

# Children's Social Care Annual Complaints Report 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020

Safeguarding and Family Support  
People Directorate  
London Borough of Islington

|                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
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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 2019 and the 31 March 2020 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 days;
- Producing the Panel's report within a further 5 days; and
- Producing the Council's response within 15 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 2019 to 31 March 2020 inclusive the department had 11,677 (10,948) contacts made to Children's Services Contact Team.

Of which in 2019/2020, there were as followed:

- 2,173 (2758) Child & Family (Child in Need) Single Assessments completed
- 495 (486) children with 503 periods of care Looked after Children throughout the year
- 866 (830) Children Looked After (CLA) reviews completed
- 1075 (1146) the number with an open referral Children in Need (CIN) cases (at year end)
- 199 (187) Child Protection cases (at year end)

As a comparison, the figure in brackets are the 2018/2019 data.

In 2019/2020, the following communications were received from service users, carers and/or their representatives:

- 74 compliments
- 8 representations
- 102 complaints
- Three Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman enquiries and complaints

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

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

Of which, just over one-third (36%) of the 99 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 2019 to 31 March 2020 lessons have been learnt in only 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 2019/2020, with changes already made based upon the learning, followed by recommendations that staff have been asked to note.

#### 5.1.1 Social work practice

- The need for clear, succinct communication and language to ensure service users do not feel unduly criticised
- Managers to forward plan when allocating cases, especially when workers are expected to go off on maternity leave, cases should be allocated to a worker we can reasonably foresee would be available for the duration of the care proceedings
- The requirement to share assessments with parents prior to them being finalised with the manager, to allow for comment and feedback
- Life storybooks and later life letters should be finished by the time of the pronouncement hearing in adoptions/completed by the date that the Special Guardianship order is granted unless a Special Guardianship order is granted alongside a supervision order.

#### 5.1.2 Customer care

- To ensure corporate standards are met when communicating with service users and/or their families
- Be respectful of service users time limitations when arranging meetings
- The need to ensure that all service users and/or their families are provided with alternative contact details, in case their allocated worker is unavailable.



## 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

- Continue to embed motivational social work practices that allow positive relationships to be built with families and information to be shared in a way that isn't perceived to be overly critical
- Managers when allocating cases to give consideration to the overall length of case, to avoid repeated change of worker
- Workers to forward plan to ensure they have allowed sufficient time to share assessments/reports with parents ahead of final submission
- Life storybooks need to be started by social workers as soon as the placement order is granted.
- Practice managers to monitor progress of completing life story books. Team managers to monitor completion of life story books and later life letters in supervisions with Practice Managers/DTM.

### 5.2.2 Customer care

- Communicate with young people and families in a timely, polite and respectful manner.
- Where possible, try to be flexible and creative when arranging meetings
- All service users to be given the allocated workers contact details and their manager's contact details in writing on introduction and out-of-office signatures to be up-to-date.

## 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 2019 and 31 March 2020 compared to the previous three years.

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

|                    | 2016/2017 | 2017/2018 | 2018/2019 | 2019/2020 |
|--------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| <b>Compliments</b> | 79        | 71        | 82        | 74        |

### 6.2 Compliments by period, service area and team

The volume of compliments received over the past four years has been relatively high and similar in numbers.

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 Table 1b: Compliments by period, service area and team**

| Service          | Team                            | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 |
|------------------|---------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Children in Need | CSCT                            | 4       | 0       | 0       | 1       |
|                  | Disabled Children's Team        | 12      | 3       | 10      | 1       |
|                  | EDT                             | 0       | 2       | 0       | 0       |
|                  | Lough Road                      | 1       | 3       | 0       | 5       |
|                  | Personalisation Team            | 2       | 2       | 0       | 0       |
|                  | Specialist Family Support       | 0       | 0       | 0       | 0       |
|                  | CIN Team 1 Barnsbury            | 3       | 7       | 6       | 2       |
|                  | CIN Team 2 Canonbury            | 2       | 2       | 1       | 3       |
|                  | CIN Team 3 Finsbury             | 4       | 2       | 7       | 5       |
|                  | CIN Team 4 Highbury             | 4       | 3       | 2       | 4       |
|                  | CIN Team 5 Hornsey              | 4       | 3       | 4       | 2       |
|                  | CIN Team 6 Holloway             | 3       | 4       | 7       | 4       |
|                  | Drug & Alcohol Service (IYPDAS) | 0       | 0       | 2       | 0       |
|                  | YOS                             | 8       | 2       | 5       | 21      |
|                  | Early Intervention Team         | 0       | 0       | 2       | 2       |
|                  | Families First                  | 0       | 5       | 11      | 3       |
| CIN Provider     | 0                               | 2       | 1       | 3       |         |

