



Safeguarding and Family Support Children's Services London Borough of Islington

Children's Social Care Annual Complaints Report 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022

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2 Context

The Social Services statutory complaints procedure requires that an annual report must be produced for children's social care complaints.

This report provides information about complaints made during the twelve months between 1 April 2021 and the 31 March 2022 under the complaints and representations procedures established through the Local Authority Social Services Complaints (England) Regulations 2006, the Representations (Children) Regulations 2006 and the Council's corporate complaints procedure.

2.1 What is a complaint?

The guidance 'Getting the best from Complaints' produced by the Department for Education and Skills (DfE) provides advice for local authorities on implementing the Children Act 1989 complaints procedure for children and young people and defines a complaint as:

'A complaint may be generally defined as an expression of dissatisfaction or disquiet in relation to an individual child or young person, which requires a response.'

2.2 Who can make a complaint?

Section 26(3) and section 24D of the Children Act, 1989 and section 3(1) of the Adoption and Children Act, 2002 require councils to consider complaints made by:

- any child or young person (or a parent of his or someone who has parental responsibility for him) who is being looked after by the local authority or is not looked after by them but is in need
- any local authority foster carer (including those caring for children placed through independent fostering agencies)
- children leaving care
- Special Guardians
- A child or young person (or parent of his) to whom a Special Guardian order is in force
- Any person who has applied for an assessment under section 14F (3) or (4)
- Any child or young person who may be adopted, their parents and guardians
- Persons wishing to adopt a child
- Any other person whom arrangements for the provision of adoption services extend
- Adopted persons, their parents, natural parents and former guardians
- Such other person as the local authority consider has sufficient interest in the child or young person's welfare to warrant his representations being considered by them.

3 Stages of the complaints procedure

The statutory social care complaints procedure has three stages.

3.1 Stage 1 – Local Resolution (Problem Solving)

This is the most important stage of the complaints procedure. The Safeguarding and Family Support Services managers and external contractors provide services on behalf of the Council are expected to resolve as many complaints as possible at this initial point.

The statutory social care complaints procedure requires complaints at Stage 1 to be responded to within 10 working days; however, Safeguarding and Family Support Services can apply for an extension of a further 10 days where a complaint is complex.

The vast majority of complaints are successfully resolved at Stage 1, which indicates that front line managers are making an effort to listen to clients and work with them to reach mutually acceptable outcomes.

3.2 Stage 2 – Independent Investigation

This stage is usually implemented where the complainant is dissatisfied with the findings of Stage 1. However, Mediation is considered as a complaints handling tool to resolve ongoing concerns at the end of the Stage 1 complaints process and before Stage 2 is evoked.

Stage 2 is an investigation conducted by an external investigating officer. An additional independent person also works alongside the investigating officer. The Director of Safeguarding and Family Support Services adjudicates on the findings of all Stage 2 complaints.

Stage 2 complaints falling within the statutory social care complaints procedure should be dealt with within 25 days, although in certain cases this can be extended to 65 working days.

3.3 Stage 3 – Review Panel

Stage 3 of the statutory social care complaints process is a Review Panel.

Where complainants wish to continue with their complaint about statutory social services functions, the Council is required to establish a complaint Review Panel. Review Panels are only open to complainants who have had their complaints investigated at Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the complaints process. The panel makes recommendations to the Corporate Director who then makes a decision on the complaint and any action to be taken. Complaint Review Panels are made up of three independent panellists.

There are various timescales relating to Stage 3 complaints. These include:

- Arranging the Panel within 30 working days;
- Producing the Panel's report within a further 5 working days; and
- Producing the Council's response within 15 working days.

A further option for complainants is the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO).

The LGSCO is an independent organisation who is empowered to investigate where it appears that a Council's own investigations have not resolved the complaint. The LGSCO is a free, independent and impartial service. Complainants can refer their complaint to the LGSCO at any time, although the LGSCO will normally allow the Council to consider the complaint first and will refer the complainant back to the Council unless exceptional criteria are met.

3.4 Other Complaints

Not all complaints relating to children social care services will be dealt with under the Children Act statutory complaints procedure as those procedures relate particularly to complaints made by or on behalf of a child or young person. Occasionally the department receives complaints which do not fit into this category and these are dealt with using the Council's corporate complaints procedure. For instance, a potential foster carer or adopter complaining about the process and/or outcome of their assessment. The Council's corporate complaints procedure has 2 internal stages. Stage 1 is investigated and responded to by the relevant manager within Safeguarding and Family Support Services, and then Stage 2 is investigated and responded

to by the Council's Corporate Complaints Team. Thereafter complainants are advised to approach the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman if they remain unhappy with the Council's action/s.

Complaints in relation to Child Protection Conferences and the decision of children being made the subject of a Child Protection plan are also dealt with under their own procedures. Stage 1 – Local Resolution is a meeting with the Child Protection Manager (Service Manager, Safeguarding and Quality Assurance) who will meet and then respond to the complainant in writing within 20 working days. If the complainant remains unhappy and requests the complaint is escalated, it is referred to Stage 2. At Stage 2 a panel is convened to review the Child Protection Conference decision. The panel should be convened within 20 working days of the request and is made up of senior representatives from Islington Safeguarding Children's Board.

4 Overview

From 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 inclusive the department had 12,199 (10,620) contacts made to Children's Services Contact Team.

Of which in 2021/2022, there were as followed:

- 2203 (1,900) Child & Family (Child in Need) Single Assessments completed
- 543 (499) children with 550 (510) periods of care Looked after Children throughout the year
- 968 (909) Children Looked After (CLA) reviews completed
- 965 (979) the number with an open referral Children in Need (CIN) cases (at year end)
- 160 (194) Child Protection cases (at year end)

As a comparison, the figure in brackets are the 2020/2021 data.

