



# **People Directorate Compliments and Complaints**

## **Annual Report**

**1<sup>st</sup> April 2018 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019**

**Alison Keeling, Complaints Manager**

# **Children's Social Care, Adult's Social Care, Housing & Benefits**

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## **1. Background and Context**

This report sets out information regarding compliments and complaints made by, or on behalf of children, young people, elderly people and Bracknell Residents who receive support or services from the Local Authority. These relate to the following departments of the council, from 1st April 2018 to 31st March 2019:

- Children's Social Care
- Adults Social Care
- Housing & Benefits

It is a statutory requirement to produce an annual report which will be published on the Council's website.

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 formal measures
- Offer early resolution of complaints
- Reduce escalations in turn addressing cost implications
- Learn lessons from complaints

## **2. Bracknell Forest Statutory Complaints Procedure**

The complaints process aims to be as accessible as possible. Complaints may be made in person, by telephone, in writing or by email. Adults Social Care and Housing & Benefits complaints may also be made online.

All complaints received are acknowledged within 3 working days and we also aim to respond within 10 working days in line with our procedure. Within Adults Social Care the legislation allows a flexible approach, and usually the investigation is completed within one to two months. More complex complaints may take longer than this in which case the complainant is contacted to inform them of this. It is our aim to change this in 2019/2020 in line with Children's Social Care and Housing & Benefits to resolve complaints within 10 working days as standard.

### **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) setting 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 Action for Children to ensure effective representation to support early and prompt resolution of complaints.

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.

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

### **Adult's Statutory Complaints and Housing & Benefits Corporate Complaints:**

Complaints can be made directly to the relevant team or to the Complaints Manager, whichever is more convenient for the complainant. Ultimately, whatever the circumstances, the complainant should feel that their views are taken seriously and that they are being listened to.

Adult Social Care and Housing & Benefits also need to:

- Make sure that the complaint is clearly understood
- Obtain the right information to assess the seriousness of the complaint
- Keep in regular contact with the complainant
- Determine what the complainant wants to happen on completion of the investigation
- Act quickly to resolve matters wherever possible

When the complaint requires an investigation, it is usual for the Assistant Director to provide the written response to the complainant, informing them of the outcome reached and whether the complaint has been upheld, not upheld or partially upheld. Occasionally, it is necessary for the Executive Director of People.

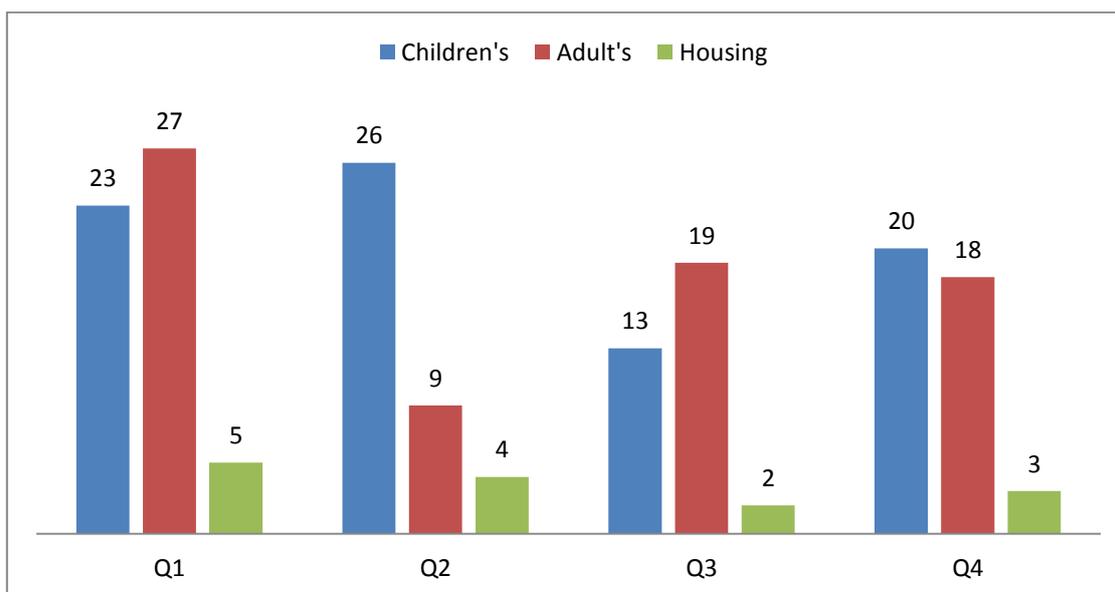
The final conclusion may not support the complainant's view. Under these circumstances, the response will be clear as to how the decisions were reached (which will be based upon the findings made by the investigator). Any changes required, recommendations or action plans that need to be put in place will be detailed.

