

DMC Complaints Survey Update

Who Did the Survey Go To?

There are about 34,000 occupied council homes in Camden. Camden has email addresses for the majority of residents and the survey went to 22,199 addresses; so some residents were missed and tenancies and leaseholds can be joint so the number of homes surveyed is about two thirds. The message was sent out on 8th September.

Did 22,199 residents read the message?

The message was opened 20,342 times by 12th October but sometimes more than once by a given recipient. 11,528 residents opened it at least once, so about half of those it was sent to. We do not know how many email addresses were no longer live as opposed to residents choosing not to read the message. 1,224 people clicked at least one link in the survey; there were several and they could have clicked repeatedly. 1004 recipients clicked at least one or more links. This is about 10% of the messages we know were sent out and seen and is an acceptable response rate for a survey of this type.

How Many Completed the Survey?

329 responses were available on 1st November 2022, representing 3.3% of the 1004. 72% were tenants and 28% leaseholders, which is roughly in line with the numbers of tenants and leaseholders.

What Did the Responses Show?

54% knew Camden had a complaints policy before completing the survey, but 46% did not. Of those who knew about the policy, 54% had used it in the last 2 years. 85 of them, likely to be a high proportion of respondents who had complained, left comments about their experience. In comparison, Camden's Annual Complaints Reports suggest about 800 cases linked to housing a year, of which about 200 are upheld at first stage, leaving 600 to progress. So, the 85 are drawn from perhaps 1200 in all though some said they had submitted more than one complaint.

Of the 46% who did not know about the policy, 43% had had an issue they might have complained about within the previous two years, so roughly a quarter of respondents. Four of 85 respondents reported a good experience; two said their immediate issues had been resolved, and one reported a quick response but felt the process had not been described clearly.

Nine said it was not useful; five that it was ineffective; three that it accomplished nothing; one that it seemed pointless; and one that it was not fit for purpose.

The system was described as not being user friendly, convoluted and hard to find, opaque, biased and poor. Two said it seemed a tick-box exercise.

Three said it was rather long or slow. Two spoke of it taking two years, three of having had no response in a year, one that the complaint had to be re-stated repeatedly. One said that their complaint had been labelled as 'lost' despite an e-mail trail, and another that they had had no response at all. Two had only got progress by involving a ward councillor, another by involving a newspaper, a fourth only after appealing to the Housing Ombudsman, and a fifth was seeking independent legal advice after four years.

Respondents referred to inaccuracies in responses to complaints, promised outcomes not being delivered and no evidence that lessons were being learned.

One simply said their experience had been bad.

Possible Lessons

The complaints process is not well known, and if it were there are likely to be more complaints without a significant culture change in the organisation.

The process can be seen as opaque; not user-friendly for those with language barriers; and with unclear or even no timescale. Support to tackle such issues could be considered.

When outcomes are not seen as satisfactory, it is not clear that claimants understand their options such as involving councillors, and MP, newspapers or the Housing Ombudsman.

If at least some users are critical of the process (and a number said their experiences meant they had lost confidence in it), it is unclear if the Council itself regards it as satisfactory. It is unclear if useful lessons are being learned from it to improve efficiency and offset the time and costs it imposes at least to some who use it.

A Resident Panel

72% of respondents expressed interest in joining a residents panel and 94 commented on their suitability and gave contact details. A panel drawn from residents with useful experiences to successfully tackle issues identified in the survey is possible.

Estate Visits

115 respondents would like an estate visit and gave their details to arrange one. The issues they wanted addressed ranged from more personal ones, through unresolved noise and neighbourhood issues, to ones reflecting a wider group of residents or an estate. Some requests came from properties where a TA is in existence, but others were from ones where there is no TA, or from street properties. Some felt excluded from processes available to groups.

Emails from DMC Chairs with updates on activity

198 respondents commented, a minority saying they would not like messages. 131 sent email addresses, with a couple of comments that this would help overcome a perceived bias against individuals as opposed to groups.

Outcomes to Discuss

The responses as reported and reactions to them;

Whether to convene a panel from responders who have agreed to join one;

How to meet the expressed need for estate visits;

Whether Chairs should issue e-mails to residents who would like to receive them.

