

1 April 2021 - 31 March 2022

Children & Families

138 Stage One Complaints
7 Representations Resolved
15 Stage Two Investigations Completed
2 Stage Three Reviews Completed
2 LGSCO (Ombudsman) Final Decisions

Education

48 Stage One Complaints
19 Representations Resolved
7 Stage Two Investigations
1 LGSCO (Ombudsman) Final Decisions

Adult Social Care

103 Stage One Complaints
21 Representations Resolved
17 Internal Reviews
4 Further Reviews
3 LGSCO (Ombudsman) Final Decisions

Commissioning

19 Stage One Complaints
1 Representations Resolved
2 Internal Reviews
2 Further Reviews
1 LGSCO (Ombudsman) Final Decisions

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Introduction

We can be relatively content that the numbers of complaints reported have remained at consistent levels.

There are a number of ‘successes’ particularly in those teams who are required to investigate and manage safeguarding and welfare concerns regarding children. And ‘successes’ when analysing the total number of cases relating to our Commissioned Providers – for which there is a 26% reduction in cases.

Across the four Directorates covered there is low prevalence for Ombudsman investigations and we take this as a form of reassurance that the work we do to resolve concerns is of a helpful standard.

At the end of this report (*p.28*) we ask ‘*Are we learning from our complaints ?*’ A lot of work takes place to promote learning and although difficult to evidence, we believe we are.

We promote a philosophy of investigating concerns objectively, with a view to identifying and ‘making-right’ any injustice caused to an individual, and identifying where improvements can be made.

The Complaints Team reports and presents to individual Services and management groups quite regularly to set out and reinforce these principles and to share best practice in investigating and responding to complaints.

Our activities are overseen by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, and in most cases, their interpretation of relevant processes and principles becomes the final arbiter in resolving complaints. We believe we best serve our residents’ needs by applying their level of scrutiny at the first opportunity, so that a formal complaint is satisfied without the need for the additional time and investigative actions of an external agency.

The Council aspires to treat residents in accordance with its published values :

- Treating residents as if they were a valued member of your own family
- Being open, honest and accountable
- Spending money as if it was our own
- Working for everyone to realise their own potential
- Making Southwark a place to be proud of
- Always work to make Southwark more equal and just
- Stand against all forms of discrimination and racism

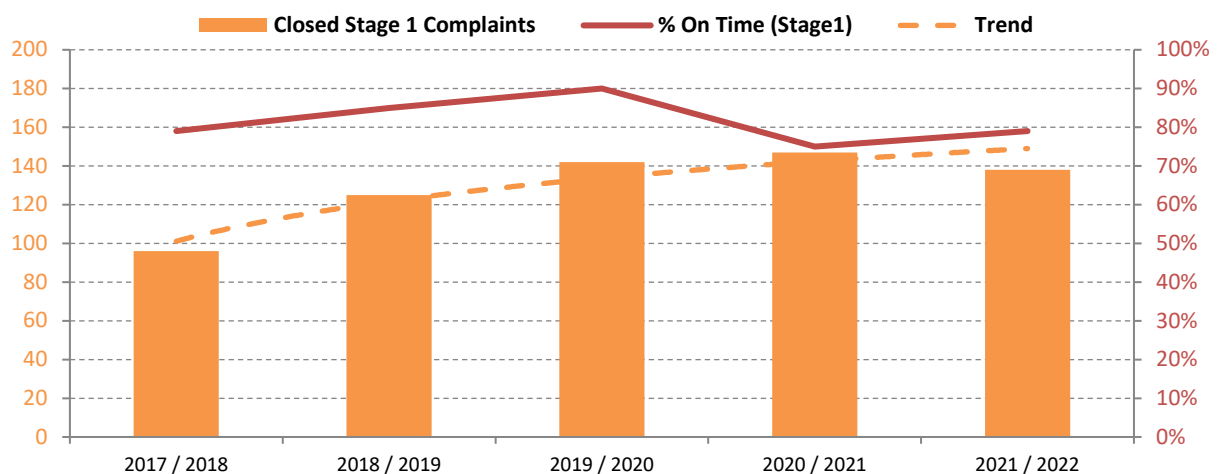
We believe and sincerely hope that our activities continue to assist the Council in achieving these goals.

