

safeguarders panel team

Summary Annual Report 2016-17

Children 1st is contracted by the Scottish Government to assist Scottish Ministers with the management and operation of the national Safeguarders Panel in terms of the Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011 (Safeguarders Panel) Regulations 2012 and Amendment Regulations 2016

(This report deals with 1 April 2016 – 31 March 2017)

Vision

For the Safeguarders Panel to be:

Excellent: what every child deserves, we will aspire to and support excellence

Transparent: be fair, equitable and accessible

Accountable: through ownership our actions stand up to scrutiny

Respectful: to the role and in all relationships and actions to fill it

Summary of Achievements:

The focus this year has been making significant advances on the implementation of the Ministers measures: the Practice Standards for safeguarders and the Performance Support & Monitoring Framework for safeguarders. This is the first year these measures have been fully exercised for and with the Panel. The focus and drive of the Safeguarder Panel Team, the valued contribution of safeguarders and key partners, and the shared determination to do the best we can for children, has enabled significant progress towards a more accountable and transparent Panel, in which safeguarders are increasingly supported and confident. There had been a lead in time for safeguarders to prepare for, and adjust to the Standards and the Framework, which became operational in April 2015.

The majority of safeguarders were given an automatic 1 year reappointment in 2016 and were due to be assessed for reappointment, for the first time in February 2017. This assessment of safeguarders, against Ministers' Standards, by the Safeguarders Panel Team led to a recommendation as to whether the safeguarder remained fit to be a member of the Panel. This was presented to Scottish Ministers to decide on the safeguarders'

reappointment or not. Ministers also considered recommendations on the length of appointment period of each safeguarder: not less than one year or longer than three years.

Operating in this new context has been a significant adjustment for safeguarders. Implementing these aspects of the new Regulations has been the most critical phase so far in this modernisation program. The aim remains to improve the experience and outcome for all children to whom a safeguarder is appointed.

Consolidating and embedding these improvements will continue to rely on the continued support of safeguarders well beyond this first year. The excellence, accountability, transparency and respect of the Panel will be contingent on this and it is this which will better deliver for children and so realise, in full, the ambitions of the 2011 Act.

Major 2016-17 milestones:

Successfully administered and managed the national Safeguarders Panel

Supported the national Safeguarders Panel to:

- Operate to clear Practice Standards
- Embed support and monitoring in its practice and conduct through Performance Support & Monitoring Framework (PSMF)
- See safeguarders supported, and challenged towards evidencing a more consistently good quality, transparent and accountable Panel
- Develop an evidence base of its practice and conduct using all the elements of the Framework

All serving safeguarders received:

- Three mandatory individual support sessions to reflect on practice with their allocated individual support manager
- Two reports sampled against the Standards
- Two mandatory training events
- Individual Development Plans to support and strengthen practice in line with the Standards

The Panel secured greater consistency and clarity:

- On the parameters of the role through the Standards, the safeguarders' engagement with the Framework and also Practice Notes
- By upholding Data Protection Regulations, through Practice Standards and Data Protection Policy and safeguarders' engagement with the Framework

Safeguarders' practice assessed against Standards to inform a recommendation to Scottish Ministers of their suitability for reappointment to the Panel

120 assessments prepared on safeguarders due for reappointment in May 2017 to qualify recommendations to Scottish Ministers

Providing an effective nationwide level of safeguarder availability

Improving the quality and rigor of recruitment process for new members of the Safeguarders Panel

Overhauling the recruitment process to align with the new Regulations

Undertaking a comprehensive recruitment program for safeguarders

Redesigning pre-appointment training for potential safeguarders

Recruiting 28 individuals to undertake pre-appointment safeguarder training recommending 26 new safeguarders to Scottish Ministers for appointment.

Securing the Contract to continue to administer and manage the Safeguarders Panel with minimal disruption to children, safeguarders and stakeholders (till 2019 (+ 1 year))

Increasing capacity of the Safeguarders Panel Team to ensure full delivery of the modernization program

Internal review and audit of the PSMF with a view to continuous improvement

Collaborating in strong partnerships with Children's Hearings Scotland, Scottish Courts and Tribunal Service, Scottish Children's Reporter Administration, Children's Hearings Improvement Partnership and other stakeholders to contribute to system wide improvements towards better experiences and outcomes for children.