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|                                  | <b>Total</b>               | <b>47</b> | <b>40</b> | <b>58</b> | <b>56</b> |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Children Looked After            | Adoption                   | 1         | 1         | 2         | 0         |
|                                  | Contact Centre             | 0         | 0         | 0         | 0         |
|                                  | Independent Futures        | 8         | 1         | 4         | 10        |
|                                  | Family Plus                | 0         | 1         | 1         | 1         |
|                                  | Fostering                  | 0         | 4         | 0         | 0         |
|                                  | CLA Team 1                 | 11        | 8         | 3         | 1         |
|                                  | CLA Team 2                 | 1         | 0         | 1         | 0         |
|                                  | CLA Team 3                 | 3         | 3         | 1         | -         |
|                                  | Virtual School             | 0         | 0         | 0         | 0         |
|                                  | <b>Total</b>               | <b>24</b> | <b>18</b> | <b>12</b> | <b>12</b> |
| Commissioning & Business Sup.    | Business Support           | 1         | 1         | 0         | 1         |
|                                  | <b>Total</b>               | <b>1</b>  | <b>1</b>  | <b>0</b>  | <b>1</b>  |
| Safeguarding & Quality Assurance | Access to Records          | 0         | 1         | 4         | 4         |
|                                  | CAIS                       | 0         | 0         | 1         | 1         |
|                                  | Child Protection Team      | 2         | 3         | 1         | 0         |
|                                  | Complaints Team            | 0         | 0         | 2         | 0         |
|                                  | Independent Reviewing Team | 1         | 2         | 1         | 0         |
|                                  | Family Group Conference    | 0         | 0         | 1         | 0         |
|                                  | Anti-Bullying & DV Prevent | 0         | 0         | 1         | 0         |
|                                  | CSE/MISSING                | 1         | 2         | 1         | 0         |
|                                  | Workforce Development      | 3         | 4         | 0         | 0         |
|                                  | <b>Total</b>               | <b>7</b>  | <b>12</b> | <b>12</b> | <b>5</b>  |
|                                  | <b>Overall Total</b>       | <b>79</b> | <b>71</b> | <b>82</b> | <b>74</b> |

## 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. They 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 2019 and 31 March 2020 compared to the previous three years and the number of representations that escalated to a formal complaint.

**Table 3: Representations**

|  | 2016/2017 | 2017/2018 | 2018/2019 | 2019/2020 |
|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Representations                          | 10        | 8         | 13        | 8         |
| Escalated to formal complaints procedure | 2         | 1         | 1         | 0         |

In 2019/2020, the representations received was low and none was escalated to a Stage 1 formal 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 2019 and 31 March 2020 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                 | 2016/2017 | 2017/2018 | 2018/2019 | 2019/2020 |
|------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Children in Need             | 7 (2)     | 1         | 5 (1)     | 4         |
| Children Looked After        | 3         | 7 (1)     | 6         | 4         |
| Targeted Services (Non CSC)  | 0         | 0         | 2         | 0         |
| Total no. of representations | 10        | 8         | 13        | 8         |

## 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 2019/2020, the number of new Stage 1 complaints received across the council was 2,529, compared to 2,182 in the previous year. This is an increase of 16%.

Table 5 shows the total number of new Stage 1 complaints recorded in the council as a whole from 1 April 2019 and 31 March 2020, compared to the previous three years.

**Table 5: Number of complaints recorded in Islington by period**

| Year                        | 2016/2017 | 2017/2018 | 2018/2019 | 2019/2020 |
|-----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| <b>Number of complaints</b> | 2,220     | 2,388     | 2,182     | 2,529     |

Table 6 shows the total number of new complaints recorded in Safeguarding and Family Support between 1 April 2019 and 31 March 2020, compared to the previous nine years.

**Table 6: Number of complaints recorded by period in SFS**

| 10/11 | 11/12 | 12/13 | 13/14 | 14/15 | 15/16 | 16/17 | 17/18 | 18/19 | 19/20 |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 48    | 57    | 48    | 61    | 90    | 98    | 104   | 85    | 81    | 102   |

In 2019/2020, the number of complaints received in Safeguarding and Family Support increased by 26% in comparison to 2018/2019. Although the number of complaints received is higher than in previous years, it is proportionate with the number of contacts made to the department.

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 2019 to 31 March 2020, compared to the total number of compliments recorded and gives a comparison to the previous three years.

**Table 7: Number of complaints and compliments recorded in SFS**

| Year               | 2016/2017 | 2017/2018 | 2018/2019 | 2019/2020 |
|--------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| <b>Complaints</b>  | 104       | 85        | 81        | 102       |
| <b>Compliments</b> | 79        | 71        | 82        | 74        |

### 8.2 Complaints by procedure

Table 8 shows the distribution of complaints recorded in Safeguarding and Family Support from 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020 by complaints procedure and gives a comparison to the previous three years.

**Table 8: Complaints by procedure**

| Year                        | 2016/2017 | 2017/2018 | 2018/2019 | 2019/2020 |
|-----------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| <b>Statutory complaints</b> | 79        | 58        | 55        | 85        |
| <b>Corporate complaints</b> | 25        | 27        | 26        | 17        |
| <b>Total</b>                | 104       | 85        | 81        | 102       |

In 2019/2020 of the 102 complaints recorded during this period, 85 were dealt with under the statutory social care complaints procedure and 17 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 2019 to 31 March 2020 by the stage of the complaint and gives a comparison to the previous three years.