In 2021/2022, the following communications were received from service users, parents, carers and/or their representatives:

- 57 compliments
- 7 representations
- 98 complaints
- 0 Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman enquiries and complaints

Common themes of complaints received regarding Safeguarding and Family Support Services are:

- Information/communication
- Conduct and/or attitude of staff
- Assessment disagreement

Of which, just over one-third (38%) of the 94 Stage 1 complaints received were considered justified in full or in part.

We continue to aim to:

- Resolve complaints as quickly and informally, where possible
- Learn lessons from complaints to inform practice in the future
- Improve and deliver better customer services to our service users
- Reduce escalations, thereby reducing overall cost to the Council
- Use alternative complaints procedures where possible, to reduce the overall cost to the council

5 Learning from complaints

Customers expect their interaction with Safeguarding and Family Support Services to be professional and positive, despite the difficult circumstances families are often in, and in the main this is the case. When things go wrong swift action is expected to be taken to resolve the matters causing concern.

The complaints process provides the council with an additional means of monitoring performance and improving service quality, and provides an important opportunity to learn from complaints.

There is an established system in place to capture a range of complaints information including the nature of the complaint, the action taken, the outcome of each complaint and whether there was compliance with the time periods specified in the Regulations. The information captured from this monitoring is used in a number of ways including:

- The provision of feedback and the dissemination of the information to managers, to improve systems and procedures
- Measurement of performance and quality control
- Where services are purchased under contract, informing the appropriate service i.e., Commissioning (Placements Team) who monitor each contract.

In Safeguarding and Family Support Services from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 lessons have been learnt in a few cases of the complaints investigated.

5.1 Service improvements

The nature and complexities of delivering social care services means that at times Safeguarding and Family Support Services can learn from complaint investigations. As a result, the department aim to improve service delivery and the experience of our service users based on the findings from complaints. Some complaint outcomes are a matter of putting things right for the individual and apologising to the complainant and/or service user. Other outcomes may have a wider significance on service delivery.

The lessons highlighted below have come from complaints received throughout the year in 2021/2022, with changes already made based upon the learning, followed by recommendations that staff have been asked to note.

5.1.1 Social work practice

- Where possible formal hand-over meetings to be held between parents, current and new social worker and foster carer for a child with disabilities being looked after.
- Having a clear process of how property for young people who go into custody is collected from their placements and then stored.
- Previous team should have requested very clear information from immigration solicitor in writing for all documents that was required as this was not evident on file to follow up.
- When a social worker has witnessed an argument between family members, they should be proactively checking in with both parents/parties in the following days in order to check on their wellbeing, but also to learn how they both respond in the aftermath of conflict.
- Maintaining consistent communication is crucial when changes have been made to original care plans in place. To not assume service users/family would understand what had taken place when decisions have been made in a court arena and the worker is expected to ensure the service users/family understood what the changes are and when they take effect.
- Parents should be provided with information regarding what a CIN plan is and what this would involve, as part of recommendations from a Child and Family assessment, even in situations where a family is stating that they do not wish to engage with the CIN service.
- Child/young person and family member, where appropriate to be advised when worker is off sick/on leave and who to contact in their absence.

5.1.2 Customer care

- Maintain good communication within the teams and to convey clear messages and wishes from the service user to all people involved in the case
- To act on service users requests promptly, make prompt decisions and to communicate outcome to service users as soon as possible.
- Communication with both parents – even when a parent is not actively involved in the child's life. Also consideration for how we communicate with a parent where there are safety risks in relation to DVA.
- Consider the environment which staff are in when working remotely and holding video calls – ensuring this an appropriate/professional environment, using virtual backgrounds where required.

5.2 Recommendations

Following on from the identified learnings, staff and managers within Safeguarding and Family Support Services are asked, where appropriate, to implement the following recommendations:

5.2.1 Social work practice

- Improve communication and collaboration between all parties in the child/ren's care
- Social Worker to follow up immediately with Foster Carer and Supervising Social Worker if any items of property have been left behind when a child/ren moves.
- Make prompt decisions and convey the outcome to the service user as soon as possible
- Team Managers to request that all social workers arrange meetings with parents when their looked after child is allocated a new SW (foster carers to also be invited to these meetings if safe and possible).
- When we have cases where managers are being pressured and criticised by other members of the network, in future the dilemma and the stress will be escalated to supervisor in order to maintain objectivity in decision making.
- Follow new process for young people who go into custody is collected from their placements and then stored.

5.2.2 Customer care

- Social Workers to follow up immediately with Foster Carer and Supervising Social Worker if any items have been left behind when a child moves.
- Staff to endeavour to remain impartial and treat service users, parents and their families in a polite and respectful manner and without showing favouritism.
- Staff to always hold meetings in a professional looking setting, where appropriate using the software backgrounds
- All managers/staff to adhere to the corporate customer care standards, i.e., staff will confirm receipt of emails within two working days. Staff replies will give you their name, title, department, telephone number and work address in the acknowledgement and send a full reply within ten working days or an explanation of any delays with a new date for a full reply. Staff will write clearly and in plain English, avoiding complicated terms and jargon. Telephone calls will be answered as quickly as possible, and staff will respond to voicemail messages within one working day etc. Staff visiting children, young people, parents, family members and or carers will always wear and/or show their Islington Council name badge.

6 Compliments

6.1 Number of compliments

Table 1 shows the total number of compliments recorded in Safeguarding and Family Support Services from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 compared to the previous three years.

Table 1: Number of compliments received in the last four years

| Year | 2018/2019 | 2019/2020 | 2020/2021 | 2021/2022 |
|-------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Compliments | 82 | 74 | 76 | 57 |

6.2 Compliments by period, service area and team

The volume of compliments received over the past four years has been relatively high, although this year there has seen a reduction. The communication method with whole services has changed from emails to a newsletter and this appears to have had an impact.

It is difficult to benchmark performance or capture themes/trends in relation to compliments; however, overall it indicates that good practice is happening across the department and some of our service users and partner agencies are grateful and satisfied with aspects of the service provided by Safeguarding and Family Support.

