



**People Directorate**

**Compliments, Complaints  
and Concerns**

**Childrens Social Care**

**Annual Report**

**1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023**

<i>Report Author</i>	<i>Alison Keeling</i>
<i>Head of Service</i>	<i>Kogie Perumall</i>
<i>Assistant Director</i>	<i>Thom Wilson</i>

## Contents

1. Background and context.....	3
2. Children’s Statutory Complaints Procedure.....	3-4
3. Children’s Social Care Compliments.....	4-6
4. Children’s Social Care Complaints.....	7-8
5. Analysis of Complaints.....	8-9
6. Concerns.....	9
7. Cost of Complaints Service & Investigations.....	10
8. Learning from Complaints.....	10
9. Update/progress on previous forward plan 2022/23.....	10
10. Forward plan for 2023/24.....	11

## 1. Background and Context

This report sets out information regarding compliments and complaints made by, or on behalf of children, young people and parents/carers who receive support or services from the Local Authority.

It is a statutory requirement to produce an annual report which will be published on the Council's website. The legal framework for children's complaints is governed by the following:

- Children Act 1989 Representations Procedures Regulations 2006
- Adoption and Children Act 2002
- Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000

The requirement of annual report is set out in Paragraph 13 of the 2006 Regulations.

The current legislation requires local authorities to appoint a 'responsible person' with responsibility for ensuring compliance with the following arrangements:

- Managing, developing and administering the complaints procedure
- Providing assistance and advice to those who wish to complain
- Liaising with services regarding the investigation of complaints where appropriate
- Supporting and training existing and new members of staff
- Monitoring and reporting on complaints activity

Staff will always try to resolve problems or concerns before they escalate into complaints, and this ensures that investigations are kept to a minimum.

Bracknell Forest Council has set procedures for resolving complaints to ensure that: -

- The views and experiences of people who use the services are heard
- Positive feedback is used to develop services and highlight good practice
- We continually learn as an organisation and resolve things
- We can sustain a quality focus on our customers

Our aims are to:

- Resolve complaints quickly and where possible using informal measures
- Offer early resolution of complaints
- Reduce escalations, and in turn addressing cost implications
- Learn lessons from complaints

## 2. Bracknell Forest Children's Statutory Complaints Procedure

The complaints process aims to be as accessible as possible. Complaints may be made by telephone, in writing, by email or using our online complaints form on the Bracknell Forest Council public website.

**Children's Statutory Complaints:**

Bracknell Forest adopts a three-stage process for dealing with complaints which is in line with statutory guidance, *Getting the Best from Complaints (2006)*. This sets out the following stages:



- Stage 1 – Informal/Local Resolution
- Stage 2 – Formal Independent Investigation
- Stage 3 – Independent Review Panel Hearing

An independent advocate for children and young people is commissioned via The Advocacy People where required, to ensure effective representation to support early and prompt resolution of complaints.

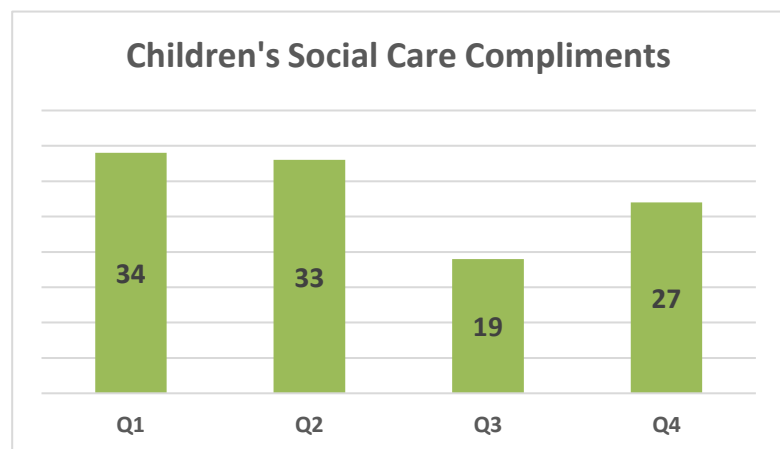
If the complainant is not happy with the outcome of their complaint, they can refer the matter to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) for consideration. Representations may be made to the LGSCO at any stage and any member of the public is able to complain to the Ombudsman if they feel there has been maladministration or injustice. The LGSCO will not normally accept the complaint until the Council has had a chance to complete all stages of the complaint procedure.

