



Children Young People and Learning Statutory Annual Complaints, Concerns and Compliments Report 2017-2018



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1. Background and Context

This report sets out information regarding statutory complaints made to Bracknell Forest Children's Services between 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018. The report also outlines information received regarding concerns or compliments made by, or on behalf of children and young people with receive support/services from Children's Social Care in Bracknell Forest.

In accordance with the Children Act 1989, Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006, Children Leaving Care Act 2000, Adoption and Children Act 2002 and the Health and Social Care Act 2003, it is a statutory requirement to produce an annual report which will be published on the Council's website.

Bracknell Forest Council has set procedures for resolving complaints and representations received by, on behalf of, or relating to children and young people 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 formal measures
- Offer early resolution of complaints
- Reduce escalations in turn addressing cost implications
- Learn lessons from complaints



Guidance surrounding how to make a complaint, representation, compliment or comment regarding Children and Young People can be found at:-

<https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/get-touch/complaints/childrens-social-care-complaints>

Complaints about school provision and Special Educational Needs are dealt with under a separate procedure and are not part of this report.

2. Bracknell Forest Children’s Statutory Complaints Procedure

Responsibility for the service rests with the Director of Children, Young People and Learning. In Order to provide independence from the line management of cases and the allocation of resources, the Complaints Manager’s post is located in the Strategy, Resources and Early Help branch of the Department and reports to the Head of Performance Management and Governance.

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

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

Representations may be made to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) 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, however, the LGO will not normally accept the complaint until the Council has had a chance to complete all stages of the complaints procedure.

Independent advocacy for children and young people are commissioned via Action for Children to ensure effective representation to support early and prompt resolution of complaints.

REMEDIES

In the majority of cases if a complaint is upheld or partially upheld, an apology will be offered and information will be given to the complainant as to what action the service will take to ensure the situation does not arise again, for the complainant or future service users. The apology would be given by the manager on behalf of the service complained about. If the case has been poorly handled causing an injustice to the individual, consideration will be given as to whether or not a financial remedy would be appropriate.

LINKS TO BRACKNELL FOREST CYPL SERVICE PLAN

The CYPL Service Plan sets out key priorities which support the monitoring and learning from complaints to help improve the delivery of service to children, young people and their families. This is monitored quarterly under objective 6.4 – ***‘Safeguarding structures to safeguard children and vulnerable adults are well established’***.

3. Number of Complaints Handled

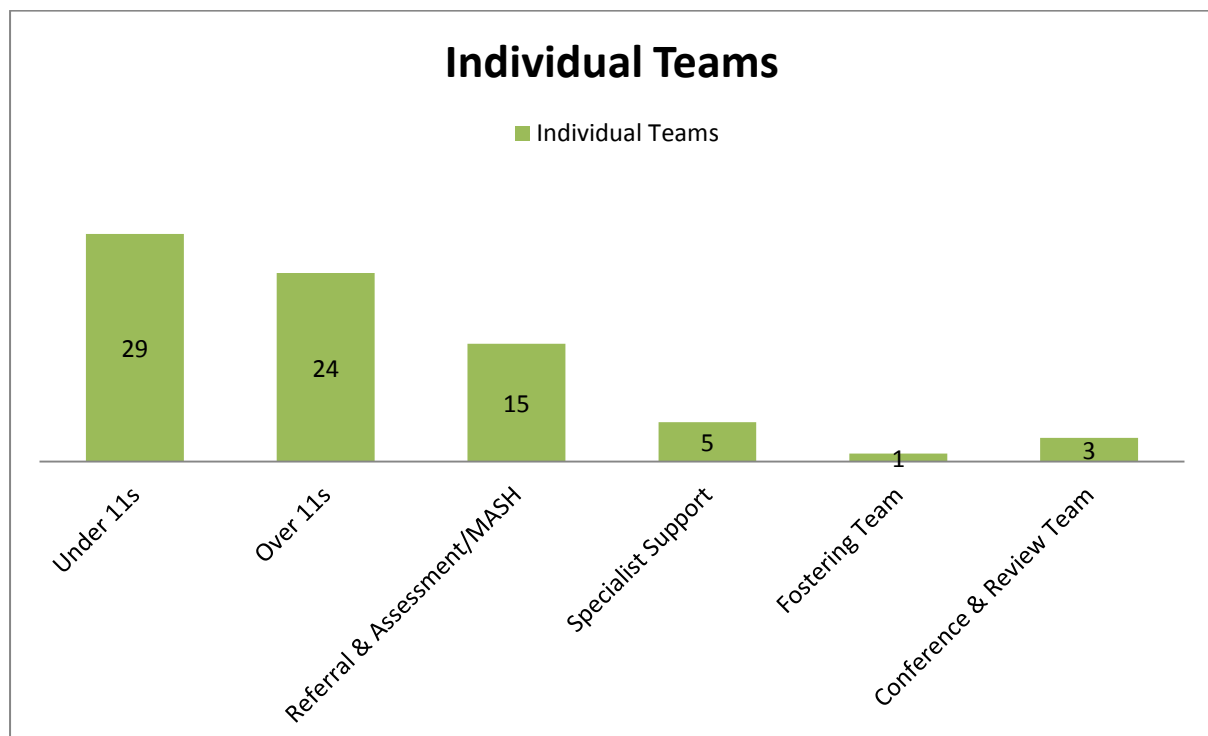
During the year 2017/2018, a total of 77 cases were received by the Complaints team which represents 7.8% of the total number of cases open to Children’s Social Care (986). There has been a 63.8% increase in the total number of statutory complaints from the previous year.