**Table 9: Number of complaints by period and stage**

| Year                         | 2016/2017 | 2017/2018 | 2018/2019 | 2019/2020 |
|------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| <b>Stage 1 complaints</b>    | 100       | 81        | 75        | 99        |
| <b>Stage 2/CE complaints</b> | 4         | 3         | 4         | 2         |
| <b>Stage 3 complaints</b>    | 0         | 1         | 2         | 1         |
| <b>Total</b>                 | 104       | 85        | 81        | 102       |

In 2019/2020 of the complaints received, 99 were investigated at Stage 1 of the complaints procedure, 2 escalated to Stage 2/CE and 1 complaint escalated onto Stage 3 – Review Panel hearing.

Under the children statutory social care complaints procedures, 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 an element 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 2019 to 31 March 2020 by service area, team and stage, compared with the previous three years.

**Table 10: Children in Need**

| Year                     | 2016-17   |          | 2017-18   |          |          | 2018-19   |          |          | 2019-20   |          |          |
|--------------------------|-----------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|
|                          | S1        | S2       | S1        | S2       | S3       | S1        | S2       | S3       | S1        | S2       | S3       |
| CIN Team 1 Barnsbury     | 8         | 1        | 5         | 1        | 1        | 4         | 2        | 0        | 6         | 0        | 1        |
| CIN Team 2 Canonbury     | 5         | 2        | 4         | 0        | 0        | 3         | 0        | 0        | 10        | 0        | 0        |
| CIN Team 3 Finsbury      | 2         | 0        | 2         | 0        | 0        | 6         | 0        | 0        | 0         | 0        | 0        |
| CIN Team 4 Highbury      | 2         | 0        | 6         | 0        | 0        | 3         | 0        | 0        | 11        | 0        | 0        |
| CIN Team 5 Hornsey       | 6         | 0        | 7         | 1        | 0        | 7         | 1        | 0        | 4         | 0        | 0        |
| CIN Team 6 Holloway      | 5         | 0        | 2         | 1        | 0        | 1         | 0        | 1        | 2         | 0        | 0        |
| CSCCT                    | 2         | 0        | 4         | 0        | 0        | 2         | 0        | 0        | 5         | 0        | 0        |
| Disabled Children's Team | 11        | 1        | 9         | 0        | 0        | 8         | 0        | 0        | 11        | 1        | 0        |
| Emergency Duty Team      | 4         | 0        | 1         | 0        | 0        | 0         | 0        | 0        | 0         | 0        | 0        |
| Lough Road               | 0         | 0        | 0         | 0        | 0        | 0         | 0        | 0        | 1         | 0        | 0        |
| CIN Provider – IFIT, FF  | 3         | 0        | 2         | 0        | 0        | 2         | 0        | 0        | 3         | 0        | 0        |
| <b>Children in Need</b>  | <b>48</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>42</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>1</b> | <b>36</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>1</b> | <b>53</b> | <b>1</b> | <b>1</b> |
| <b>TOTAL</b>             | <b>52</b> |          | <b>46</b> |          |          | <b>40</b> |          |          | <b>55</b> |          |          |

**Table 11: Children Looked After**

| Year                  | 2016-17   |    | 2017-18   |    |    | 2018-19   |    |    | 2019-20   |    |    |
|-----------------------|-----------|----|-----------|----|----|-----------|----|----|-----------|----|----|
| Stage                 | S1        | S2 | S1        | S2 | S3 | S1        | S2 | S3 | S1        | S2 | S3 |
| Virtual School        | 0         | 0  | 1         | 0  | 0  | 0         | 0  | 0  | 0         | 0  | 0  |
| Adoption              | 2         | 0  | 2         | 0  | 0  | 1         | 0  | 0  | 4         | 0  | 0  |
| CLA Team 1            | 10        | 0  | 8         | 0  | 0  | 3         | 0  | 0  | 14        | 0  | 0  |
| CLA Team 2            | 4         | 0  | 5         | 0  | 0  | 4         | 1  | 1  | 6         | 0  | 0  |
| CLA Team 3            | 3         | 0  | 6         | 0  | 0  | 9         | 0  | 0  | 1         | 0  | -  |
| Contact Centre        | 0         | 0  | 1         | 0  | 0  | 1         | 0  | 0  | 1         | 0  | 0  |
| Family Plus           | 3         | 0  | 1         | 0  | 0  | 1         | 0  | 0  | 4         | 0  | 0  |
| Fostering             | 1         | 0  | 2         | 0  | 0  | 5         | 0  | 0  | 3         | 0  | 0  |
| Historical CLA        | 0         | 0  | 0         | 0  | 0  | 0         | 0  | 0  | 1         | 0  | 0  |
| Independent Futures   | 23        | 0  | 12        | 0  | 0  | 10        | 0  | 0  | 9         | 0  | 0  |
| Children Looked After | 46        | 0  | 38        | 0  | 0  | 34        | 1  | 1  | 43        | 0  | 0  |
| <b>TOTAL</b>          | <b>46</b> |    | <b>38</b> |    |    | <b>36</b> |    |    | <b>43</b> |    |    |