Stage One Complaints Completed (with assistance of an advocate in brackets)					
Children's Services	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
Care	23 (2)	19 (4)	12.5 (2)	15.5 (4)	17.5 (4)
Care Leavers	23 (7)	18 (6)	28 (8)	21 (7)	15 (3)
Permanence	8 (0)	8 (0)	11 (1)	6 (0)	3.5 (0)
Family Early Help	3 (0)	3 (0)	2 (0)	2 (0)	1 (1)
Youth Offending	1 (0)	1 (0)	-	1 (0)	2 (0)
Quality Assurance	6 (0)	8 (1)	3 (0)	5.5 (0)	3 (0)
Assessment & Intervention	26 (1)	36 (0)	33 (2)	22 (1)	20 (4)
Safeguarding and Family Support	32 (2)	43 (5)	36 (1)	28 (3)	19 (2)
Children under All Ages Disabilities	16 (3)	11 (3)	15.5 (4)	23 (5)	n/a
Clinical Service	-	-	-	-	-
Finance, Business Support, Complaints, Other	1 (0)	-	1 (0)	3 (0)	15 (1)
Total	138 (15)	147 (19)	142 (18)	125 (20)	96 (15)

The total number of complaints received has reduced slightly and has reduced significantly for Safeguarding & Family Support, with a 26% reduction in formal stage one complaints.

The Assessment & Intervention Team, who work closely with S&FS, have also benefited from a 26% reduction in formal stage one complaints.

It is a positive that no Service has experienced a rise in complaints of any similar magnitude.

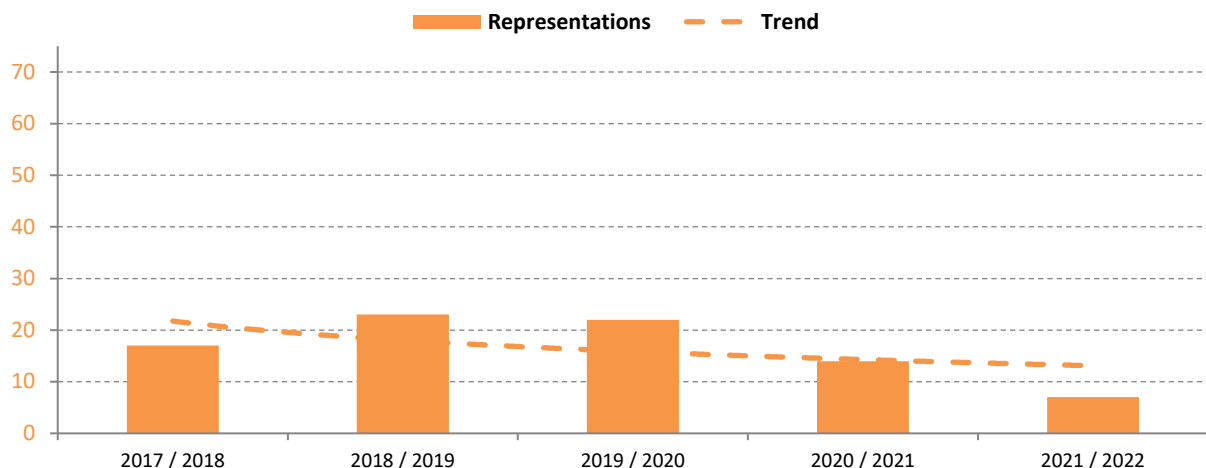


Other Representations (with assistance of an advocate in brackets)					
Children's Services	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
Care	1 (0)	4 (0)	7 (0)	3 (0)	-
Care Leavers	2 (0)	-	1 (1)	4 (0)	6 (1)
Permanence	1 (0)	3 (0)	3 (1)	2 (1)	2 (0)
Family Early Help	-	-	-	1 (0)	2 (0)
Youth Offending	-	-	-	-	-
Quality Assurance	-	2 (0)	-	3 (0)	-
Assessment & Intervention	1 (0)	1 (0)	7 (0)	7.5 (0)	2 (0)
Safeguarding and Family Support	-	4 (0)	3 (0)	0.5 (0)	3 (1)
Children under All Ages Disabilities	1 (0)	-	1 (0)	1 (0)	n/a
Clinical Service	-	-	-	-	-
Finance, Business Support, Complaints, Other	1 (0)	-	-	1 (0)	2 (0)
Total	7 (0)	14 (0)	22 (2)	23 (1)	17 (2)

There are times when we can agree to resolve issues without the need for full, formal investigations. This requires the agreement of the complainant, and ordinarily a 3 day turnaround time. We record these cases as 'representations'.

A large number of representations may indicate that all the issues presented to the Council are straightforward and easily-remedied, whilst a low number could suggest that the Complaints Team is not giving enough thought to whether a resolution can be found by more creative and immediate means.