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 for consideration.

### **3. Bracknell Forest Compliments**

Compliments are received from a wide range of sources across the service, through the use of surveys, activity feedback and direct consultation exercises. All compliments received from external and internal professionals/agencies are sent to the individuals line Manager to support the appraisal process and personal development of employees.

**Number of Compliments 2018/19**



During 2018/19 there were 169 compliments received which breaks down into the following:

- Children's – 82
- Adult's – 73
- Housing – 14

This compares to 154 across all departments in 2017/18.

#### **What are compliments saying?**

##### **Childrens Social Care**

- Very satisfied with the overall assessment from the Duty and assessment team
- Duty Team Survey feedback - Very happy with the outcome listened too, actioned, support given in a non-judgemental way - service offered excellent at all times even though the situation was very difficult
- FSM - the support she had has been fantastic. She couldn't have been more flattering of your staff - all the support from the social worker and from the mental health worker has been fantastic, got her a new home; got her off drinking; she's now got a job and she couldn't believe how well she had been supported

- Many thanks for supporting D and C in the way you have it really is very good and commendable. J has informed me that your relationship with the family is excellent
- L spoke very highly of the help and support you have offered her, which clearly goes over and above addressing her substance misuse

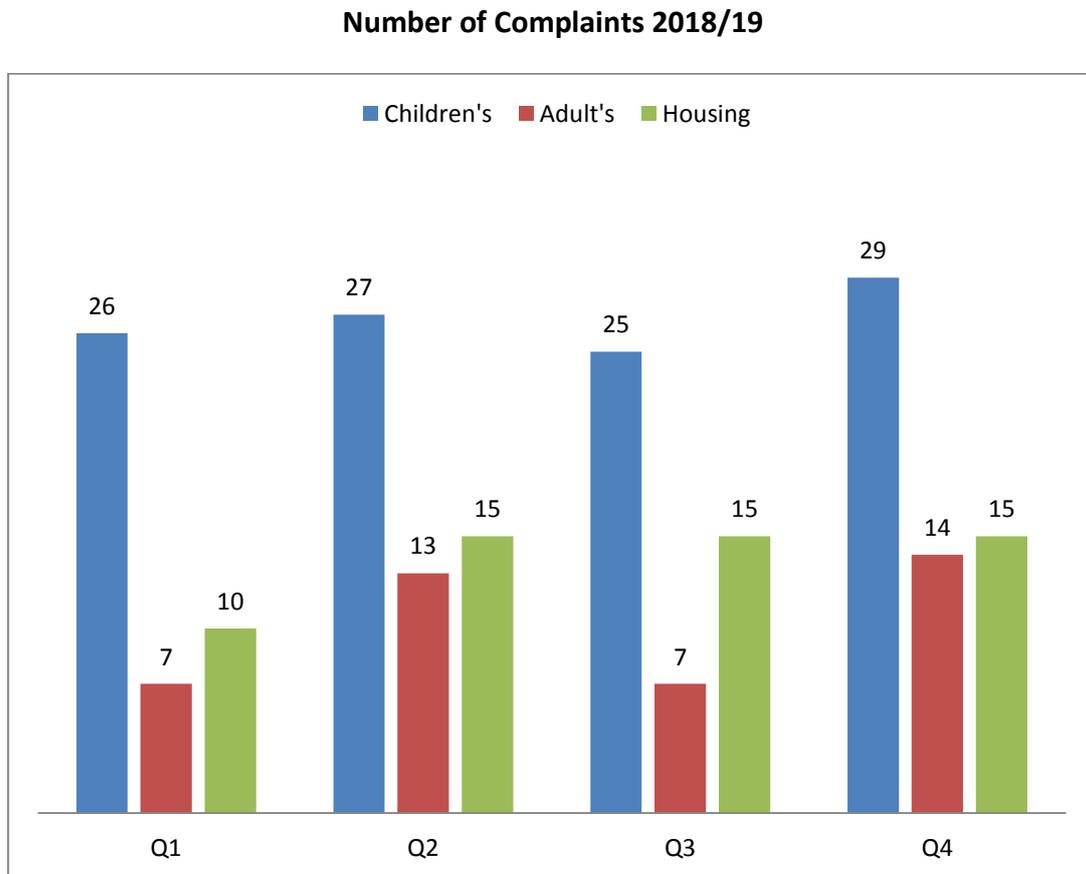
### **Adults Social Care**

- Your staff were wonderful. My late Dad kept his dignity. They became friends, we are very, very grateful. We cannot thank you enough for all the care given by the carers
- Thank you very much for all the help, advice and support you have given us over the past few months, it has been invaluable. The service and level of care has been excellent. The carers have all been caring, respectful of Mum and all very professional, and always cheerful you are lucky to have such a great team
- Definitely above and beyond; they had excellent ways of explaining things. Thank you from the bottom of my heart to all the ICS team who astounded me by their professionalism, kindness and compassion. I truly appreciate all the help and support they gave me in my own home, such a perfect efficient team with inspiring management who truly deserves a very BIG thank you
- Special thank you to B and the direct payments team for all that you have done for me and my parents it has helped enormously over the past few weeks
- Through the difficult times the support from O and the team have been totally brilliant - they are stars, who represent the very best in public service

### **Housing & Benefits**

- Thank R for her swift help with sorting out her benefits, she was fabulous and helped her not to worry about it
- Successful outcome for two homeless clients who have moved into private rented accommodation and 30% of the costs are being claimed back from MHCLG SWEP funding
- Thank you so much, we can finally start to pay off bills. Thanks for all your help, I'm so glad it was you that answered the phone that day and went above and beyond to help
- C wanted to thank O for being such an awesome housing officer and really helping her
- Mr R rang to thank T for his help and advice and he wanted to let the housing management team know how good he was and he was a credit to the Council