**Table 12: Information and Commissioning**

| Year                          | 2016-17  |    | 2017-18  |    |    | 2018-19  |    |    | 2019-20  |    |    |
|-------------------------------|----------|----|----------|----|----|----------|----|----|----------|----|----|
| Stage                         | S1       | S2 | S1       | S2 | S3 | S1       | S2 | S3 | S1       | S2 | S3 |
| Business Support              | 2        | 0  | 0        | 0  | 0  | 0        | 0  | 0  | 1        | 0  | 0  |
| Commissioning                 | 1        | 0  | 0        | 0  | 0  | 0        | 0  | 0  | 1        | 1  | 0  |
| Information and Commissioning | 3        | 0  | 0        | 0  | 0  | 0        | 0  | 0  | 2        | 1  | 0  |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                  | <b>3</b> |    | <b>0</b> |    |    | <b>0</b> |    |    | <b>3</b> |    |    |

**Table 13: Safeguarding and Quality Assurance**

| Year                               | 2016-17  |    | 2017-18  |    |    | 2018-19  |    |    | 2019-20  |    |    |
|------------------------------------|----------|----|----------|----|----|----------|----|----|----------|----|----|
| Stage                              | S1       | S2 | S1       | S2 | S3 | S1       | S2 | S3 | S1       | S2 | S3 |
| Access to Records                  | 1        | 0  | 0        | 0  | 0  | 1        | 0  | 0  | 0        | 0  | 0  |
| Child Protection                   | 0        | 0  | 0        | 0  | 0  | 2        | 0  | 0  | 1        | 0  | 0  |
| Customer Care & Complaints         | 1        | 0  | 1        | 0  | 0  | 0        | 0  | 0  | 0        | 0  | 0  |
| Independent Reviewing Team         | 0        | 0  | 0        | 0  | 0  | 0        | 0  | 0  | 0        | 0  | 0  |
| S&QA                               | 0        | 0  | 0        | 0  | 0  | 1        | 0  | 0  | 0        | 0  | 0  |
| Safeguarding and Quality Assurance | 2        | 0  | 1        | 0  | 0  | 4        | 0  | 0  | 1        | 0  | 0  |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                       | <b>2</b> |    | <b>1</b> |    |    | <b>4</b> |    |    | <b>1</b> |    |    |

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

| Year         | 2016-17  |    | 2017-18  |    |    | 2018-19  |    |    | 2019-20  |    |    |
|--------------|----------|----|----------|----|----|----------|----|----|----------|----|----|
| Stage        | S1       | S2 | S1       | S2 | S3 | S1       | S2 | S3 | S1       | S2 | S3 |
| Other        | 1        | 0  | 0        | 0  | 0  | 1        | 0  | 0  | 0        | 0  | 0  |
| Other        | 1        | 0  | 0        | 0  | 0  | 1        | 0  | 0  | 0        | 0  | 0  |
| <b>TOTAL</b> | <b>1</b> |    | <b>0</b> |    |    | <b>1</b> |    |    | <b>0</b> |    |    |

**Table 15: Totals**

| Year                               | 2016-17    |          | 2017-18   |          |          | 2018-19   |          |          | 2019-20    |          |          |
|------------------------------------|------------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|------------|----------|----------|
| Stage                              | S1         | S2       | S1        | S2       | S3       | S1        | S2       | S3       | S1         | S2       | S3       |
| Children in Need                   | 48         | 4        | 42        | 3        | 1        | 36        | 3        | 1        | 53         | 1        | 1        |
| Children Looked After              | 46         | 0        | 38        | 0        | 0        | 34        | 1        | 1        | 43         | 0        | 0        |
| Information and Commissioning      | 3          | 0        | 0         | 0        | 0        | 0         | 0        | 0        | 2          | 1        | 0        |
| Safeguarding and Quality Assurance | 2          | 0        | 1         | 0        | 0        | 4         | 0        | 0        | 1          | 0        | 0        |
| Other                              | 1          | 0        | 0         | 0        | 0        | 1         | 0        | 0        | 0          | 0        | 0        |
| <b>Sub-total</b>                   | <b>100</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>81</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>1</b> | <b>75</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>99</b>  | <b>1</b> | <b>1</b> |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                       | <b>104</b> |          | <b>82</b> |          |          | <b>81</b> |          |          | <b>101</b> |          |          |

Of the all of CIN teams, DCT have received the highest number of complaints in the last four years and the number of complaints received in 2019/2020 was a slight increase on the previous year. However, given the complexity of the support packages DCT put in place, the level of finance required and the frequency that families dispute these, it is not surprising that the team receives a higher level of complaints. Having said that in 2019/2020 CIN Highbury received the same number of complaints as DCT, and CIN Canonbury received a similar number of complaints.

