

<b>LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN</b>	<b>WARDS: ALL</b>
<b>REPORT TITLE</b> London Borough of Camden Children's Statutory Services Complaints Report 2022/23	
<b>REPORT OF</b> Director of Children's Prevention, Family Help and Safeguarding	
<b>FOR SUBMISSION TO</b> Children Schools and Families Scrutiny Committee	<b>DATE</b> 9 November 2023
<p><b>SUMMARY OF REPORT</b></p> <p>This report provides information about complaints made to the Children's statutory services in the London Borough of Camden during the twelve months between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023. It is a statutory requirement to produce an annual report which is published on the Council's website.</p> <p><b>Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information</b> The Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006.</p> <p><b>Contact Officer:</b> Jim Read, Service Manager, Business Support Services London Borough of Camden, 5 Pancras Square, N1C 4AG 020 7974 6093 / <a href="mailto:jim.read@camden.gov.uk">jim.read@camden.gov.uk</a></p>	
<p><b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b></p> <p>The Committee is asked to consider and note the contents of the report.</p>	

Signed:



Rashida Baig, Director of Children's Prevention, Family Help and Safeguarding

Date: 27 October 2023

## 1. Introduction and Background

### Purpose of the report

1.1 This is the London Borough of Camden's Children's statutory services annual complaints report for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023.

### Scope of the report

1.2 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.

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

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

1.5 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.

1.6 Learning from complaints contributes to the ambitions in **We Make Camden:**

- Camden is a borough where every child has the best start in life.
- Camden's local economy should be strong, sustainable, and inclusive – everyone should have a secure livelihood to support them to live a prosperous life.
- Camden actively tackles injustice and inequality, creating safe, strong and open communities where everyone can contribute.
- Camden communities support good health, wellbeing and connection for everyone so that they can start well, live well, and age well.
- Everyone in Camden should have a place they call home Camden should be a green, clean, vibrant, accessible, and sustainable place with everyone empowered to contribute to tackling the climate emergency

## 2 The Complaints Procedure

2.1 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.

- 2.2 The Council has a single policy and procedure for managing complaints which includes the statutory Social Services complaints process. This single policy was reviewed and a new version published in July 2023.
- 2.3 Children's services aim to resolve complaints for parents, young people, children and families as quickly and simply as possible.
- 2.4 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).
- 2.5 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.
- 2.6 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 2022/2023**

- 3.1 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.
- 3.2 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.

*[Figures in brackets are 2021/22 data for comparison purposes]:*

- 3.3 In 2022/23 there were a total of **2,015 (1,844)** referrals received by the children's social work service.
- 3.4 On 31 March 2023 there were **1,521 (1,376)** children and young people allocated to named workers within CSSW.
- 3.5 Children and Young People's Disability Service also had a further **300 (258)** cases who were solely allocated to the Short Breaks co-ordinator and **107**

(102) cases aged over 18 who were allocated to the Transition Manager. These cases are not included in the 1,521 cases specified above.

- 3.6 Over the 2022/23 financial year there were a total of **3,363** (3,510) children and young people open to the children's social work service.