The compliments received are varied and range from individual messages of gratitude to specific members of staff; i.e. support staff, social workers and managers, by email to thank you cards for the work a team has done for the children/young person or family. See Appendix 1 - Compliments.

Table 2 shows the number of compliments recorded in Safeguarding and Family Support Services by the period, service area and team.

Table 2: Compliments by period, service area and team

| Service | Team | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | 2020/21 | 2021/22 |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Children in Need | C SCT | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| | Disabled Children's Team | 10 | 1 | 2 | 6 |
| | EDT | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| | Lough Road | 0 | 5 | 11 | 9 |
| | Personalisation Team | 0 | 0 | 4 | 2 |
| | Specialist Family Support | 0 | 0 | 0 | - |
| | CIN Team 1 Barnsbury | 6 | 2 | 3 | 1 |
| | CIN Team 2 Canonbury | 1 | 3 | 1 | 2 |
| | CIN Team 3 Finsbury | 7 | 5 | 0 | 2 |
| | CIN Team 4 Highbury | 2 | 4 | 5 | 3 |
| | CIN Team 5 Hornsey | 4 | 2 | 3 | 2 |
| | CIN Team 6 Holloway | 7 | 4 | 2 | 1 |
| | Drug & Alcohol Service (IYPDAS) | 2 | 0 | 0 | - |
| | YOS | 5 | 21 | 15 | - |
| | Early Intervention Team | 2 | 2 | 0 | - |
| | Families First | 11 | 3 | 0 | 3 |
| | CIN Provider | 1 | 3 | 0 | - |
| Total | | 58 | 56 | 46 | 35 |
| Children Looked After | CLA | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| | Adoption | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| | Contact Centre | 0 | 0 | 0 | - |
| | Independent Futures | 4 | 10 | 3 | 3 |
| | Family Plus (Permanence) | 1 | 1 | 4 | - |
| | Fostering | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4 |
| | CLA Team 1 | 3 | 1 | 10 | 6 |
| | CLA Team 2 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 1 |
| | CLA Team 3 | 1 | - | - | - |
| | Pause | - | - | - | 1 |
| | Virtual School | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| Total | 12 | 12 | 25 | 19 | |
| Commissioning & Business Sup. | Business Support | 0 | 1 | 1 | - |
| | Commissioning | - | - | - | 2 |
| | Total | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Safeguarding & Quality Assurance | Access to Records | 4 | 4 | 2 | - |
| | CAIS | 1 | 1 | 0 | - |
| | Child Protection Team | 1 | 0 | 1 | - |
| | Complaints Team | 2 | 0 | 0 | - |
| | Independent Reviewing Team | 1 | 0 | 0 | - |
| | Family Group Conference | 1 | 0 | 1 | - |
| | Anti-Bullying & DV Prevent | 1 | 0 | 0 | - |
| | CSE/MISSING | 1 | 0 | 0 | - |
| | Workforce Development | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Total | 12 | 5 | 4 | 1 | |
| Overall Total | | 82 | 74 | 76 | 57 |

Following a reorganisation in 2020 - CLA Team 3 is no longer part of the CLA service.

7 Representations

Service users and/or their representatives may make representations about the contact they have had with Safeguarding and Family Support Services or the service they have received without necessarily making a complaint under the formal procedure.

A representation may be regarded as a comment, enquiry or statement of a formal nature regarding matters such as the availability, delivery or nature of services. They will not necessarily be critical. They can be taken into account when assessing the quality of a service provided but are not usually viewed as a complaint. The issue may be critical, but the service user does not wish to go through the complaints procedure.

7.1 Number of representations

Table 3 shows the total number of new representations recorded in Safeguarding and Family Support Services from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 compared to the previous three years and the number of representations that escalated to a formal complaint.

Table 3: Representations

| Year | 2018/2019 | 2019/2020 | 2020/2021 | 2021/2022 |
|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Representations | 13 | 8 | 9 | 7 |
| Escalated to formal complaints procedure | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 |

In 2020/2021, the representations received were low and none were escalated to a Stage 1 complaint. This indicates that the Department takes concerns raised seriously and take steps to successfully resolve these as early as possible.

7.2 Representations by period and service area

Table 4 shows a breakdown of representations recorded in Safeguarding and Family Support Services from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 by period and service area, compared to the previous three years.

Table 4: Number of representations recorded in the last 4 years by period received and service area

| Service Area | 2018/2019 | 2019/2020 | 2020/2021 | 2021/2022 |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Children in Need | 5 (1) | 4 | 7 | 6 |
| Children Looked After | 6 | 4 | 2 | 0 |
| Targeted Services (Non CSC) | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Total no. of representations | 13 | 8 | 9 | 7 |

8 Complaints activity

All timescales in this report are in working days.

This report sits within the wider context of complaints activity in Islington as a whole. In 2021/2022, the number of new Stage 1 complaints received across the council was 3015 compared to 2433 in the previous year. This is an increase of 24%.

Table 5 shows the total number of new Stage 1 complaints recorded in the council from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022, compared to the previous three years.

Table 5: Number of complaints recorded in Islington by period

| Year | 2018/2019 | 2019/2020 | 2020/2021 | 2021/2022 |
|----------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Number of complaints | 2182 | 2529 | 2433 | 3015 |

Table 6 shows the total number of new complaints recorded in Safeguarding and Family Support from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022, compared to the previous nine years.

Table 6: Number of complaints recorded in SFS by period

| 12/13 | 13/14 | 14/15 | 15/16 | 16/17 | 17/18 | 18/19 | 19/20 | 20/21 | 21/22 |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 48 | 61 | 90 | 98 | 104 | 85 | 81 | 102 | 96 | 98 |

In 2021/2022, the number of complaints received in Safeguarding and Family Support increased by 2% in comparison to 2020/2021. The number of complaints received is lower than in previous years; however, not too dissimilar to the decrease in the number of contacts made to the department in the same period.

Complaints are reviewed to ensure that any patterns in relation to reoccurring issues are identified and addressed.

