

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND EARLY HELP SERVICES

TO:	ADULT SOCIAL CARE, CHILDREN'S SERVICES & EDUCATION COMMITTEE		
DATE:	11 DECEMBER 2018	AGENDA ITEM:	9
TITLE:	ANNUAL COMPLAINTS REPORT 2017 - 2018 FOR CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	COUNCILLOR TERRY	PORTFOLIO:	CHILDREN'S SERVICES
SERVICE:	CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE	WARDS:	BOROUGHWIDE
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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Children's Social Care 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 Council understand where and why changes need to be made to improve the service provided.
- 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 the 1<sup>st</sup> of April 2017 to the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2018.
- 1.3 During this period the service received 136 statutory complaints, which is an increase of 4 (3.03%) over 2016/17. Of the 136 received:
- 34 were resolved through Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) by the Social Care Teams
  - 98 progressed to a formal investigation
  - 4 were withdrawn
- 1.4 During the same period, 6 complaints progressed to a Stage 2 investigation, and 2 progressed to a Stage 3 investigation.

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. Following the Ofsted inspection in June 2016, the Council and

Children's Services have worked closely to drive improvement in the services for children. The DfE recommended that Children's Services be transferred to a children's company, wholly-owned by the Council to deliver children's social care, early help, education and health services, it is proposed that the new company, 'Brighter Futures for Children' will go live on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2018.

- 1.5 The 'Children's Social Care Complaints 2017/18 - 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 the Council's website from the 12<sup>th</sup> of December 2018.

## **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 2018/19 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 The Council 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 the Council, also has to be aware of all complaints as they are being dealt with.
- 4.2 Reading Borough Council's 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.

Year	Approximate No. of Leaflets Distributed	Increase/Decrease over Previous Year
2013/14	880	
2014/15	700	-180 (-20.45%)
2015/16	1175	+475 (+67.86%)
2016/17	920	-255 (-21.7%)
2017/18	1260	+340 (+36.9%)

- 6.2 In all Looked After Children's 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, Momo App, e-mail direct to the Customer Relations Team, in person, by phone and in writing or via an advocate.
- 6.3 The Children in Care website continues to have a direct link to the complaints service and the Customer Relations Team has published the details of the Customer Relations Manager and our advocacy provider with Care Matters, Voice and National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS). These are organisations who all offer a free help line support to children in care.
- 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 the Council 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 2017/18

## SUMMARY REPORT

### Introduction

This is a summary report of the data for Statutory complaints received by Children's Social Care for the financial year 2017/18 when the number of complaints received has increased compared to previous years. This report will also be made available to the public through the Reading Borough Council (RBC) website following agreement of the report at the Committee Meeting on the 12<sup>th</sup> of December 2018.

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.

The Council 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 Head of Safeguarding).

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 the Local Authority 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 increase 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 there has been a lack of, or slow, progress on cases or where extended family members have not been included in the care planning process.

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. This monitoring system will remain once the children's company goes live.

## 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 senior 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. Following discussions with the Director of Childrens,

Education & Early Help Services, face to face training will be scheduled after the 1<sup>st</sup> of December 2018.

The Customer Relations Team promotes the Social Care complaints service. Promotional activity has included outreach work to external groups, publicity material for staff, children and young people and close links with the National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS). This is the body which is currently providing advocacy support for children and young people wanting to make a complaint or representation. 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. The Children's Social Care 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.

Quarterly reports are prepared for the Council's Management Team (CMT), and the Director of Children's Services on Social Care complaints received.

All of the above arrangements will remain once the children's company go live.

