

London Borough of Camden Children's Statutory Services Complaints Report 2020/2021

Signed:



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1. Introduction and Background

1.1 Purpose of the report

This is the London Borough of Camden's Children's statutory services annual complaints report for the period 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021.

1.2 Scope of the report

Many representations, comments and complaints are dealt with informally by officers and managers every day without the need for the formal complaints process to be followed. Officers are encouraged to try to resolve - children's and families' dissatisfaction as part of their normal business. These are not formally logged or reported on though services are encouraged to use this to continually improve the way they provide their services.

Our complaints procedure is for those complaints that require a formal documented response.

The report focuses not only on volumes and timeliness of responses but also identifies themes and lessons learnt that result in service improvements.

Complaints provide an important source of feedback to the council that informs us when things have gone wrong. If we do not learn from this, the council is missing an opportunity to improve services.

2 The Complaints Procedure

Our complaints procedure is for those complaints that require a formal documented response and is activated when officers are unable to resolve the issue promptly, or the parent, young person or child is not willing to engage with the officers to try to resolve it informally and outside of the formal procedure.

The Council has a single policy and procedure for managing complaints which includes the statutory Social Services complaints process.

Children's services aim to resolve complaints for parents, young people, children and families as quickly and simply as possible.

Stage 1 (local resolution) is dealt with by the officers and managers responsible for the service. The emphasis is on trying to reach a resolution. If a resolution is not reached, the complainant has the right to escalate matters to stage 2 (review). Stage 2 complaints for children's statutory social care services are handled by an independent investigator. The whole process is overseen and monitored by the complaints service.

Stage 3 is an independent review conducted, in the case of statutory children's services, by a panel of professionals.

3. Context - Services users and provision in 2020/2021

The Children's Safeguarding and Social Work division (CSSW) provides a statutory social work service to support families, protect children and care for looked after children. We know that bringing up children can be a demanding job, and sometimes parents may need extra help or advice.

We believe that children usually do better when they live at home or within their extended family and we aim to work with parents to help them care for their children so that families can stay together where this is in the best interests of the child.

We have a duty to help any child under the age of 18 years who lives in the borough and who is considered to be 'in need' as defined by the Children Act (1989). This means:

- children who need extra help or services to achieve good levels of health and development
- disabled children
- children who are at risk of harm
- children who, for whatever reason, are unable to live at home.

In 2020/21 there were a total of **1,514** referrals received by the children's social work service.

On 31 March 2021 there were **1,678** children and young people allocated to workers within CSSW.

Children and Young People's Disability Service also had a further **241** cases who were solely allocated to the Short Breaks co-ordinator and **104** cases of people aged over 18 who were allocated to the Transition Manager. These cases are not included in the 1678 cases specified above.

Over the 2020/21 financial year there were a total of **3,136** children and young people open to the children's social work service.

The CSSW service had to adapt their service due to the pandemic in March 2020 with visiting and meetings initially going virtually (using a number of different platforms such as teams, zoom, what app, phone) unless deemed an emergency. Visits and meetings continued during this period and when lockdown was lifted at various stages face to face visiting in community (such as, schools, parks, outdoors), visits at the office, or in people's homes, resumed in line with the government guidance. Cases were continually risk assessed and rag rated as to whether face to face visiting was necessary. Children continued to be supported during this unprecedented time.

The service also receives compliments through our auditing programme, and service user feedback forms (see section 7).