Key Performance Indicators

1. Recruitment and Selection

KPI: Children 1st will be responsible for the recruitment and retention of safeguarders ensuring that the number fully trained meets demand. (SOR Ref 3)

Target: 100%

Achieved: 100%

Table 1.1: Safeguarder, numbers, appointment and reappointment

Appointed Safeguarders at 1 April 16	158
Resignations/Removals between 1 April 16 and 31 March 17	14
Total Number of Appointed Safeguarders at 31 March 17	144
New Safeguarder Presented for Appointment for May 17	26
Safeguarders recommended for 3 year reappointment from May 17	99
Safeguarders recommended for 1 year reappointment, From May 17	16
Safeguarders not recommended for reappointment	2
Safeguarders not seeking reappointment	5

There has been sufficient coverage of safeguarders to meet the level of demand this year. The 144 safeguarders compares to 196 in March 2015 and 178 safeguarders in March 2014. The close analysis and detailed review of the allocation data base informs the level of demand predicted for safeguarders in the different local authority areas and across the country. This informed the decision to start a recruitment programme for safeguarders in June 2016 agreed with the Scottish Government Children's Hearings Team. This recruitment programme resulted in 150 applications and yielded 27 suitable individuals for the pre-appointment training module. Throughout the year there were over 150 notes of interest in individuals joining the Panel.

Some safeguarders resigned this year and this was for a wide range of reasons. This included safeguarders who had dedicated many years to this role and considered it was the right time for them to resign from it. The overall impact on the Panels ability to appoint a safeguarder to referrals in the required timeframe is closely monitored and the reduction in total number of safeguarders did not adversely impact on the effectiveness of the Panel. A very small number of safeguarders were recommended for removal from the Panel on the basis of conduct which breached Standards.

56 safeguarders requested time out over the year and this was for an average of 13 weeks. This is a measure that supports the overall retention of safeguarders. Time out is factored into the ongoing review and analysis of safeguarder availability and if required modifications can be made to enable safeguarders to benefit from time out when required with the caveat that this can impact on their ability to engage fully with the Framework and levels of evidence gathered for supporting future reappointment recommendations.

Table 1.2: Safeguarder Gender and Age Range at 31 Mar 2017

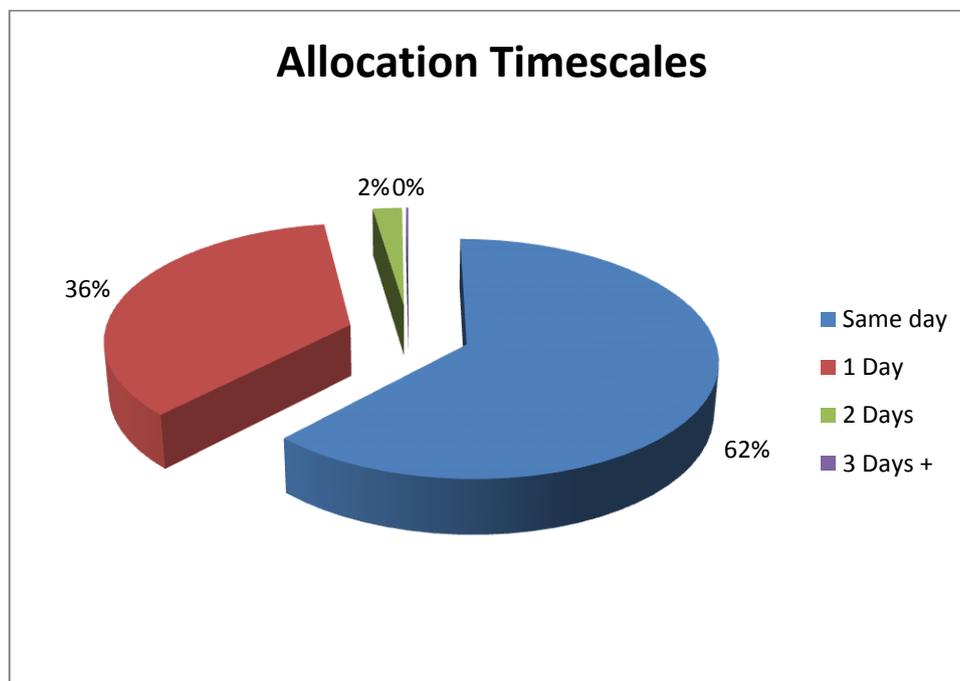
Gender	Under 40	40-49	50-59	60-69	70-79	80+	Total
Female	8	12	17	39	12	1	89
Male	2	6	23	19	5	0	55
Total	10	18	40	58	17	1	144