- Of the 11 complaints received in DCT in 2019/2020, 3 (27%) were upheld following investigation, 2 (18%) were partially upheld, 5 (45%) not upheld and 1 (9%) withdrawn.
- In CIN Highbury and CIN Canonbury none of the complaints received were upheld in full. The complaints received were either partially upheld, not upheld or withdrawn.
- In CLA, CLA Team 1 received the highest number of complaints. Of the 14 complaints received in CLA Team 1 in 2019/2020, 1 (7%) was upheld following investigation, 5 (36%) were partially upheld, 7 (50%) not upheld and 1 (7%) complaint withdrawn by the complainant.

Of the 14 complaints received:

- 3 (21%) complaints were in relation to placement/accommodation issues,
- 2 (14%) complaints regarding conduct and/or attitude of staff,
- 2 (14%) complaints were due to contact issues,
- 3 (21%) complaints were due to quality of service issues,
- 3 (21%) complaints were due to service delay issues, and
- 1 (7%) complaint was in relation to support disagreement issues.

## 8.5 Complaints by subject category

Table 16 shows the total number of complaints recorded in Safeguarding and Family Support from 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020 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 quality of service is sometimes interconnected with information/communication complaints.

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

| Complaint subject        | 2017-18<br>Number | 2017-18<br>% | 2018-19<br>Number | 2019-20<br>% | 2019-20<br>Number | 2019-20<br>% |
|--------------------------|-------------------|--------------|-------------------|--------------|-------------------|--------------|
| Alleged historical abuse | 0                 | 0%           | 0                 | 0%           | 0                 | 0%           |
| Assessment delay         | 0                 | 0%           | 0                 | 0%           | 0                 | 0%           |
| Quality of assessment    | 1                 | 1%           | 1                 | 1%           | 1                 | 1%           |
| Assessment disagreement  | 12                | 14%          | 9                 | 10%          | 12                | 12%          |



| Complaint subject                               | 2017-18 Number | 2017-18 %   | 2018-19 Number | 2019-20 %   | 2019-20 Number | 2019-20 %   |
|---|----------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|
| Assessment request                              | 0              | 0%          | 1              | 1%          | 0              | 0%          |
| Conduct and/or attitude of staff                | 22             | 26%         | 18             | 23%         | 26             | 25%         |
| Contact   | 4              | 5%          | 5              | 6%          | 8              | 8%          |
| Finance   | 9              | 10%         | 2              | 3%          | 4              | 4%          |
| Historic Case: Support Disagreement             | 0              | 0%          | 0              | 0%          | 1              | 1%          |
| Information/communication incl. data protection | 9              | 10%         | 16             | 20%         | 15             | 15%         |
| Lack of Support                                 | 1              | 1%          | 4              | 5%          | 0              | 0%          |
| Late/missed appointments                        | 0              | 0%          | 0              | 0%          | 1              | 1%          |
| No response to previous communication           | 3              | 4%          | 2              | 3%          | 0              | 0%          |
| Placement issues                                | 13             | 15%         | 7              | 9%          | 5              | 5%          |
| Quality of service                              | 4              | 5%          | 9              | 11%         | 13             | 12%         |
| Referral disagreement                           | 1              | 1%          | 0              | 0%          | 0              | 0%          |
| Service delay                                   | 3              | 4%          | 5              | 6%          | 6              | 6%          |
| Support disagreement                            | 2              | 2%          | 1              | 1%          | 2              | 2%          |
| Other (including lost belongings, Housing)      | 1              | 1%          | 1              | 1%          | 8              | 8%          |
| <b>Total</b>                                    | <b>85</b>      | <b>100%</b> | <b>81</b>      | <b>100%</b> | <b>102</b>     | <b>100%</b> |

Whilst numbers for complaints in individual categories are small, it is important to examine the areas where we receive the most complaints in order to learn. The two highest subject categories were 'Conduct and/or attitude of staff', which has increased from 18 (23%) complaints to 26 (25%); then 'Information/communication' which has decreased from 16 (20%) complaints to 15 (15%).

The two categories make up 40% of all complaints received.

- 'Conduct and/or attitude of staff' - 26 (25%): None of the complaints were upheld, 10 (28%) complaints were partially upheld (partially founded), 12 (46%) complaints were not upheld (unfounded) and 4 (15%) complaints were withdrawn.
- 'Information/communication' - 15 (15%): 5 (33%) of the complaints received were upheld, 2 (13%) complaints were partially upheld, whilst 8 (54%) complaints were not upheld.

In the two categories that featured most highly, 41% of the complaints were justified, being upheld or partially upheld.

## 8.6 Complaints by outcome

Table 3h 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 |
|-----------|----------|------------------|------------|----------|-------------------------|
| 2016/2017 | 22 (22%) | 26 (26%)         | 52 (52%)   | 0 (0%)   | 100 (100%)              |
| 2017/2018 | 13 (16%) | 19 (23%)         | 46 (56%)   | 3 (4%)   | 81 (100%)               |
| 2018/2019 | 9 (12%)  | 18 (24%)         | 44 (59%)   | 4 (5%)   | 75 (100%)               |
| 2019/2020 | 11 (11%) | 25 (25%)         | 51 (52%)   | 12 (12%) | 99 (100%)               |

In 2019/2020, of the 99 Stage 1 complaints received 11 (11%) were upheld, 25 (25%) were partially upheld and 52 (52%) were not upheld.