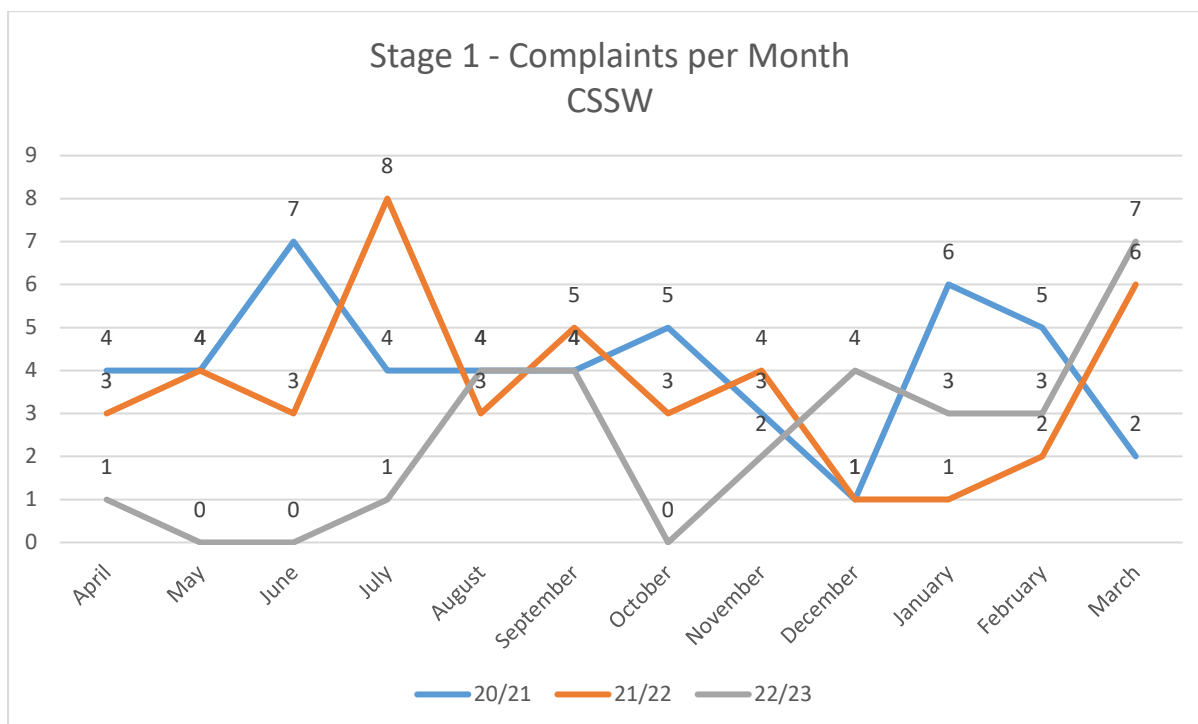
### **Service Comments 2022/23**

- 3.7 In the last year 2022-23 CSSW has continued to experience a high level of pressure and challenge when keeping our most vulnerable children safe in very challenging circumstances.
- 3.8 In order to safeguard children we continue to refine and refresh our safeguarding arrangements, including increasing the level of intervention for our children in needs, with more frequent visiting taking place. We also continue to offer face to face visits and meetings and using hybrid working too where appropriate.
- 3.9 From September 2022 early consultation began to explore a restructure of CCSW to provide greater support to social workers through flattening the hierarchy, and bringing in more capacity to develop the workforce to ensure we are improving the outcomes for children and families.

## **4 Overview - Complaints Data 2022-2023**

### **Stage 1 complaints**

- 4.1 There were a total of **29** complaints related to children's statutory social work services that went through the formal stage 1 process. There has been an increase in the total number of children and young people allocated to workers but a decrease in the number of complaints compared to the previous year (43 complaints). This means that **1.5%** of children and young people receiving services, or their parents or carers within CSSW (including CYPDS) made a formal complaint which is lower than last year (2.5%). The highest number of complaints were logged in March 2023 with August 2022, September 2022 and December 2022 the next highest. The periods of increase tend to align with school holidays. This may indicate that families require higher levels of support during these periods and are complaining more often.