On analysing this increase we looked at the number of Children Looked After which increased from 116 in March 2017 to 138 in March 2018. Of the total 77 complaints received 26 were from parents of Children Looked After which appears to be one reason for the increase.

Complaint Type	2016/17	2017/18	Difference in numbers
Statutory Complaints	38	73	+35
Deferred/ Declined	9	4	-5
Total Complaints	47	77	+30

The four complaints deferred during 2017/18 were due to being in court.

The table below sets out the proportion of complaints received by individual teams across CYPL.



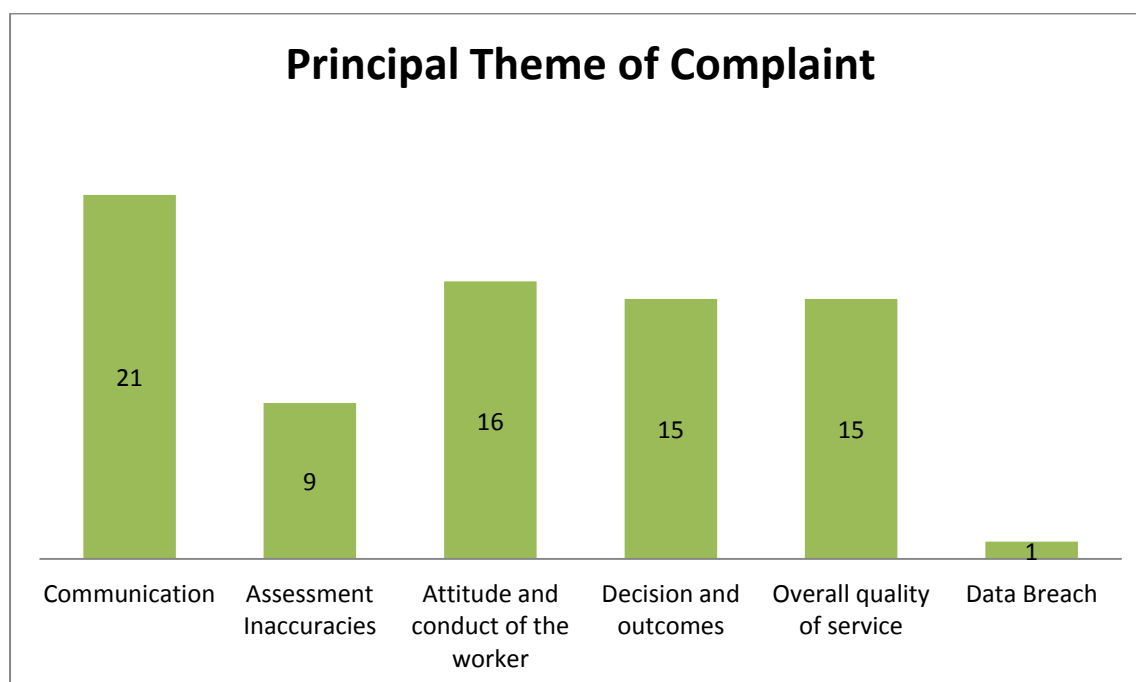
4. Analysis of Complaints

SOURCE OF CONTACTS

The majority of complaints made regarding CYPL were made by parents and grandparents of children and young people, with 4 complaints coming directly from children or young people. All 4 of these complaints were received via the advocacy service and were concluded at Stage 1 successfully.