2. Service Delivery

KPI: Appointments will be made as soon as reasonably as possible within two days of referral (SOR Ref 4)

Target: 98% Achieved: 100%

Table 2.1: Allocation Timescales



100% of all referrals are appointed within the target two day timeframe and 98% within one day. This marks an improvement on the 2015-16 figure of 99% and 94.5% in one day. The allocations coordinator post offers a strong focused operational oversight of the data base which details activity of each safeguarder in terms of referrals, those accepted and declined etc. This allows national demand and individual safeguarder availability to be monitored to ensure the Panel remains sustainable and effective in terms of the speed to which a safeguarder is allocated to a child. The use of the “taxi rank” system enables this process to be transparent whilst preserving the independent nature of the safeguarder role.

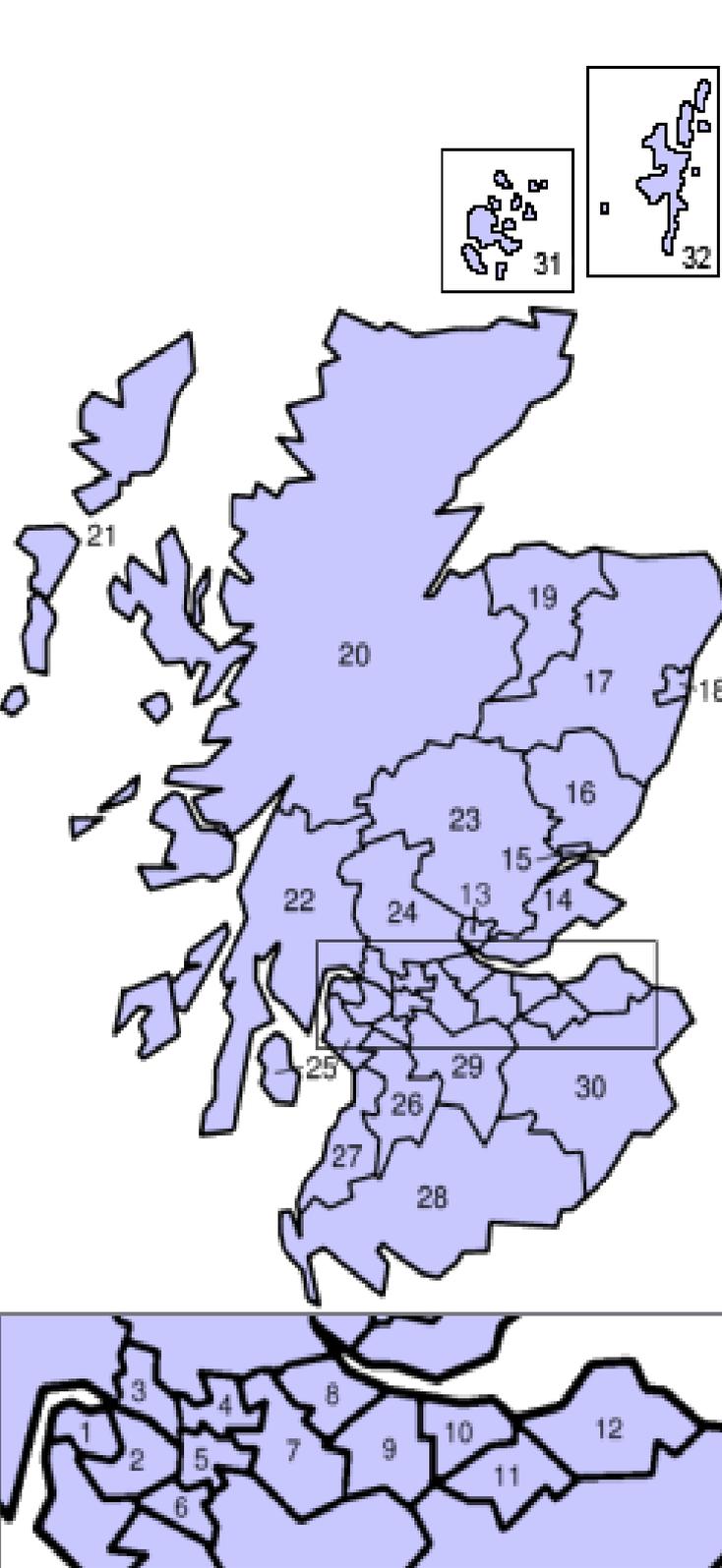
Table 2.2: Safeguarder Allocations by Type of Proceeding