Complaints not covered by this process will be dealt with under the Local Authority's Corporate Complaints Procedure. These can include complaints made by parents/carers about their own experiences and not that of their children or foster children.

### 3. Children's Social Care Compliments

Compliments are received from a wide range of sources across the different services, using surveys, service user feedback forms and direct consultation exercises.

All compliments received from external sources and internal professionals/agencies are sent to the individual's line manager to support the appraisal process and personal development of employees.

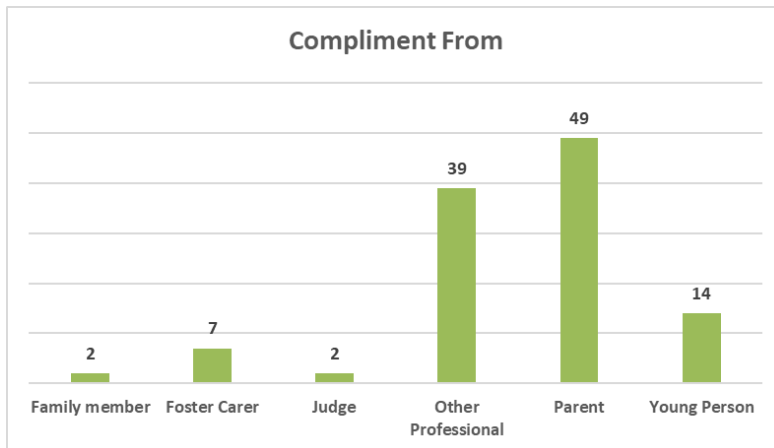


	Number of compliments
2018/19	83
2019/20	173
2020/21	185
2021/22	164
2022/23	113

## Compliments from

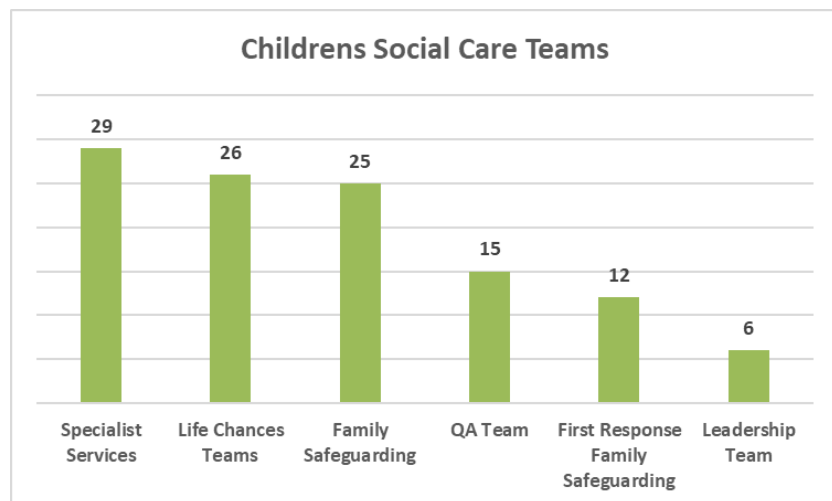
Compliments were received from various avenues, but mostly from parents.

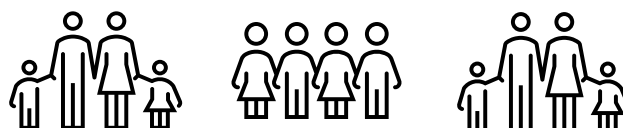
During 2022/2023 there were 113 compliments received. This is a decrease of 31% compared to the previous year. This decrease may be due to changing views and expectations as services resume normal operations following the pandemic.



