



# **People Directorate Compliments and Complaints**

## **Annual Report**

**1<sup>st</sup> April 2019 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020**

**Alison Keeling, Complaints Manager**

# **Adult's Social Care, Children'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, older 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 2019 to 31st March 2020:

- Adults Social Care
- Children's 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, by email or using our online complaints form on the Bracknell Forest Council's public website.

All complaints received are acknowledged within 3 working days and we also aim to respond within 10 working days in line with our procedures. This has been implemented within Adults Social Care this year and has worked well. More complex complaints may be responded to within 20 working days, with the complainant being kept informed during the process.

- All complaints are dealt with efficiently.
- Complaints are properly investigated.
- Complainants receive a timely and appropriate response.
- Complainants are told the outcome regarding the investigation of the complaint.
- An apology is given if required.
- Appropriate response is taken where necessary.

### **Adult's Statutory Complaints**

The Adults Statutory procedure is an internal investigation and a response is sent from the Assistant Director of the Service area. If no resolution is achieved an external investigator will be appointed and a full report will be sent to the complainant of the findings.

### **Housing & Benefits Corporate Complaints:**

Housing & Benefits follow the Council's Corporate complaints procedure being:

- Stage 1 – response from Service Area Manager
- Stage 2 – response from Service Area Assistant Director
- Stage 3 – response from CEO

### **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.

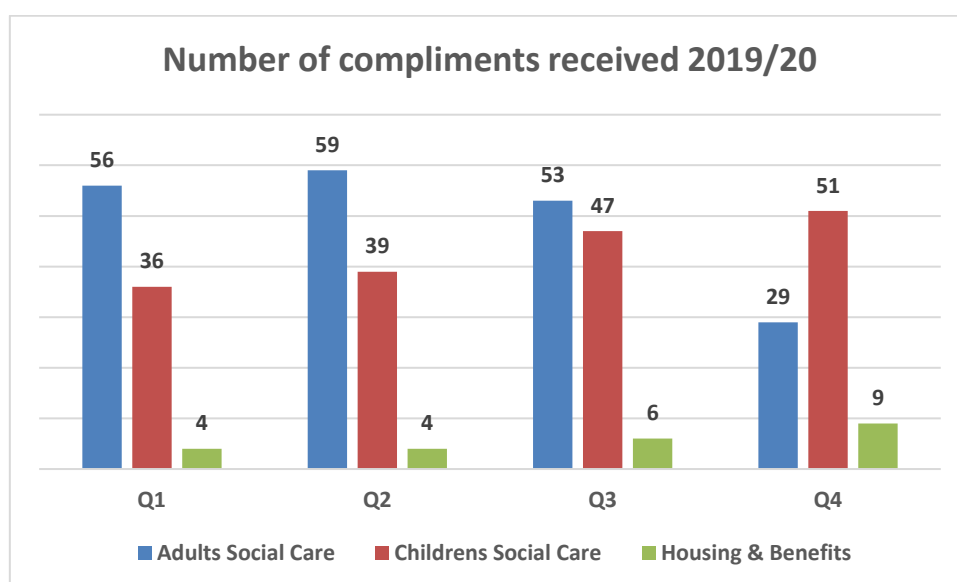
In the majority of cases if a complaint is upheld or partially upheld, an apology will be offered and information will be given to the complainant as to what action the service will take to ensure the situation does not arise again, for the complainant or future service users. The apology would be given 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.

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.



During 2019/20 there were 393 compliments received which breaks down into the following:

- Adults Social Care – 197 *(73 received in 2018/19)*
- Childrens Social Care – 173 *(83 received in 2018/19)*
- Housing & Benefits – 23 *(14 received in 2018/19)*

This compares to 170 across all departments in 2018/19. This year we have included compliments from ForestCare within Adults Social Care which were not monitored in the previous year. New feedback forms were created for the Children's Social Care teams, which may have encouraged more feedback being given from families.

