

Complaints relating to Safeguarding Adults processes

1. INTRODUCTION

This guidance contains links (underlined in blue) to internet pages that practitioners may find helpful so is best viewed electronically.

This local practice guidance supplements [the London Wide Multi-Agency Adult Safeguarding Policies & Procedures \(November 2025\)](#) and reflects the local practice guidance for managing complaints made in relation to safeguarding adults (whether individual cases, with respect to Safeguarding Adults Board, or Safeguarding Adults Reviews).

The Care Act 2014 states that guidance should be formulated about the arrangements for managing adult safeguarding and dealing with complaints. All complaints around the Local Authority go through the Enfield Complaints and Information Service.

This guidance is intended to support and read in conjunction with the document by the Local Government Ombudsman '**Casework Guidance Statement: Complaints about Safeguarding Adults Boards**'. This document can be accessed at <http://www.adass.org.uk/lgo-casework-guidance-statement-sabs-april-2015/>

A complaint for the purposes of this guidance is any expression of dissatisfaction which requires a response; whereas an appeal is a request to review or change the decision made. In terms of the safeguarding, the latter relates primarily to decisions made in safeguarding and / or actions put in place as a result of safeguarding plans.

All work in dealing with risk and safeguarding should consider the six Making Safeguarding Personal principles of Prevention, Participation, Empowerment, Partnership working, Proportionality and Accountability. Decision making should be clearly recorded to reflect these principles in any form of safeguarding work.

Support is available for individuals wishing to complain via [Citizen's Advice](#).

2. HOW COMPLAINTS ARE DEALT WITH BY THE COUNCIL

It should be noted that service users or their representatives are expected to be shown the Enquiry report and have had this discussed with them before it is finalized. Disagreements at this stage are not considered complaints but rather part of that discussion. Safeguarding Adults Managers should aim to resolve such disputes before finalizing the report and actions. Where it seems there are such disputes, a face-to-face meeting between the service user or representative, Enquiry Officer and Safeguarding Adults Manager should be considered.

If disputes cannot be resolved at that stage, then it may be appropriate to discuss with Senior Managers or the Strategic Safeguarding Adults team.

Providers or other stakeholders may also wish to comment on reports and have their contents discussed with them. Such discussions must bear in mind any confidentiality issues. It may be expected that some providers do not agree with the outcome of an enquiry and, in these cases, transparency and fairness are key principles. If the SAM (with guidance from their manager if required) is satisfied that they have been both transparent and fair then they can finalize the report and any further disagreements can be dealt with

via the Complaints process.

Sometimes complaints arise from the decision about whether or not a referral will be processed as a Section 42 (1) or 42 (2) Enquiry or as a referral for assessment. In these cases, respectful communication about the criteria is usually sufficient to satisfy the complaint (as long as they feel risks are addressed), however, managers are reminded that such decisions are meant to be flexible as new information is gathered.

Complaints or appeals about Section 42 Enquiries

In relation to complaints or appeals with respect to safeguarding in individual cases, the adult at risk, their carer, friend or personal representative including the advocate should make a complaint to the Council under the Adult Social Care Complaints Procedure. Individuals should be provided with information on request which details how to make a complaint. The Corporate Complaints Team can be contacted on complaintsandinformation@enfield.gov.uk.

Complaints are managed by the Service who made or was responsible for the decision. Within the Local Authority, these can be sent through the Council's Complaints Service, who will liaise with the appropriate service. Complaints should initially be responded to by the Safeguarding Adults Manager in the case but it may be appropriate for another manager within the team to have oversight.

If the concerns raised appear to be an appeal of a decision made, the Service which handled the enquiry with handle this response. However, if their initial response does not resolve the matter or the Service Manager concerned feels the appeal is particularly complex then they can liaise with the Safeguarding Adults, Quality and Deprivations of Liberty Service.

It is asked that any lessons learned from complaints and appeals be fed back to the Strategic Safeguarding Adults team so that they can (in an anonymised format) disseminate the learning.

It is not possible for a complaint (in itself) to change the Safeguarding Adults Enquiry outcomes but it may be that the enquiry is reopened or considered (which may lead to the outcomes being changed). Several aspects should be considered where, for example:

- there has been an obvious problem in the Safeguarding Adults planning and enquiry process
- It can be shown that key information was not considered in making the decisions.
- when one agency has evidence that other agencies were involved in the issues but have not been brought into the decision-making process (for example, the role of health and social services staff in the support of a private/voluntary provider).
- when new information is submitted to the enquiry process following the outcome
- when a conflict of interest has been identified on the part of the enquiry leads or chair / Safeguarding Adults Manager.

Complaints and appeals raised by partner organisations should be dealt with via the same process and the same principles applied. However, it is expected that a provider will need to give a strong reason for appeal for this to be upheld.

Complaints should be responded to promptly and respectfully – with reference to the London Wide Multi-agency Safeguarding Adults Guidance and in line with the normal Enfield Council Complaints processes. Defensible decision making which is clearly recorded will be a great help when providing a complaint response.

It may be appropriate, following a complaint or appeal, to consider the following (this list is far from exhaustive):

- a new Enquiry into the allegations by another member of staff or even an external person.
 - Individual staff or whole team/service learning and development.
 - Involvement of HR if misconduct or competency issues identified.
 - An apology to the individuals involved.
 - Support for any employees involved.
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As with any complaint about the services provided by the Local Authority, complaints around Safeguarding Adults may be escalated to the Local Government Ombudsman.

2b) Complaints about the Safeguarding Adults Board or Safeguarding Adults Reviews

Complaints with respect to the Safeguarding Adults Board or a Safeguarding Adults Review should be made to the Councils Corporate Complaints Team on: complaintsandinformation@enfield.gov.uk.

The Corporate Complaints Manager should contact the Head of Safeguarding Adults and Quality, who will liaise with the Independent Chair of the Safeguarding Adults Board and notify senior managers. Councils should have the opportunity to consider complaints and investigate these before they can be sent to the Local Government Ombudsmen should the complainant remain dissatisfied.

3. HOW COMPLAINTS ARE DEALT WITH BY THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN

The Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) has jurisdiction to investigate complaints about safeguarding investigations for which Councils have coordinating responsibility. The Local Government Ombudsman 'Casework Guidance Statement: Complaints about Safeguarding Adults Boards' should be read around this. This document can be accessed at <http://www.adass.org.uk/lgo-casework-guidance-statement-sabs-april-2015/>

Depending on the nature of the complaint, LGO's practice is to consider whether:

- The safeguarding investigation is proportionate
- The Council has taken appropriate action in response to the findings of the safeguarding investigation
- The Council continues to monitor the situation e.g. through its contracts and monitoring team or reviews
- The Council can provide evidence why the safeguarding allegation did not meet the safeguarding threshold
- There were any delays or failures in the process
- The conclusions are consistent with the evidence
- The Council considered all relevant and available evidence

In relation to the Safeguarding Adults Board, the LGO considers that they can look at the actions of the Board including – in some circumstances – actions of professionals who are not employees of the council. The LGO expects someone to complain to the local authority, as the body responsible for setting up the Safeguarding Adults Board, before asking the LGO to consider the complaint. The Safeguarding Adults Board, as the only body able to commission a Safeguarding Adults Review, also falls under this jurisdiction.

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