## Compliments by Team

This table shows the numbers of compliments for individual teams within Childrens Social Care. Every team within the service has received at least one compliment.

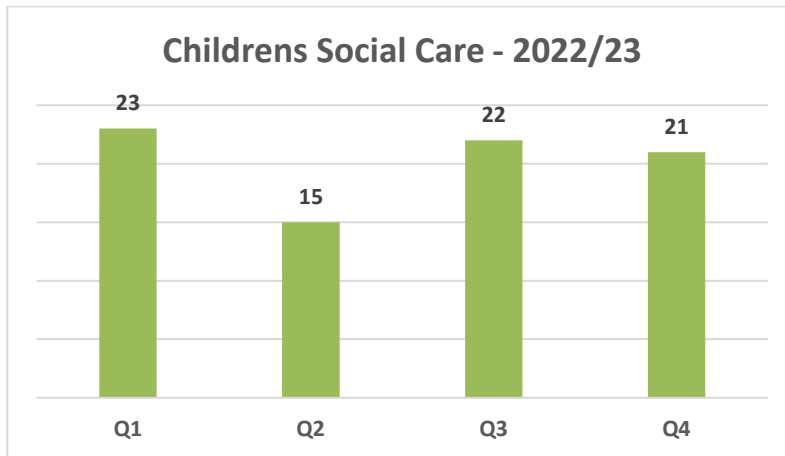




## What are compliments saying?

- **Young Person** – “Thank you for your call and your professionalism and for all your support. I can't express how much you and the work you are doing on my behalf is appreciated, beyond words”
- **Other Professional** – “Thank you for letting me know. It's good working with you as your great at keeping me updated! Not something that I regularly experience and it's a welcome and refreshing pleasure!”
- **Young Person** – Compliment from a refugee from Sudan who has been with us since April 2018. His family have lived in a refugee camp in Sudan most of his life and he eventually made it to England in 2018. His younger brother arrived in the UK this month and we have been able to work with the transfer scheme for him to be placed in Bracknell – the brothers have been reunited. He sent a photo to his PA and said “it is very good news. I'm so blessed to have the support from Bracknell”
- **Parent** – “We always found the Social Worker to be polite, respectful and attentive. He was supportive of our son's and our needs”
- **Parent** – A parent today shared she was pleased her daughter has had same Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) for 8 years, as it's been helpful to have someone consistent and who knows her daughter well
- **Foster Carer** – “We are very happy with the support we get especially from the LA we are very lucky working with everyone as a team getting the best outcome for him, the Social Worker has been very supportive to us all and we are very happy with the LA”
- **Parent** – “Firstly I want to thank you all for being so great in general, from the moment my daughter started at Larchwood she has been so happy and talks about you a lot!! I have ALWAYS felt 100% supported by Bracknell Forest council who have supported me via my daughter's school”
- **Parent** – “Your support to our child with additional needs is vital and you (they) have a successful case in home environment; supporting the parents to help our daughter in her independence path”
- **Young Person** – “I just want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for being the only person in the Bracknell council to ever really listen to me and my views. Thank you for all your support ❤️”
- **Judge** - The Judge had no hesitation in making the Orders that were proposed and commended your hard work and commitment to the children in this case, working under difficult circumstances to assist the family in reaching a family outcome that is in the best interests of all the children