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

#### **Adults Social Care**

- **Family members** - Thank you so much for all your help - you've all been wonderful and are much appreciated by all the family
- **Individual** - Very friendly and helpful at all times. All staff have been supportive and helpful. Excellent service.
- **Individual** - Thank you all for your excellent care & support and helping me regain my independence
- **Individual** - The staff were all very helpful & polite
- **Family members** - A huge thank you for all your help and dedication where S. is concerned. It has been a genuine pleasure working with you and we are very grateful."

#### **Childrens Social Care**

- **Young Person** - Thank you card to SW thanking her for her support and being with him throughout his journey and is now with his forever family who love him loads
- **Parent** - SW never doubted me always there when I needed advice or help. She did absolutely everything to help me and my daughter
- **Young Person** - Thank you for being an amazing Personal Adviser. You've done a great job with me and I can only imagine what you've done for others
- **Parent** - Friendly, professional, understanding, fair and non-judgemental. Great
- **Other Professional** - You are inspirational you know! The children are lucky to have you looking after their interests and giving them their challenges

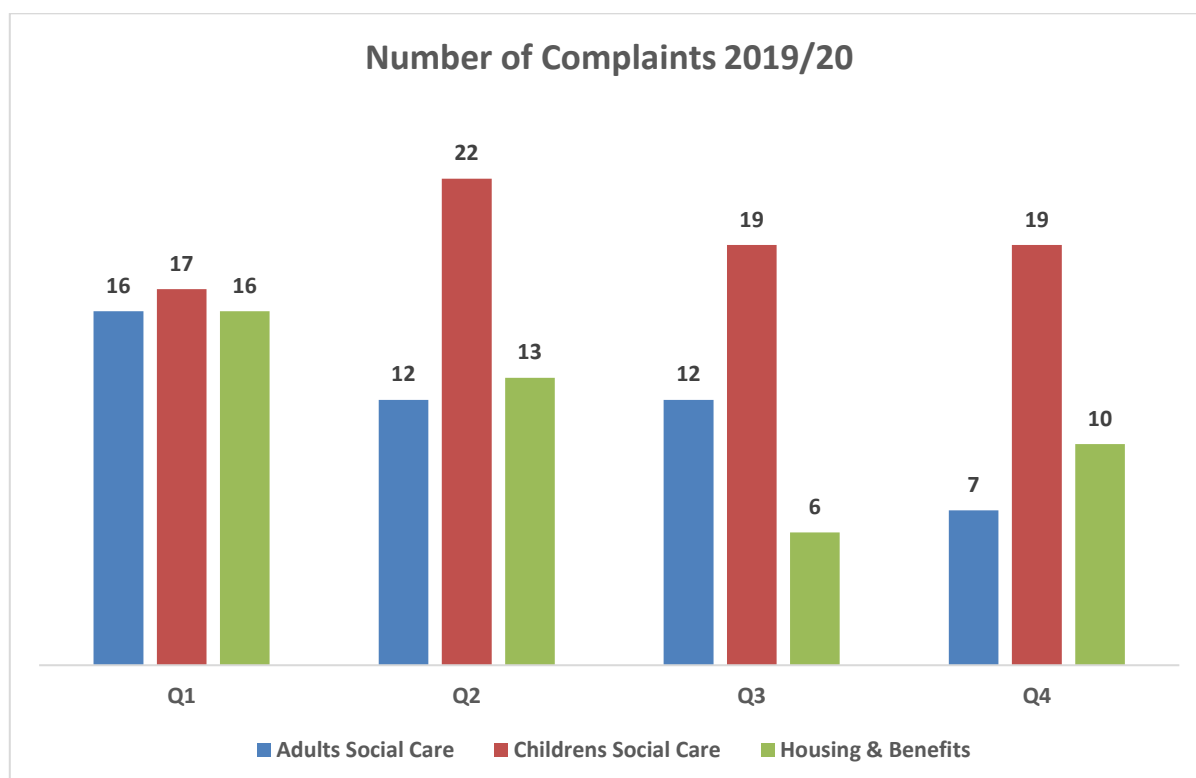
#### **Housing & Benefits**

- **Individual** - I'd just like to say thank you so much for all your help and overall friendliness! I have never come across anyone who have been so helpful and friendly as you, so thank you!
- **Individual** - I don't know how this has come about, but as I'm about to put my head down for the second night in my new home, I can't help but think about how it all came about. Either real angels put me here and you two are just riding the

waves, clinging onto their tail feathers and taking the credit (in which case fair play!), or you are actual angels. Either way, from the centre of my heart, thank you for seeing something in me that is most certainly there