4 Overview - Complaints Data 2020-2021

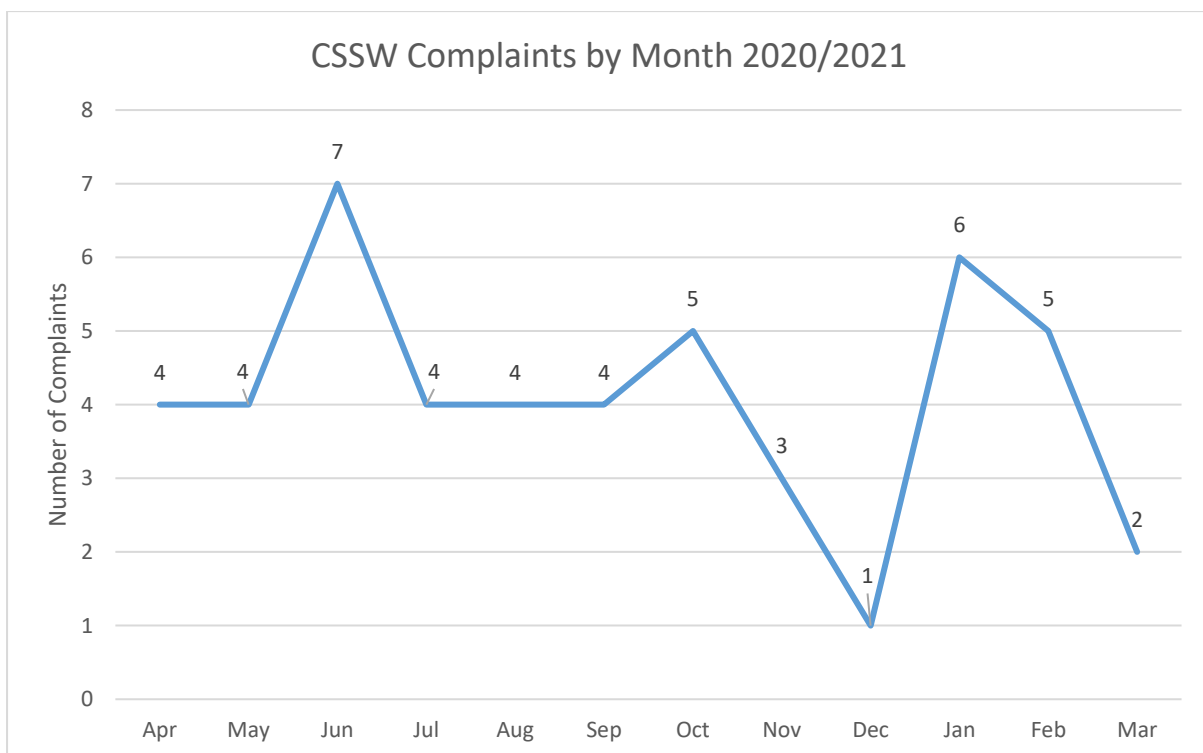
4.1 Stage 1 complaints

4.1.1 There were a total of **49** complaints related to children's statutory social work services that went through the formal stage 1 process. This means that **2.5%** of children and young people receiving services, or their parents or carers within CSSW (including CYPDS) made a formal complaint.

This is a **31%** decrease in complaints compared to the previous year (71 complaints).

This decrease may be attributable to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. The spread across the year is fairly even though there is a peak in June 2020, a drop in December 2020 and a spike in January & February 2021. These correspond with the end of each wave during the pandemic.

It might be expected to see an increase in complaints given the impact of the pandemic on service provision but the decrease demonstrates that the service has been resilient and maintained a focus on children and young people during this challenging and unprecedented situation.



4.1.2 A third of the complaints remained open at the time when data for this report was analysed. This is high and whilst some remain open as they were only received towards the end of the period, there will be a variety of other factors that mean others remain open for a prolonged period:

- 1) The case is complex and involves multiple agencies.
- 2) The data on the reporting system may not been updated in a timely way
- 3) Delays due to the pandemic

4.1.3 The regulations provide a deadline of 10 working days for the council to respond to complaints.

4.1.4 This may be extended to 20 working days if the complaint is complex and the council requires more time to investigate. This extension is legitimate as long as the young person is kept informed of the extension and communication is maintained until the full response is provided. The service must tell the complaints service of the new deadline.

4.1.5 The table below compares volume, performance and outcome data over the last four years for children's statutory services.

Year	Stage 1	Stage 1 upheld	% upheld	Stage 1 % within 10 days	Stage 1 % within 1-20 days*
2020/2021	49	1	2%	20%	33%
2019/2020	71	6	8%	25%	44%
2018/2019	68	7	10%	24%	65%
2017/2018	45	5	11%	76%	N/K

* = total cases responded to between 1 day and 20 days (includes 1-10 figures)

4.1.6 Volume and performance data by service area

(2019/2020) figures in brackets

Service	1-10 wkg days	11-20 wkg days	21-40 wkg days	41+ wkg days	With drawn	Open	Total 20/21	2019 / 2020	Avg wkg days *
LAC & Care Leavers	3 (9)	5 (6)	5 (5)	0 (4)	0 (3)	4 (2)	17	29	18
Children in Need	5 (5)	1 (6)	6 (12)	5 (9)	1 (1)	9 (3)	27	36	34
Children & Young People Disability	2 (2)		0 (2)		1 (0)		3	4	9
Children's Quality Assurance	0 (2)					2 (0)	2	2	N/A
Total	10	6	11	5	2	15	49	71	20 wkg days
%age	20%	12%	22%	10%	2%	33%			