REASON FOR COMPLAINTS 2017/18

The table below sets out the detail in relation to the nature of the concern:



During 2017/18 the majority of Stage 1 complaints related to Communication.

COMPLETION TIMES

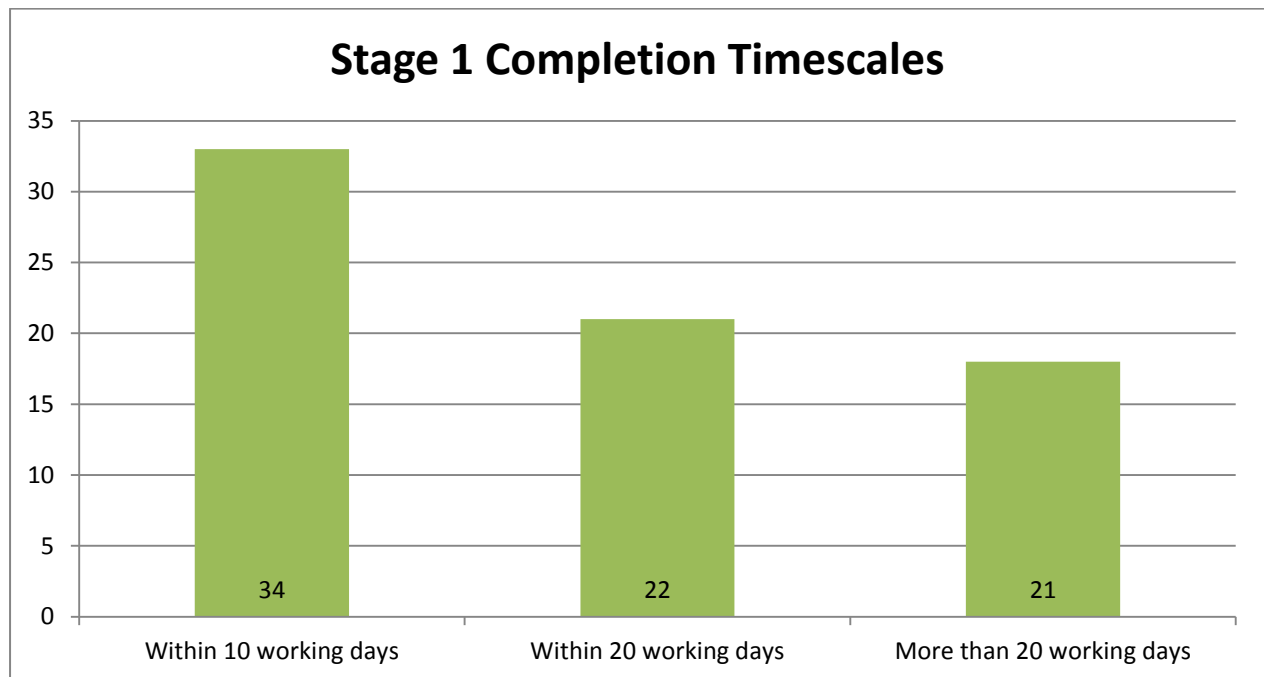
- **Stage 1 - local resolution completion times**

It is expected that the majority of cases should be completed within 10 working days; only complex cases should take longer and these should be completed with 20 working days.

The 21 complaints that were responded to after the 20 working days timescales were 11 in Q1, 5 in Q2, 2 in Q3 and 4 in Q4.

The reason for these being out of timescales was due to; a new Complaints Manager coming into post and then leaving shortly after, the Ofsted inspection and an Interim Complaints team.

Interim Complaints staff were recruited from existing staff to assist with the running of the complaints team.



- Stage 2 (Independent investigation) Completion timescales**

There is a target timescale for the completion of Stage 2 formal investigations of 25 working days, but can be extended to 65 working days in exceptional circumstances.

The following table sets out completion timescales for Stage 2:

Service Area	Under 25 days	26-65 days	65+ days	Pending completion
B/F from 2016/17	0	0	2	2
R & A/MASH	0	1	0	2
Under 11's	0	3	0	2

In 2017/18, 4 complaints were brought forward from 2016/17. Two of these complaints are now completed however two are still pending completions due to the complexity of the complaints. We endeavour that these will be completed by end August 2018.