Type of Hearing	Nos.	%
Sheriff Court	575	40%
Children's Hearing	866	60%
Total	1441	

1441 appointments of safeguarders were made in this year; a reduction of 37 from 1478 in 2015-16. The number of appointments has fallen by 144 since the year 2014-15. It is possible that this reflects a gradual increase in clarity of the role of the safeguarder.

In 2015-16 the split between safeguarder appointments, from children's hearings and court proceedings was on average 48 % court to 52 % from children's hearings. This year there was a decrease in court made appointments at 40% and an increase in children's hearings to 60%. Some areas significantly depart from that ratio. It is acknowledged that there may well be factors at play locally and it is worth considering this further. These areas are highlighted by *in the table below. Conversely there are some areas where the pattern of higher number of children's hearings appointments to court appointments is significantly departed from, these are highlighted by ** in the table below.

Table 2.3: Safeguarder Allocations and Availability across Scotland: 2016-17

20. Highland Safeguarders - 11 Appt by hearing – 24 Appt by Court – 17	31. Orkney Islands Safeguarders - 6 Appt by hearing – 1 Appt by Court – 5 **	32. Shetland Islands Safeguarders - 6 Appt by hearing – 2 Appt by Court – 0	19. Moray Safeguarders - 11 Appt by hearing - 7 Appt by Court – 0*
21. Eilean Siar Safeguarders - 6 Appt by hearing - 0 Appt by Court – 0			18. Aberdeen Safeguarders - 10 Appt by hearing - 18 Appt by Court - 4*
22. Argyll & Bute Safeguarders - 7 Appt by hearing - 9 Appt by Court – 4			17. Aberdeenshire Safeguarders - 10 Appt by hearing - 18 Appt by Court – 11
23. Perth & Kinross Safeguarders – 15 Appt by hearing - 19 Appt by Court – 49**			16. Angus Safeguarders - 13 Appt by hearing - 25 Appt by Court – 37 **
24. Stirling Safeguarders - 12 Appt by hearing - 13 Appt by Court – 18 **			15. Dundee Safeguarders - 23 Appt by hearing - 63 Appt by Court – 63**
29. South Lanarkshire Safeguarders - 13 Appt by hearing - 47 Appt by Court – 12*			14. Fife Safeguarders - 19 Appt by hearing - 62 Appt by Court – 98 **
25. North Ayrshire Safeguarders - 12 Appt by hearing - 27 Appt by Court – 4*			13. Clackmannanshire Safeguarders - 12 Appt by hearing - 12 Appt by Court – 27 **
26. East Ayrshire Safeguarders - 10 Appt by hearing - 27 Appt by Court – 5*			30. Borders Safeguarders - 5 Appt by hearing - 16 Appt by Court – 4
27. South Ayrshire Safeguarders - 11 Appt by hearing - 31 Appt by Court – 4 *	28. Dumfries & Galloway Safeguarders - 4 Appt by hearing - 36 Appt by Court – 0 *		
1. Inverclyde Safeguarders - 6 Appt by hearing - 14 Appt by Court – 6		7. North Lanarkshire Safeguarders - 16 Appt by hearing - 47 Appt by Court – 11*	
2. Renfrewshire Safeguarders - 9 Appt by hearing - 32 Appt by Court – 14		8. Falkirk Safeguarders - 12 Appt by hearing - 15 Appt by Court – 12	
6. East Renfrewshire Safeguarders - 10 Appt by hearing - 17 Appt by Court – 2 *		9. West Lothian Safeguarders - 17 Appt by hearing - 13 Appt by Court – 26**	
5. Glasgow Safeguarders – 28 Appt by hearing - 90 Appt by Court – 64		10. Edinburgh Safeguarders - 26 Appt by hearing - 80 Appt by Court – 36	
4. East Dunbartonshire Safeguarders - 8 Appt by hearing - 8 Appt by Court – 2		3. West Dunbartonshire Safeguarders - 11 Appt by hearing - 55 Appt by Court – 36	11. Mid Lothian Safeguarders - 20 Appt by hearing - 16 Appt by Court – 2 *
N.B. safeguarders may choose to cover more than one local authority within reasonable travelling distance			