8.1 Complaints compared to compliments

Table 7 shows the total number of complaints recorded in Safeguarding and Family Support from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022, compared to the total number of compliments recorded and gives a comparison to the previous three years.

Table 6: Number of complaints and compliments recorded in SFS

| Year | 2018/2019 | 2019/2020 | 2020/2021 | 2021/2022 |
|-------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Complaints | 81 | 102 | 96 | 98 |
| Compliments | 82 | 74 | 76 | 57 |

8.2 Complaints by procedure

Table 8 shows the distribution of complaints recorded in Safeguarding and Family Support from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 by complaints procedure and gives a comparison to the previous three years.

Table 7: Complaints by procedure

| Year | 2018/2019 | 2019/2020 | 2020/2021 | 2021/2022 |
|----------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Statutory complaints | 55 | 85 | 86 | 91 |

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| Year | 2018/2019 | 2019/2020 | 2020/2021 | 2021/2022 |
|----------------------|-----------|------------|-----------|-----------|
| Corporate complaints | 26 | 17 | 10 | 7 |
| Total | 81 | 102 | 96 | 98 |

In 2021/2022 of the 98 complaints recorded during this period, 91 were dealt with under the statutory social care complaints procedure and 7 dealt with under the council's complaints procedure.

8.3 Complaints by period and stage

Table 9 shows the total number of complaints recorded in Safeguarding and Family Support from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 by the stage of the complaint and gives a comparison to the previous three years.

Table 8: Number of complaints by period and stage

| Year | 2018/2019 | 2019/2020 | 2020/2021 | 2021/2022 |
|-----------------------|-----------|------------|-----------|-----------|
| Stage 1 complaints | 75 | 99 | 92 | 94 |
| Stage 2/CE complaints | 4 | 2 | 3 | 2 |
| Stage 3 complaints | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| Total | 81 | 102 | 96 | 98 |

In 2021/2022 of the complaints received, 94 were investigated at Stage 1 of the statutory children's social care complaints procedure, 2 escalated to Stage 2 and 2 complaints escalated up to Stage 3 – Review Panel hearing.

Under the statutory children social care complaints procedure, it is not possible to prevent complainants from escalating their complaint to Stage 2 or Stage 3 if the complaint has been accepted and investigated at Stage 1, even if the complaint is unfounded/not upheld. There will always be a portion of complainants who, having had their complaints not upheld or only partially upheld at Stage 1, will automatically insist their complaint is escalated to Stage 2 and on occasion, to Stage 3 – Review Panel hearing.

8.4 Complaints by service area, team and stage

Tables 10 to 15 show the total number of complaints recorded in Safeguarding and Family Support from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 by service area, team and stage, compared with the previous three years.

Table 10: Children in Need

| Stage | 2018-19 S1 | 2018-19 S2 | 2018-19 S3 | 2019-20 S1 | 2019-20 S2 | 2019-20 S3 | 2020-21 S1 | 2020-21 S2 | 2020-21 S3 | 2021-22 S1 | 2021-22 S2 | 2021-22 S3 |
|-----------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| CIN Team 1 Barnsbury | 4 | 2 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 9 | 1 | 0 |
| CIN Team 2 Canonbury | 3 | 0 | 0 | 10 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 0 |
| CIN Team 3 Finsbury | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 12 | 0 | 0 |
| CIN Team 4 Highbury | 3 | 0 | 0 | 11 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| CIN Team 5 Hornsey | 7 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 1 | 0 |
| CIN Team 6 Holloway | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| CSCT | 2 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Disabled Children's Team | 8 | 0 | 0 | 11 | 1 | 0 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 0 | 0 |
| Emergency Duty Team | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Lough Road | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| CIN Provider | 2 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 |

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|------------------|----|---|---|----|---|---|----|---|---|----|---|---|
| Children in Need | 36 | 3 | 1 | 53 | 1 | 1 | 42 | 1 | 1 | 54 | 2 | 0 |
|------------------|----|---|---|----|---|---|----|---|---|----|---|---|

Table 11: Children Looked After

| Stage | 2018-19 S1 | 2018-19 S2 | 2018-19 S3 | 2019-20 S1 | 2019-20 S2 | 2019-20 S3 | 2020-21 S1 | 2020-21 S2 | 2020-21 S3 | 2021-22 S1 | 2021-22 S2 | 2021-22 S3 |
|------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Virtual School | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Adoption | 1 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| CLA Team 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 14 | 0 | 0 | 11 | 0 | 0 | 10 | 0 | 0 |
| CLA Team 2 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 11 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 1 |
| CLA Team 3 | 9 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Contact Centre | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Family Plus (Permanence) | 1 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| Fostering | 5 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Historical CLA | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Independent Futures | 10 | 0 | 0 | 9 | 0 | 0 | 18 | 1 | 0 | 15 | 0 | 1 |
| Pause | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Children Looked After | 34 | 1 | 1 | 43 | 0 | 0 | 49 | 2 | 0 | 38 | 0 | 2 |

Table 12: Information and Commissioning

| Stage | 2018-19 S1 | 2018-19 S2 | 2018-19 S3 | 2019-20 S1 | 2019-20 S2 | 2019-20 S3 | 2020-21 S1 | 2020-21 S2 | 2020-21 S3 | 2021-22 S1 | 2021-22 S2 | 2021-22 S3 |
|--------------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Business Support | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Commissioning | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Information and Commissioning | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Table 13: Safeguarding and Quality Assurance

| Stage | 2018-19 S1 | 2018-19 S2 | 2018-19 S3 | 2019-20 S1 | 2019-20 S2 | 2019-20 S3 | 2020-21 S1 | 2020-21 S2 | 2020-21 S3 | 2021-22 S1 | 2021-22 S2 | 2021-22 S3 |
|---|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Access to Records | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Child Protection | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Customer Care & Complaints | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Independent Reviewing Team | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| S&QA | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Safeguarding and Quality Assurance | 4 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 |