## 4. Children's Social Care Complaints

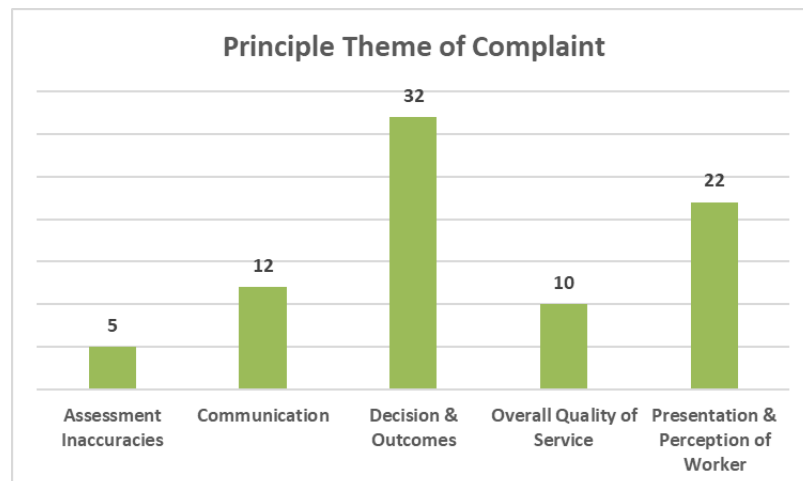


During 2022/23 there were 81 complaints received compared to 90 received in 2021/22. This is a decrease of 10%.

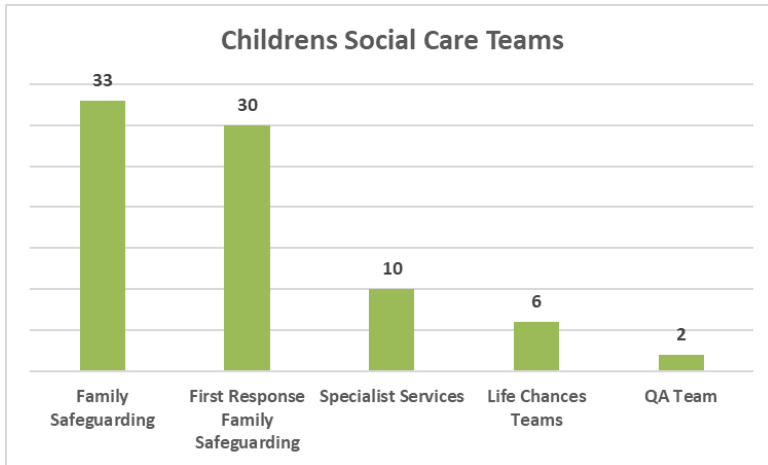
The table below shows the numbers of complaints since 2018/19 and reflects a reduction since then, suggesting better working with children and families in Bracknell.

Year	Number of complaints
2018/19	107
2019/20	77
2020/21	73
2021/22	90
2022/23	81

In this reporting year 2022/23 the theme most complained about is decision and outcomes and the presentation & perception of the worker. The most common in 2021/22 was communication.



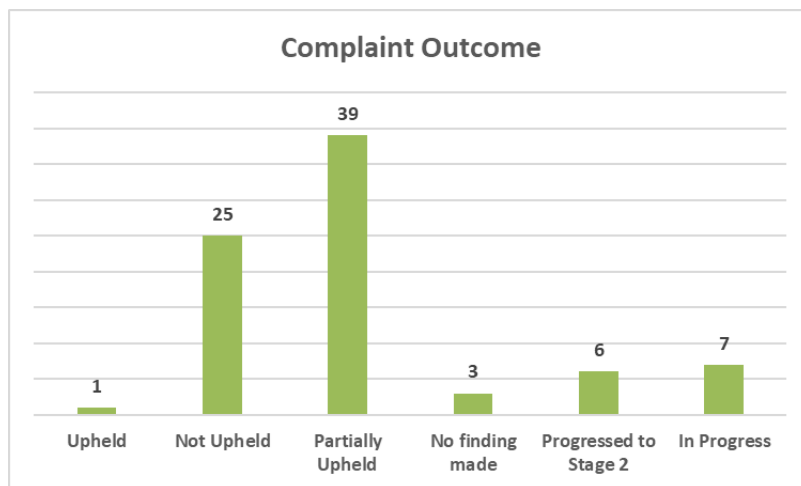
Staff turnover was still high during this period. Children's Social Care have been actively working to address this and significant progress has been made.



This table shows a breakdown of the teams that have received complaints.