## 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 2017/18 these were the learning areas and below each one the progress made on these actions is noted:

- Implementing the revised workforce strategy to stabilise the workforce and reduce the reliance on agency workers. *Work on this continues. There is a specialist recruitment consultant working closely with relevant managers to secure access to high quality candidates looking for permanent positions. Other improvement work, such as reducing caseloads also continues to increase staff retention.*  
*In addition, work is being undertaken aimed at developing and improving the learning and development offer to new and existing staff. This is a staff progression scheme, aimed at enabling career progression for existing staff.*
- Improving the quality and consistency of practice by continuing to progress through auditing and quality assurance, ensuring that learning is being fed back into practice.  
*Auditing and quality assurance activity is now more visible and evident across the service. It is particularly well embedded in Early Help who have been keen*

*to embrace the Beyond Auditing approach to quality assurance, and who now hold quarterly 'quality assurance days as business as usual'.*

*Quality assurance activity has been fed back into practice through individual coaching and mentoring sessions for practitioners, workshops and bespoke training courses. A number of policies and procedures have been, or are being, refreshed.*

*A 'business as usual' case audit cycle has been rolled out since October 2018. This will require all Team and Service Managers to audit pre-selected cases on a regular basis to identify areas of good practice and areas for development. This will provide additional assurance of the quality of practice across the service.*

- Recruiting more foster carers and specialist carers to increase capacity to avoid far distanced and residential placements for more complex children and young people.

*Recruitment activity and WEB presence has increased enquiries from prospective foster carers; 76 fostering enquiries were received in 2017/18. 7 of these went through the assessment process and were approved.*

The DfE guidance asks for the Council 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:

- Ensure that parents/carer are made aware of the content and reasons for our involvements

*This forms the basis of good practice. Practitioners and their managers continue to do this through discussions at first point of contact.*

- Ensure formal complaints are responded to in a timely manner

*'Live' complaints are now discussed at the Children's Service Management Team (CSMT) Meeting which is held weekly. This is to support the drive to respond to complaints in a timelier manner; however in 2017/18 60% of complaints went over timescales.*

- Ensure that only relevant information is shared as required and due diligence is given in regards to information-sharing / data protection.

As a result of complaints, services and processes were reviewed or strengthened including:

- Refresher training carried out in relation to Data Protection protocols
- Refresher sessions carried out by the Customer Relations Manager to the Children's Services Management Team

*All staff across the service completed GDPR training in light of the new legislation.*

*The Customer Relations Manager attends CSMT every quarter and is working her way through attending Team Meetings to discuss the complaints procedure with Team Managers and front line staff.*



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 Children's Services senior managers.

The recruitment of foster carers and specialist carers is an ongoing action for the Service to continue to increase capacity to avoid far distanced and residential placements for more complex children and young people.

The Fostering Team are progressing focused recruitment of carers for children placed out of area whose care plan is a step down to foster care or where plans for foster care in the local area is in line with care planning.

Prospective foster carers are involved in the fostering preparation group prior to completion of assessments to support them through the assessment process.

The Family and Friends Service is working to increase the number of Special Guardianship Order assessments, to encourage more long term care for children and young people in care and provide them with more permanency & support.

A number of complaints were received from fathers who felt they had been left out of the care planning process for their child/children. Children's Services to give due consideration to both parents' views and wishes and include both parents in meetings pertaining to their children's case. That all staff are reminded of the need to include a father's views in any meetings and include fathers in their children's care planning where appropriate.

Other key areas of learning have been around provision of the service in general terms as such managing customer expectations which is key. Staff have been advised to explain processes and procedures to young people and carers. Also any changes to processes or care plans should be documented and provided to young people and carers in a timely manner.

A high volume of complaints have been received around staff conduct and we acknowledge that front line staff are faced with challenges due to the nature of their work. Staff have however been advised to be polite and professional at all times and to work to the Council's customer care standards.

Communication - staff have been reminded of the importance of returning telephone calls and replying to email/correspondence in a timely manner within the Council's customer care standards.

Children's Services recognise the need to improve the timescales for responding to complaints. Two-weekly reports will be provided to the Head of Safeguarding and his/her management team. These reports will detail the response date and the name of the officer investigating, who will be held accountable for any that go over timescales. Face to face training on the complaints procedure will also be rolled out to all Team Managers and Assistant Team Managers from December 2018.

## Complaints Activity Statistics

In the year 2017/18, Children's Social Care received 136 statutory complaints, which is an increase of 4 (3.3%) compared to the 132 received in 2016/17.