- **Family** - Just a quick note to give thanks, firstly for giving us a home of our own. It's a lovely property, and we count ourselves very lucky to have found our 'forever' home. Secondly, huge thanks for the assistance with finding, and paying for, the removals company
- **Family member** - Thank you for the overseeing & designing my mother's downstairs shower room. It is going to make such a difference to her standard of living as she gets older & hopefully it will allow her to live at home for as long as possible. The builders came on time & were clean, tidy & very personable. They carried out the work with care & to a great standard. The whole project has been stress free. Mum is delighted with how it has turned out as am I. Many thanks to the whole team
- **Individual** - The guys have now finished my bathroom conversion. And what a fantastic job they have done. I'm over the moon with it. It will make my well-being so much better
- **Individual** - Thank you for explaining my benefits and thank you for your assistance and prompt replies. You are a credit to Bracknell!

#### 4. Complaints Handled within the year (2019/20)



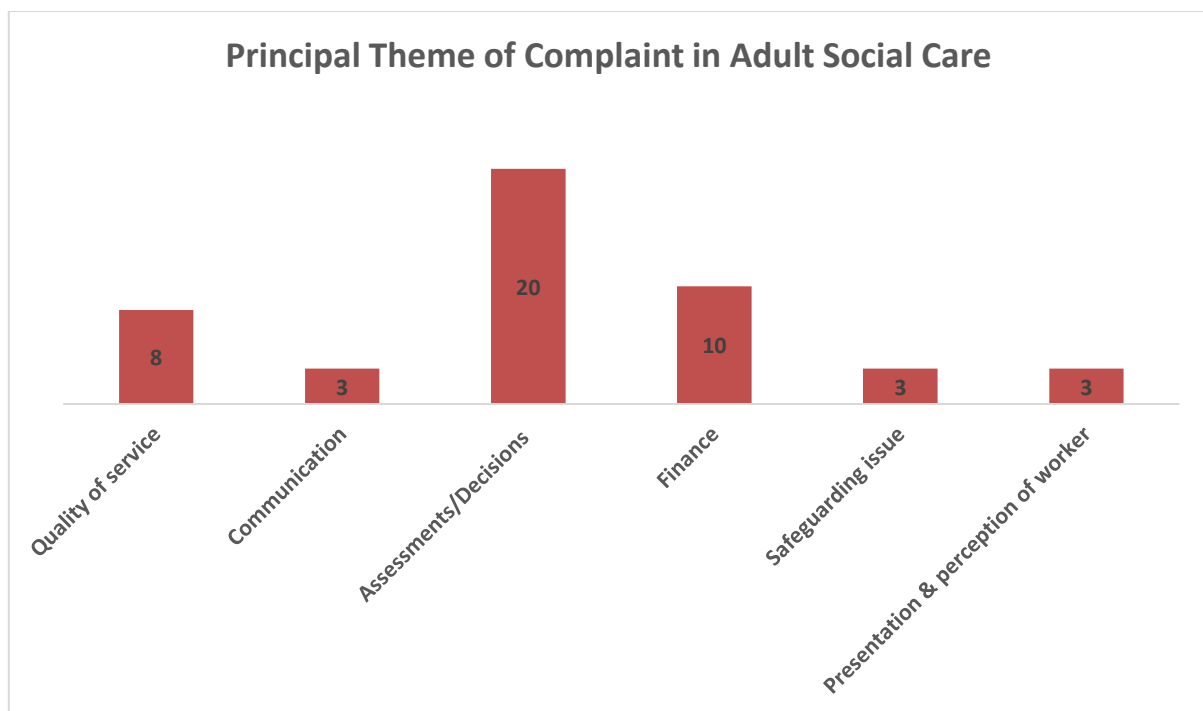


During 2019/20 there were 169 complaints received which breaks down into the following:

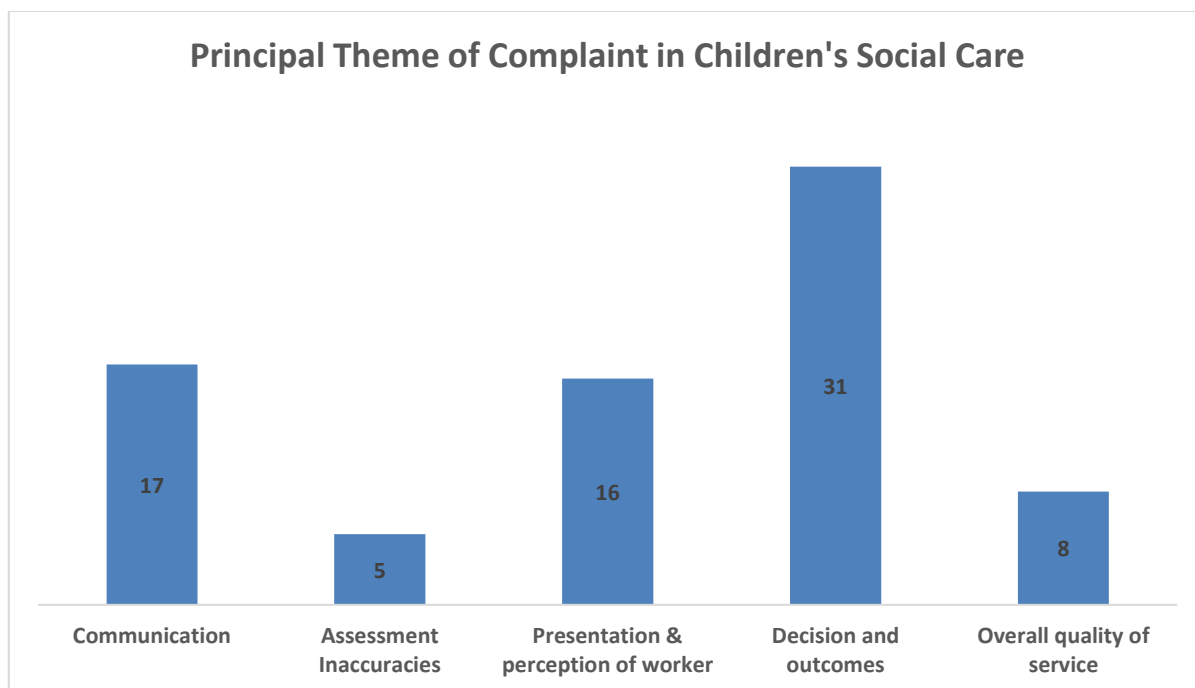
- Adults Social Care – 47 (*41 received in 2018/19*)
- Childrens Social Care – 77 (*107 received in 2018/19*)
- Housing & Benefits – 45 (*55 received in 2018/19*)

This compares to 203 across all departments in 2018/19. There is a slight increase in the number of complaints received by Adults Social Care, but a significant drop in the number received by Children’s Social Care and a good reduction within Housing & Benefits.