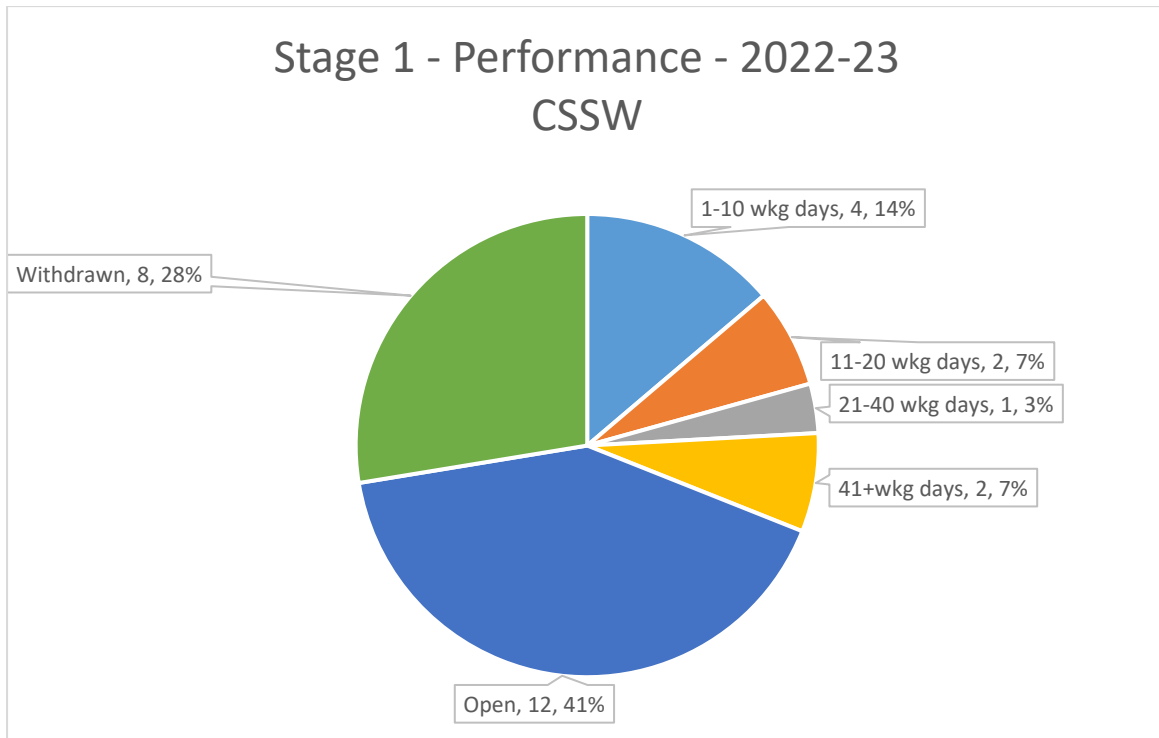


- 4.2 12 complaints remained open at the time when data for this report was analysed. Whilst some remain open as they were only received towards the end of the period, there will be a variety of other factors that mean others remain open for a prolonged period:
- 1) The case is complex and involves multiple agencies.
  - 2) The data on the reporting system may not have been updated in a timely way
- 4.3 The Heads of Services have reviewed their complaints data and are confidently able to report that complaints have been responded to but the transfer to the new system has meant that using the system to send a response is not routinely done. This then requires responses to be uploaded retrospectively to the case record on the system. A new administrator across Quality Assurance has been responsible for tracking responses, however, the process needs to be streamlined to allow the administrator to upload the complaints responses. The current system relies on the managers responsible for the responses to upload them on the system before a case can be closed, and due to their irregular use of the system this is not always done in a timely way. Further training on the system will be provided to CSSW managers and officers in January 2024 to ensure it is used effectively.
- 4.4 The regulations provide a deadline of 10 working days for the council to respond to complaints at Stage 1 (local resolution).
- 4.5 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.