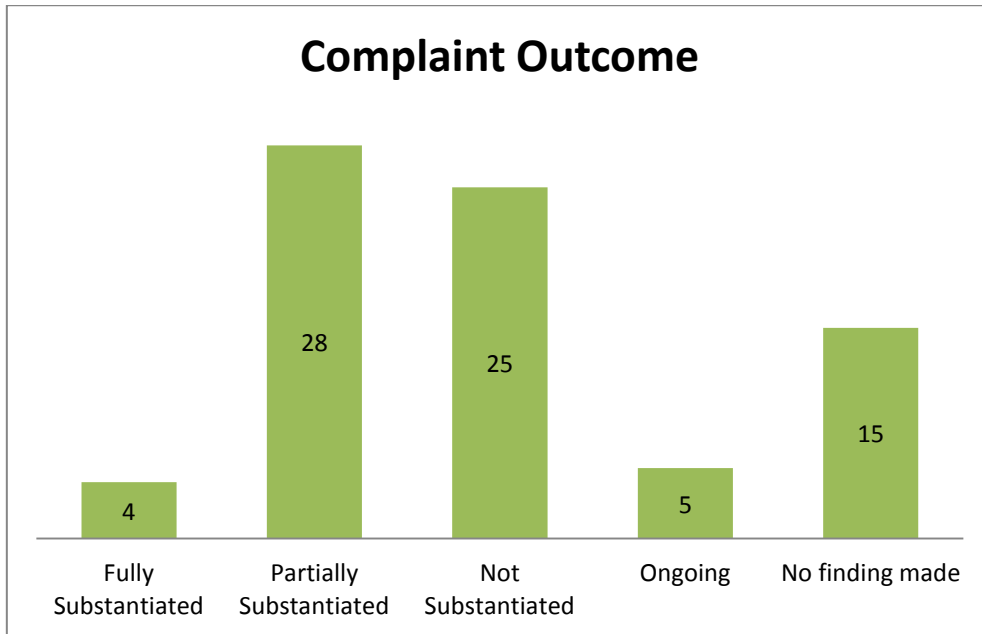
There were 8 Stage 2 complaints during 2017/18, 4 have been completed and 4 are still pending completion. No Stage 2 complaints were completed in 25 days.

- **Stage 3 Independent review panel hearing completion times**

No complaint was taken to Stage 3 during 2017/18.

OUTCOMES OF COMPLAINTS

The outcomes of initial Stage 1 complaints (excluding those deferred) were as follows:



In 2017/18 only 5% (4) of the 77 complaints were fully substantiated and of these cases the themes were identified as; attitude and conduct of the worker, decisions and outcomes and overall quality of service.

5. Cost of Complaints Service and Investigations 2017/18

The Complaints Manager was only in post for a short time in 2017, in the interim Managers were paid honoraria payments at the end of the financial year.

When the complaint proceeds to Stage 2 under the statutory procedure, it is a requirement that an Investigating Officer and an Independent Person be appointed. The cost of this varies depending on the length of time involved and the complexity of the investigation.

There has been an increase in the number of complaints being investigated at Stage 2 during 2017/18, including complaints carried over from the previous year, as outlined earlier. This in turn has resulted in an increase in the overall cost of the complaints investigators and independent persons' commissioned which totalled £59,405.

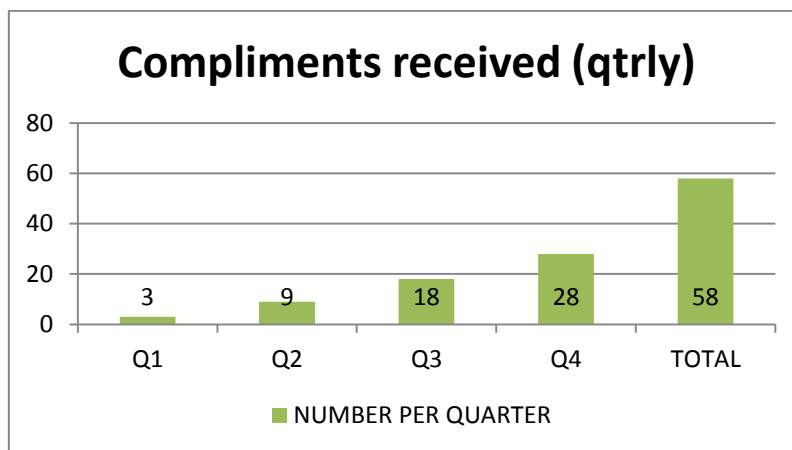
6. Training/Workshops

The Complaints Manager held training for staff in 2017. The Interim Complaints Officer has carried out refresher training on the Complaints procedures to staff who have requested this. The Complaints Officer is always at hand to offer advice and explain the policy and procedures to staff and newly qualified Social Workers.