Annex 1

1. The complaint procedure is not useful and the problem was never resolved
2. The management took the necessary inspection. The immediate issue is resolved. However, some issues are still left unresolved.
3. The team handling the complaint was ineffective and did not deliver any improvement
4. Slow to respond and usually nothing accomplished.
5. This was just under two years ago. I initially got an automated email and then a short reply saying my email was being forwarded to someone else. My issue has literally just been resolved (first week of Sept) now. This system is not fit for purpose.
6. Completely useless. As always. Waste of time
7. It took a lot of running around to get answers and finally a resolution! There is also plenty of fobbing off resulting in having to take my case to the local councillor to add pressure
8. Very poor. Responses from Council usually inaccurate and always in the Council's favour. Slow, opaque, biased - tick-boxing exercise
9. I've filed a noise nuisance complaint to housingcustomerservices@camden.gov.uk in regards to loud council tenants in the flat above, but haven't received any response. No action has been taken. The right to 'Quiet enjoyment' from my leaseholder contract has been violated for more than a year.
10. I have used the complaints service before which have been satisfactory. But more recently on 2 separate occasions, I have received an automated email confirming my complaint reference & an aimed response time. However, I did not get contacted for response for several weeks & despite emailing them for updates, there isn't a response. I would have to approach someone senior to then help me get an update on the matter. Only then would I have contact from the Department but am told my complaint wasn't received! Again, this wasn't the 1st time this had happened where I've received email with a reference but not received at the Department. If this is a recurring issue then it needs looking into.
11. Initially called in about rising damp in the hallway heading into the electric meters in Feb 2018. After successive failures to get the issue resolved, I made a complaint and received a complaint resolution letter stating that the repair would be done in the next 10 DAYS. It is now September 2022 - Currently in communication with no win no fee lawyers to get the work done
12. Anti social noises, lack of empathy, sound issues, rubbish
13. I got a relatively quick response from the complaints section. . The complaints procedure and the stages of it were never explained to me
14. I complained & attention was brought to my issue & people were made aware of the problems I'm having.
15. Pointless making my complaints
16. They said they had no record of my complaint despite a visit from the member of the council
17. its a shambles a whitewash, I have not been listened too, the council have brushed it all under the carpet because they are corrupt , unprofessional liars.
18. Nothing done about my complaint
19. I used Camden Complaints service I sent so many letters unfortunately I did not get any answers and any help
20. I complained about a moped being illegal parked and it took the council 4 weeks to do anything.
21. It was useless. I was sent an automated reply and that was all

22. A waste of time
23. The response , both levels did not fully investigate the complaint. The next level is then to go to the Ombudsman. The council needs to fully investigate complaints instead of batting it off to someone else.
24. Appalling service, those that make complaints are targeted by the council in attempt to silence or ignore them completely. Most tenants do not complain because nothing is done about the complaint. Complaints are lost, complaints system done on computer was pointless because staff were not trained to use it, hence failure to progress. Complaints are not taken seriously, to recall one about council staff alleged smoking cannabis. The council claim to take this very seriously and yet they failed to interview the caretaker that made the initial claim that was then forwarded. I was sent an offensive letter by the person investigating and accused of malicious behaviour, it was all done in good faith for the caretaker. How about calling it observations instead of complaints, not every observation is a complaint, it is a way of improving a situation.
25. My experience was not a good one. My complaint was simply looked over with no compassion from the handler. I had to go back and forth for months and only got listened to when a councillor got involved
26. There is Japanese knot weed in my downstairs neighbours garden. The garden has just been let go wild with trees growing so tall they will affect my light in the next year of two if not dealt with. I asked my estate manager to visit to see for himself how bad it is. He came and said he would try to have something done about it. He never got back to me and has not responded to emails. This is directly affecting my neighbours on both sides as well as the three flats in our house.
27. Very poor
28. No I just knew about it I didn't use it
29. The employees dealing with the complaint at Camden, were unprofessional, indecent and unsympathetic about my situation. They spent their time trying to find holes in my story and not taking responsibility for their actions. In the end I contacted the Housing Ombudsman, this then took 18 months to get a result. Camden were found to be in wrong on several aspects and I was awarded compensation.
30. The procedure was easy to follow..
31. It is still 'live' and unresolved. They have yet to determine if it is formal or informal and are trying to direct me back to the Housing Team who are the source of the ongoing problems.
32. Absolutely nothing, just a automated reference number, no follow up nothing
33. I've not had a good experience. There was a complete lack of accountability in terms of someone following up to ensure that actions were carried out or that the issue had been resolved following the response from the complaints team. Also, lessons don't seem to be learned, for example, poor communication continuing even after it's been acknowledged in the complaint.
34. So bad
35. Almost nothing has come of it. It feels like a policy to tick a box rather than to have an meaningful impact.
36. I am very unhappy with complaints procedure. Complaints process is not being followed as per Camden Council guidelines and I have been forced to chase complaint numerous times without response and have had to ask 2 support networks that work with family to follow up as council have not being following up complaints
37. I had a complaints officer, XXXXXX who left the council which I discovered when I emailed him & got an automated response. I called Camden Complaints explaining & they said I had to email. I did this in April & to date have still not had a response. My