Table 14: Other (non-Children's Social Care)

| Stage | 2018-19 S1 | 2018-19 S2 | 2018-19 S3 | 2019-20 S1 | 2019-20 S2 | 2019-20 S3 | 2020-21 S1 | 2020-21 S2 | 2020-21 S3 | 2021-22 S1 | 2021-22 S2 | 2021-22 S3 |
|--------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Other | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Other | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Table 15: Totals

| Stage | 2018-19 S1 | 2018-19 S2 | 2018-19 S3 | 2019-20 S1 | 2019-20 S2 | 2019-20 S3 | 2020-21 S1 | 2020-21 S2 | 2020-21 S3 | 2021-22 S1 | 2021-22 S2 | 2021-22 S3 |
|------------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Children in Need | 36 | 3 | 1 | 53 | 1 | 1 | 42 | 1 | 1 | 54 | 2 | 0 |
| Children Looked After | 34 | 1 | 1 | 43 | 0 | 0 | 49 | 2 | 0 | 38 | 0 | 2 |
| Information and Commissioning | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Safeguarding and Quality Assurance | 4 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Other | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Sub-total | 75 | 4 | 2 | 99 | 1 | 1 | 92 | 3 | 1 | 94 | 2 | 2 |

Of all of CIN teams, CIN Finsbury received the highest number of complaints for the first time in the last four years.

In 2021/2022 CIN Finsbury received 12 complaints, which was a significant increase on the previous year; however, whilst the numbers of referrals are like other CIN teams, the Finsbury area tend to have larger families and with the exception of one complaint, all the other complaints were in the court arena - either in private proceedings or public proceedings.

Of the 12 complaints received in CIN Finsbury in 2021/2022:

- 5 (41%) complaints were in relation to the conduct and/or attitude of staff
- 4 (33%) complaints were in relation to communication/information issues
- 2 (17%) complaints were in relation to assessment disagreement issues
- 1 (8%) complaint was in relation to support disagreement

Of the 12 complaints received - 2 (17%) were partially upheld following investigation 6 (50%) were not upheld and 4 (33%) were NFA i.e., no further action - matter in court or out of timescale.

Of all the CLA teams, Independent Futures received 16 complaints. This is a slight reduction on the previous year. Despite Independent Futures supporting almost 650 young people in 2021/2022, whereby in 2020/2021 they were supporting almost 600 young people, an increase of 8%. (It should also be noted that the number of young people supported in Independent Futures is approximately double the number of children and young people each CLA team holds.)

Of the 16 complaints received in Independent Futures in 2021/2022:

- 7 (44%) complaints were in relation to placement/accommodation issues
- 4 (25%) complaints were in relation to finance concerns
- 2 (13%) complaints were in relation to the conduct and/or attitude of staff
- 1 (6%) complaint was in relation to assessment disagreement issues
- 1 (6%) complaint was in relation to communication/information issues
- 1 (6%) complaint was in relation to quality-of-service issues

Of the 16 complaints received in Independent Futures in 2021/2022, 3 (19%) complaints were upheld following investigation, 3 (19%) were partially upheld and 10 (62%) were not upheld.

8.5 Complaints by subject category

Table 16 shows the total number of complaints recorded in Safeguarding and Family Support from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 recorded by subject category, compared with the previous year.

Attempts have been made to categorise the subject matter of each complaint; however, it should be noted that some complaints comprise of more than one issue. For example, complaints about conduct and/or attitude of staff are sometimes interconnected with information/communication complaints.

Table 16: Number of SFS complaints recorded in last 3 years by subject category

| Complaint subject | 2019/20 Number | 2019/20 % | 2020/21 Number | 2020/21 % | 2021/22 Number | 2021/22 % |
|--|-------------------|--------------|-------------------|--------------|-------------------|--------------|
| Quality of assessment | 1 | 1% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |
| Assessment disagreement | 12 | 12% | 9 | 9% | 15 | 16% |
| Conduct and/or attitude of staff | 26 | 25% | 32 | 33% | 20 | 21% |
| Contact | 8 | 8% | 4 | 4% | 2 | 2% |
| Finance | 4 | 4% | 3 | 3% | 4 | 4% |
| Support Disagreement | 1 | 1% | 0 | 0% | 2 | 2% |
| Information/communication incl. data protection | 15 | 15% | 12 | 13% | 22 | 22% |
| Lack of Support | 0 | 0% | 1 | 1% | 11 | 11% |
| Late/missed appointments | 1 | 1% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |
| No response to previous communication | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 1 | 1% |
| Placement issues | 5 | 5% | 13 | 14% | 11 | 11% |
| Quality of service | 13 | 12% | 15 | 16% | 2 | 2% |
| Service delay | 6 | 6% | 1 | 1% | 4 | 4% |
| Support disagreement | 2 | 2% | 2 | 2% | 2 | 2% |
| Other (including lost belongings, Housing) | 8 | 8% | 4 | 4% | 2 | 2% |
| Total | 102 | 100% | 96 | 100% | 98 | 100% |

Whilst numbers for complaints in individual categories are small, it is important to examine the areas where we receive the most complaints to learn. The two highest subject categories were 'Information/communication', which has increased from 12 (13%); complaints to 22 (22%); then 'Conduct and/or attitude of staff', which has decreased significantly from 32 (33%) complaints to 20 (21%).

The two categories make up 42 (43%) of all complaints received.

- 'Information/communication' = 22 (22%) complaints: Of which 1 (5%) of the complaint received was upheld, 8 (36%) complaints were partially upheld, 11 (50%) complaints were not upheld, 1 (5%) complaint was NFA (no further action) matter in court and 1 (5%) complaint withdrawn by the complainant.
- 'Conduct and/or attitude of staff' = 20 (21%) complaints: Of which 3 (15%) complaints were upheld, 6 (30%) complaints were partially upheld (partially founded), 8 (40%) complaints were not upheld (unfounded) and 3 (15%) complaints were NFA (no further action), as the matters were in court/out of time.

In the two categories that featured most highly, 18 (43%) of the complaints were justified, being upheld or partially upheld.