Wherever a young person, or their representative, wishes to have a formal complaint investigation, in to a matter within our remit, a formal complaint will be pursued.



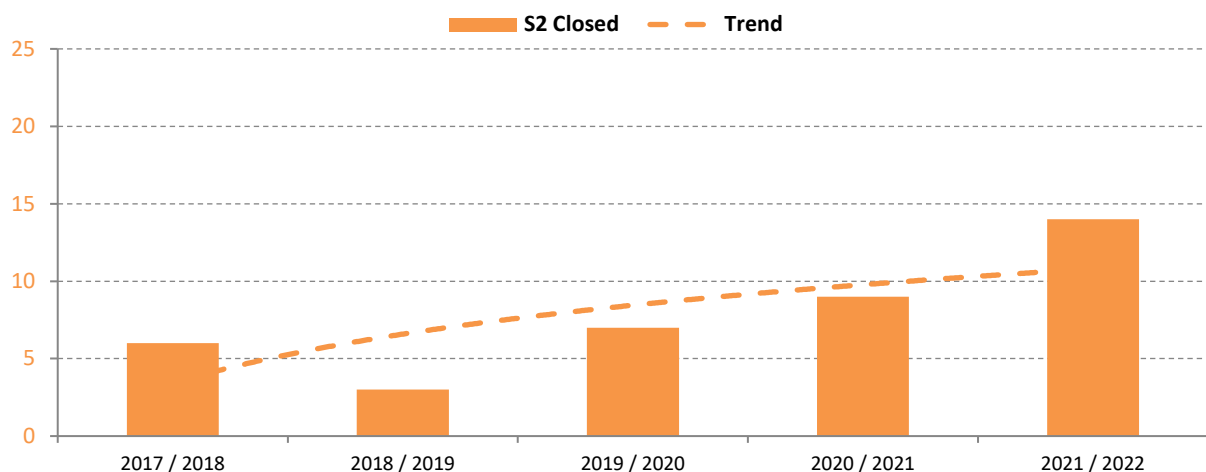
Stage Two Complaints Investigations Completed					
Children's Services	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
Care	-	-	-	-	3
Care Leavers	-	-	-	-	1
Permanence	5	1	2	-	1
Family Early Help	-	1	-	-	-
Youth Offending	-	-	-	-	-
Quality Assurance	1	1	1	-	-
Assessment & Intervention	2	-	2	1	-
Safeguarding and Family Support	6	4	-	1	1
All-Ages Disability Service (relating to Children)	-	2	2	1	n/a
Clinical Service	-	-	-	-	-
Finance, Business Support, Complaints, Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total	14	9	7	3	6

There were 12 investigations commenced under the statutory procedure and 13 cases under the corporate procedure but we were able to find early agreements for 11 of the 12 statutory cases.

The distribution across the two procedures suggests that the Council does not actively favour either procedure, instead is focused on ensuring the letter of the law is applied in determining the most appropriate process.

Resolving 11 cases early represents a sympathetic re-doubling of efforts both in respect of finding appropriate corrective actions and for relieving complainants of the burden of a long independent investigation.

Figures for 2020/21 have been corrected here, to correctly reflect that this table shows cases completed.



