Us

### Customer Relations Team

Call: 0118 937 2905

Write: Freepost RTLS-CKGX-RKLL  
Reading Borough Council  
Customer Relations Team  
Bridge Street  
Reading  
RG1 2LU

Email: <mailto:complaints@reading.gov.uk>

Text: type SPKUP & your message to 81722

**Please note:** If your complaint is about a residential service you may also complain to Ofsted (Tel: 0300 123 4666)