

Children's Social Care Complaints, Compliments & Comments



How to let us know what you think

Brighter Futures for Children is responsible for all Children, Education and Early Help services in Reading, including those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

We have a duty to protect and promote the welfare of Reading's children and young people.

We are always looking for ways to improve our services and raise standards. You can help by letting us know what you think about the services you receive. We value all feedback, whether it is a complaint, comment, compliment or suggestion.

There are a number of ways you can tell us what you think:

1. Let us know when we do well

If you think a member of staff (or a team) has been particularly helpful and deserves special recognition, please let us know. Positive feedback helps us share and promote good practice.

Let us know by contacting the Team Manager.

2. Tell us what we can do better

When you talk to your friends and family about us you probably say what you think we should do to make our services better. Why not tell us too?

Your comments and ideas can help us change the way we do things for the better - sometimes the simplest suggestion can make the biggest difference. We promise to listen and use what we can.

If you have ideas about how we can improve please talk to the staff working directly with you or the Team Manager.

3. Take part in consultations

We regularly ask service users for ideas and what you think of our services. We do this by:

- sending satisfaction surveys to a number of service users selected at random
- organising discussion groups for children, young people, parents and families using services
- talking to service user groups (such as people registered on the Children's Needs Index)

- Putting feedback forms on our website, to capture your views (www.brighterfuturesforchildren.org)

If you are asked to complete a survey or take part in a discussion group, please take the time to join in. Your views can make a real difference.

4. Tell us if things go wrong

We always try to deliver good quality services but we know that, sometimes, things go wrong. If this happens it's important that you tell us as soon as possible. Please be assured that we will not treat you less favourably or withdraw services because of a complaint.

Generally, complaints should be about matters which have happened within the last 12 months although, in some cases, we can accept complaints that are older than this. If you are not sure please discuss your complaint with us.

BFFC will always endeavour to support parents with all aspects of caring for their child. However, there may be times when a parent feels that they can no longer communicate with the allocated social worker, practitioner, or their line manager.

In the first instance, we would advise that a meeting is held with your allocated workers alongside their line manager (you may also have a friend or relative to support you if you wish), to resolve this issue. If you feel that the issues are not resolved, a designated neutral officer will be appointed, or advocate made available in line with the parents/ carers or guardians wishes and feelings.

Our Complaints Process:

The law says that we must have a straightforward complaints procedure to make it easy for you to complain. Our three stage complaints process ensures your concerns are investigated thoroughly and fairly. However, we may not be able to investigate anything which is currently subject to court proceedings or tribunal hearings.

STAGE 1: Let us know something is wrong

If you are unhappy with the service we provide or the way you have been treated by a member of staff please tell us straight away. Once we know something isn't right, we can start to sort it out or at least explain why we can't do things differently.

The easiest and quickest way to let us know there is a problem is to tell the staff working with you, their manager (if you are in care, their contact details will be in your Care Plan) or, if you prefer, contact the Customer Relations Team.

We will look into your complaint and talk to you to agree a way forward.

Although we aim to complete this stage within 10 working days sometimes this is not possible. If this is the case, we will let you know how much longer we need but this should be within 20 working days.

STAGE 2: Making a further complaint

If you aren't happy with our response you can ask us to look into your complaint again. You can either contact the person who dealt with your initial complaint or the Customer Relations Team.

We will ask someone who has no previous connection with you, or the staff working with you, to investigate your complaint again. They will look at the files, talk to everyone involved and produce a written report with recommendations.

The Head of Service will then decide what action we should take (if any) and confirm this to you in writing.

We aim to complete this stage within 25 working days of receiving your further complaint. However, we can extend this to up to 65 working days if it isn't possible to investigate fully within this time.

STAGE 3: Taking your complaint to a panel

If you still think we haven't dealt with your complaint properly you can ask for a review.

An independent panel made up of three people who don't work for us will look at the way your complaint was handled. The panel will hear from everyone involved and then produce a report with their recommendations about what should happen next (we will send you a copy).

The Director of Children's Services will consider these recommendations, decide what action to take and confirm their decision to you in writing within 28 days of the panel hearing.

The Ombudsman

The panel is the last stage of our complaints process. If you are still not happy with the outcome you can contact the [Local Government Ombudsman](#). The Ombudsman provides an independent, impartial and free service investigating complaints about services provided by us.

You can contact the Ombudsman at any stage of the complaints process but, in most cases, the Ombudsman will ask you to give us a chance to deal with your complaint before they investigate.

If you need help to complain

If you would like help with your complaint please ask the Customer Relations Team to find you an advocate.

An advocate is someone who doesn't work for us and who has been specially trained to make sure children and young people like you can express their views and are listened to.

If you prefer, you can ask a family member, friend or worker you trust to be your advocate. If they haven't been an advocate before we can ask one of our trained advocates to help them give you the support you need.

Contact Us

Customer Relations Team

Call: 0118 937 3787

Write: Freepost RTLS-CKGX-RKLL
Brighter Futures for Children
Customer Relations Team
Bridge Street
Reading RG1 2LU



Email: complaints@reading.gov.uk

Text: type SPKUP & your message to 81722

Please note: If your complaint is about a residential service you may also complain to Ofsted
(Tel: 0300 123 4666).