

Children and Young People Directorate
Annual report on compliments, complaints, and enquiries
2024 - 2025

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides information on complaints and enquiries handled by the Children and Young People Directorate (CYP) between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025 and includes the annual report required by statutory guidance, in 'Getting the Best from Complaints' (Social Care Complaints and Representations for Children, Young People and others).
 - 1.2 The report includes information on complaints falling within the Council's corporate complaints procedure which were eligible for consideration by CYP, for the same period.
 - 1.3 Enquiries from MPs, Councillors, the Mayor, and general enquiries are also included, for the same period.
 - 1.4 The report provides information on all stages of the complaints procedures, as well as complaints to The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO).
 - 1.5 This report draws on statistical information extracted from icasework live data as of October 2025.
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2 Purpose of report is to provide:

- 2.1 Numbers of complaints and representations received by CYP.
 - 2.2 Information about compliance with timescales.
 - 2.3 Key themes of complaints.
 - 2.4 Outcomes of complaints.
 - 2.5 Learning and service improvements.
 - 2.6 Information about monitoring and quality assurance.
 - 2.7 Details about independent advocacy services.
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Appendix I: Summary of Stage 1 Complaint Outcomes and Themes

This section will provide a summary of findings from Stage 1 complaints, highlighting recurring themes, issues raised, and key learning points.

Appendix II: Summary of Stage 2 Complaint Outcomes and Actions

This appendix will outline the outcomes of Stage 2 investigations, identifying areas for service improvement and actions implemented by the local authority.

Appendix III: Stage 3 Review Panel – Purpose, Membership, and Process

This section will summarise the purpose of the Review Panel under the Children Act complaints procedure, including its membership, meeting format, and reporting requirements.

Appendix IV: LGSCO Decisions and Remedies

This appendix will present information on decisions made by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, including findings, fault analysis, and remedies or recommendations issued.

Appendix V: Data Tables – Complaints and Enquiries (2022–2025)

Statistical tables will be presented here, showing annual trends, volumes, and performance comparisons across the three-year period.

Appendix VI: NYAS Advocacy Data Summary

This appendix will provide data and commentary on advocacy referrals, including numbers of young people supported, key themes, and outcomes of advocacy support.

Complaints and Enquiries Overview

3 Stage 1 complaints and enquiries – (Appendix I)

3.1. Response times:

- **Statutory complaints:** 10 working days, with option to extend to 20 working days for complex complaints.
- **Corporate complaints:** 10 working days
- **MP/Mayor/Councillor enquiries:** 10 working days.

3.2. **Table 1a.** Total of new cases received over past three years.

2022/2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
342	368	528

3.2.1 **Table 1b.** Breakdown of new cases received over past three years.

Period	Corporate Stage 1	Children Act Stage 1	General enquiry	Mayor enquiry	Member enquiry	MP enquiry	Chief Executive enquiry	Total
2024 - 2025	165	124	37	29	46	124	3	528
2023 – 2024	93	100	17	12	47	96	3	368
2022 - 2023	72	96	17	28	23	91	15	342

3.3 **Table 2a.** Breakdown of new cases received 2024/2025

Period	Corporate Stage 1	Children Act Stage 1	General enquiry	Mayor enquiry	Member enquiry	MP enquiry	Chief Executive enquiry	Total
Q1	43	26	6	7	7	21	1	111
Q2	60	26	10	12	16	28	1	153
Q3	29	31	15	4	14	34	0	127
Q4	33	41	6	6	9	41	1	137
Total	165	124	37	29	46	124	3	528

3.3 **Table 2b.** Case total received (monthly figures)

Month	Corporate Stage 1	Children Act Stage 1	General Enquiry	Mayor Enquiry	MP enquiry	Member Enquiry	Chief Executive enquiry	Total
April	9	7	1	3	11	4	1	37
May	12	11	2	1	9	3	0	38
June	22	8	3	3	1	0	0	37
July	17	9	2	2	8	2	0	38
August	14	12	3	1	12	6	0	48
September	29	5	5	0	8	8	1	56
October	12	10	7	9	14	2	0	53
November	10	13	6	1	11	7	0	48
December	7	8	2	3	9	5	0	34
January	6	19	1	2	12	4	0	44
February	12	12	4	2	14	1	1	46
March	15	10	1	2	15	4	0	47
Total	165	124	37	29	124	46	3	528

3.4. Common issues raised in new cases.

- 3.4.1. Delays in meeting statutory timescales for Education, Health, Care Needs Assessments (EHCNA) and Education, Health, Care Plans (EHCP).
- 3.4.2. Delay in providing school travel assistance, reimbursing travel costs.
- 3.4.3. Delays in processing payments to foster carers, connected carers, supported lodging providers and Special Guardians.
- 3.4.4. Disagreement with professional decisions – outcome of assessments, Child Protection conferences, school admissions.
- 3.4.5. Attitude, conduct of worker – inappropriate behaviour, lack of support, perceived bias against complainant, management of Child Protection Conference and Looked After Children review.