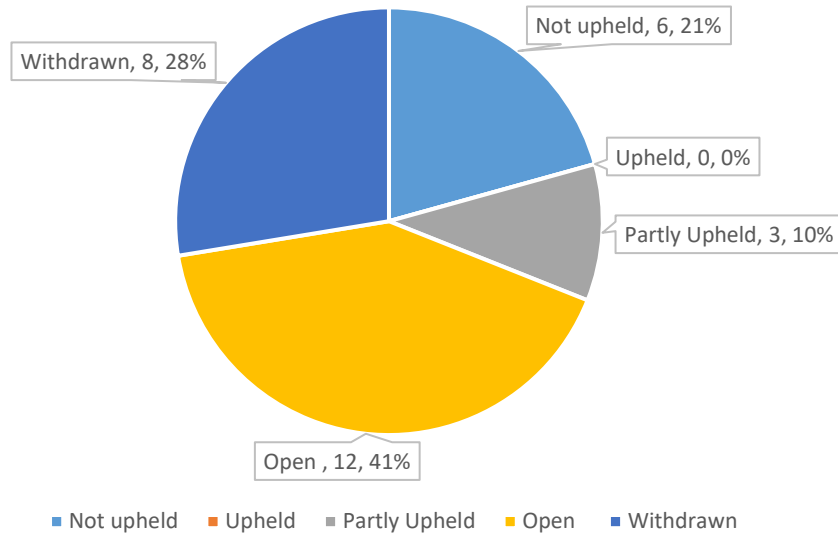
4.6 The table below compares volume, performance and outcome data over the last four years for children’s statutory services.

Year	Stage 1	Stage 1 upheld	% upheld	Stage 1 % within 10 days	Stage 1 % within 1-20 days*
<b>2022/2023</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>21%</b>
2021/2022	43	2	5%	7%	23%
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)



## Stage 1 - Outcomes 2022-23 CSSW



### 4.7 Volume and performance data by service area

(2021/2022) figures in brackets

Service	1-10 wkg days	11-20 wkg days	21-40 wkg days	41+ wkg days	With drawn	Open	Total 22/23	Avg wkg days *
LAC & Care Leavers	0 (2)	2 (1)	0 (2)	1 (4)	3 (0)	2 (11)	8 (20)	31 (40)
Children in Need	4 (1)	0 (3)	1 (2)	1 (6)	3 (0)	8 (4)	17 (16)	17 (43)
Children & Young People Disability	0 (0)	0 (3)	0 (1)	0 (1)	1 (0)	2 (0)	3 (5)	N/A (25)
Children's Quality Assurance	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (1)	1 (0)	0 (1)	1 (2)	N/A (70)
<b>Total</b>	<b>4 (3)</b>	<b>2 (7)</b>	<b>1 (5)</b>	<b>2 (12)</b>	<b>8 (0)</b>	<b>12 (16)</b>	<b>29 (43)</b>	<b>24 (44)</b>
<b>Percentage</b>	<b>14% (7%)</b>	<b>7% (16%)</b>	<b>3% (12%)</b>	<b>7% (28%)</b>	<b>28% (0%)</b>	<b>41% (37%)</b>		

\* 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

## **Looked After Children & Care Leavers (LAC)**

- 4.8 Of the 8 complaints received, none were showing as responded to within 10 working days on the complaints dashboard and 2 were responded to within 20 working days. 3 were withdrawn which means that they did not progress to a formal complaint and were resolved informally. 3 are still awaiting closure on the system and this is being followed up.

## **Children In Need (CIN)**

- 4.11 CIN received a similar number of complaints to last year. A quarter of the complaints (4) were responded to within 10 working days which is a significant improvement in performance compared to last year. Complaints to this service are often complex involving many other services and require the extended period to provide a full response so the improvement in this area is positive.

Nearly a half of complaints (8) are showing as 'open' where a response has not been recorded on the system. The CSSW local tracker is aware that these have been responded to but still require documents to be uploaded and closed on the system. This is being followed up.

## **Children & Young People with Disability (CYPD)**

- 4.12 None of the 3 complaints were responded to within 10 working days nor within 20 working days. None of the complaints were closed with an outcome as one was withdrawn and 2 remained open on the dashboard at the point of this report. The withdrawn one was resolved informally at the time which was why it was withdrawn and with the two open cases there were delays due to allocation issues and they have subsequently been responded to.