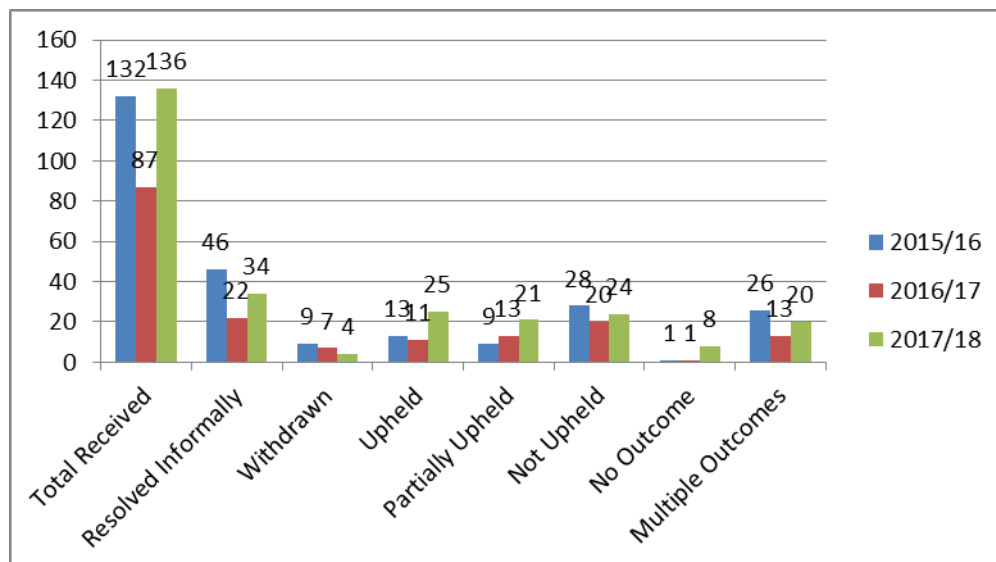
To give this some context, in 2017/2018, 2,717 children in total were referred to Children's Social Care. The number of statutory complaints represents 5.01% of the total number of referrals for the service last year.

Of the 136 complaints received, 34 (25%) were resolved as representations informally through Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) by the Social Care Teams.

4 (4%) of the remaining 102 complaints were withdrawn by the complainant following a resolution with the service after the investigation had commenced, leaving 98 of which 97 were investigated at Stage 1 and 1 complaint was investigated at Stage 2 without going through Stage 1.

Of the 98, 39 (39.8%) were responded to within timescale, and 59 (60.2%) complaints were responded to over timescale. The decline in the timeliness of complaints responses is attributable to the department being in a state of adjustment following structural and management changes. This had a knock on impact to responsiveness to complaints. Going forward with more senior management oversight and training for new Team Managers we hope to improve on the response times.

Of the 98 complaints investigated to an outcome (136 in total, 4 withdrawn, and 34 resolved informally), 25 (25.51%) were recorded as Fully Upheld, 21 (21.43%) as Partially Upheld, 24 (24.49%) as Not Upheld, and 8 (8.16%) as having no recordable outcome. The remaining 20 (20.41%) 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

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

Outcome	Number	% of Total
Upheld	25	25.51
Partially Upheld	21	21.43
Not Upheld	24	24.49
No Outcome	8	8.16
Multiple Outcomes	20	20.41
Total	98	100

**Timescales**

Total Investigated to an Outcome	In Timescale	% of Total	Over Timescale	% of Total
98	39	39.80%	59	60.20%

Total Resolved Informally	In Timescale	% of Total	Over Timescale	% of Total
34	22	64.71%	12	35.29%

The average response time for the 39 complaints responded to in timescale was 10.5 working days. The 1 complaint considered directly at Stage 2 was completed and responded to on the 32<sup>nd</sup> working day. Statutory guidance states that a Stage 2 investigation can take between 25 and 65 working days to complete.

Of the 59 complaints responded to over timescale, 29 (49.15%) 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 the 59 complaints over timescale was 24 working days.