## 5. Analysis of Complaints

During 2022/23 1% (1) of complaints were upheld compared to 8% (7) during 2021/22. However, a further 49% (39) of complaints were partially upheld compared to 47% (42) during 2021/22. Of complaints received 31% (25) were not upheld compared to 28% (25) during 2021/22.

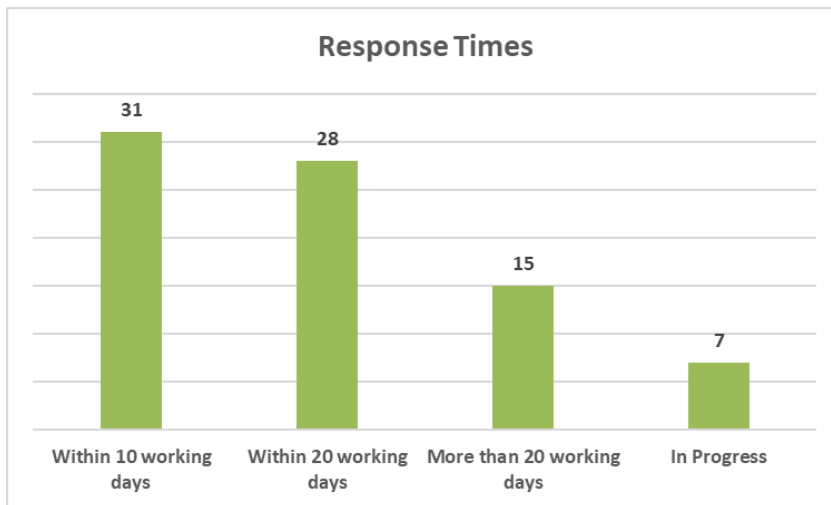


There were 8% (6) of complaints escalated to the next stage of the Childrens Statutory Complaints procedure. This included three complaints put through the Council's Corporate Complaints process.

Overall, this shows 50% of all complaints made are either upheld or partially upheld compared to 54% during 2021/22. 35% of complaints were either not upheld or had no finding made compared to 34% during 2021/22. 9% (7) of complaints were still in progress at the year end.



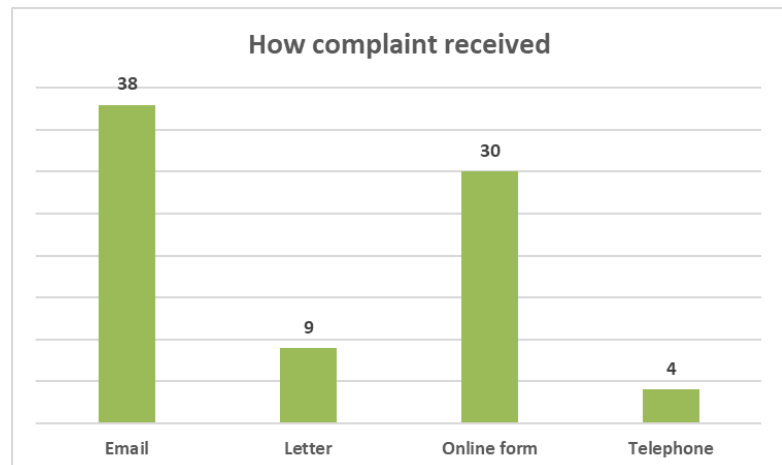
## Timeliness of Complaints



Whilst it is the aim to respond to complaints within 10 working days, 20 working days is allowed for more complex complaints. A response may exceed 20 working days if this involves meeting with complainants or further investigations are required.

During the past year there were 15 complaints that took longer than 20 days. This compares to 16 complaints in the previous year sent out of timescales. More managers are meeting with complainants before writing their responses to ensure that actions discussed during the meeting are reflected in the written responses. This is proving a better way to respond to complainants as they report feeling more listened to although this does cause responses being out of the expected timescales. We continue to work to improve response timeliness within 20 working days through management meetings and regular reminders to team managers of the standards we are working to.