3.5. **Table 3.** Stage 1 Complaints and enquiries with % responded on time.

Period	Corporate Stage 1	Children Act Stage 1	General enquiry	Mayor enquiry	Member enquiry	MP enquiry	Chief Executive enquiry
Q1	33% (14/43)	58% (15/26)	83% (5/6)	86% (6/7)	71% (5/7)	86% (18/21)	0% (0/1)
Q2	40% (24/60)	19% (5/26)	40% (6/10)	100% (3/3)	40% (6/15)	0% (0/1)	0
Q3	66% (19/29)	23% (7/31)	47% (7/15)	54% (7/13)	77% (10/13)	62% (21/34)	0% (0/1)
Q4	42% (14/33)	18% (7/39)	83% (5/6)	100% (6/6)	100% (9/9)	46% (19/41)	100% (1/1)

3.6. **Table 4.** Cases responded to within timescale – by Division.

Directorate	Corporate Stage 1	Children Act Stage 1	General enquiry	Mayor enquiry	Member enquiry	MP enquiry	Chief Executive enquiry
Children's Social Care	19% (9/48)	27% (30/111)	38% (8/21)	75% (3/4)	36% (4/11)	44% (17/39)	33% (1/3)
Education Services	56% (60/107)	100% 1/1	50% (11/14)	79% (19/25)	83% (24/29)	64% (48/75)	0
Families, Quality and Commissioning	20% (2/10)	30% (3/10)	100% (2/2)	0	33% (2/6)	50% (5/10)	0

* There were 2 case reviews logged under Stage 1 of the statutory process that has not been included in the table due to the PCG Service reviewing how services process historic complaints outside the scope of a 12-month period in accordance with LGSCO guidelines. 1 case review was responded to within timescale resulting in 1/1 – 100% in Q4 and 1 case review was not responded to within timescale.

3.7. **Table 4.1** Stage 1 Payment Related Complaints

Directorate	Quarters	Corporate Stage 1
Children's Social Care	Q1	8
	Q2	17
	Q3	3
	Q4	2
Total		30

Directorate	Quarters	Corporate Stage 1
Education Services	Q1	2
	Q2	2
	Q3	1
	Q4	0
Total		5

Directorate	Quarters	Corporate Stage 1
Families, Quality and Commissioning	Q1	1
	Q2	0
	Q3	0
	Q4	0
Total		1

3.8. **Table 4.2.** Compliments received by division

Directorate	Compliments
Children's Social Care	11
Education Services	7
Families, Quality and Commissioning	2

3.8. Summary of compliments received, and themes identified.

Children's Social Care –

- Staff members were praised for their compassionate and understanding approach which contributed to a smooth and effective complaints process.
- A reflection of appreciation for clear and proactive communication by providing clear guidance and proactive support.

Education Services –

- Compliments emphasised the promptness and efficiency of the support provided that assisted in the reduction of complainant's stress.
- The services were noted for their transformative effect on children due to the consistent support from staff.

Stage 1 Complaints Overview

3.9. **Table 5.** Outcome of Stage 1 complaints

Outcome	Corporate Stage 1	Children Act Stage 1	Total	%
Not upheld	41	64	105	36%
Partly upheld	24	28	52	18%
Upheld	79	13	92	32%
Returned / Withdrawn	18	18	36	12%
Resolved upon receipt	1	1	1	0%
Case Reviews	0	2	2	1%
Total	163	126	289	

4.0. Recurring themes of upheld and partially upheld Stage 1 complaints*

- Not meeting statutory timescales for Education, Health, Care Needs Assessments (EHCNA) and Education, Health, Care Plans (EHCP)
- Delays in processing payments to Supported Lodging Providers, and provider invoices.
- Delay with arranging SEN travel assistance
- Attitude, conduct, communication, and practice of staff

* Appendix I contains details of Stage 1 outcomes

4.1 Types of themes of returned and withdrawn complaints*

Corporate –

- Safeguarding in education
- EHCP Assessment
- Attendance

Statutory -

- Care proceedings
- Social worker behavioural conduct
- Anonymous reports
- Not for CYP Complaints

Stage 2 Complaints Overview

5. Stage 2 complaints – (Appendix II)

5.1. Response times

- **Statutory complaints:** 25 working days, with option to extend to 65 working days.
- **Corporate complaints:** 20 working days with no option for extension.