8.6 Complaints by outcome

Table 17 below shows the total number of complaints in Safeguarding and Family Support Services recorded by outcome in the past four years, whether the complaints were upheld (well founded), partially upheld (partially founded) and not upheld (unfounded).

Table 17: Stage 1 complaints by outcome

| Year | Upheld | Partially Upheld | Not Upheld | Other | Total no. of complaints |
|-----------|----------|------------------|------------|----------|-------------------------|
| 2018/2019 | 9 (12%) | 18 (24%) | 44 (59%) | 4 (5%) | 75 (100%) |
| 2019/2020 | 11 (11%) | 25 (25%) | 51 (52%) | 12 (12%) | 99 (100%) |
| 2020/2021 | 8 (9%) | 24 (26%) | 53 (58%) | 7 (8%) | 92 (100%) |
| 2021/2022 | 14 (15%) | 22 (23%) | 48 (51%) | 10 (11%) | 94 (100%) |

In 2021/2022, of the 94 Stage 1 complaints received 14 (15%) were upheld, 22 (23%) were partially upheld and 48 (51%) were not upheld.

Therefore, 36 (38%) of the complaints investigated were considered to be upheld (justified) in full or in part and 58% were not upheld/other. This is not dissimilar to the previous three years in 2018/2019 2019/2020 and 2020/2021.

In 2021/2022 of the 2 - Stage 2 complaints received, both (100%) were partially upheld and of the 2 - Stage 3 complaints received both (100%) were not upheld.

8.7 Timeliness of complaint responses

The council’s objective is that 95% of all new complaints are responded to within the target timescale. The complexity of the statutory complaints received has an associated impact on achievability of responding to complaints within the set timescales.

8.7.1 Stage 1 complaints

Table 18 shows the total number of Stage 1 complaints recorded in Safeguarding and Family Support Services from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022, in relation to the timeliness of the complaint responses, compared with the previous three years.

Table 18: Timeliness of Stage 1 complaint responses

| Year | Timescale met | Timescale not met | Other (i.e., withdrawn) | Total no. of complaints |
|-----------|---------------|-------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 2018/2019 | 60 (80%) | 12 (16%) | 3 (4%) | 75 (100%) |
| 2019/2020 | 71 (72%) | 18 (18%) | 10 (10%) | 99 (100%) |
| 2020/2021 | 52 (57%) | 37 (40%) | 3 (3%) | 92 (100%) |
| 2021/2022 | 75 (80%) | 17 (18%) | 2 (2%) | 94 (100%) |

NB. Stage 1 complaints responded to within 10/20 working days are included as being within timescale.

In 2021/2022, 75 of the 94 Stage 1 complaints received and completed by the department were responded to within the relevant timescale, meaning we achieved 80% compliance. This is a significant improvement on the previous year, as in comparison, in 2020/2021, 52 of the 92 Stage 1 complaints received and completed by the department were responded to within the relevant timescale, meaning we achieved 57% compliance. The improvement in compliance is possibly due to hybrid working following the Corona virus pandemic which affected the way we worked in the previous year.

However, it is important to note that where the set or agreed timescales were not met, complainants were routinely kept informed and updated throughout the investigation process by the allocated investigating manager and/or the Customer Care and Complaints Manager.

8.7.2 Stage 2 complaints

Table 19 shows the total number of Stage 2 complaints received in Safeguarding and Family Support Services from 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021, in relation to the timeliness of the complaint response, compared to the previous three years.

Table 19: Timeliness of Stage 2 complaint responses

| Year | Timescale met | Timescale not met | Total no. of complaints |
|-----------|---------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| 2018/2019 | 1 (25%) | 3 (75%) | 4 (100%) |
| 2019/2020 | 2 (100%) | 0 (0%) | 2 (100%) |
| 2020/2021 | 2 (67%) | 1 (33%) | 3 (100%) |
| 2021/2022 | 0 (0%) | 2 (100%) | 2 (100%) |

NB: Stage 2 complaints responded to within 65 working days are included as being within timescale

At Stage 2 – independent investigation the initial deadline for responding to complaints is 25 working days, which is very tight and unrealistic in most cases, as the complaints tend to be complex and multifaceted. However, with the agreement of the complainant, the timescale can be extended to 65 working days, from the date the complaint is agreed.

Of the 2 Stage 2 complaints received from the 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022, both were dealt with under the statutory social care complaints procedure. Of which neither complaint was responded to within the given timescale. Due to the two independent investigating officers submitting their investigation reports after the maximum 65 working day time limit.

8.7.3 Stage 3 complaints

Table 20 shows the total number of Stage 3 complaints received in Safeguarding and Family Support Services from 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2022, in relation to the timeliness of the complaint response, compared to the previous three years.

Table 20: Timeliness of Stage 3 complaint responses

| Year | Timescale met | Timescale not met | Total no. of complaints |
|-----------|---------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| 2018/2019 | 2 (100%) | 0 (0%) | 2 (100%) |
| 2019/2020 | 1 (100%) | 0 (0%) | 1 (100%) |
| 2020/2021 | 1 (100%) | 0 (0%) | 1 (100%) |
| 2021/2022 | 2 (100%) | 0 (0%) | 2 (100%) |

The 2 Stage 3 complaints received from the 1 April 2021 to the 31 March 2022 were dealt with under the statutory social care complaints procedure and within the timescales set out on the statutory regulations.

8.8 Complaints by relationship to the service user

Table 21 shows a breakdown of complaints recorded in Safeguarding and Family Support from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 by relationship to the service user, compared to the three previous years.

Table 21: Complaints by relationship to the service user

| Year | 2018/2019 | 2019/2020 | 2020/2021 | 2021/2022 |
|---|-----------|------------|-----------|-----------|
| Advocate | 12 | 9 | 15 | 12 |
| Child in need | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Child/young person being looked after | 3 | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| Child leaving care | 5 | 3 | 1 | 5 |
| Parent | 53 | 68 | 65 | 67 |
| Foster carer | 1 | 2 | 5 | 5 |
| Persons with sufficient interest in the child's welfare | 0 | 12 | 4 | 5 |
| Partner agency | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Other | 6 | 6 | 3 | 2 |
| Total | 81 | 102 | 96 | 98 |

As might be expected the highest number of complaints are received from parents and year on year the number remains similar.