initial complaint was made in February 2020 when XXXX took it over. I think it's a disgraceful way to treat me & anyone else who is going through the same thing. I deserve a response & a resolution to my complaint after all this time.

38. My complaint is not resolved yet
39. The first time you lodge a complaint it is rarely addressed. You always have to repeatedly submit the same complaint. It is very disheartening
40. It wasn't very good.
41. useless
42. I am severe disabled when I approach the camden council I was very ill running from violence threats to kill I also had an head injury where I was asulted by a rock and I needed safe guarding and lots of support from all services camden refused to provide me with floating support workers and left me in a hostel what was against act 2010 and also I felt discriminate and was experiencing severe mental health due to traumatic events what I experiencing in my home I plea for refuge and contact every one possible even mp prior to the hostel me and my 2 children who also has mental health was offered to be put in another unsutible accommodation an hour away from camden a far away place in a state again full of gangs and crime same from where I was fleeling from me and my children still not supported and is an absolute nightmare we are now in a better place what still not sutible and still causing me to suffer I ent able to have a scooter my life is a mess and I still haven't been supported as I should by law is painful prossess and we need to be helped and that simply ent happening
43. Although I have received response to my two complaints I have not been told when I'll hear from Camden again, I'm a bit in limbo. I was expecting to hear from a complaints officer but actually I had local response from housing.
44. The complaints process was completed without any follow up or further questions asked other than the submitted complaint detail. It was dealt with in a timely way. However I was surprised that we were not asked any follow up questions or material before a decision was made. I would have thought a direct conversation would have been had as I am sure this was done from the team in Camden Council that the complaint was made against.
45. Making complaint online is not user friendly. I find not being able to discuss my concern/complaint in person to be a very impersonal service. Whilst your complaint is acknowledged with the timeframe stated the process ongoing after this can (at times) be excessive.
46. Poor response - often no answer at all and when I got any answer, it gave me no information about who was handling my case nor when I might expect to receive attention to it.
47. It could help but the process is rather long
48. No follow up after an complaint is made.
49. The process was a bit convoluted and a first hard to locate the start of said process, it was about large overcrowding trees if you want to know, dangerous in heavy wind
50. Prompt an sympathetic reply. Thank you
51. A Camden officer answered, but as he was employed by Camden, I felt his response may have been biased. Also, I sent 2 emails to complaints which were not even acknowledged, let alone responded to.
52. complaints servicide is woefully inadqequaet they havent addressed a compliant of mine in ten years they sit their sdrinking coffee all day and noone answers a thing ive not been able to get repairs done in hyears all complaints are directed to jiom read and nothing is answered it is in short a farce and you have ahell of a cheek sending out this

questionnaire XXXX XXXX typos not corrected too but we should be paid for filling out these surveys