* New data. This is the average number of working days to respond. It discounts those cases still open and those that were responded to in 100+ working days

4.1.6.1 Looked After Children & Care Leavers (LAC)

There has been a significant decrease in the number of complaints dealt with within the target timescale of 10 working days - 18% as compared to 31% last year. Delays in responding this year have been because the complaints have had to have input from multiple teams and there has not been a robust tracking process in place nor a lead person allocated to take ownership. A new case management system is to be implemented from November 2021 which will allow all cases to be tracked and monitored during the whole process. A lead person for complaints will be identified in the CSSW Quality Assurance team to ensure complaints are handled more effectively.

The number of complaints dealt with within the extended timescale of 20 working days is a slight improvement to the previous year – 29% compared to 21% last year. Overall, the number of complaints responded to within 1 to 20 working days has decreased slightly – 47% compared to 52% last year.

The work in LAC is almost always involving conflict to some degree so the complaints are always complex and challenging. Therefore the longer timescale to respond of 20 days is required in most cases. The average time to respond to a complaint in LAC is 18 working days which is within the 20 working days target for complex cases.

4.1.6.2 Children In Need (CIN)

CIN have seen a slight increase in the number of complaints dealt with within the 10 working days – 19% compared to 14% last year.

CIN have seen a significant decrease in the number of complaints dealt with within extended timescale of 20 working days – 4% compared to 17% last year. Overall, the number of complaints responded to within 1 to 20 working days has decreased – 22% compared to 31% last year.

The longer timescale to respond of 20 days is required in most cases and often more time is required in order to provide a full response. The complainant is kept updated on the progress of their complaint.

The average time to respond to a complaint in CIN is 34 working days which is significantly above the 20 working days target for complex cases.

4.1.6.3 Children & Young People with Disability (CYPD)

The number of complaints dealt with within the target timescale of 10 working days has been maintained from last year at 67%.

The average time to respond to a complaint in CYPD is 9 working days which is within the 10 working days target.

4.1.6.4 CSSW Summary

Overall, CSSW is below the target of responding to 90% of complaints within 10 or 20 working days with 33% responded to within those timescales compared to 44% last year. In the Council overall, 29% of complaints were responded to within 10 working days and 52% responded to within 20 working days.

The pandemic has been a contributing factor on performance. Staff resources in all services including complaints were diverted to Covid19-related work and there was higher staff sickness across the council.

Whilst complaints continued to be handled throughout the period there were delays at some stages of the process. The channels for reporting complaints were utilised during the pandemic for reporting Covid19-related issues and for contacting the council more generally which meant an increase in volumes of telephone calls and e-forms that were not complaints-related. Screening of these enquiries meant that it took longer to forward complaints to the right service to respond with delays of 2-3 days. Services took longer to respond due to other critical work taking priority and reduced staff resources.

A new case management system for complaints handling will be rolled out across the council in the autumn. This will allow complaints to be logged and sent to the relevant services much quicker and these can be fully tracked during their progress through the complaints process. Managers will be able to see the status of complaints in their service area and which are nearing the deadline. Reports can be generated on learning outcomes, themes and response times which can be used to make service improvements to ensure the same issues do not reoccur.

Children's services continue to focus on working with the complainant to ensure a satisfactory resolution and this can take longer especially when cases are complex and involve multiple agencies.

4.1.7 Outcomes by service area

(2019/2020 figures in brackets)

Service	Upheld	Partly Upheld	Not Upheld	No Finding	With drawn	Open	Total
LAC & Care Leavers	0 (4)	0 (3)	13 (17)	0 (2)	0 (1)	4 (2)	17 (29)
Children in Need	1 (2)	2 (7)	14 (23)	0 (0)	1 (1)	9 (3)	27 (36)
Children & Young People Disability	0 (0)	0 (1)	2 (3)		1 (0)		3 (4)
Children's Quality Assurance		0 (1)	0 (1)			2 (0)	2 (2)
Total	1	2	29	0	2	15	49 (71)
%age	2% (8%)	4% (17%)	59% (62%)	0% (3%)	4% (3%)	31% (7%)	

4.1.7.1 Looked After Children & Care Leavers (LAC)

There were no complaints that had the outcomes upheld or partly upheld during the period compared to 24% last year. 76% of cases were not upheld (100% of closed cases).