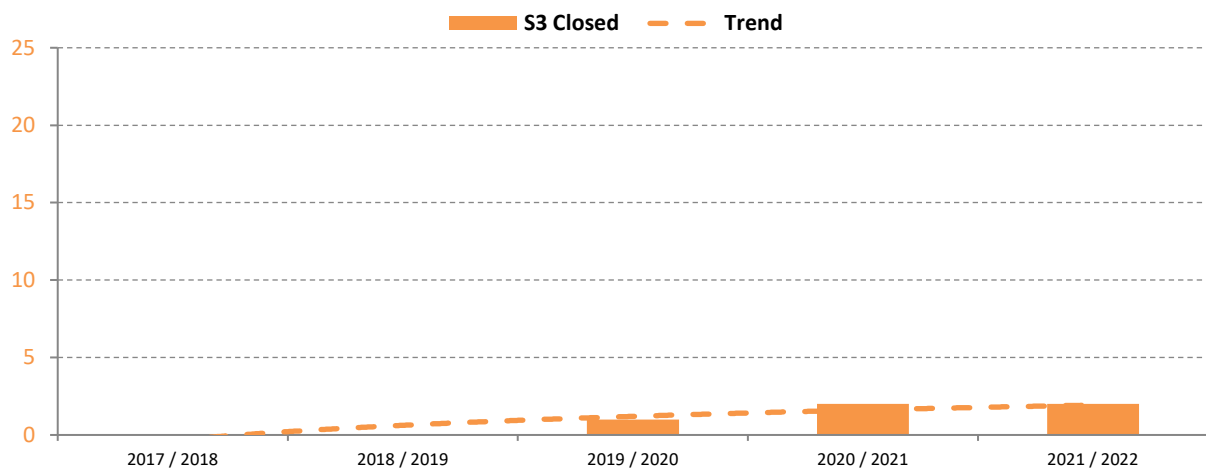
Stage Three Panel Reviews (Cases Closed)					
Children's Services	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
Care	-	-	-	-	-
Care Leavers	-	-	-	-	-
Permanence	-	-	-	-	-
Family Early Help	-	-	-	-	-
Youth Offending	-	-	-	-	-
Quality Assurance	-	1	-	-	-
Assessment & Intervention	-	-	-	-	-
Safeguarding and Family Support	2	-	-	-	-
All-Ages Disability Service (relating to Children)	-	1	1	-	-
Clinical Service	-	-	-	-	-
Finance, Business Support, Complaints, Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total	2	2	1	0	0

Stage Three Panels are required when a complainant does not agree with the independent findings at stage two of the statutory procedure, or with how the Council intends to address the independent findings.

Panel consists of an Independent Chair, two Independent Panelists, the Independent Officer and Independent Person from stage two, in addition to the Adjudicating Officer and a Clerk.

A low number of stage three panels is suggestive that the work undertaken at stage two is objective and professional.

The regulations make no provision for a stage three Panel to be declined if a complainant wishes it.

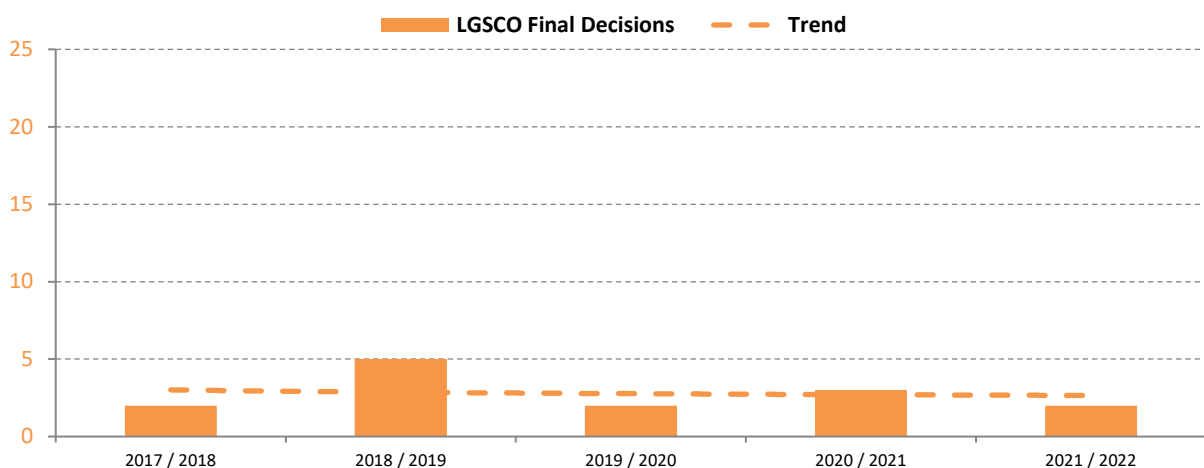


Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Investigations (Final Decisions)					
Children's Services	2020/21	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
Care	-	-	-	-	1
Care Leavers	-	-	-	1	-
Permanence	-	-	-	-	1
Family Early Help	-	-	-	-	-
Youth Offending	-	-	-	-	-
Quality Assurance	-	-	1	-	-
Assessment & Intervention	1	3	-	1	-
Safeguarding and Family Support	-	-	-	3	-
All-Ages Disability Service (relating to Children)	1	-	-	-	-
Clinical Service	-	-	-	-	-
Finance, Business Support, Complaints, Other	-	-	1	-	-
Total	2	3	2	5	2

There were nine cases presented to the Local Authority, leading to the Ombudsman investigating 2 cases and this low number appears to support our belief that our work on cases at the earlier stages is of an appropriate, or good standard.