## **CSSW Summary**

- 4.13 Overall, CSSW has improved performance with 14% responded to within 10 working days and 21% within 1-20 working days though this is below the target of responding to 90% of complaints within 10 working days. In the Council overall, 38% of complaints were responded to within 10 working days and 56% responded to within 20 working days.
- 4.14 The new case management system for complaints handling was rolled out across the council in January 2022. The aim of this system was to allow complaints to be logged and sent to the relevant services much quicker and these could then be fully tracked during their progress through the complaints process with each stage carried out directly through the system rather than email. The complaint comes directly into the system where it is triaged by a case co-ordinator and assigned to a service officer for a response. Sometimes it is not clear which service is responsible so where a responding officer decides the complaint is not for them, they can decline it and it can be reassigned. Responding officers and managers are not checking cases regularly and this causes delays. Responding officers are also not always using the system to respond directly and responding to the complainant via



email. This then requires that response to be uploaded retrospectively onto the case record in order to close the case and this is not always done in a timely manner. Team Managers do not regularly use the system, and although they are responding to complaints in a timely way, the system does not always reflect the work if documents are not uploaded and officially closed on the system. Further training will be provided to CSSW staff in January 2024.

- 4.15 Children’s services continue to focus on working with children and young people to resolve issues informally and this is reflected in the decrease in the number of complaints compared to last year despite an increase in allocated cases. Where a complaint does become formal, children’s services work with the complainant to ensure a satisfactory resolution and this can take longer especially when cases are complex and involve multiple agencies.

#### 4.16 Outcomes by service area

(2021/2022 figures in brackets)

Service	Upheld	Partly Upheld	Not Upheld	With drawn	Open	Total
LAC & Care Leavers	0 (1)	2 (2)	1 (6)	3 (0)	2 (11)	8 (20)
Children in Need	0 (0)	1 (1)	5 (11)	3 (0)	8 (4)	17 (16)
Children & Young People Disability	0 (1)	0 (1)	0 (3)	1 (0)	2 (0)	3 (5)
Children's Quality Assurance	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (1)	1 (0)	0 (1)	1 (2)
<b>Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>29 (43)</b>
<b>Percentage</b>	<b>0%</b> (5%)	<b>10%</b> (9%)	<b>21%</b> (49%)	<b>28%</b> (0%)	<b>41%</b> (37%)	

- 4.17 Looked After Children & Care Leavers (LAC)  
None of the complaints were upheld and 2 partly upheld which is 25% compared to 15% last year. 1 complaint was not upheld.
- 4.18 Children In Need  
None of the complaints were upheld and 1 partly upheld which is 6% compared to 10% last year. Nearly a third were not upheld.
- 4.19 Children & Young People Disability  
None of the three complaints had an outcome as one was withdrawn and two remained open.

#### 4.21 CSSW Summary

When dealing with complaints from young people and families who are facing challenges and often do not agree with decisions or actions carried out, it is not helpful sometimes to define outcomes purely as upheld or not upheld. However, there remains the highest proportion of cases which are not upheld across the service areas together with a high proportion of cases that were withdrawn and handled outside of the formal process. This could be for several reasons:

- 1) There were greater opportunities to discuss concerns at an informal stage and a greater willingness to resolve issues more informally. The point of early engagement is to resolve issues and move on in a positive way and the service has seen an improvement in doing this.
- 2) Complaints to the service are mainly about disagreements with difficult decisions made or perceived staff behaviour, or perceived lack of communication. 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.

#### 4.22 Complaint Source

<b>Complaint source</b>	<b>Number</b>
Parent/Guardian	<b>22 (22)</b>
Advocate	<b>1 (10)</b>
Child/Young Person	<b>2 (7)</b>
Family Member	<b>2 (0)</b>
Friend	<b>0 (0)</b>
Unknown	<b>1 (4)</b>
Solicitor	<b>1 (0)</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>29 (43)</b>

## Types of complaint

4.23 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.