Complainants continue to email directly to [Childrens.Complaint@bracknell-forest.gov.uk](mailto:Childrens.Complaint@bracknell-forest.gov.uk) and using the online complaints form.



## 6. Concerns

We have received 32 complaints from individuals which were not Children's Statutory or Corporate complaints. Some concerns were to do with Data Breaches which were passed on to the relevant department. Other concerns were daily team management which were dealt with by the relevant Team Manager. Some were by family members who would not have Parental Responsibility for the children concerned so we would not be able to discuss with them as this would breach General Data Protection Regulations.

## **7. Cost of Complaints Service & Investigations**

Children's Social Care has had seven Stage 2 investigations this year, one of which was from 2021/22. Four of the seven Stage 2 investigations were processed through our Corporate Complaints procedure. One of these escalated to a Stage 3 panel hearing and two progressed to Stage 3 of the Corporate Complaints procedure. Two complainants escalated their complaints to the LGSCO.

The cost of the Stage 2 investigations including one Stage 3 panel hearings was £18,755.77. There were additional costs for Stage 2 investigations and Stage 3 panel hearings from 2021/22 that were delayed due to Covid costing £14,423.22.

## **8. Learning from Complaints**

For all complaints that progress to Stage 2 or Stage 3, reflective discussions are held so that staff can discuss, reflect, and learn from the complaints received. On a more strategic level, learning from complaints is a learning brief presented twice a year at the Children's Social Care Learning Event. The last Learning Event in November 2022 included a presentation by the Ombudsman on best practices when responding to complaints. The Complaints Manager works with our Quality Assurance Team and our Principal Social Worker to ensure that learning contributes to the ongoing development of our social care workforce.

The Complaints Manager is always on hand to offer procedural advice and explain the policy and procedures to all members of staff and will seek expert advice and guidance where necessary to ensure a complaint is managed in the most considerate and considered manner.

The Complaints Manager and other members of the Quality Assurance Team hold quarterly induction training for all new staff. The Complaints Manager and the Head of Corporate Complaints will be arranging Complaint Handling training across CSC for all Team Managers and Assistant Team Managers in the new reporting year.

## **9. Update/progress on previous forward plan 2022/23**

During 2022/23 we held five reflective/learning sessions with staff involved. There are two still to be held following the conclusion of stage 2 investigations. Ten action plans were created during 2022/23 and any learning from these were taken forward to the Learning Events held during the year.

Quarterly reports were sent to Assistant Director, Head of Service, Team Managers and Assistant Team Managers and were presented at Childrens Senior Leadership meetings.

Complaint investigations continued to be virtual during 2022/23 and these were set up by the Complaints Manager with the complainants and staff members involved. This has not only been cost effective, but beneficial to the complainant, the Local Authority and the Investigating Officers and Independent Persons who are not local to Bracknell Forest Council.

## 10. Forward plan for 2023/24

<b>Learning from complaints</b>	Work with HR/OD to develop a routine Complaints Handling training offer to the workforce	By August 2023
	Present thematic learning to the CSC learning event	2 x pa
	Ensure a reflective practice discussion is held with involved practitioners to enhance learning and improve practice	For each complaint upheld following a stage 2 or 3 complaint
<b>Timeliness</b>	Work with colleagues to achieve a stage 1 complaint response within 20 working days on all complaints. Where this is not possible a clear rationale will be evidenced	Target of 95% by year end
<b>Governance</b>	Data report to assistant directors, heads of services, team managers and assistant team managers	Monthly
	Quarterly summary reports to assistant directors, heads of services, team managers and assistant team managers	For each quarter
<b>Process</b>	Investigate and implement a streamlined and efficient operational arrangement for virtual complaints meetings where the situation allows	By August 2023
	New complaints system is being developed called Liberty Create Complaints System. This will be a council wide system and is currently being tested in conjunction with IT developers, the Complaints Manager, and Head of Corporate Complaints.	December 2023

End