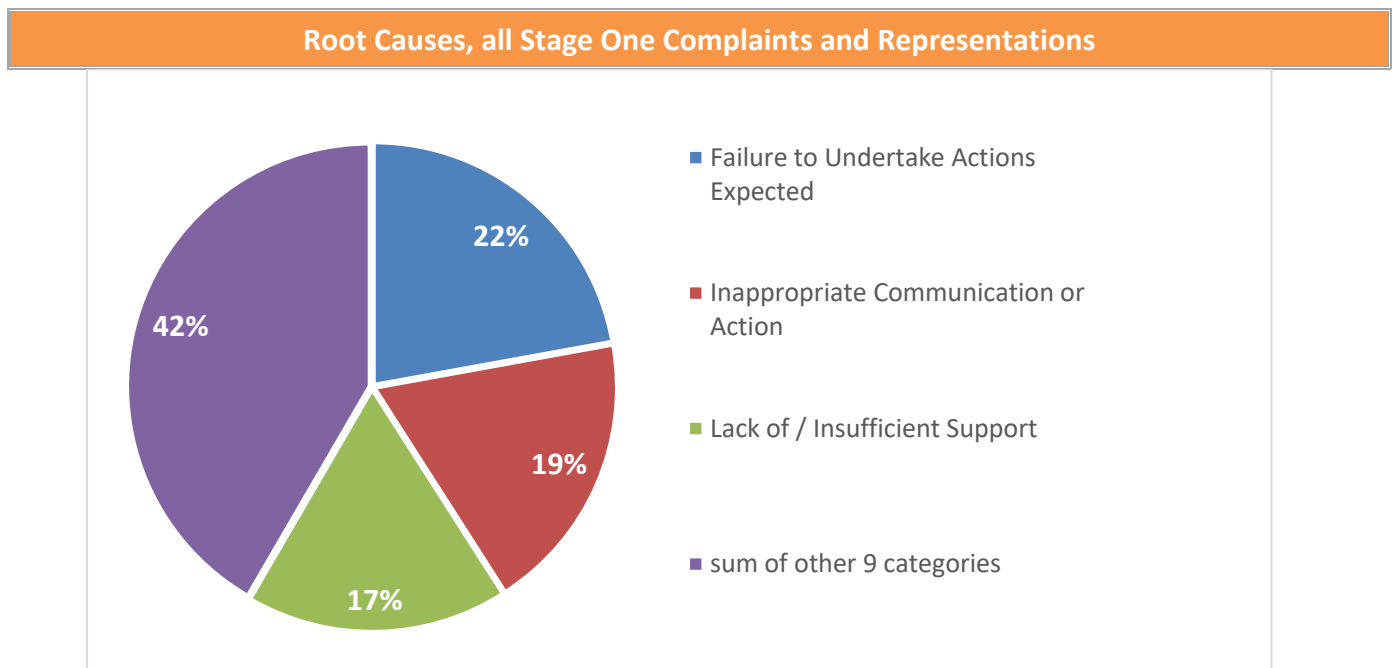
The performance of Southwark and other boroughs can be found here : <https://www.lgo.org.uk/your-councils-performance/>

The Ombudsman's annual letter to the Local Authority is also published here, in addition to data on the number of upheld complaints and details relating to requested service improvements and compliance with Ombudsman recommendations.



Outcomes, all Stage One and Representations					
Children's Services	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
Partly Upheld	44%	29%	31%	21%	22%
Upheld	15%	13%	10%	13%	16%
Not Upheld	28%	28%	29%	31%	37%
No Findings / Resolved	8%	14%	13%	17%	13%
Unresolved and Escalated (representations only)	0%	1%	1%	2%	n/a
Withdrawn / Rejected	5%	15%	16%	16%	12%

The Council wishes to resolve concerns at the first opportunity. We believe that we must investigate objectively, and seek to identify and acknowledge any fault and then to put it right. We believe this is the appropriate principle by which to serve our complainants. It is encouraging that this message is being heard, being trusted and being followed. An increasing uphold rate, as we see above, is evidence not that there are more faults, but that we are working better to address them.



The full range of 12 categories are listed in **appendix a** on page 26.