#### 4. Complaints Handled within the year (2018/19)

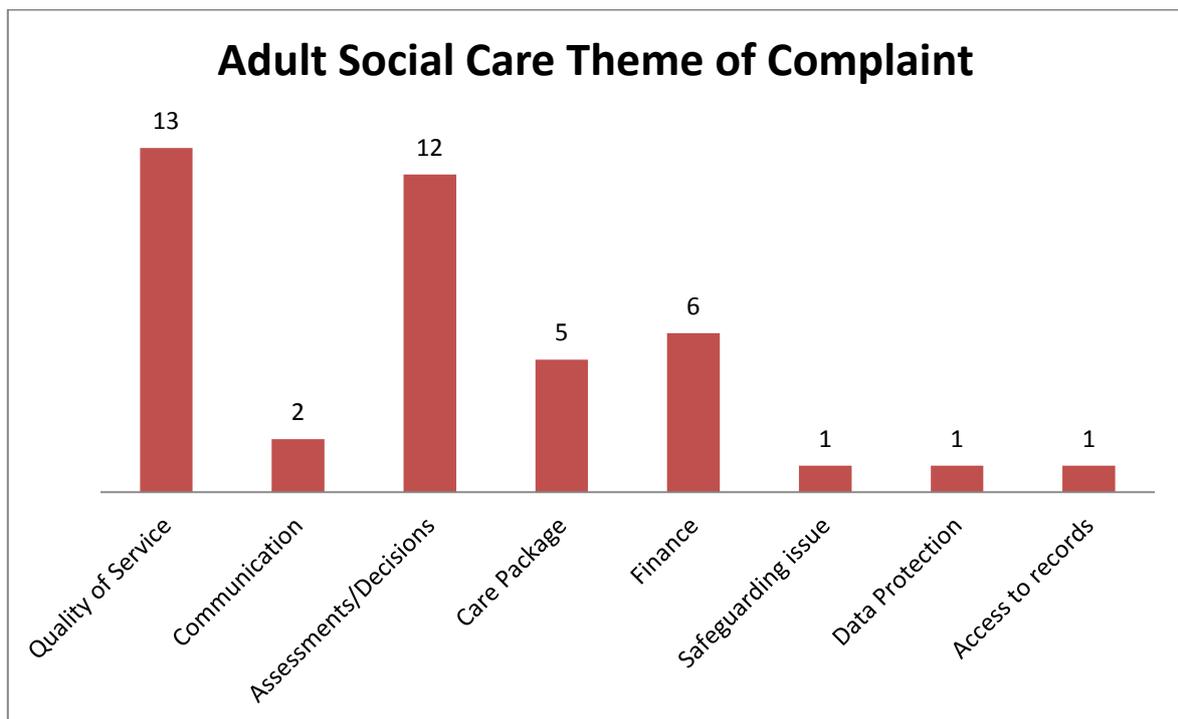
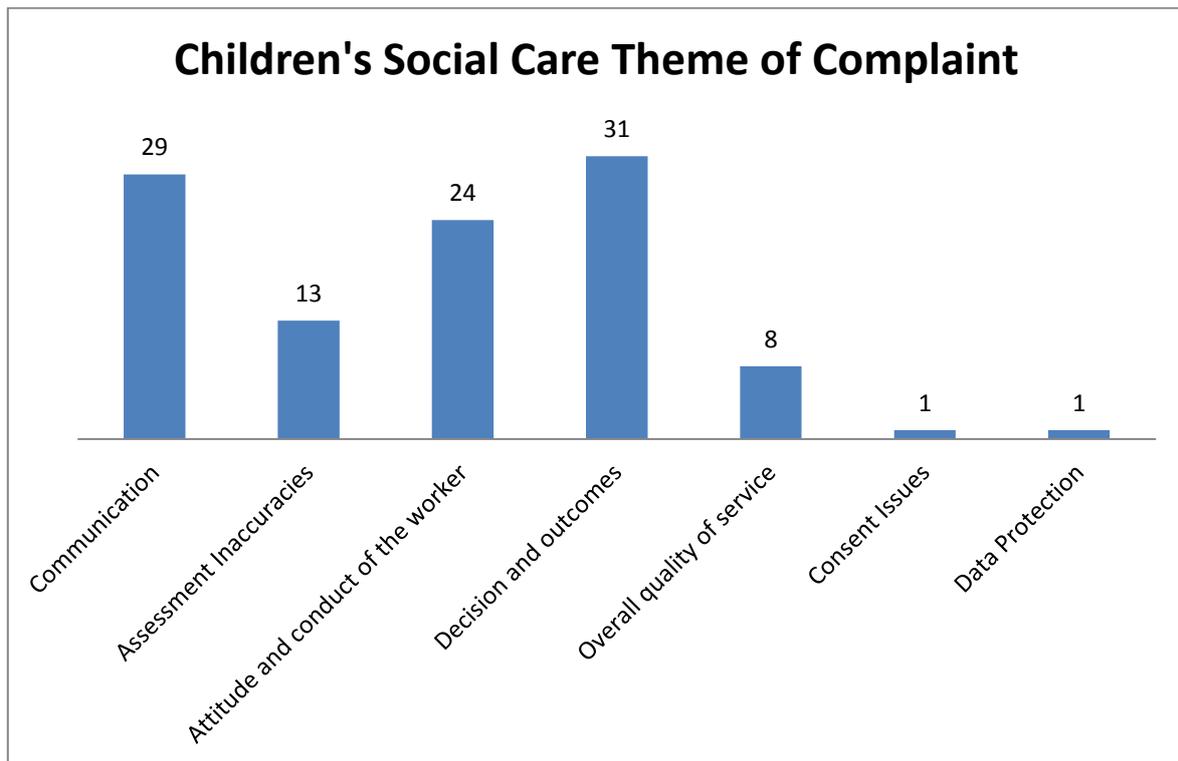