4.24

Service	Quality of Service	Staff behaviour / poor customer service	Delay in providing a service	Disagree with a decision/ action	Lack of Communication	TOTAL
Children Looked After	2 (7)	0 (5)	1 (2)	0 (3)	5 (3)	8 (20)
Children In Need	2 (8)	2 (1)	2 (2)	4 (4)	7 (1)	17 (16)
CYPDS	1 (2)	0 (1)	0 (2)	1 (0)	1 (0)	3 (5)
Quality Assurance	0 (0)	0 (2)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (0)	1 (2)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>29</b>
2021/2022	17	9	6	7	4	43

## Case studies

4.25 Case study 1

Issue: Lack of Communication  
 A father complained about a delay in him being notified by the social worker that his children had been referred for an assessment as there were safeguarding concerns with the mother's care of them. He did not feel his concerns and evidence of abuse were adequately explored nor taken into consideration in the assessment report. When he tried to contact the social worker, they did not respond or responded very late.

Outcome: Partly Upheld

Response: A manager reviewed the assessment report and found it to be accurate and fair and the decisions which were made were proportionate and in line with the concerns which had been raised during the course of the assessment. This was not upheld.  
 The manager accepted there was a delay in contacting the father and apologised that the social worker could not be easily contacted at times and sometimes did not respond to emails in a timely way. This was upheld.

Learning

Outcomes: Improve communication and contact with parents who are not in the home but are included in parental responsibility. They should consult

fully with the parent to ensure that they feel heard and are receiving promptly all necessary information about the case.

#### 4.26 Case Study 2

**Issue:** Disagree with a decision and Quality of service  
A mother raised concerns regarding her treatment by the social work service and decision-making regarding her son being subject to a Child Protection plan. These were disagreeing with aspects of the Care Plan for her son and the quality of service provided by carers.

**Outcome:** Not Upheld

**Response:** Explained the child protection process and the opportunities that there were for the mother to contribute and comment. Offer of advocacy support. Carers have been supporting and providing adequate services.

#### Learning Outcomes

4.27 The following learning outcomes were recorded on the complaints case management system in response to complaints

Delay in providing a service

Social Worker to ensure that invitations and arrangements for CLA reviews are checked properly so that parents have adequate notice.
--

Direct Payments to be reviewed to ensure quicker payments
---

Timeliness of future contact with parents who are not living in the home
--

Communication with parent in a timely manner
--

Lack of Communication

Ensure communications (with parent) is at the forefront of my mind at holiday times like Christmas.
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Allow opportunities for parent to express dissatisfaction when discussing case with them as this offers better outcomes
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Improve communications between Social Worker and parent
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### 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 **8** (5) Stage 2 Investigations received in 2022/2023 with 5 withdrawn from formal investigation and resolved informally, 2 completed in the same period and partly upheld and 1 remained open at the time of downloading the data for this report. This represents **28%** of Stage 1 complaints that are requested to be escalated to stage 2 and **10%** that are formally investigated at Stage 2.

#### 5.4 Stage 2 cases with outcome

Ref	Team	Recd	End date	Complaint Type	Outcome	Action
COMRS177	LAC	21/09/22	10/02/23	Lack Of/ Poor Communication	Partly Upheld	Delay to access statutory process
COMRS273	CIN	23/11/22	24/07/23	Lack Of/ Poor Communication	Partly Upheld	Delay to access Stg2

#### 5.5 Outcomes at Stage 2

(2021/2022 figures in brackets)

Service	Upheld	Partly Upheld	Not Upheld	With drawn	Open	Total
LAC & Care Leavers	0 (2)	1 (0)	0 (0)	2 (0)	0 (0)	3 (2)
Children in Need	0 (0)	1 (0)	0 (3)	3 (0)	1 (0)	5 (3)

#### Learning Outcomes from Stage 2

- 5.6 In many cases, the reason for requests to escalation to Stage 2 was due to failure by the Council to progress and follow up in a timely manner the outcomes and actions in Stage One complaint. A key learning from last year was to develop and embed the system that allows CSSW to respond in a timely way to first stage complaints to prevent escalation and to look at more informal ways to resolve any outstanding issues without going to a formal stage 2 process which is time consuming, costly and distressing for families. The 5 withdrawn cases demonstrate that this is being applied this year as these requests were dealt with informally without the need to go through a formal Stage 2 investigation.
- 5.7 The lessons learnt on the case that were due to lack of and/or poor communication were:

- Reminder to officers that all findings of investigations and assessments must be fully documented and communicated to all parents involved in a timely way.
- Both parents should be made aware of all stages of the assessment process in a timely way.