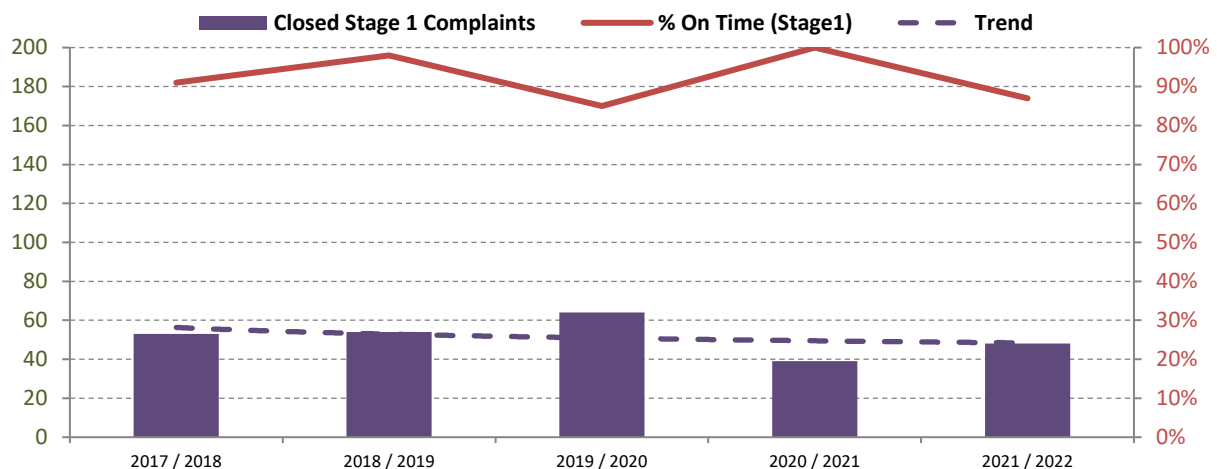
Stage One Complaints Completed (with assistance of an advocate in brackets)					
Education	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
Admissions & Benefits	11 (0)	6 (0)	7 (0)	10 (0)	9 (0)
Travel Assistance	12 (0)	16 (0)	13.5 (0)	5 (0)	5 (0)
Southwark Information & Advice (SIAS)	0 (0)	2 (0)	1 (0)	-	-
Early Help Strategy	0 (0)	-	1 (1)	2 (0)	3 (0)
Special Educational Needs & Disability (SEND)	25 (0)	12 (0)	36.5 (1)	33 (2)	35 (0)
Learning and Achievement	0 (0)	3 (0)	5 (1)	4 (0)	1 (0)
Total	48 (0)	39 (0)	64 (2)	54 (2)	53 (0)

The numbers of cases have increased when compared to the previous year, but remain lower than the recent years reported.

Education work has been impacted by the practicalities of the pandemic and particularly SEND and Admissions – both of which requires a lot of interaction with schools who have at times, and with little or notice, been closed.

The Local Authority, through Southwark Information Advice and Support (SIAS), assists parents with concerns and whilst many of the issues being reported are emotive, there is at least an extra tier of help for parents in need of support with education issues.

We don't record SAIS assistance as 'advocacy' and so the low prevalence for formal advocacy in Education complaints should not be cause for concern.



Other Representations (with assistance of an advocate in brackets)					
Education	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
Admissions & Benefits	7 (0)	3 (0)	2 (0)	3 (0)	-
Travel Assistance	2 (0)	1 (0)	-	1 (1)	1 (0)
Southwark Information & Advice (SIAS)	0 (0)	-	-	-	-
Early Help Strategy	0 (0)	-	2 (0)	2 (1)	-
Special Educational Needs & Disability (SEND)	10 (0)	1 (0)	-	1 (0)	-
Learning and Achievement	0 (0)	1 (0)	1 (0)	-	-
Total	19 (0)	6 (0)	5 (0)	7 (2)	1 (2)

Stage Two Investigations (Corporate Reviews)					
Education	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
Admissions & Benefits	0	1	-	-	-
Travel Assistance	1	-	-	1	1
Southwark Information & Advice (SIAS)	0	-	-	-	-
Early Help Strategy	0	-	-	-	-
Special Educational Needs & Disability (SEND)	6	2	3	3	2
Learning and Achievement	0	1	-	-	-
Total	7	4	3	4	3

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Investigations (Final Decisions)					
Education	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
Admissions & Benefits	0	-	-	-	-
Travel Assistance	0	-	1	-	-
Southwark Information & Advice (SIAS)	0	-	-	-	-
Early Help Strategy	0	-	-	-	-
Special Educational Needs & Disability (SEND)	1	1	-	-	2
Learning and Achievement	0	-	-	-	-
Total	1	1	1	0	2