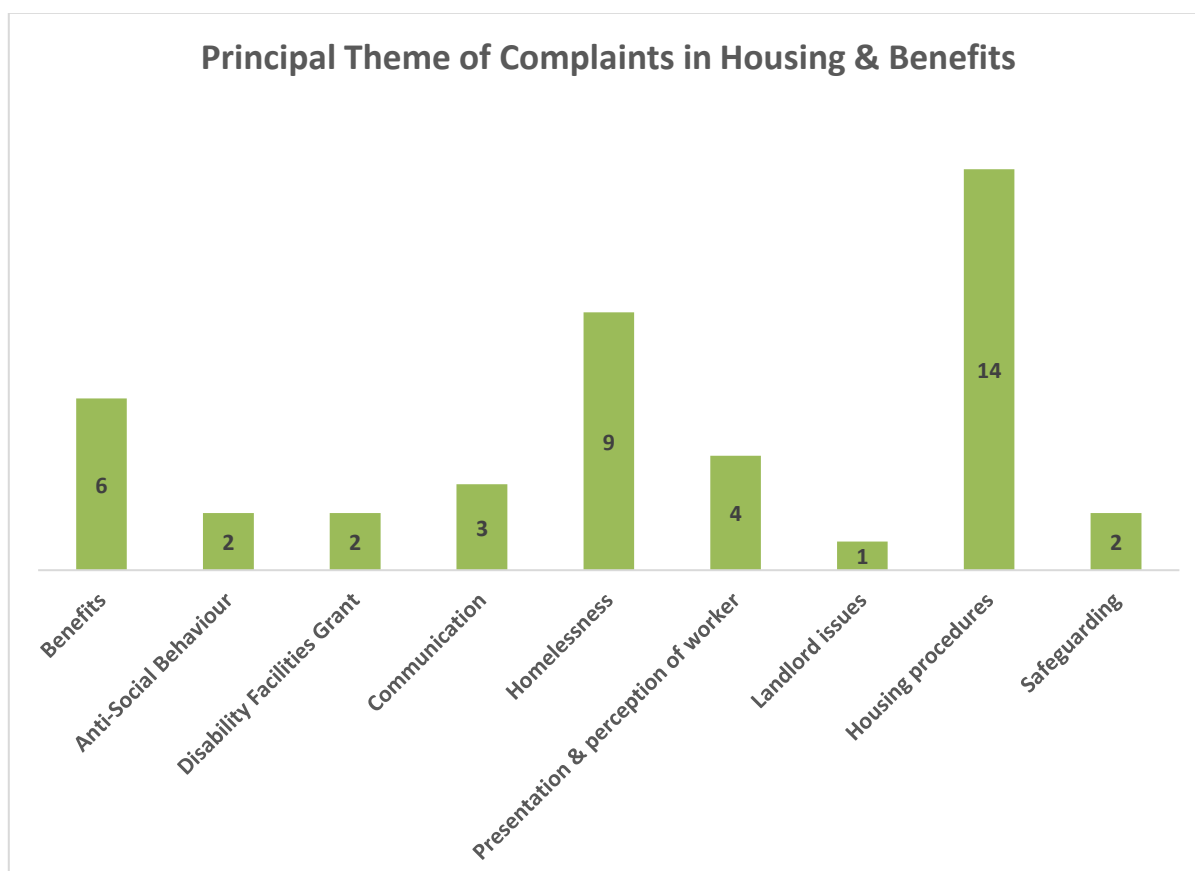
The themes for complaints across the three departments were:



In 2018/19 the Quality of Service had the most complaints with 13 in total. In this reporting year most complaints related to Assessment/Decisions. This suggests that the quality of our service has improved over the year.