4.1.7.2 Children In Need

Upheld or partly upheld outcomes of CIN complaints this year (11%) have decreased significantly compared to last year (25%). This indicates that whilst complaints are taking longer to resolve, more are found to be not upheld (52% or 77% of closed cases).

4.1.7.3 Children & Young People Disability

100% of complaints were not upheld though with the very low numbers no conclusions should be drawn here other than this follows the pattern in the other service areas.

4.1.7.4 CSSW Summary

When dealing with complaints from young people and families who are facing challenges and often don't agree with decisions or actions carried out, it is not helpful sometimes to define outcomes purely as upheld or not upheld. Complaints to the service are mainly about disagreements with difficult decisions made or perceived staff behaviour. So the response is not about upholding or not upholding the complaint but acknowledging the perspective of the complainant and working with them to get the support they need.

There is a high proportion of cases which are not upheld across the service areas – 59% of all cases or 85% of closed cases. This could be for several reasons:

- 1) the ways we had to engage in the early stages of the pandemic meant that there were fewer opportunities to discuss concerns at an informal stage and a greater willingness to go to the formal complaint system. The point of early engagement is to resolve issues and move on in a positive way and this may not have been as easy to do in the early stages of the pandemic.
- 2) When dealing with complaints from young people and families who are facing challenges and often don't agree with decisions or actions carried out, it is not helpful sometimes to define outcomes purely as upheld or not upheld. Complaints to the service are mainly about disagreements with difficult decisions made or perceived staff behaviour. So the response is not about upholding or not upholding the complaint but acknowledging the perspective of the complainant and working with them to get the support they need and move on positively. Consequently, the complaints outcomes definitions can seem artificial.

4.1.8 Complaint Source

Complaint source	Number
Parent/Guardian	31
Advocate	9
Child/Young Person	7
Family Member	1
Friend	1
TOTAL	49

4.1.9 Types of complaint

This year the types of complaint have been broken down by service area. The complaint types have been standardised and follow those used by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

It should be noted that many complaints are about multiple issues and cross over more than one of these types. The primary reason as described by the complainant is logged here.

Service	Staff behaviour / poor customer service	Quality of Service	Disagree with a decision/ action	Delay in providing a service	Lack of info/ access to service	Lack of Communication	Not recorded	TOTAL
Looked After Children	4	6	2	2	2	1		17
Children In Need	16	6	4				1	27
CYPDS	3							3
Quality Assurance	1						1	2
TOTAL	24	12	6	2	2	1	2	49
2019/2020	31	21	9	1	9			

4.1.9.1 Case studies – Staff behaviour/ poor customer service

Case study 1 – Children In Need – Not Upheld

Issue: a relative of a child under CIN complained about the conduct of the social worker and other professionals involved. They felt a report contained incorrect and defamatory information about the family and that there was a lack of communication with delays in responding. The child was 16 years old and therefore there were consent issues with providing information to a third party. A complex care case involving legal proceedings and several family members.

Response: The response was able to confirm that several face-to-face meetings had taken place to address the complaints and get the family's view on what they felt was incorrect in the report. Explanation given to the relative about what they could tell them as a third party. Response time was over the timescale but service had maintained regular contact with the complainant and meetings had taken place during that time to address issues.

Case Study 2 – Children In Need - Upheld

Issue: A parent complained that the allocated social worker was intrusive, overly focussed on the wrong issues and exhibited unprofessional behaviour in their dealings with them.

Response: The manager phoned the complainant the day after receiving the complaint to discuss the issues and followed this up with a written response a week later. The response explained the reasons for the questioning which might have felt intrusive and the need to take a whole family approach. Manager agreed to discuss good practice with social worker. Agreed all communications would be done in writing in future with phone calls by exception. Response was provided within the 10 working days timescale.

4.1.9.2 Case studies – Quality of Service

Case Study 3 – Looked After Children - Not Upheld

Issue: Mother with a baby on a full care order in a Mother & Baby unit feels her parenting is being criticised and that she is ready to move to her own flat but has been waiting a long time.

Response: Acknowledgement that parenting had improved but there were still some areas of concern. Explanation that there were no flats currently available. Response was provided within 20 working days.

4.1.9.3 Disagree with a decision/action

Case Study 5 – Children In Need - Not Upheld

Issue: Father disagreed with level of contact with children and the decision to send children to a childminder instead of coming to him.