### Main Theme of ALL complaints received during 2017/18

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

Theme of Complaint	Number	% of Total
Child Protection Issue	7	5.15%
Communication	16	11.76%
Data Protection Breach	1	0.73%
Failure to Act	3	2.21%
Financial Issue	5	3.68%
Safeguarding	1	0.73%
Service Provision	77	56.62%
Staff Conduct	26	19.12%
Total	136	100%

### Who the complaint was received from

Who Made the Complaint	Number	% of Total
Adoptive Parent	0	0%
Advocate	6	4.41%
Child / Young Person	4	2.94%
Extended Family (Grandparents/Aunts & Uncles)	3	2.21%
Foster Carer / Care	3	2.21%

Provider		
Other	4	2.94%
Parent	116	85.29%
<b>Total</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>100</b>

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	18
Children & Young Persons' Disability Team (CYPDT)	11
Court Team	8
Edge of Care Team	2
Fostering & Adoption/Family Placements Team	5
IRO/QA Team	16
Leaving Care Team	9
Looked After Childrens Team 1	14
Looked After Childrens Team 2	7
Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)	2
Safeguarding Team 1	11
Safeguarding Team 2	8
Safeguarding Team 3	13
Safeguarding Team 4	8
SEND Team	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>136</b>

The Safeguarding service with a total of 40 (29%) complaints, followed by the Looked After Children's services with 21 (15%) and Access & Assessment with 18 (13%), received the highest number of complaints within Children's Services. Mainly this can 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	53	38.97%
Feedback Form	7	5.15%
In Person	5	3.67%
Letter	13	9.56%
Telephone	43	31.62%
Webform	15	11.03%
<b>Total</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>100</b>

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
African	1	0.7%
Black or Black British	3	2.2%
Chinese	1	0.7%
Mixed Black / White	5	3.7%
Mixed White	1	0.7%
White British	8	5.9%
Not Stated	117	86.1%
Total	136	100%

For Equality Monitoring purposes in 2017/18 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 the 1<sup>st</sup> of April 2017 and the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2018, 10 complaints were received from Young People and 6 of these were received via the advocacy provider. In 2016/17 a total of 11 complaints were received from Young People with 4 referred by the advocacy provider. The Customer Relations Manager has regular contact with the National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) and works closely with them to ensure the complaints process and advocacy provision is promoted to ensure that young people are aware of their right to submit a complaint.

NYAS has commended the Customer Relations Team on good complaint management process on behalf of young people.

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 Ombudsman

Between the 1<sup>st</sup> of April 2017 and the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2018 the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) received 3 representations from dissatisfied service users for

issues relating to Children's Services. This is a decrease of 5 compared to the 8 cases which were received in 2016/17. Of these 3 cases, the Ombudsman discontinued 2 investigations as 1 case was going through a court process and with the other case the Ombudsman was satisfied with the Council's response and found they could not add to it. The Ombudsman found fault with 1 case, however found no fault in how the complaint was handled and did not investigate further or identify any critical learning.

### **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	98	46	24	28
West Berkshire	160	20	Not available	Not available
Bracknell	77	32	25	20
Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead	37	20	Not available	Not available
Bournemouth	43	13	28	2
Southampton City Council	52	21	25	6

### **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.

17 compliments were recorded within the Directorate between the 1<sup>st</sup> of April 2017 and the 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2018; this a decrease of 3 from the 20 received in 2016/17. These were received by the following Teams:

Children's Action Teams (CAT)	-	1
Children & Young Persons' Disability Team (CYPDT)	-	5
Fostering/Family Placements	-	6
Leaving Care Teams	-	1

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)	-	2
Safeguarding Teams	-	1
Child In Need Team	-	1

The number of compliments recorded is very low. There is good work being carried out across the Service and staff are encouraged to feed back compliments received. More will be undertaken with staff and Team Managers in this area during the next year.

### **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 Council by phone, letter, in person or by email. Telephone the Customer Relations Manager (Complaints & Representations) on 0118 937 2905 or e-mail: [complaints@reading.gov.uk](mailto:complaints@reading.gov.uk).

If you wish to make your complaint to us in writing, our address is:  
 The Customer Relations Team,  
 Reading Borough Council,  
 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 Council's website. 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.