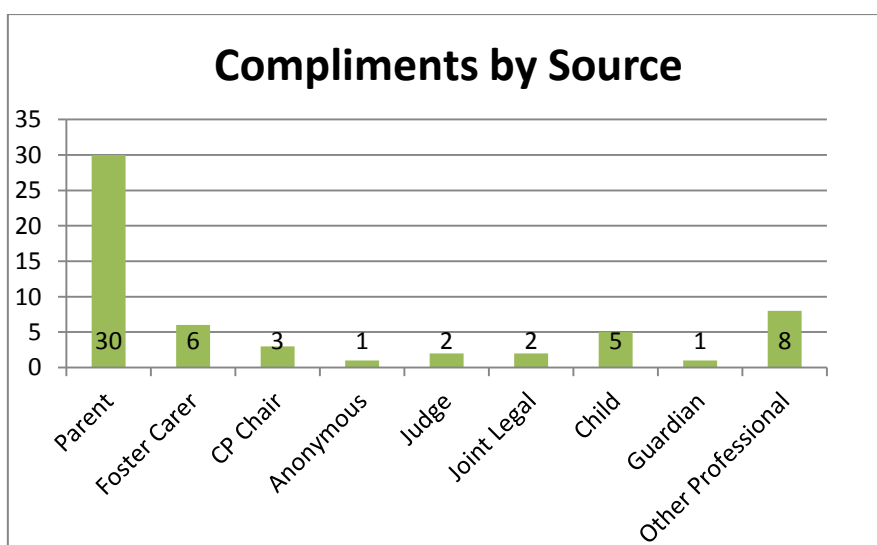
7. Compliments

A total of 58 compliments and positive comments were received by the Complaints department throughout 2017/18.

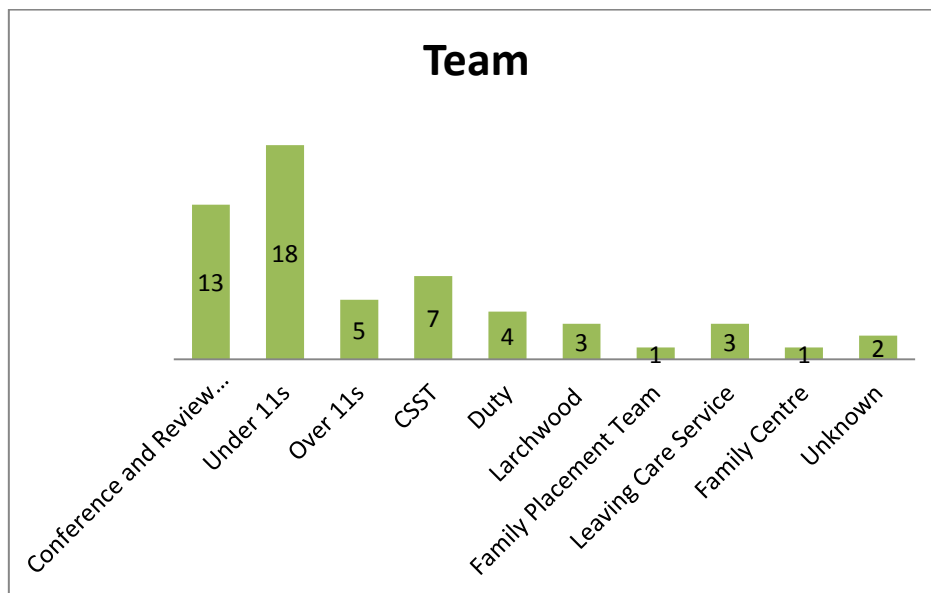
As the table below shows these increased throughout the year with the highest amount of 28 received between January and end March 2018.



Of these most were from parents, while the remainder came directly from other professionals and foster carers. We received 5 from the children themselves.



The table below shows the different teams where the compliments were sent. The highest being the Under 11's team and information gathered from the feedback forms at a Child Protection Conference.