Response: Confirmed the outcomes of a meeting to discuss father's issues that took place a week after the complaint was submitted.
Explanation of Local Authority duty to investigate following a disclosure, reasons for the child minder and why level of contact was limited.

Case Study 6 – Children In Need - Partly Upheld

Issue: New mother disagreed with decision to place baby on child protection when in the maternity ward and disagreed with having to stay in hospital over a bank holiday weekend.

Response: Explanation of discharge planning meetings. Apology for social worker not being available over the bank holiday weekend and for a pre-planning meeting not having taken place before the bank holiday.
Reminder that parent has had reasons for child protection explained to her at a meeting the day before admission to hospital.
Invitation to a meeting to review the child protection situation.

4.1.9.4 Learning Outcomes

As part of the CSSW Quality Assurance framework, we take the learning from complaints and use it for improvements to the service and good practice.

The above case studies highlight the common themes that feature in the complaints and show the importance of good practice in the following areas:

- Clear explanations of why decisions are made
- Clear and accurate records shared with the customer
- Manage customer expectations from the outset
- Transparency over what services are available
- Maintain regular communication to check understanding and build relationships
- Respond in a timely manner

5. Stage 2 Complaints

- 5.1 If a complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint, the complainant can request a full investigation, leading to a report. An external Investigating Officer is commissioned and an Independent person is appointed to observe and ensure the investigation is carried out fairly and impartially.
- 5.2 Both the Investigating Officer and Independent Person will submit reports to the Council, making recommendations. A senior officer will then act as Adjudicating Officer and approve a response to the report, either accepting or disputing the findings. These adjudications are prepared by the complaints team with input from the relevant service areas.
- 5.3 There were **9** Stage 2 Investigations in 2020/2021 – twice as many compared to 2019/2020. This represents 18% of Stage 1 complaints that are escalated to stage 2. Of these, 33% were partly upheld. Stage 2 complaints are often broken down into specific complaints which are considered individually so it is usual for some areas to be upheld and some not upheld resulting in an overall partly upheld outcome.

5.3.1 Outcomes at Stage 2

(2019/2020 figures in brackets)

Service	Upheld	Partly Upheld	Not Upheld	With drawn	Open	Total
LAC & Care Leavers		2	1		2	5 (4)
Children in Need		1	2		1	4 (1)

5.3.1.1 Learning Outcomes from Stage 2

These were common learning outcomes to all stage 2 complaints.

Improvements made to record keeping practices to ensure accuracy and clarity arising from individual cases.

- Correction to incorrect spelling of names
- Correction of factual inaccuracies in reports and assessments
- Include with minutes a list of all professionals and attendees at case meetings
- Minutes and notes of meetings distributed in a timely manner
- Records updated to reflect outcomes and recommendations of complaints
- Better recording of Health & Safety issues

Improvements made to processes and practices arising from individual cases.

- Better monitoring of health & safety issues when raised with social workers
- Placement Planning meetings and decisions from them to be fully shared with young person involved.
- Ensure matching process for children received into foster care considers placement locality and possible impact on young person
- Young people in the Pathway panel process are given reasons for any decisions made and signposted accordingly.
- Provide a guide for care leavers detailing the role of the Pathway Panel process.
- Ensure young person's finances are discussed with all relevant parties
- A single, joint response is provided to complaints that pertain to more than one service area.
- Arrangements for staff cover for placement visits are made when staff are on long term absences.

6. Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)

6.1 Residents may complain to the LGSCO at any stage of the complaints process. However, the Ombudsman expects the resident to utilise the Council's procedures before they begin their investigation.

6.2 LGSCO Cases Reviewed for 2020/2021.

6.2.1 The LGSCO made decisions on 13 cases under its category: 'Education and Children's Services'

Decision	Total
Upheld – maladministration & injustice	4
Upheld – maladministration no injustice	1
Incomplete/Invalid	2
Closed (Sch 5.1 Court proceedings)	2
Premature (referred back for local resolution)	4
TOTAL	13

(Source LGSCO Annual Review Letter 20/21 - [LGSCO Camden Performance 2020/2021](#))