5.2. **Table 6.** Stage 2 requests received.

Complaints	Requests received	Withdrawn / Suspended
2024 – 2025 Total	40	1
Statutory	22	1
Corporate	18	0
2023-2024 Total	18	0
Statutory	9	0
Corporate	9	0
2022-23 Total	30	1
Children Act	21	1
Corporate	9	0

i. **Stage 2 complaints received by Directorate**

I. **Numbers of received and completed Stage 2 complaints.**

Stage 2 Complaints	CSC	FQC	Education	Total Number received
New requests received	19 Statutory	3 Statutory	18 Corporate	35
Currently being investigated	4 Statutory 3 Corporate	1 Statutory	3 Corporate	11
Pending investigation	0	0	0	0
Completed investigation	15 Statutory	2	15 Corporate	32

5.2.1 The number of Stage 2 complaint requests and the subsequent investigations both increased compared to the previous year.

5.2.2. As in previous years, most complaints are successfully resolved at Stage 1.

5.2.3. A total of 289 complaints were received during the year (up from 212 in 2023 - 2024)

5.2.4. A total of **40 (14%)** were escalated to Stage 2 of the complaints process.

5.3. **Escalation reasons**

5.3.1. Main Reasons for Stage 2 Requests:

- I. There were significant delays and failures in delivering policies and procedures related to EHCNA/EHCP. These included a case of delayed EHCP finalisation, leaving a child without alternative provision, and another case involving removal of a child's EHCP.
- II. Procedural failings with the Lewisham Attendance team regarding the Attendance policy.
- III. Disagreement with IRO assessment, contesting the accuracy of information recorded on file.
- IV. Dissatisfied with the service provided by Young People Relate.
- V. Dissatisfied with the adoption assessment process - experiences in relation to the unsuccessful adoption for two children.
- VI. Dissatisfied and disagrees with the outcome of the Stage 1 response letter.
- VII. Dissatisfied with level of support which was provided by CSC and the ongoing delays with receiving his funds resulting in hardship.

5.4. **Table 7. Outcomes of Stage 2 complaints**

Outcome	Corporate	Statutory	Total
Not upheld	8	15	23
Partly upheld	6	4	10
Upheld	4	3	7
Total	18	22	40

5.5. **Actions arising from upheld and partly upheld Stage 2 complaints:**

1	Apologise that a more thorough initial interrogation of LCS could have been taken
2	Provide additional information or service
3	Sending electronic copies of assessments to all parents and carers should be considered by the Council
4	A practice reminder to all professionals in the service about how the financial transactions process works
5	Recommendation of a system review that triggers an alert for a Team Manager to communicate to the service user what is happening and the reason for the delay.
6	Apology for the delay experienced in completing EHCNA
7	Consideration of reviewing the ECHP and the suggested amendments undertaken

* The above summarisation applies to multiple / various complaints

Stage 3 Complaints Overview

6. Stage 3 complaints – (Appendix III)

6.1. Response times:

Stage 3 is the final stage of the statutory Children Act complaints procedure. It involves an independent Review Panel of three members who examine how the Stage 2 investigation was conducted. The panel's purpose is to ensure the process was fair, thorough, and compliant with Children Act requirements. 30 working days to convene and hold the Review Panel, 5 working days for the Review Panel to issue its findings and 15 working days for the Executive Director to respond to their findings.

6.2. **Table 8.** Stage 3 requests received – (Appendix V)

Period	Requests received
2024 - 2025	1
2023-2024	1
2022-2023	2

6.3. **Table 9.** Details of Stage 3 complaints completed during the year.

Case Type	Service	Details	Outcome	Remedy
Corporate	Corporate Parenting	Fault in the handling of the adoption process that caused distress.	Not Upheld	-Provide a written apology for the multiple failures listed within the Stage 3 report -The Council to follow up on the action / investigation needing to be carried out by the IFA

LGSCO Overview7. **Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) complaints – (Appendix IV)**7.1. **Table 10.** Numbers of complaints received in 2024 - 2025 (with initial decision)

Case type	Numbers received	Service	Decision
Corporate	3	SEN team	Maladministration and injustices caused to complainants.

7.2. The number of LGSCO complaints is down from 4 in 2023 - 2024

7.3. **Table 11.** LGSCO complaints completed during 2024 – 2025

Case type	Service	Details	Decision	Remedy
Corporate	Integrated Services & SEND	Failure to provide sufficient provision for online education after child's laptop broke and Council refused to fund another resulting in missed education.	Fault causing injustice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Issue an apology in accordance with LGSCO guidelines. - A payment of £2500 to be made. - Within 3 months of final decision produce recommendations of how situation can be avoided in the future.