## 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 2022/2023.

The LGSCO made decisions on **6** cases under its category: 'Education and Children's Services'

Decision	Total
Upheld – maladministration & injustice	<b>3</b> (3)
Upheld – maladministration no injustice	<b>0</b> (0)
Not Upheld	<b>1</b> (1)
Incomplete/Invalid	<b>0</b> (1)
Closed after initial enquiries	<b>0</b> (5)
Closed (Sch 5.1 Court proceedings)	<b>0</b> (0)
Premature (referred back for local resolution)	<b>2</b> (1)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6</b> (11)

From LGSCO Annual Review Letter 2022~2023

Click on link: [London Borough of Camden - Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman](#)

### 6.3 LGSCO cases detail – Upheld

No.	Service	Summary of case	Findings	Remedies & Service Improvements
1	Education & Children's Services	complaint about the Council's lack of children's social care support for his family after it carried out an Early Help assessment in 2019 and actions of a social worker working with the family.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No fault in Assessment handling</li> <li>• Fault – delay in complaint handling</li> </ul>	£250 compensation
2	Education & Children's Services	how the Council handled concerns raised about its handling of a foster care placement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fault – delay in complaint handling (Stage 2)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apology</li> <li>• £600 compensation</li> <li>• Start a new stage 2 investigation into the complaints</li> </ul>

	Looked After Children			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>reminders to staff to ensure they are aware of the timescales under the statutory complaints procedure.</li> <li>reminders to staff to ensure they are aware all relevant files must be sent to the Investigating Officer when they are conducting a stage 2 investigation</li> </ul>
3	Education & Children's Services  Children In Need	complaint about the actions of the Council in providing support to a mother and daughter when they experienced difficulties.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fault – excessive delay complaint handling (all 3 stages)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Apology</li> <li>£200 compensation</li> <li>review 3 stage complaints process to make changes to prevent delays.</li> </ul>

#### 6.4 Comments – LGSCO Cases

All the remedies for the above cases were fully complied with in the timescales given by the LGSCO.

All the faults were found in the complaint handling process where there were significant delays at all three stages. The central complaints team and children's services are reviewing all the processes to see where the blocks occur.

Actions to be taken to address this are:

- Refresher training to CSSW staff on the case management system
- more capacity in the Quality Assurance service to continually improve our learning from complaints
- Increasing the list of Independent Investigators available for Stage 2 investigations
- Work more closely with young people and families to resolve issues at an early stage to prevent escalation.

### 7. Compliments

7.1 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.

#### 7.2 From other professionals

A CAFCASS colleague feedback: the social worker was pro-active in identifying concerns as well as being child focused in analysing risks with reports being on time and of a good quality.

Manager feedback about a social worker: She was involved in a difficult child removal case. She travelled with colleague out of hours (Glasgow) to ensure that new foster placement went without event. She showed tremendous empathy and dedication.

The guardian/barrister wanted to feed back that the worker's evidence was brilliant. The local authority's case closed with a strong note with their evidence.