3. Performance Support & Monitoring Framework

KPI:	Two mandatory training days will be delivered to safeguarders per annum with failure to attend reported to Scottish Government (SOR Ref 6)		
Target:	100% delivered	Achieved:	100% delivered
Target:	95% attendance	Achieved:	95% attendance

Table 3.1: Training and Elements of Framework

Date	Course Name	No. of Events	No. of Safeguarders Attending
Sept/Oct	Mandatory Training 1 – Substance Use	10	132
Feb/Mar	Mandatory Training 2 – Permanency an Adoption	10	128
Sept-Jan	Pre-appointment Training	12	27
Apr-Mar	Individual Support Sessions	471	153

The mandatory training events are designed with safeguarders' feedback in mind. This year's training content was requested by safeguarders in evaluations of training in 2015-16. Training 1 was very positively evaluated and focused on the lived experience of children whose parents and carers have alcohol and substance misuse issues. Safeguarders also consistently report that they value the opportunity training provides for sharing experience and views with fellow safeguarders. In view of this the training has been redesigned to be more interactive and reflective for safeguarders. The most recent mandatory event Training 2, addressed another important area: permanence. The early feedback is that this was positively received and thought provoking for safeguarders. Safeguarders were able to share their understanding and experiences, in their role, in the contact children have with family members and recommendations they make in respect of this. These training events provide a further opportunity to gain an overview of practice nationally, to identify particular inconsistencies and challenges, finding appropriate ways of addressing these with safeguarders and partners.

The redesigned pre appointment training for individuals applying to be safeguarders was very positively received and this group embrace the role in the context of the new Standards and Framework.

Individual support sessions for Safeguarders with support managers offer the chance to reflect together on practice. The Safeguarders Panel Team facilitated 471 sessions for 153 safeguarders. This year (due to the substantial number of safeguarders due for reappointment) the sessions were focused more on monitoring safeguarders practice against the Standards in preparation for recommendations to Scottish Ministers. The individual sessions have produced Individual Development Plans for some safeguarders. Where applicable objectives are identified that will be of benefit in strengthening their practice. The plans also capture areas that require to evidence improvement to meet Standards. For example where it was identified that a safeguarder was not routinely sharing recommendations of their reports in accordance with Standard 4 this would be captured in the Individual Development Plan for further review and evidence that this Standards was being met consistently.

There were two internal audits of recordings of individual support sessions. These were carried out to build the team's capacity to enhance the experience for safeguarders of the sessions and deliver the best possible evidence bank to reflect the Panel's work. Additionally there was an annual review exercise internally to develop learning. This included feedback from safeguarders to capture their experience of the application of the Standards and Framework.

This provided rich information to the Team to support continuous development and improvement for the year ahead. The following are a small sample of some statements from safeguarders from this exercise:

"I feel the framework was needed and in fact long overdue. Although safeguarders are independent this is only in relation to them not being tied to any particular agency and that accountability was needed. The use of the framework also gives safeguarders greater credibility with those they work with. I also use the framework and standards for self-evaluation out with my support sessions. The value of this is both in reassuring myself that I am working to the standards and also in helping me identify where I need to focus my practice'."