In 2021/2022 'Advocate', including solicitors was the second highest category with 12 (12%) complaints and a reduction on the previous year. Of the 12 complaints received from advocates, 9 (75%) were from Action for Children, who are commissioned by CAIS, ensuring our young people are being empowered and actively supported through the formal complaints process.

8.9 Complaints by ethnicity with comparative data

Table 22 shows the number of complaints recorded in Safeguarding and Family Support from 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2022 by ethnicity, with comparative data.

Table 22: Complaints by ethnicity with comparative data

| | Complaints in 2021/2022 | % of complaints in 2021/2022 | % of service users 2021/2022 | Islington's Child population* |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| White British | 27 | 28% | 24% | 28% |
| White Irish | 2 | 2% | - | - |
| White Other | 8 | 8% | 11% | 18% |
| Total - White | 37 | 38% | 35% | 46% |
| Mixed White & Black Caribbean | 2 | 2% | - | - |
| Mixed White & Black African | 1 | 1% | - | - |
| Mixed White & Asian | 0 | 0 | - | - |
| Mixed British | 0 | 0 | - | - |
| Mixed Other | 0 | 0 | - | - |
| Mixed Not Stated/Unknown | 11 | 11% | - | - |
| Total - Mixed | 14 | 14% | 22% | 18% |
| Indian | 1 | 1% | - | - |
| Pakistani | 0 | 0 | - | - |
| Bangladeshi | 0 | 0 | - | - |
| Other Asian | 2 | 2% | - | - |
| Asian / Asian British | 0 | 0 | - | - |
| Total - Asian | 3 | 3% | 7% | 8% |
| Caribbean | 8 | 8% | 7% | 4% |
| African | 17 | 17% | 16% | 16% |
| Black British Caribbean | 1 | - | - | - |
| Black British African | 1 | 1% | - | - |
| Other Black | 0 | 0 | 7% | 2% |
| Other Black British | 0 | 0 | - | - |
| Total - Black | 27 | 28% | 30% | 22% |
| Not Stated / Unknown | 17 | 17% | 3% | - |
| Other | 0 | 0 | 3% | 6% |
| TOTAL | 98 | 100% | 100% | 100% |

NB. *Islington Population (0-17 Years) source: January 2021 - Early Years and School Censuses

In 2021/2022 the ethnic profile of complainants was found to be broadly reflective of the service user population.

8.10 Complaint by source

Table 23 shows the number of complaints received in Safeguarding and Family Support from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 by the source. It is evident that the majority (89%) of complainants prefer to communicate with the department in the first instance via email.

Table 23: Complaints by source

| Source | 2018/2019 | 2019/2020 | 2020/2021 | 2021/2022 |
|--------------|-----------|------------|-----------|-----------|
| Contact Form | 6 | 13 | 3 | 7 |
| Email | 62 | 75 | 89 | 87 |
| In Person | 2 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Letter | 6 | 6 | 1 | 0 |
| LGSCO | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Telephone | 5 | 4 | 2 | 4 |
| Text Message | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Total | 81 | 102 | 96 | 98 |

9 Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) enquiries and complaints

Table 24 shows the total number of new LGSCO enquiries and complaints received in Safeguarding and Family Support from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022, compared to the previous three years.

Table 24: Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman enquiries and complaints

| Year | 2018/2019 | 2019/2020 | 2020/2021 | 2021/2022 |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Notice | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Enquiries | 3 | 1 | 4 | 0 |
| Complaints | 1 | 2 | 2 | 0 |
| Other (i.e. outside jurisdiction) | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 5 | 3 | 6 | 0 |

In 2021/2022 there were no LGSCO notices, enquiries and complaints received in children social care. This is testament to the effective, robust complaints investigations being carried out within Safeguarding and Family Support at the internal 3-stages of the complaints process.

10 Cost

10.1 Stage 2 and Stage 3 complaints independent (external) people

Table 25 shows a breakdown of the cost in delivering the statutory social care complaints process in Safeguarding and Family Support from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 and gives a comparison to the previous three years.

Table 25: Cost of Stage 2 and Stage 3 complaints

| Year | 2018/2019 | 2019/2020 | 2020/2021 | 2021/2022 |
|------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Investigating Officers | £6960.25 | £159.20 | £4800.94 | £6500.45 |
| Independent Persons | £1568.75 | £501.80 | £1610.00 | £2012.50 |
| Review Panellists | £3816.15 | £1876.10 | £1697.50 | £2437.50 |
| Total | £12,345.15 | £2537.10 | £8108.44 | £10,950.45 |

10.2 Compensation/ex-gratia payments

Table 26 shows a breakdown of compensation/ex-gratia payments made by Safeguarding and Family Support from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 in relation to complaints.

Table 26: Compensation/ex-gratia payments offered

| Year | 2018/2019 | 2019/2020 | 2020/2021 | 2021/2022 |
|--------------------|-----------|-----------|------------|------------|
| Stage 1 complaints | £5132.00 | £5458.00 | £17,900.00 | £14,605.00 |
| Stage 2 complaints | £100.00 | £0 | £0 | £450.00 |
| Stage 3 complaints | £0 | £0 | £0 | £1500.00 |
| Stage 4 - LGSCO | £0 | £0 | £0 | £0 |

| Year | 2018/2019 | 2019/2020 | 2020/2021 | 2021/2022 |
|-------|-----------|-----------|------------|------------|
| Total | £5232.00 | £5458.00 | £17,900.00 | £16,555.00 |

If it is appropriate to do so, compensation is offered and paid at Stage 1 of the complaints process. In 2021/2022, the compensation was offered in relation to 5 complaints. Of which, 2 complaints were at Stage 1 of the complaints process, 2 at Stage 2 and 1 at Stage 3. With 2 complaints being from the CIN Service (Barnsbury and Hornsey teams), 2 complaints from CLA - Team 2 and 1 complaint from Independent Futures.