Below is an overview of some of the comments received from children, parents & Foster Carer: -

I would just like to thank CC and N on a brilliant job and service they provided to me and my Girls yesterday (Parent)

The chair of the meeting was fair, he understood how I felt and took my feelings into consideration (Parent)

I am happy with the discussions and dealings that I have had with your office. 'A' has listened well and taken on board mine and my ex-wife's views. (Parent)

H is very respectful, knowledgeable and goes above what you would expect to help us all. I have been very impressed by her she has made me feel very positive about Bracknell Forest Council. (IFA, Foster Carer)

Competent and professional (Parent)

*Thank you for everyone thank you genuinely x everything** You're not even my social worker but you're the best social worker I've had thank u ❤️❤️❤️(child)*

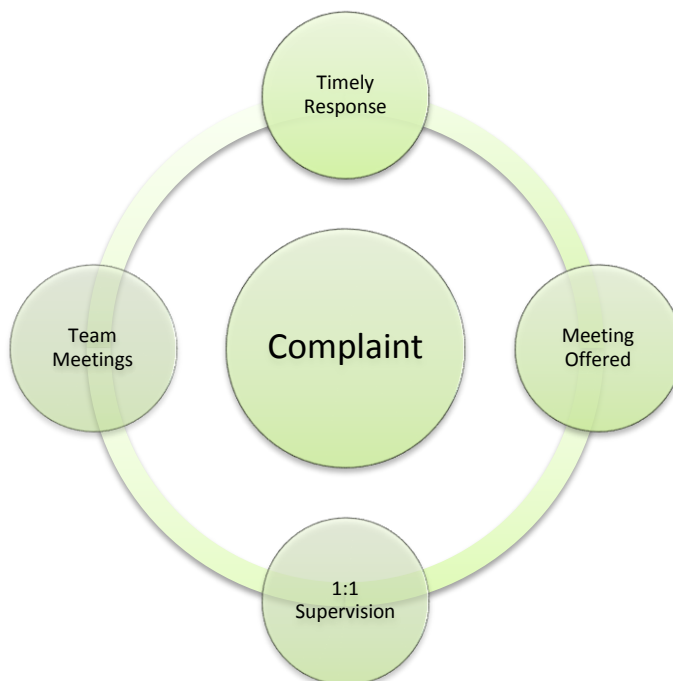
Thank you so much for being so kind and understanding. You guys have been so kind throughout this process and made things less stressful in terms of housing etc at what otherwise is a very stressful time thank you!! (Parent)

Thank you for all your help over the past year. I have heard horror stories about social services but you and your team have been brilliant (Parent)

Just want to say thank you so much for all the support you have given me since I have been out of work I really do not know what I would have done without you. (child)

8. Progress on 2016/17 Recommendations

Bracknell Forest Council is committed to continued improvement with the following focus when dealing with and resolving complaints and general concerns received by this department during 2017/18.



The following sets out the progress made during 2017/18 against the recommendations outlined in the previous year's report:-

- *Training for managers on dealing with Stage 1 to de-escalate complaints in a timely manner*

The Managers have been offering meetings with the complainant which has resolved the complaint at Stage 1. This is proving very successful and no complaints escalated to Stage 2 in the last quarter of 2017/18.

- *Commissioning quality Independent Person/Investigation Officer from within Bracknell Forest Council with an agreed schedule of costs within a forecasted budget*

A new Investigation Officer and Independent Person were commissioned in November 2017 who lives more local to Bracknell. There are still the existing Investigation Officer and Independent Person working on pending Stage 2 complaints from 2016/17.

- *Corporate complaints are separately managed to ensure focus on statutory responsibilities to children*

Corporate complaints are no longer handled through the Children's Complaints department.

- *Recruit a full time permanent Complaints Manager to ensure sufficient capacity and oversight of practice and to continue to drive up standards and improvements.*

The recruitment of a fully time Complaints Manager will be undertaken during the new financial year 2018/19.

- *Work closely with Participation Officer to capture feedback from children and young people to inform complaints service delivery.*

The Participation Officer works closely with the Complaints team and will send through any feedback received from children and young people. The Participation Officer via Action for Children has sent through the 4 complaints received from young people in 2017/18.

9. Recommendations and Future Priorities

Formal investigations of complaints undertaken during 2017/18 indicate the continued need to review policies and procedures which underpin how services are currently delivered with the following key objectives:-

- Continuing to respond to Stage 1 complaints within 10 working days and Team Managers giving the complainant the opportunity to meet and discuss the complaint
- Reduced spend on Investigator Officer and Independent Person by using alternative investigators
- Recruit a full time Complaints Officer