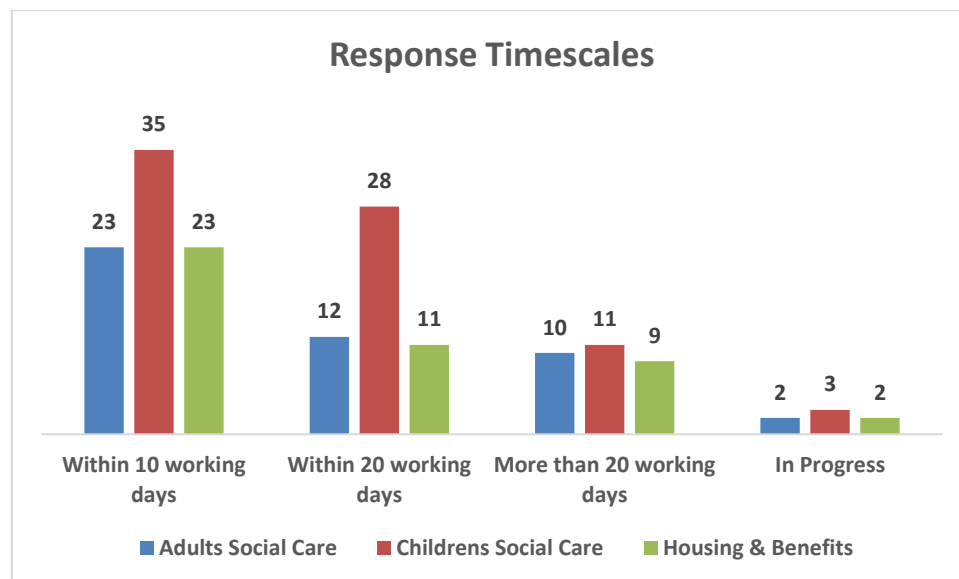


In 2018/19 Decision and outcomes was the most common complaint with 31 in total, this is the same as in 19/20. Decision and outcomes is a common theme of complaints within Childrens Social Care.

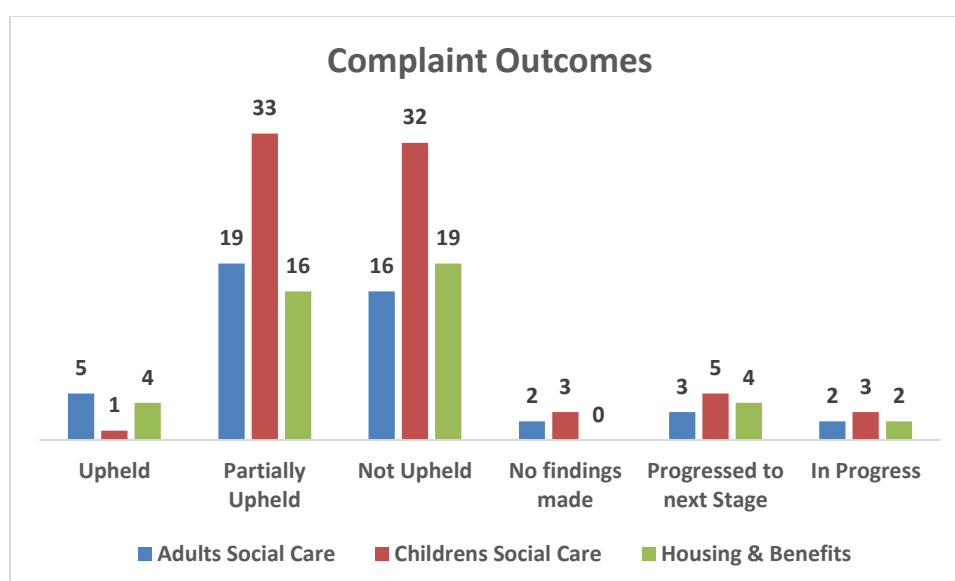


In 2018/19 the Attitude of staff (changed to Presentation & perception of worker) had the most complaints with 9 in total, this has changed this year to being housing procedures. This suggests that the quality of practice of our staff has improved with on-going staff training and leadership within the housing department.