53. Few months ago I got an unusual request from my Council Officer to get a copy of my front door that was before used as a communal door but have been changed. This is because my neighbour wanted to use her electric meter which was placed in there. For many years I let her have access to it. I have requested several times the Council to remove the meter to her flat which is the basement with no avail. My neighbour put pressure through a Lawyer that she must have the key to my front door in order to use the meter. Every front door in my street is used by the tenant who lives there and there are no shared front doors. After several email exchanges and talk to my neighbour and the Council Officer are not requesting the copy of my front door (it is a street home). But I don't know for how long my neighbour or my Council Officer will restart this unusual request
54. Dealt with quickly to my satisfaction
55. No one has ever got back to me about the floods and lack of heating.
56. We did use, however it takes a long time. The only time they listened to us was when we reported it to a newspaper.
57. I have recently submitted 4 complaints (1 via my councillor), here is a list of some of the problems I encountered; 1. Response time too slow 10 days 2 Expected more interaction from my Councillor once submitted to him. He initially said he would get the problem solved for me, by that I thought he meant personal ownership instead he signposted my complaint to a mailbox and after that any problems I experienced were left to me even after I made him aware via email. 3. A caseworker who had upheld one of my complaints did not produce an accurate summary. When I corrected this via email I got no further response. 4. The complaint sent via my Councillor and presume is a different mailbox got picked up by a caseworker who did not appear to see his role to help facilitate a solution and would only provide a contact name for me to call. When I said I saw this as part of his role he then said he had picked up my complaint by mistake and that he wasn't a caseworker but a manager. When I pointed out that I expected him to continue as I had already waited 12 days for a response (2 days over the service level agreement) he continued to help to reach a resolution. 5. Two other complaints have been returned to me via the complaints team to say the complaint has been cancelled and sent to another team to resolve as not relevant to them. Neither of those complaints has been resolved and because the ref number has been cancelled I have been left to see what I can discover on my own as one is an outstanding repair.
58. Useless! it directed me to talk to someone else!
59. My complaint was responded to and marked as resolved when in fact it had been dismissed without proper consideration. Issues I raised were just not addressed. I felt I had wasted my time in complaining.
60. I had an ongoing issue with damp on several walls made worse by broken window locks not closing properly. The issue began a few years ago after the external walls were treated. Prior to the treatment I lived without damp and the same number of people have lived in this property for the last 16 years and the issue was caused by the "treatment".
61. They don't care and they don't listen
62. I had to use the complaints process following the refusal of Camden Council to carry out work in my kitchen. The complaints system did not work for me and I had to keep emailing them for updates etc.. In the end they did nothing to help me and. I still have the problem.
63. I'm still waiting to hear from the complaints department I am one complaint I'll put in over 2 years ago come back on the council favour but I thought was wrong

64. Took me nearly 2 years to solve an issue.
65. The process was a waste of time, truly farcical. Our complaint was responded to by one of the managers we were complaining about. The reply upheld many of our points but there has been no subsequent action. The points the manager didn't agree with were only supported by inaccurate feedback from them speaking to another one of the people we were complaining about. We have had no opportunity to offer any rebuttal to their false comments. We have stacks of written evidence !!
66. I spent over four months trying to get a repair completed. This leak affected the whole of one side of the block. I was told variously - there is no leak (despite photographic evidence), we do not know where it is coming from, we cannot get access, it has been repaired (untrue), multiple excuses made by senior officers to councillors and MP with regard to the failure to carry out the repair. Complete lack of serious engagement by council officers via a web chat who at one point suggested that the water was coming from a point below its source. Complete denial of responsibility by senior officers. Poor work by sub-contractors. All of the above is at public expense and so a waste of public money and would not be tolerated by said senior officers if they were paying for the service personally and/or it was their own home. In a nutshell there is real sense that no-one at the council cares about tenants who treated with zero respect particularly by sub-contractors and with disinterest by council officers.
67. Camden did not respond in a constructive or helpful manner to my complaint of serious disrepair to the flat I had lived in, carefully, and with great investment to the decor and furnishing of my home for twenty years. The so called repairs team trashed it. I felt extremely let down and very frightened. Had I been more robust I would have called the police at one point. Eventually I took the advice of a housing solicitor and went through four years of legal wrangling with a very hostile Camden solicitor before finally winning the right to repair/rehousing. The initial complaint I made was ignored. The flat was deemed not fit for human habitation due to rising damp/collapsed drains/ leaking guttering. Camden 'lost' CCTV surveys of the drainage system on four occasions yes, four, and tried claiming the rising damp from the collapsed drains was caused by drying laundry indoors. I lived in hell for over four years and was treated for clinical depression.
I am currently experiencing a poor repair to the toilet cistern in the flat I live in. It still leaks and floods despite a wait of five weeks to have it repaired. I am afraid they will just continue to make it worse. It is as if they sabotage the repairs; it's worse than it was before repair. I find it extremely stressful. The thought of not having a working toilet is too much. In my last tenancy, they left me without a toilet for two weeks, I had to use my neighbours toilet, when my neighbour was out, I resorted to using the public toilet in the tube station. I am afraid this could happen again.
68. Complaints about vendors Camden outsources to, for example, Veolia, get closed as "withdrawn" from Camden and the user has to deal directly with Veolia. That's not right - we pay Camden - Camden should represent us against the vendors it chooses to use. In any case, it should not mark a case as withdrawn - only the person making the complaint can say they withdraw, not the entity receiving the complaint.
69. I have complained a number of times and it's never been taken seriously. It's much easier for it to be ignored
70. When I used the complaint service a couple of years ago they were pretty good - a messed up repair by contractors employed by Camden was sorted out. However, another issue (in part caused by the same contractors) has not been dealt with so well. Although making a formal complaint did initially get the issue addressed, the repair in question (to a tenanted flat adjacent to mine, but which was affecting my flat) was not done properly