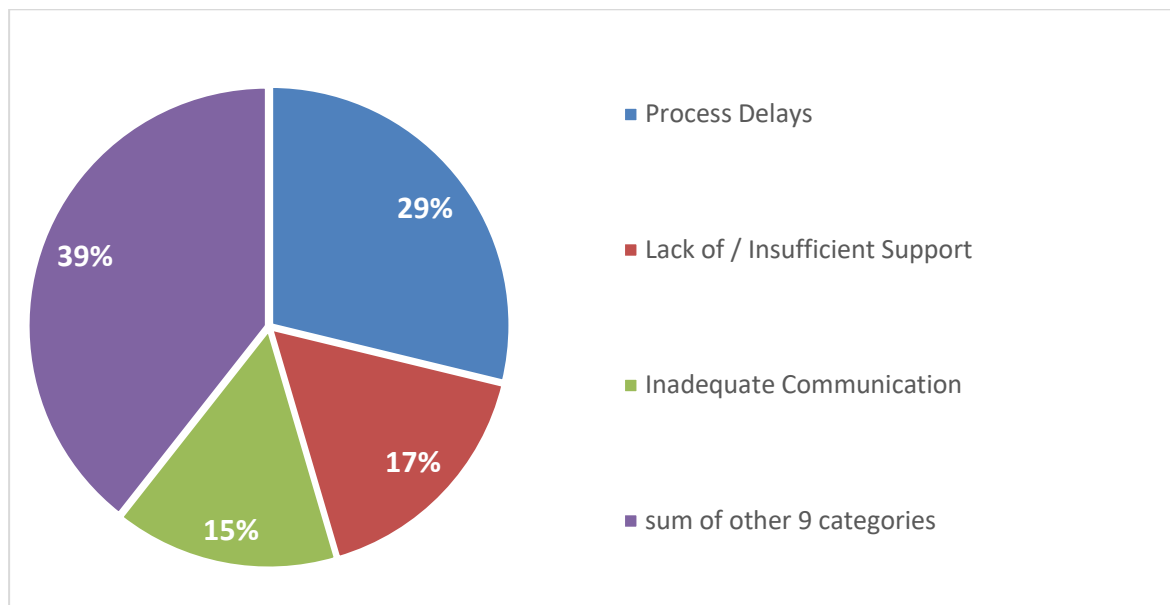
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The Ombudsman's annual letter to the Local Authority is also published here, in addition to data on the number of upheld complaints and details relating to requested service improvements and compliance with Ombudsman recommendations.

Outcomes, all Stage One and Representations					
Education	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
Partly Upheld	16%	27%	18%	20%	17%
Upheld	21%	24%	20%	22%	19%
Not Upheld	24%	25%	39%	28%	46%
No Findings / Resolved	28%	13%	14%	19%	9%
Unresolved, Escalated (representations only)	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Withdrawn / Rejected	9%	11%	9%	11%	9%

A majority of rejected complaints are where it is the school’s own jurisdiction to investigate and respond. For example where there is dissatisfaction with a teacher’s actions or decisions made by the Head Teacher.

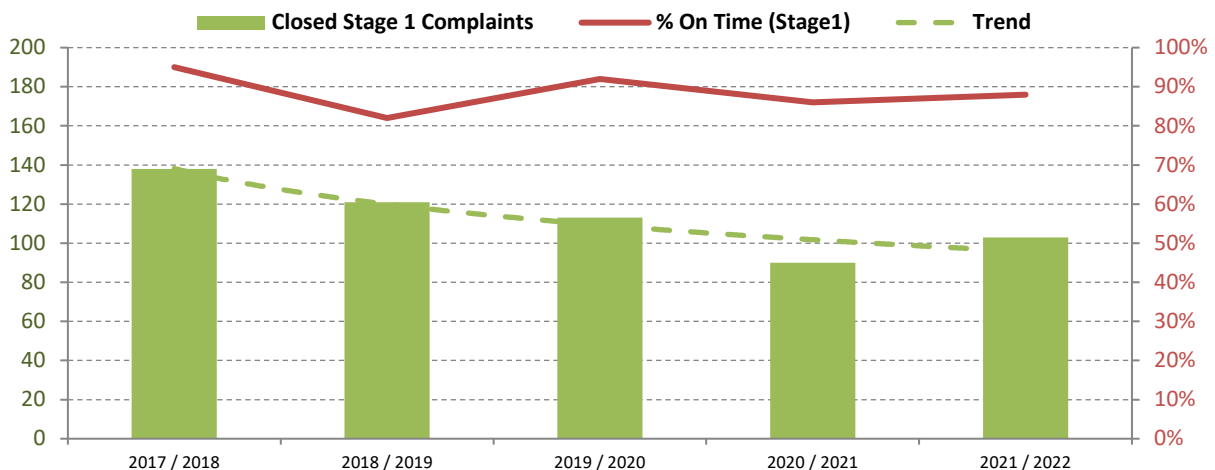
Root Causes, all Stage One Complaints and Representations



The full range of 12 categories are listed in **appendix a** on page 26.