6.2.2 LGSCO cases detail on outcome

<p>Service area: Children In Need (Early Help)</p> <p>Premature referral -Complainant unhappy with content recorded by the social worker as part of the Family Assessment process.</p> <p>Case progressed via Stage 2 of the statutory complaint process Outcome - not upheld</p>
<p>Service area: Looked After Children</p> <p>Outside jurisdiction- case cannot be escalated via Stage 2 of the Statutory complaint procedure. This case is subject to legal proceedings</p>
<p>Service area; Special Education Needs (not statutory)</p> <p>Council is at fault in not paying the costs associated with young person's ABA programme and for equipment such as an iPad as named in the EHC Plan without delay. The Council has remedied that through meeting with parents and paying for the support as agreed in the meeting.</p>
<p>Service Area: Children In Need</p> <p>Public Interest' / Non-compliance -The LGO have issued this notice as this case has been re-opened under Public Interest' ' / Non-compliance due to the timescale in which the LB Camden took to remedy this case (13 months) (see section 6.2.3)</p>

6.2.3 LGSCO Public Interest report - Briefing - Investigation into a complaint against the London Borough of Camden by the LGSCO

This briefing sets out the findings by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) to a complaint made against the London Borough of Camden in August 2018. Part III of the Local Government Act 1974 sets out the role of the Ombudsman in terms of investigating and reporting maladministration and the Monitoring Officer of a local authority - who in Camden is the Borough Solicitor - to report to Cabinet on those cases where an Ombudsman has made a finding of maladministration.

Members were informed of the publication of the public interest report on 1st July 2021. This is also being presented to this Cabinet as part of the annual complaints report, outlining where there has been a failing by the Council on this case and where the Council has agreed to make remedies and changes in line with the LGSCO's recommendations.

6.2.3.1 Introduction

The briefing is to make Cabinet aware of a report, which was published by the LGSCO on their website on 1st July 2021. The report is a result of a public interest investigation carried out by the LGSCO on the grounds of non-compliance by the Council, due to the extended delay to implement the recommendations made. These originated from an initial complaint made against the Council, of which the Council was found to be at fault.

6.2.3.2 Background

The complainant made an official complaint to the LGSCO that the London Borough of Camden had failed to properly deal with his original complaint submitted back in August 2018. The LGSCO found the Council had not considered this complaint properly because it failed to:

- respond to the concerns the complainant raised about arrangements for his contact with his children and
- provide a response to another matter that he raised in that complaint when it responded to his complaint initially in August 2018

The LGSCO found fault that the Council failed to respond to this complaint properly in August 2018 and asked the Council to apologise to the complainant and to ensure that its staff would properly address and respond to complaints in future, informing the LGSCO how the Council would do this. The Council should have acted on both these recommendations, however a further delay in doing so resulted in the LGSCO notifying the Council on 19th January 2021 of their intention to progress a Public Interest investigation on the grounds of non-compliance, due to the extended delay to implement the recommendations made.

6.2.3.3 Actions taken

In addition to the Council considering this at Cabinet, a list of recommendations was set out by the LGSCO in order to remedy the injustice caused to the complainant. The Council was asked to action these recommendations within one month of the date of their report (dated 21st May 2021). They were the following:

- Apologise to the complainant for the slow and inadequate apology it provided on his earlier complaint and for its failure to complete the action agreed to improve its handling of future complaints
- Pay the complainant £250 to recognise the further injustice he was caused in the form of avoidable frustration and time and trouble, because of the delayed apology
- Explain the steps it will take to ensure staff are clear about how to properly address and respond to complaints in future, as this remedy from the complainant's original complaint is still outstanding
- Explain how it monitors and implements our recommendations to prevent similar mistakes from happening again.

The Council accepted these recommendations and has since apologised to the complainant for the slow and inadequate apology initially sent. Payment of £250 has been made to the complainant and the Complaints Team have implemented the LGSCO recommendation regarding complaint handling to mitigate any future risk of recurrence.

In addition, the Council has placed two public notices in local newspapers and published the report on its website, as required by the LGSCO.

7. Compliments

The service receives compliments from young people and families through our auditing programme, and service user feedback forms and from other professionals working with the services. Here are some examples of those compliments.