Corporate	Integrated Services & SEND	Final EHC Plan was issued which the complainant appealed and requested SEND Tribunal	LGSCO could not investigate due to complainant appealing decision via SEND Tribunal	- No further action or remedy suggested.
Corporate	Integrated Services & SEND	The Local Authority in breach of its statutory duties as documented in the EHCP.	Remedy satisfied on time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Issue an apology in accordance with LGSCO guidelines for failing to meet the statutory deadline to issue amended EHCP following annual review. - A payment of £200 to be made.

Complaints / Monitoring Overview

8. Monitoring and Quality Assurance

- 8.1. There has been an amended online tracker to assist senior management by providing live data / insights into all current and outstanding cases. It is accessible to all DMT members and Heads of Service(s) that undergoes weekly review by DMT.
- 8.2. An escalation procedure has been established to flag cases nearing completion date and those that are overdue so Directors can have oversight to assist in meeting completion targets. CYP Casework team sends reminders to managers and CC'ing the relevant Heads of Service in accordance with the escalation process.
- 8.3. To integrate the insights from complaints into the quality assurance framework, quarterly reports are generated. These reports inform the quarterly quality assurance cycle and are presented to the directorate management team. This ensures a regular and reflective process to capture recent complaint learnings, identifying regular trends and themes to assist with preventing recurring issues, and enhance customer satisfaction.

NYAS Overview

9. Independent Advocacy – (Appendix VI)

- 9.1. Advocacy services for young people have been delivered by National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) since 1st January 2020.
- 9.2. The contract requires NYAS to deliver a minimum of 1,000 advocacy hours per year, with an option for the Council to spot-purchase up to 500 additional hours on top of this, as needed.
- 9.3. The Advocacy Service works with children and young people in the below eligible groups who are:
 - Children Looked After who want or need to be supported to attend formal meetings, such as CLA Reviews, to get their wishes and feelings heard.
 - Children Looked After who have a concern about their care that they don't feel has been sufficiently addressed by the Council and so wish to raise a complaint.

- Children and young people that are subject to Child Protection Plans where the child or Social Worker feels support of an advocate would be beneficial at conferences.
- Care Leavers that have a concern about the support they have received from the Council, that they wish to be addressed.

- 9.4. Referrals for the advocacy service can either be self-referrals or a referral from a young person's social worker, personal advisor, participation manager, independent reviewing officer or CP conference chair.
- 9.5. The service provides time-limited support, information, and representation from independent advocates. This will support Children Looked After (CLA), care leavers and children subject to Child Protection Plans when decisions are made about their lives, or when they wish to raise a concern about a service they have received.
- 9.6. During 2024 - 2025 **18** young people were supported by NYAS advocates to make a complaint and/or enquiry.

Stage 1	Stage 2	General Enquiry	MP Enquiry	Total
12	2	3	1	18

FOI Request Overview

10. Summary of activity on FOI requests for the year 2024-2025

1. Requests received – 276

	Request	Internal review	Information Commissioner	Total	%
April 2024	24	1	0	25	9%
May 2024	33	0	0	33	12%
June 2024	15	0	0	15	5%
July 2024	25	0	0	25	9%
August 2024	15	0	0	15	5%
September 2024	22	0	0	22	8%
October 2024	23	0	0	23	8%
November 2024	22	0	0	22	8%
December 2024	17	2	0	19	7%
January 2025	27	0	0	27	10%
February 2025	28	0	0	28	10%
March 2025	25	1	0	26	9%
Total	276	4	0	280	

2. Requests received in previous years

Year	Requests	Internal reviews	Total
2023 - 2024	258	3	262
2022 - 2023	233	8	242

2. Performance on requests for 2024 – 2025 of those responded to within target

ii.

Breakdown of total quarters for the year	Requests (159 / 276) – 58%	Internal review (2/4) – 50%
Q1	63% - (45/72)	100% - (1/1)
Q2	97% - (60/62)	0
Q3	71% - (44/62)	50% - (1/2)
Q4	38% - (30/80)	0% - (0/1)

3. Past years' performance

Year	Performance
2024 - 2025	58% (159 / 276)
2023 - 2024	69% (179/258)
2022 - 2023	81% (190/234)

Conclusion

The 2024–2025 reporting year shows significant increases in Stage 1 Corporate complaints (+77%), Stage 2 Statutory complaints (+144%), MP enquiries (+29%), and FOI requests (+7%).

The themes of report will be considered further by the CYP leadership team and shared with the Safeguarding & Quality Assurance teams, as well as Work Force development teams to identify and embed any learning.