Therefore, under 40% of the complaints investigated were considered to be upheld (justified) in full or in part and 52% were not upheld. This is not dissimilar to the previous three years in 2016/2017, 2017/2018 and 2018/2019.

In 2019/2020 of the 2 Stage 2/CE complaints received, 1 (50%) was not upheld and 1 (75%) was withdrawn and the 1 Stage 3 complaint received was (100%) partially 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 increase in statutory complaints has an associated impact on achievability of responding to complaints within the set timescales, especially as the complaints received are increasingly more complex.

### 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 2019 to 31 March 2020, 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 |
|-----------|---------------|-------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| 2016/2017 | 82 (82%)      | 18 (18%)          | 0 (0%)                 | 100 (100%)              |
| 2017/2018 | 56 (69%)      | 25 (31%)          | 0 (0%)                 | 81 (100%)               |
| 2018/2019 | 60 (80%)      | 12 (16%)          | 3 (4%)                 | 75 (100%)               |
| 2019/2020 | 71 (72%)      | 18 (18%)          | 10 (10%)               | 99 (100%)               |

NB. Stage 1 complaints responded to within 15/20 working days are included as being within timescale

In 2019/2020, 71 of the 99 Stage 1 complaints received and completed by the department were responded to within the relevant timescale, meaning we achieved 72% compliance. This is not as good as the previous year, as in comparison, in 2018/2019, 60 of the 75 Stage 1 complaints received and completed by the department were responded to within the relevant timescale, meaning we achieved 80% compliance. However, in 2019/2020 the department received 24 (25%) more complaints.

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 2019 and 31 March 2020, 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 |
|-----------|---------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| 2016/2017 | 2 (50%)       | 2 (50%)           | 4 (100%)                |
| 2017/2018 | 3 (100%)      | 0 (0%)            | 3 (100%)                |
| 2018/2019 | 1 (25%)       | 3 (75%)           | 4 (100%)                |
| 2019/2020 | 2 (100%)      | 0 (0%)            | 2 (100%)                |

NB: Stage 2/CE complaints responded to within 65/28 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. Chief Executive (CE - Stage 2) complaints have a 28 working timescale. These investigations are carried out at the discretion of the Principal Complaints Officer who is based in the Council's Central Complaints Team.

Of the 2 Stage 2 complaints received between the 1 April 2019 to the 31 March 2020 – 1 was dealt with under the statutory social care complaints procedure and 1 at the Chief Executive's stage. Of the 2 complaints received, both were completed within the given timescales.

### 8.7.3 Stage 3 complaints

There was 1 Stage 3 complaint in 2019/2020, which was completed within timescale.

**Table 20: Timeliness of Stage 3 complaint responses**

| Year      | Timescale met | Timescale not met | Total no. of complaints |
|-----------|---------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| 2016/2017 | 0 (0%)        | 0 (0%)            | 0 (0%)                  |
| 2017/2018 | 1 (100%)      | 0 (0%)            | 1 (100%)                |
| 2018/2019 | 2 (100%)      | 0 (0%)            | 2 (100%)                |
| 2019/2020 | 1 (100%)      | 0 (0%)            | 1 (100%)                |

## 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 2019 to 31 March 2020 by relationship to the service user, compared to the three previous years.

**Table 21: Complaints by relationship to the service user**

| Year                                  | 2016/2017 | 2017/2018 | 2018/2019 | 2019/2020 |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Advocate                              | 21        | 15        | 12        | 9         |
| Child in need                         | 6         | 0         | 1         | 0         |
| Child/young person being looked after | 0         | 1         | 3         | 2         |
| Child leaving care                    | 10        | 3         | 5         | 3         |

| Year  | 2016/2017  | 2017/2018 | 2018/2019 | 2019/2020  |
|---|------------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| Parent  | 48         | 53        | 53        | 68         |
| Foster carer  | 4          | 5         | 1         | 2          |
| Persons with sufficient interest in the child's welfare | 11         | 3         | 0         | 12         |
| Partner agency  | 1          | 1         | 0         | 0          |
| Other   | 3          | 4         | 6         | 6          |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>104</b> | <b>85</b> | <b>81</b> | <b>102</b> |

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

In 2019/2020 Persons with sufficient interest in the child's welfare was the second highest category with 12 (12%) complaints and an increase on the previous year. It is also noted that 8 of the 9 (9%) complaints received from advocates 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 2019 and 31 March 2020 by ethnicity, with comparative data.