## 5. Analysis of Complaints

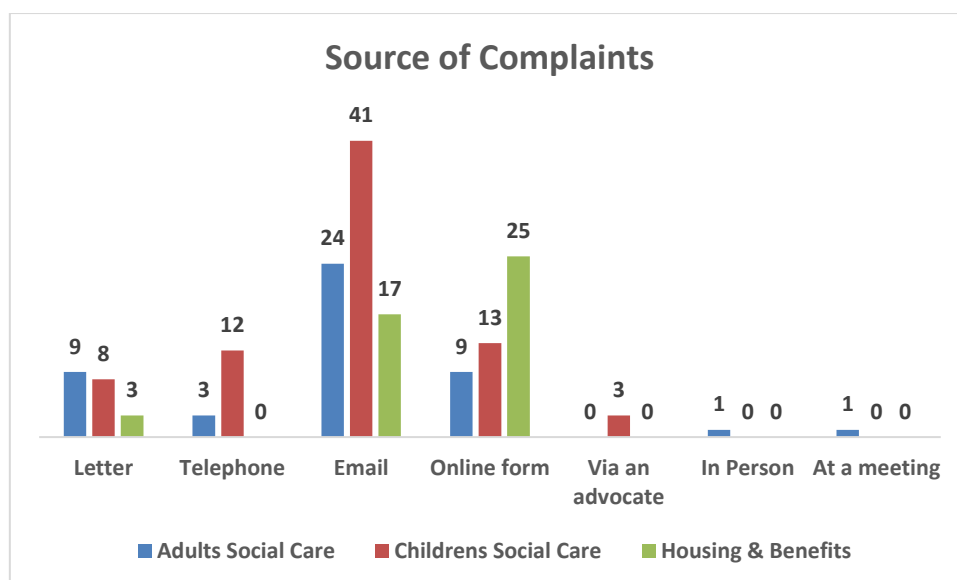


Whilst it is our aim to respond to most complaints within 10 working days, we do allow up to 20 working days for more complex complaints. We aim to work within these timescales, but sometimes the response can go over 20 working days if this involves meeting with complainants or further investigations are required.



In total 39.6% of complaints during 2019/20 were not upheld compared to 54% during 2018/19. A further 40.2% of complaints are partially upheld compared to 28% during 2018/19 and 5.9% of complaints received were fully upheld compared to the 8.8% fully upheld in 2018/19.

There is constant learning from complaints received during team meetings and quarterly learning events which are held within the Council.



The Childrens Social Care online complaints form went live during 2019 and appears to be working for the public. 13 Complainants accessed this form to pursue their complaint.

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

Most investigations within Adult's Social Care and Housing are dealt with internally, we have commissioned an independent investigator to deal with one complaint within Adults Social Care during the year. This is still being investigated and has been delayed due to COVID-19. Children's Social Care has had two Stage 2 investigations completed this year, one of which was from the previous year. There has been one Stage 3 completed this year.

We have four Stage 2 investigations and one Stage 3 panel hearing to be completed later this year as these too were delayed due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

The average cost of a Stage 2 Investigation as well as a Stage 3 Panel Hearing in 2018/19 was £2.8k, the average during 2019/20 was £1.9k. Due to the delays some of the outstanding costs will be accrued to the 2020/21 financial year.

## **7. Training/Workshops**

The Complaints Manager held quarterly induction training for all new staff during 2019/20. Training was also held for all staff involved with complaints, including Assistant Team Managers and Team Managers. This was well received by staff and further training will be commissioned during 2020/2021. The Complaints Manager is always at hand to offer advice and explain the policy and procedures to all members of staff.

## **8. Progress on 2018/19 Recommendations**

1. Enhancing systems to ensure that we routinely learn from complaints and feed that learning into service improvement – ***Learning events are held quarterly.***
2. Improved training for all involved in the complaints process – ***this is being implemented***
3. Creating online forms for all services, to enable people to make complaints – ***online forms are available for all services and are received at a central point to ensure they go to the correct departments/services***
4. Aligning procedures and timelines for adult complaints so that they match with those for children and housing – ***this is now implemented***

## **9. Recommendations**

This review includes several recommendations which will be implemented during 2020/21.

1. Continued training for all involved in the complaints process to support effective responses to complaints
2. Continue to learn from complaints to continue improving the services the council offer to support Bracknell residents and families. Ensure thematic learning from complaints across the council
3. Update all complaints policies across the People Directorate
4. Respond to all complaints within timescales
5. Track and ensure progress of case actions as a result of complaints