Another safeguarder fed back:

"having to wait during a support session for the support manager to write up their hand written notes is a huge waste of time and I would prefer if the support manager went away, reflected on the session and then typed up considered notes which were then sent to me to read and consider. I would then sign and scan this document or have another conversation with the support manager if there were any areas to discuss."

We have implemented a change to the recording of sessions to reflect this.

"I found the structures that had been put in place for safeguarders were good and support sessions useful to benchmark myself against. I find using the standards brings a focus to the support session as without this the session could go in different directions. I feel this approach ensures a more standardised approach across Scotland for all children. I feel there is still independence for safeguarders to be able to use their own style within the structure of the framework."

One safeguarder reported he was:

"overall very positive about the framework and finds it really useful although he suspects that safeguarders have not really experienced an ordinary support session yet due to the constraints around evidencing the standards for reappointment purposes. He is hopeful that these sessions will develop into providing a more developmental opportunity for safeguarders, and similarly that over time and with experience, the standards and training will also evolve."

We will collaborate with safeguarders on the training Framework.

Another safeguarder reported:

"I really like the framework and the standards and would not want to see their use being watered down at the support sessions. I find this incredibly useful to give me confidence and reassurance in my own practice as a safeguarder. It is also a way of evidencing my

competence when I am challenged (e.g. by a family) as to what qualifications I have to be a safeguarder. I can explain what happens with the framework - that I have these support sessions to examine my practice to ensure I am meeting the standards.”

Another safeguarder shared she is:

“happy with the framework and would want the rigour of assessment against standards to continue now for her next support sessions but with more challenge given to her, to reflect on her practice, what she is learning and how she is now practising differently and improving as a safeguarder.”

Support is provided to safeguarders in a number of ways including in the form of Practice Notes and Policy and Guidance to give clarity of the role and expectations. This year we collaborated with safeguarders to produce the Practice Note: Role of Safeguarder, which includes guidance on the parameters of the role and contact beyond appointments etc. We also collaborated with safeguarders to produce the Data Management Policy and Guidance. Both are examples of documents that support greater consistency in meeting the Standards in these areas. Links to these supporting documents are given below.

[Practice Notes on Role of the Safeguarder](#)

[Data Management Policy and Guidance for Safeguarders](#)

4. Safeguarders

4.1 Investigation of Complaints about Safeguarders

Table 4.1: Summary of Complaints

Source of Complaint	Complaints Received
Family Member	4
Local Authority	8
SCRA	2
Foster carers	2
Solicitor	2
Safeguarder	2
Total	20

Reasons for Complaint	Nos.
Safeguarder conduct	10
Content of report	4
Conduct and report content	6
Total	20

Complaint Outcome	Nos.
Fully upheld	3
Part upheld	9
Not upheld	2
No Further Action	2
Beyond scope of SPT	0
Decision pending	0
Under investigation	4
Total	20

Notes

1. Complaints classified as "No Further Action" were not progressed by the complainant following initial contact with Children 1st
2. "No Finding Made" applies to complaints where insufficient information is available to support a formal finding.

The number of complaints has reduced to 20 this year from 27 in 2015-6 and 29 in 2014-15. 4 complaints related to content of reports, compared with 8 in 2015-6. There were fewer complaints about safeguarders' conduct (10), compared with 17 in 2015-16. In this year more complaints were found to be partially upheld (9), compared to 5 the previous year and 3 were fully upheld, compared to 0 the previous year.

This year saw a closer connection between the complaint process with the Standards and Framework. The outcomes of complaints can now lead to Individual Development Plans for safeguarders where clear objectives are set for the safeguarder in a timeframe to evidence improvement or amendment to practice or conduct to support safeguarders to bring practice into line with the Practice Standards. For example, when a complaint has been upheld that a safeguarders report did not meet the Standards [due to not considering the views of the child

or a lack of analysis as set out in the Standard 4 Reports, this element was then captured in the Individual Development Plan to be addressed in subsequent report sampling exercises and individual support sessions.