by the repair team sent to do it. Despite contacting the repairs team several times, after getting no response, I tried to get my complaint escalated to Level 2, as advised by Housing Ombudsman. Camden Level 2 complaints responded that the repair was more likely to get done if it was opened as a new complaint, which I agreed to do. Since then, despite the complaints department saying they have tried to chase up the repairs team several times over 6 months, neither the repairs team have not responded to me or the complaints officer. I have again requested the complaint be escalated to Level 2. This time the complaints service has been a very convoluted, frustrating and drawn out, for something - getting a repair done properly - that should not be this difficult to arrange.

71. I approached my estate officer, and when not getting assistance, I then raised a complaint, which proceeded in escalating the matter swiftly.
72. Not Helpful and did not make any improvement about the issue raised on the complaints.
73. terrible experience
74. waste of time, did not solve issue, caretaking services still abysmal monies from tenants and lease holders under false pretenses, why should we pay for a Service we do not receive? and despite complaints nothing changes
75. Took a year to resolve damage from guttering leakage
76. I DID not. Your question had only two options, neither of which suited me
77. i didn't manage to finish with the process as I wasn't well and wasn't helped along by anyone in the complaints department. The complaint hasn't been closed though.
78. My experience Complaints Officers are Level 2/3 graded Council Officers working in the Corporate services department - centralised. At step one of the process -enquiries - the Officers don't understand the query because they are not from housing, social services or education. Consequently, the Officers don't understand the service agreements in the first place like the Tenancy Agreement that a Council Tenant signs or a procurement agreement. The Complaints Officer has to refer the problem to the Officer who the complaint is made against resulting in bias analysis of the problem. As the Complaint escalates to more senior staff Level 4/5/6 the Complaints Officer is out of his/her depth in knowledge and understanding and invariable request outside help like the Ombudsman. The Complaints Officer cannot log-in to the Councils Management and database system themselves and make an independent analysis. A skill base problem.
79. Nothing concrete was done
80. It is all over the place, especially if it is a Cabinet Member complaint. Sometimes they ignore you.
81. Camden always says the right thing, but nothing changes in practice. Even after involving councillors etc... We live in a block that has a lot of potential, but the gardens are totally neglected, and there is zero upkeep on the block, so it looks shabby (paint peeling, etc...). Also cleaning is just someone coming once a week (mostly, some weeks are skipped) and just quickly sweeping up the communal hallway.
82. Really poor value for the service charge we pay.
83. The worst experience of my life. I currently have a dispute with the LGO regarding 3 officers from the complaints team. Depending on the complaint some experiences were not so bad like repairs. However when it comes to members of staff especially housing officers and the complaint officers they never get investigated, therefore it is pointless going to complaints unless it is about repairs.
84. My experience so far hasn't been great. it's still ongoing although i did get a response to my appeal request quicker than i imagined it would take so that was good. Camden complaints team officer assigned to my case told me they had called me and visited my home, yet there were no emails received apart from assigning a complaints team member to my case and the 2nd email telling me they were closing my case due to lack of being

able to contact me, but there were no missed calls on my phone both phones having leave a message options, and no evidence of any visit either requesting a home visit by email or leaving a calling card to say that wither member of staff visiting my flat. I would recommend anyone who has had poor experiences with camden council to make the effort to put in a complaint and appeal if not receiving a satisfactory response. Camden council is notorious for its poor efforts of dealing with issues with their tenants. Often when i do finally manage to get work addressed the people who come to do the work reaffirm how they hear the same concerns and agree themselves that camden council is notorious for not providing adequate help and resources or fix things in a timely manner or address concerns in a timely manner. Always put in a complaint otherwise this will never change even if you are not well as i am its still worth doing it to change things and the system and hold people accountable for not following guidelines or providing relevant help and assistance. Even my complaints officer said that they had heard complaints of other sectors such as the voids team not carrying through with their offer to email or contact the tenant as requested.

85. The system is poor and without time frame because of working Off-site or WFH
86. Good