The amounts paid varied and were in relation to legal fees, lost property, lack of support, delays within the complaints process, stress caused, time and trouble for pursuing their complaint etc. However, 1 complaint alone amounted to £11,000 of the compensation paid – the complainant, a care leaver in Independent Futures who was offered and accepted the compensation for the lack of appropriate support afforded to her as a young person in 2014. This young person would have sought legal recourse which may have prolonged her emotional suffering about the issues of dispute. It was also apparent that her wishes, and feelings had not been given due consideration which impacted on her later life chances. This level of compensation is highly unusual, and it is not part of standard practice to offer high level compensation.

11 London complaints network

Following the national pandemic the Customer Care and Complaints Manager has resumed work with colleagues from the London Complaints Managers group, meeting several times each year to ensure that Safeguarding and Family Support Services is kept informed and in a position to adopt as consistent an approach to complaints handling as possible. Since the 1 April 2020 the work of this group has been solely online and virtual via Microsoft Outlook and Teams.

12 Conclusion

Considering the number of contacts, the department has, the number of people assessed and in receipt of services; together with the nature of the work, this continues to be a relatively low figure, and there should be no concern that the department is receiving too many complaints.

The number of complaints dealt with under the corporate complaints procedure this year is significantly higher than previous years, increasing by 24%, which is fortunately not reflected in the same way within Safeguarding and Family Support as there was only a 2% increase in the number of complaints received. Using Islington’s corporate complaints procedure can potentially save money for the department as complaints do not then escalate to the expensive and time-consuming statutory social care Stage 2 complaint - independent investigation and Stage 3 – review panel hearing process; however, this is not always possible to prevent due to the nature of the complaints received.

It is recognised that frontline teams have a variety of pressures they need to manage and in the coming year it is important that complaints continue to feature high on their list of priorities.

13 Moving forward - 2022/2023

The Customer Care and Complaints Service will continue to deal with complaints, where appropriate, under alternative procedures to the Children Act statutory social care procedure. However, Michael King, Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, made it clear on their website that *“Our answer is the statutory complaints process is set out in law so we expect councils to follow the guidance and regulations as they stand, and will hold them to account should they not do so.”*

Full use of the Data Protection Act, Council, Child Protection and any appeal procedures will continue to be utilised where they are available.

The recommendations for next year – 2022/2023 are that:

- The Customer Care and Complaints Manager will provide a summary of the Annual Complaints Report for children social care managers and staff

- The Customer Care and Complaints Manager will continue to encourage managers to consider the benefits of virtual and/or face-to-face discussions (Resolution Meetings) when investigating complaints
- The Customer Care and Complaints Manager and line managers where required to continue to support individual members of staff during the complaint investigation process, as it can sometimes be very upsetting and stressful for those involved.
- Customer Care and Complaints Service to continue to be promoted through the Children's Active Involvement Service
- The Customer Care and Complaints Manager will continue to work with colleagues from the London Complaints Managers group and the Central Complaints Team to ensure Safeguarding and Family Support Services remain informed and, in a position, to adopt as consistent an approach to complaints handling as possible
- Aim to reduce the number of complaint escalations, thereby reducing overall cost to the Council
- Continue to consider learning events for disseminating and promoting key learning points from complaints throughout the department.
- Each service should review the complaints received and identify common issues and themes and how they will resolve these through specific objectives.
- Each service should review the complaints received and identify common issues and themes and how they will resolve these through specific objectives.
- Each service should take steps to remind their customers of how to provide feedback, and actively promote this through all their interaction with customers.

Appendix 1 - Compliments

A sample of compliments received in 2021/2022:

1. A Judge said of the social worker: ***L was very balanced in his evidence not being afraid to point out the positives as well as the deficits in parenting which was very refreshing and as such, she gave a lot of weight to his evidence.***
2. A partner agency said of the Practice Education Manager: ***We are writing to thank you for joining our Practice Moderation Panel on 14th June. Your incisive comments and observations are greatly appreciated and help the Social Work team to reflect on standards and delivery.***
3. A young person wrote in a greeting card and to the social worker: ***Thank you for being the best social worker. You're amazing keep at it...***
4. A partner agency wrote to CSCT and said: ***Dr B said that the introduction of the CPA is: "the single best change I have seen for children and young people's mental health in my 30 years as a GP in Islington".***
5. A parent wrote to a social worker and said: ***I really appreciate the effort you've made really describe how things are for J and us as he is now as a 17-year-old.***
6. A service user said of the social worker: ***I just wanted to take a moment to send compliments to AH work. I understand that he is new but is doing an excellent job. He sticks to his word. Is effective and efficient. He even goes above and beyond what I have asked of him.***
7. A child's Guardian said of the social worker: ***We commend the social worker, for her thorough and sensitive approach to this difficult case.***
8. Carrie and David Grant said live on their radio show to the Social Worker and Adopt London: ***Thank you is for all those kids who I believe benefit from things like this, they completely got over to listeners how amazing you were.***
9. The children's Guardian said of the social worker: ***I was impressed by the work of the Disability Team in this complex case, in particular, S. The Team had to support the needs of the parents without the assistance of Adult Services as well as prioritise the complex needs of four children who moved out of the borough just after the start of the proceedings. I am also impressed by the level of service offered to the children and parents by the Local Authority. As a Guardian, I work across many London boroughs and provisions vary greatly and it is good to see a Local Authority that prioritises children with disabilities in the way Islington has.***
10. A partner agency said of the social worker: ***I just wanted to let you know how impressed I have been with LE work, particularly in bringing together and collaborating with the network, around the family.***
11. A foster carer said of the social worker: ***She feels supported and the children's social worker is supportive and very understanding of the children and their needs.***