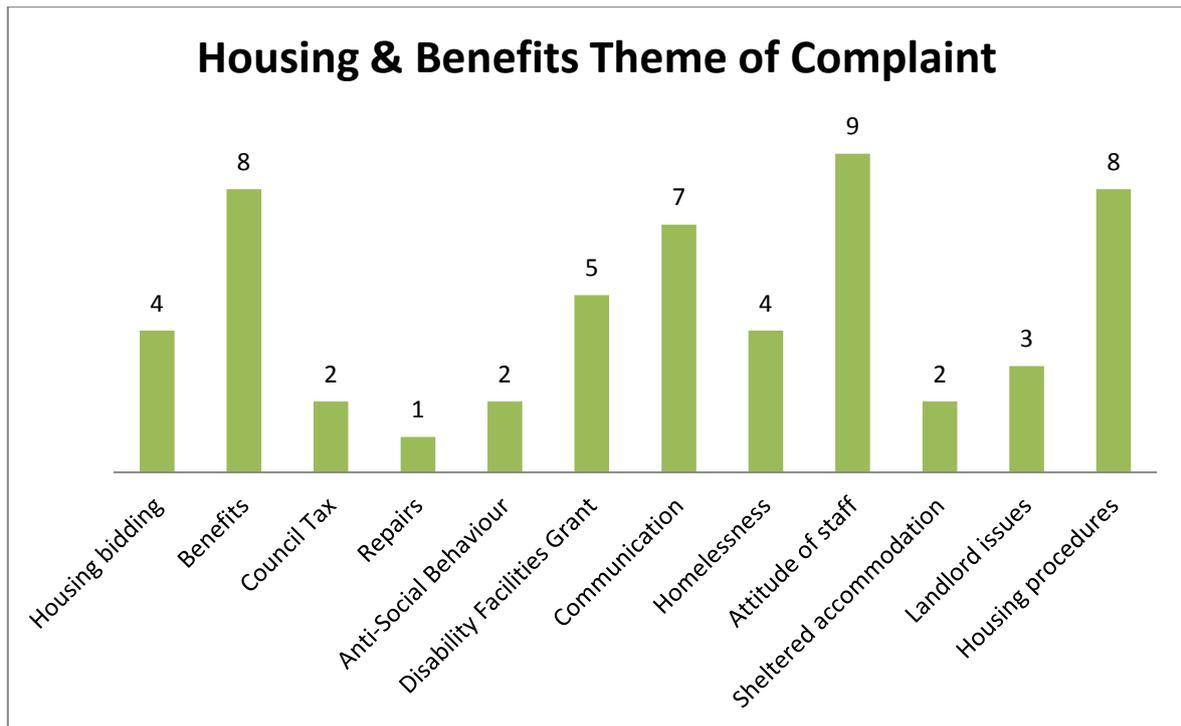
During 2018/19 there were 203 complaints received which breaks down into the following:

- Children's – 107
- Adult's – 41
- Housing – 55

This compares to 100 across all departments in 2017/18. The reasons for the increase includes the fact that we now have a full time complaints manager and have been actively encouraging recording of complaints in order that we are able to learn from experiences of residents. Also all Stage 1 complaints for Housing & Benefits are now included.

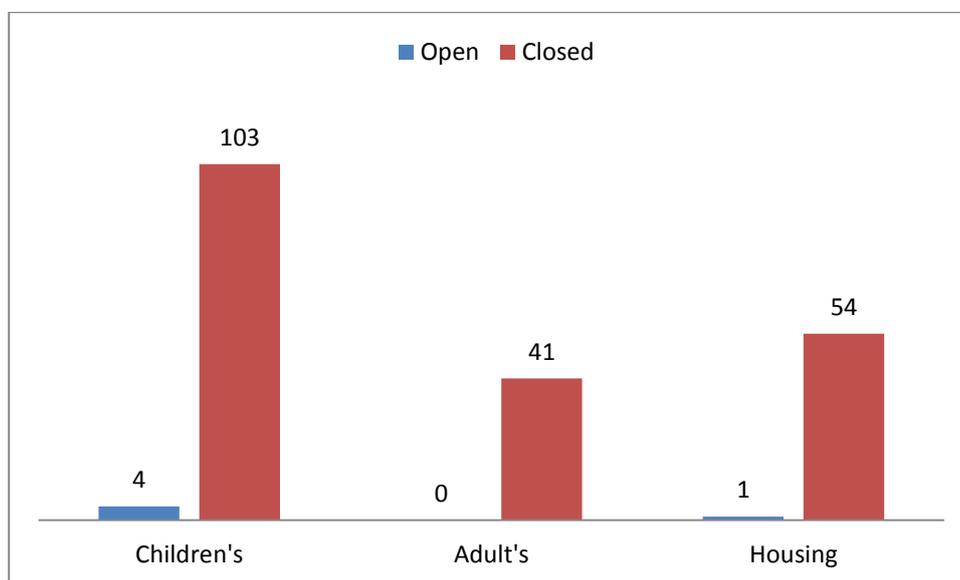
The themes for complaints across the three departments were:





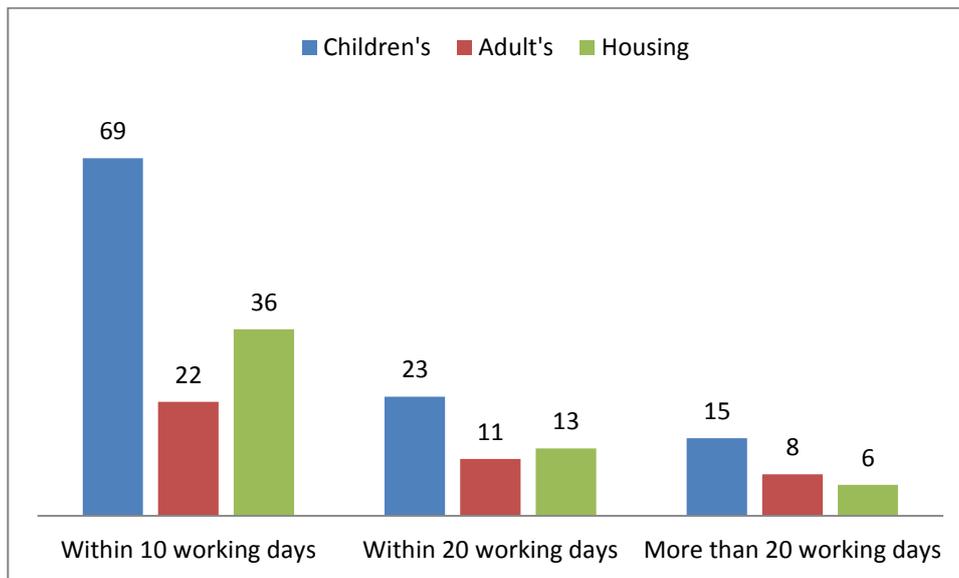
## 5. Analysis of Complaints

### Complaints Status



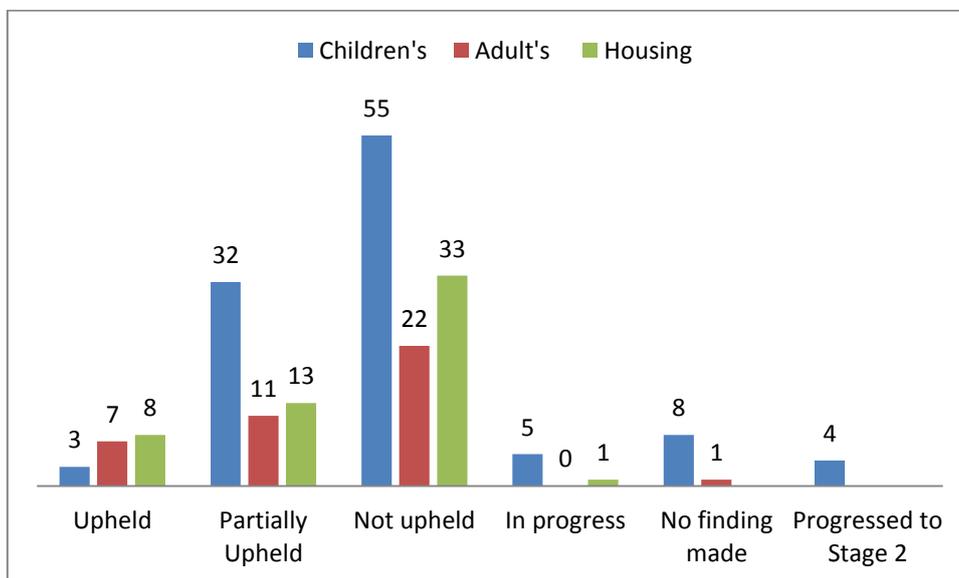
There were 4 cases still open for Children's Complaints and 1 case still open in Housing at the end of March 2019.