The Safeguarders Panel Team also receives feedback forms in respect of safeguarder practice, reflecting positive practice and conduct as well as concerns. Safeguarders have captured feedback from children's panels and others, and submitted this to the Safeguarders Panel Team to be triangulated with information from the other elements of the Framework. Some examples of Children's Hearings feedback about safeguarders' contributions are given below:

"A very clear comprehensive report, safeguarder was present at the hearing and spoke in detail giving reasons for her recommendations and helping the panel reach their decisions"

"She covered all aspects of the request and her advice was very clear and simple for the panel to understand"

"the safeguarder's report was very informative, comprehensive and clear, the safeguarder spoke extremely well to her report and helped the panel to come to a unanimous decision in the best interests of the child and which we feel fairly reflected all the information and discussion during the panel"

"The safeguarder produced a very comprehensive and useful report and the panel thanked him for his work".

Concerns and issues are also passed to the Safeguarders Panel Team where the individual does not wish to make a formal complaint but is content for the matter to be raised with the safeguarder and addressed in individual support sessions. On occasion feedback forms have been submitted which in fact disclose concerns supporting a formal complaint rather than feedback. With any matter, the Safeguarders Panel Team endeavours to find an early, local, de-escalated resolution where appropriate.

4.2 Complaints against Safeguarders Panel Team

Table 4.2: Complaints Against Safeguarders Panel Team

Source of Complaint	Complaints Received	Outcome
Family Member	1	Not upheld
Safeguarder	1	Not upheld

Two complaints were received by the Scottish Government Children's Hearings Team. Whilst these were found not to be upheld, both had points of learning for the Safeguarders Panel Team which will contribute to the process of continuous improvement.

Additional achievements and progress

The 2015-16 Annual Report highlighted the following “next steps”

The plan for the next year is to build on the implementation of the Framework- *completed*

Within this the priority is to introduce all the distinct elements of this, in particular the required mandatory elements: 2 cycles of report sampling and three individual support sessions, and two training days for the first time – *completed*

Most significantly in February 2017 and beyond this will mean this evidence recorded for each safeguarder will then be triangulated to make recommendations to Scottish Ministers for their decision on reappointment- *completed*

In collaboration with a working group of safeguarders the “linked” Training Framework will be completed – *in progress not yet completed*

Distinct training modules designed and delivered, including reappointment training- *in progress, reappointment training redesigned and delivered- completed*

Set up a working group to review local engagement events- *in progress not yet completed*

The Practice Notes working group to continue to deliver supportive notes on the parameters of the role- *completed*

Build the views of children, young people and stakeholders into the ongoing developments; review this through feedback mechanisms and review of the leaflet- *in progress and continuing, leaflet review- completed*

Instigate review activity of the first year of the implementation of the Standards and Framework to demonstrate impact of the Framework- *completed and continuing*

Complete review of recruitment strategy and agree to implement new process with Scottish Government in June 2016, with planned review- *completed*

Continue to build profile and regard for the national Safeguarders Panel and awareness of the modernisation program, including through children’s panel training, Scottish Children’s Reporters Association and judiciary events- *completed and continuing*

Build further awareness of the developments in the wider system and continue to contribute to whole system improvement through attendance at CHIP and sub groups.

Looking ahead

It is clear that the role of safeguarder is complex and challenging and the influence of safeguarders and the value the independent role is held in, is clear and well documented (CELCIS 2015¹).

The modernising program to realise a national Safeguarders Panel that is consistent in its practice and accountable and transparent in delivery is now well underway and is set to be strengthened further in the next year.

In the following year the Safeguarders Panel Team will focus on continuing to:

Embed further the Standards and Framework with the Safeguarders Panel

Improve the strength and consistency of the evidence base of the practice of the national Safeguarders Panel against the Standards

Build opportunities for supporting safeguarders and collaborating with them to advance the Panel

Collaborate with safeguarders in completing the linked training framework

Review the feedback mechanism to better hear the voice of children and families in the modernisation process

Build evidence of the impact of the Standards and the Framework for the experience and outcomes for children

Build further clarity across the system of the role of safeguarders and consistency of reasons for their appointment

Continue to contribute appropriately to the wider system improvement agenda, by taking account of relevant findings and recommendations, for example from research on the role of safeguarders, from the Care Review and Better Hearings activity etc.

And also:

Introduce an element of proportionate auditing of fees and expenses.

¹ Andressa Gadda, Malcolm Hill, Emma Young, Vicki Welch, CELCIS May 2015

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