**Table 22: Complaints by ethnicity with comparative data**

|                               | Complaints in 2019/2020 | % of complaints in 2019/2020 | No. of service users 2019/2020 | Islington's Child population* |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| White British                 | 17                      | 17%                          | 24%                            | 32%                           |
| White Irish                   | 2                       | 2%                           | -                              | -                             |
| White Other                   | 13                      | 13%                          | 11%                            | 18%                           |
| <b>Total - White</b>          | <b>32</b>               | <b>31%</b>                   | <b>35%</b>                     | <b>50%</b>                    |
| Mixed White & Black Caribbean | 2                       | 2%                           | -                              | -                             |
| Mixed White & Black African   | 1                       | 1%                           | -                              | -                             |
| Mixed White & Asian           | 1                       | 1%                           | -                              | -                             |
| Mixed British                 | 0                       | 0%                           | -                              | -                             |
| Mixed Other                   | 1                       | 1%                           | -                              | -                             |
| Mixed Not Stated/Unknown      | 0                       | 0%                           | -                              | -                             |
| <b>Total - Mixed</b>          | <b>5</b>                | <b>5%</b>                    | <b>19%</b>                     | <b>14%</b>                    |
| Indian                        | 2                       | 2%                           | -                              | -                             |
| Pakistani                     | 3                       | 3%                           | -                              | -                             |
| Bangladeshi                   | 2                       | 2%                           | -                              | -                             |

|                             | Complaints in 2019/2020 | % of complaints in 2019/2020 | No. of service users 2019/2020 | Islington's Child population* |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Other Asian                 | 3                       | 3%                           | -                              | -                             |
| Asian / Asian British       | 0                       | 0%                           | -                              | -                             |
| <b>Total - Asian</b>        | <b>10</b>               | <b>10%</b>                   | <b>7%</b>                      | <b>8%</b>                     |
| Caribbean                   | 1                       | 1%                           | 8%                             | 5%                            |
| African                     | 2                       | 2%                           | 16%                            | 9%                            |
| Black British Caribbean     | 19                      | 19%                          | -                              | -                             |
| Black British African       | 6                       | 6%                           | -                              | -                             |
| Other Black                 | 0                       | 0%                           | 8%                             | 8%                            |
| Other Black British         | 3                       | 3%                           | -                              | -                             |
| <b>Total - Black</b>        | <b>31</b>               | <b>30%</b>                   | <b>32%</b>                     | <b>22%</b>                    |
| <b>Not Stated / Unknown</b> | <b>23</b>               | <b>23%</b>                   | <b>3%</b>                      | -                             |
| <b>Other</b>                | <b>1</b>                | <b>1%</b>                    | <b>4%</b>                      | <b>6%</b>                     |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                | <b>102</b>              | <b>100%</b>                  | <b>100%</b>                    | <b>100%</b>                   |

Islington population figure from database of Islington Children - September 2016

In 2019/2020 the ethnic profile of complainants was found to be reasonably reflective of the service user population.

## 8.10 Complaint by source

Table 23 shows how complaints were received in Safeguarding and Family Support from 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020. It is evident that the majority (over 74%) of complainants prefer to communicate with the department in the first instance via email.

**Table 23: Complaints by source**

| Source       | 2017/2018 | 2018/2019 | 2019/2020 |
|--------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Contact Form | 0         | 6         | 13        |
| Email        | 78        | 62        | 75        |
| In Person    | 2         | 2         | 3         |
| Letter       | 2         | 6         | 6         |
| LGSCO        | 2         | 0         | 1         |
| Telephone    | 1         | 5         | 4         |
| Total        | 85        | 81        | 102       |

## 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 2019 to 31 March 2020, compared to the previous three years.

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

| Year                              | 2016/2017            | 2017/2018 | 2018/2019 | 2019/2020 |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Notice                            | 0                    | 1         | 0         | 0         |
| Enquiries                         | 0                    | 2         | 3         | 1         |
| Complaints                        | 1 (withdrawn)        | 1         | 1         | 2         |
| Other (i.e. outside jurisdiction) | 0                    | 0         | 1         | 0         |
| <b>Total</b>                      | <b>1 (withdrawn)</b> | <b>4</b>  | <b>5</b>  | <b>3</b>  |

The number of LGSCO notices, enquiries and complaints has decreased in 2019/2020; however, the number is still relative and low.

Of the three cases received from the LGSCO in 2019/2020 – one enquiry was Closed after initial enquiries - no further action and the other two complaints, the LGSCO decision was not to investigate. One complaint was found to be a Court matter and the other, the LGSCO stated "...unlikely we (LGSCO) would find that the Council’s response to his complaint was flawed by fault."

## 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 2019 to 31 March 2020 and gives a comparison to the previous three years.