### Stage 1 Response Timescales



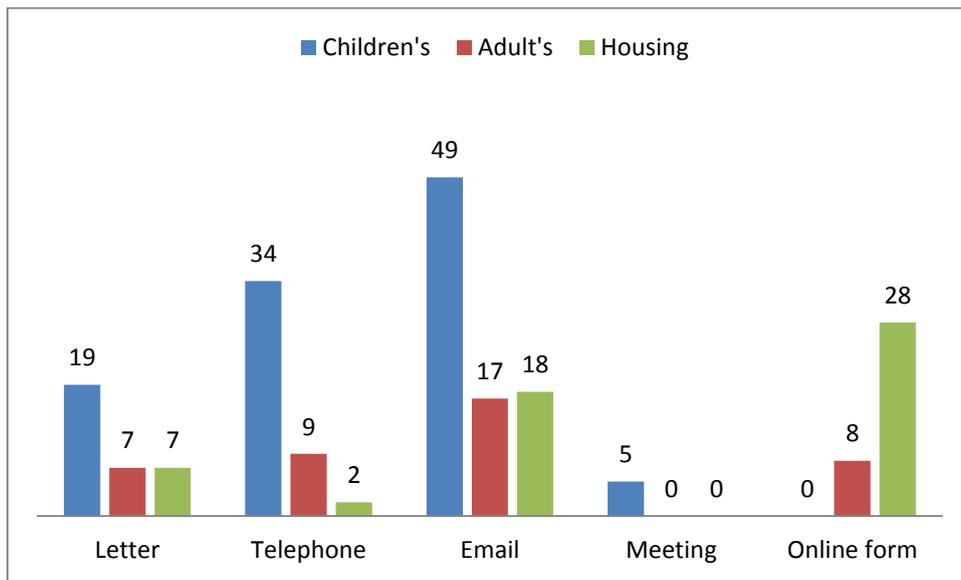
Whilst it is our aim to always respond within 20 days there are a number of factors that can cause delays. This includes highly complex complaints, and an increasing number of cases in which managers are meeting with complainants prior to responding. However, it remains our intention to improve the proportion of complaints that are responded to within timescales, and this will be closely monitored during 2019/20.

### Complaints Outcomes



In total 54% of complaints during 2018/19 were not upheld. However, despite this the council continues to seek to learn lessons from the experience of the complainant. A further 28% of complaints are partially upheld. This means that some aspects of the complaint are upheld but that others are not.

### Source of Complaints



At this time it is not possible to log Children’s complaints online. This will be updated during 2019.

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

Investigations within Adult’s Social Care and Housing are dealt with internally so no additional costs are involved. Within Children’s Social Care when a complaint escalates to Stage 2 and Stage 3, an Independent Investigating officer and an independent person are appointed along with panel members for Stage 3. During 2018/19 there have been five Stage 2 investigations and three Stage 3 panel hearings.

Due to changes in sourcing of Investigation Officers & Independent Persons the costs have reduced from previous years. The average cost of a Stage 2 investigation in 2017/18 was £9.6k, the average during 2018/19 has reduced to £2.8k, a reduction of 71%.

### **7. Training/Workshops**

The Complaints Manager has held induction training for staff during 2018 for all newly qualified social workers.

More training will be implemented during the coming year for all staff involved with complaints, including ATMs and Team Managers. The Complaints Manager is always at hand to offer advice and explain the policy and procedures to all members of staff.

## **8. Progress on 2017/18 Recommendations**

We are continuing to respond to Stage 1 complaints within the 10 working days and offering Complainants meetings with Assistant Team Managers and Team Managers to resolve the issues.

This has been working really well during 2018/2019 and we will continue to offer these meetings.

Costs have been reduced by finding alternative investigators and independent persons for Children's Complaints at Stage 2.

A full time Complaints Manager has been in post since 1st July 2018.

## **9. Recommendations**

During 2018/19, as we have transitioned into a People Directorate, we have commissioned a review of complaints. This review includes a number of recommendations which we will be implementing during 2019/20.

These include:

1. Improved training for all involved in the complaints process
2. Enhancing systems to ensure that we routinely learn from complaints and feed that learning into service improvement
3. Creating on-line forms for all services, to enable people to make complaints
4. Aligning procedures and timelines for adult complaints so that they match with those for children and housing