The Judge at a hearing remarked on the sensitive and sensible way this case was handled. Praise was given to the thoughtful social work that had gone into the

<p>case. The worker's last statement was also mentioned and considered an exemplary piece of work.</p>
<p>A colleague at RFH was impressed with the social worker's consideration to this case (e.g. checking with nurses and who the visitors were), her dedication to child (i.e. coming to the ward, taking her home), and joint collaborative approach in getting her 'home' to Nan, which was not straightforward.</p>
<p>A judge at a final hearing was very pleased with work done with parents and the level of engagement/gratitude from parents around the social work Team.</p>
<p>The manager at Perry House wanted to share that the worker had established an excellent rapport with both users and staff members as well as Reg 44 visitors.</p>
<p>The worker was praised by the Court Judge for her Section 37 Report. The Judge also commented on how well it was written. The same worker presented at the YOY out of Court Disposal Panel for another case and the Police commented on what an asset she was to the team.</p>
<p>An Assistant Headteacher thanked the manager and her team for chairing meetings that were delivered in a clear, concise and empathetic way whilst juggling different agencies and range of emotions from the family.</p>
<p>A colleague at UCL Academy thanked two workers for the continued support offered to a family. The colleague was inspired by their professionalism and said it had been a great learning experience and pleasure to have worked with these two workers.</p>
<p>Judge commented that this case was extremely well served by the social workers and felt this contributed to the children staying together. Court statement was of a high standard.</p>
<p>A worker was praised by the school for establishing a working relationship with a mother (acknowledging it was difficult to achieve) and through these efforts both children have now settled into school.</p>

### 7.3 From young people and families

<p><i>"Thank you to the CYPDS team /social worker for the outstanding support and assistance provided for my daughter."</i></p>
<p>A carer sent an email to thank everyone as issues with an outstanding Carer's payment (backdated) was addressed promptly.</p>
<p>A guardian thanked the social worker for keeping her informed of any developments in the case</p>
<p>A mother was grateful for all the support offered to her child. The worker helped get home learning support and had been very helpful and supportive with the Early Help Care Plan (EHCP) process.</p>



## 8. Comments from the Service

- 8.1 The CSSW service continues to be 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.
- 8.2 As part of the restructure we have brought in more capacity into the Quality Assurance service to continually improve our learning from service user feedback and improve ways to gather this. The Quality Assurance, Performance and Practice Board launched in September 2022 meets monthly and complaints/compliments is now scheduled as a quarterly item so we can scrutinise this data and the outcomes more routinely and celebrate the good practice that is also highlighted.

## 9. Coram Voice Advocacy Service Annual Report 2022/23

- 9.1 Coram Voice advocates aim to empower Camden young people by giving them information on their rights and entitlements 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 2022/2023 (2021/2022 shown in brackets)	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year to date totals
Number of new cases regarding a complaint where an <b>advocate</b> has been allocated	2 (0)	1 (3)	1 (2)	1 (1)	5 (6)

[Note: In addition, there were 39 (39) 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 2022/2023].

- 9.2 Based on the reports of young people and advocates, over the reporting period the main issues identified were:
- Housing: high number of care leavers sought advocacy support throughout the year seeking support with housing issues for a variety of reasons, namely wanting to move out of semi-independent accommodation, falling into rent arrears and living in unsuitable accommodation.
  - Concerns about SW/ PA: some children and young people required advocacy representation to address concerns about allocated social workers and personal advisors. Young people have shared their dissatisfaction with the low level of contact with social workers/ personal advisors and/ or perceived inaction of allocated workers.
  - Finance benefits and debt: There have been a number of young people seeking advocacy for issues around finances, including subsistence monies not being received in timely way; confusion and delays in

applications for Universal Credit; young people's understanding of processes for and access to Setting Up Home and Allowances.

- 9.3 These mirror the types of issues which sometimes result in a formal complaint found in Children's services generally i.e. not feeling heard and wanting more control over decision, expectations and quality of service provided.

## **10. Legal Implications (comments from the Borough Solicitor)**

- 10.1 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)**

- 11.1 The Director of Finance has been consulted and has no comments to add.

## **12. Environmental Implications**

- 12.1 The Information and data presented in this report have no environmental implications.

## **13. Appendices**

Appendix 1 ~ Coram Voice – Advocacy Services Report 2022/2023