**Table 25: Cost of Stage 2 and Stage 3 complaints**

| Year                   | 2016/2017         | 2017/2018        | 2018/2019         |
|------------------------|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Investigating Officers | £8530.35          | £4927.45         | £6960.25          |
| Independent Persons    | £2711.70          | £1475.75         | £1568.75          |
| Review Panellists      | N/A               | £1166.20         | £3816.15          |
| <b>Total</b>           | <b>£11,242.05</b> | <b>£7,569.40</b> | <b>£12,345.15</b> |

### 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 2019 to 31 March 2020 in relation to complaints.

**Table 26: Compensation/ex-gratia payments offered**

| Year               | 2016/2017         | 2017/2018        | 2018/2019       | 2019/2020       |
|--------------------|-------------------|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Stage 1 complaints | £8,677.50         | £4,150.00        | £5132.00        | £5458.00        |
| Stage 2 complaints | £20,192.00        | £3,000.00        | £100.00         | £0              |
| Stage 3 complaints | N/A               | £800.00          | £0              | £0              |
| Stage 4 - LGSCO    | £0                | £400.00          | £0              | £0              |
| <b>Total</b>       | <b>£28,869.50</b> | <b>£8,350.00</b> | <b>£5232.00</b> | <b>£5458.00</b> |

If it is appropriate to do so, compensation should be offered and paid at Stage 1 of the complaints process. In 2019/2020, the compensation was offered in relation to 7 complaints. All 7 complaints were at Stage 1 of the complaints process, 5 complaints were from Independent Futures, one from Children Looked After team 1 and one from Child in Need Service (Highbury Team).

The amounts paid varied and were in relation to service delay, section 17 payment, poor accommodation, time and trouble for pursuing their complaint etc.

In addition, following investigation of another complaint within the Fostering service, a significant under payment to one of the foster carers was found of £28,370.40, which was promptly reimbursed, together with a £100.00 for the lost interest, amounting to £28,470.40, in total.

## 11 London complaints network

The Customer Care and Complaints Manager works closely with colleagues from the London Complaints Managers group 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.

## 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 less than previous years; however, appropriate due to the nature of the 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.

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 remain high on their list of priorities.

### **13 Moving forward - 2019/2020**

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. 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 – 2020/2021 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 provide a quarterly complaints report for children social care senior managers
- The Customer Care and Complaints Manager will continue to encourage managers to consider the benefits of face-to-face discussions (Resolution Meetings) when investigating complaints
- The Customer Care and Complaints Manager and line managers where required to support individual members of staff during the complaint investigation process, as it can 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 closely 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
- Consider further 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. Service action plan is provided in the appendix
- Each service should take steps to remind their customers of how to provide feedback, and actively promote this through all of their interaction with customers.
- Each service should take steps to remind their customers of how to provide feedback, and actively promote this through all of their interaction with customers.



## Appendix 1 - Compliments

A sample of compliments received in 2019/2020:

1. A parent said of a social worker... "Thank you for being the best! I'm twenty years old and no professional that I've ever met have been committed to genuinely helping me like you. It feels great to have someone to talk to and help me through the kind of things that a mum would usually help with".
2. The Managing Director of Minority Matters said of members of staff from Targeted Youth Support... "Thank you and to team members for the fantastic day out on the 23/08/2019. The day went without any problems and everyone thoroughly enjoyed it. Children told me on the day and parents have been calling me non-stop, expressing their appreciation. Of course, I took all the credit, but passing on my and their appreciation. Once again, thanks for all your hard work and team work. Well done to you all."
3. The Director of Islington Faith's Forum said of Targeted Youth Support Workers and Young People's Participation Officers... "Thank you very much for all your support of the Peace Cup yesterday. Having spoken with different stakeholders today, the young players drew a lot from the tournament".
4. A school class teacher said of a social worker... "I have found her thoroughly professional, highly personable and very supportive. It has also been obvious that she has a good relationship with the young person and a good understanding of his needs, as an individual with complex autism. Above all, this gave me confidence in her as a professional. Her presence in class during visits has been unobtrusive but also often helpful as, rather than simply observing, she gets involved in class activities".
5. A Senco said of a key worker from the Disabled Children's Family Support Team... "She had built a very positive and trusting relationship with the family and mum spoke very highly of the service. The Key Worker was able to work in the home with the family and even supported her with a very tricky transport situation which is a challenge many parents with children with disabilities struggle with. I was really impressed with the Key Worker's commitment to the family and how she attended a TAC even though this case has finished and she was keen to ensure the family had further to support and really advocated for what the family needed. I would definitely refer to this service in the future for cases that don't always meet threshold".
6. A Child Protection coordinator feedback on behalf of the parents said of the social worker... "At the review conference today in respect of 5 siblings, both parents praised the help the Social Worker has given to them. Father said that the Social Worker had helped him with finding housing after being homeless for some time".
7. GP for Child and Adult Safeguarding said of the Senior Administrator in Safeguarding and Quality Assurance... "Thank you for your tireless chasing of these reports so that Islington has one of the best completion rates for these reports Nationally".
8. A parent said of the social worker, "I cannot thank you enough for all your efforts. You have kept me sane, and pushing on when sometimes I feel like all hope is lost. This generation are a very difficult bunch to understand, but I am sure that is what our parents said about us, and theirs before them. Your support has been consistent and superior to many that I have encountered in this field of social care and support, and behalf of all of those who are too proud to say it, you are appreciated. Continue to stay real, and speak encouragement and motivation into these youths as I feel that often as a parent our voices become white noise. Thanks again for your support".