7.1 From other professionals

- ✓ I am very sorry to hear you are leaving your post, you are by far the best social worker I have had the pleasure of working with, and your support for X and the family has been invaluable.
- ✓ Can I please highlight that Social Worker “R” has been identified by several of my staff as brilliantly supporting the education of her looked after children. We are most grateful!
- ✓ Social Worker “J” received a compliment from the judge on her excellent work on the case.
- ✓ I am the foster carer for one of your young people and work for an agency. Social Worker “T” is his supervising social worker. I felt it was really important to take the time out to write this email, as I feel that sometimes as human beings we are quick at firing off emails when we want to complain but don't always think to fire of an email to show our appreciation. I wanted to express that the last year has been tough for us all but T has shown tremendous amount of support not only to your young person but also to myself. Throughout this whole time she has been extremely consistent, supportive and most importantly always delivered, she also sets very firm but yet very fair and clear boundaries which is also appreciated. This is the first time in 17 years as a foster carer I have worked with Camden and I can honestly say that working alongside T has definitely made it one of the top boroughs for me.
- ✓ Best of luck with your new endeavours H, it's been an absolute pleasure working with you. You and the Camden team have been excellent to work alongside and I think we've made a great team! Thanks for everything,

7.2 From young people and families

- ✓ I'm really sad because you (Social Worker H) are leaving, I'm still trying to process the information! We have been working together really nicely and you have been an amazing and really kind professional. You have been supporting us so well in all hard times that we have been through and so positive and kept us going and doing our best with X. Moreover, I always felt that you are X's second mum who really cares so much about him! Although it's a great loss for our family, but I really wish you the best of luck in your new job and great success. I'm sure you will be a great role model and inspiring for others.

8. Comments from the Service

The CSSW service is committed to seeking feedback from our children, young people and families and from the professionals we work with and have built this into our audit programme. This helps ensure we are not only learning from formal complaints but actively seeking feedback so we can continually improve our service. We are focusing on a new process for managing these complaints so we ensure timeliness of response and that we learn from the themes identified in the complaints in an ongoing way rather than just annually.

The council has been committed to ensure service provision and delivery is equitable and when each complaint is received, the response considers the issues of racism, anti-racist practice and any disproportionality in addressing the area of concern raised. The commitment of the council has been demonstrated by the provision of a comprehensive programme of anti-racist practice offer (ARLO) with noted impact on the ability of CSSW staff to engage in sensitive conversations with children, young people and their families, to consider their lived experience, with recognition of and importance paid to equality and disproportionality.

9. Advocacy and Independent Persons – Coram Voice

9.1 [Extract from the Coram Voice Advocacy Annual Report 2020/21].

Coram Voice advocates aim to empower Camden young people by giving them information on their rights and entitlements in order to make informed decisions, also about ways in which they can engage with Children's Services and speak out about their wishes and feelings.

Period 2020/2021 (2019/2020 shown in brackets)	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year to date totals
Number of new cases regarding a complaint where an advocate has been allocated	0 (5)	4 (2)	1 (6)	3 (5)	8 (18)

[Note: In addition, there were 46 cases where **representation** has been allocated but not related to a complaint so these are not detailed in this report but can be found in the Coram Voice Advocacy report 2020/2021].

Based on the reports of young people and advocates, over the reporting period the main issues identified were:

- *Concerns about social workers/ personal advisors*: a high proportion of young people report inconsistent contact/ lack of availability from their allocated worker.
- *Housing/ request to move placements*: a significant proportion of young people seeking advocacy support for issues relating to wish to move from current accommodation, to gain access to long term stable housing and to secure a social housing tenancy.
- *Immigration*: a few of the young people receiving advocacy report difficulties navigating the immigration system and share feelings of being unsupported by the local authority in doing so.
- *Finances*: significant number of young people reporting difficulties with managing debt/ budgeting. Also, issues with some CYP not knowing/difficulty accessing their savings whilst they were in the care of the local authority.

These mirror the types of the complaint found in Children's services generally i.e. staff behaviour, quality of service and disagreeing with an action or decision.

10. Legal Implications (comments from the Borough Solicitor)

Under Regulation 13(3) the Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006, the Local Authority must each financial year publish an Annual Report. The Annual Report is a means by which the Local Authority can be kept informed about the effectiveness of its complaints procedure. The report is required to be presented to the relevant Local Authority committees, the Regulator and the public. The contents of this Annual Report are in accord with the recommended contents as outlined in the Getting the Best from Complaints Guidance.

11. Resource Implications (Finance comments from Director of Finance)

The budget for the complaints service sits within Business Support Service and consists of staffing budgets (ERB) and complaints investigations. The complaints advocacy services funding is located within Children's Care Provision budgets. Any compensation payments are paid from Directorate services' budgets. There are no financial implications to add to this report.

12. Appendices

Appendix 1 ~ Coram Voice – Advocacy Services Report 2020/2021