Stage One Complaints Completed (with assistance of an advocate in brackets)					
Adult Social Care	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
Mental Health Long Term / Substance Misuse	3 (0)	4 (0)	4 (0)	13.5 (0)	9.5 (1)
Mental Health Short Term Services	4 (0)	4 (0)	4 (0)	4 (0)	2.5 (0)
All-Ages Disabilities [18-25]	3 (0)	9 (0)	14 (1)	18.5 (1)	19 (2)
Learning Disabilities [25+]	15 (0)	4 (0)	22 (2)		
Family Link / Orient Street	-	-	-	-	-
OPPD Assessment & Intake	9 (0)	15 (3)	7 (0)	15 (2)	9 (0)
OPPD Case Management	13 (2)	8 (1)	16 (0)	20.5 (0)	24 (1)
OPPD Occupational Therapy	9 (0)	2 (1)	4 (0)	6 (0)	7 (0)
OPPD Contact Team	9 (0)	9 (0)	11 (0)	6 (0)	10 (2)
OPPD Review Team	6 (0)	4 (0)	6 (0)	14 (1)	21.5 (4.5)
OPPD Reablement, Rehab and Hospital Discharge	10 (0)	8 (0)	6 (0)	10.5 (3)	11 (2)
Southwark Resource Centre	-	-	1 (0)	1 (0)	-
Service Development	2 (0)	-	-	-	-
Finance	20 (3)	23 (2)	16 (0)	17 (0)	24.5 (7.5)
Business Support, Customer Resolutions, Other	-	-	2 (0)	1 (0)	-
Total	103 (5)	90 (7)	113 (3)	121 (7)	138 (20)

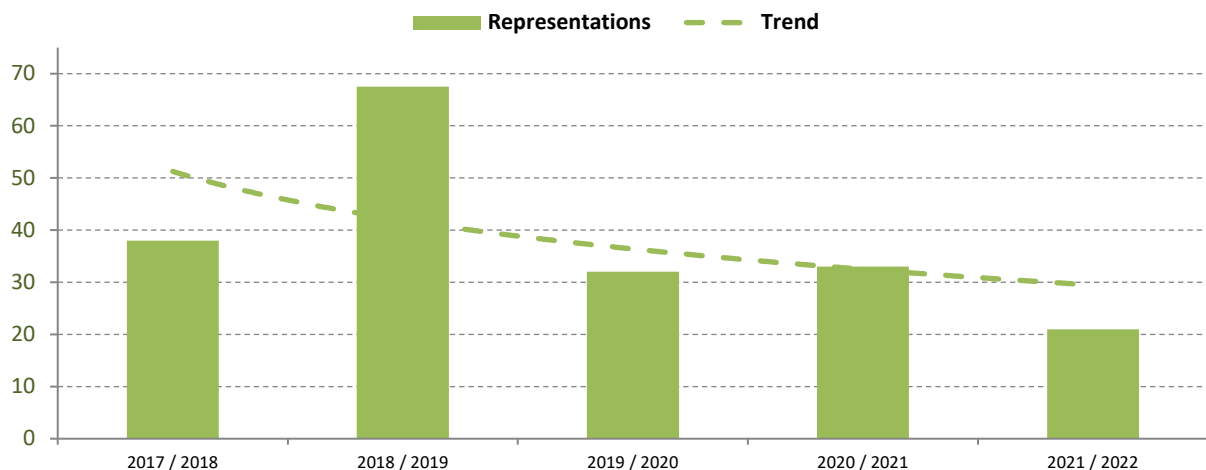
When combined with the number of representations (see following table), the total number of new cases is unchanged and this compares well with the historical statistics you can see reported above.



Other Representations (with assistance of an advocate in brackets)					
Adult Social Care	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
Mental Health Long Term / Substance Misuse	-	-	-	3 (0)	1 (0)
Mental Health Short Term Services	-	-	-	1 (0)	-
All-Ages Disabilities [18-25]	1 (0)	2 (0)	1 (0)	4 (1)	4 (1)
Learning Disabilities [25+]	1 (0)	1 (0)	2 (0)		
Family Link / Orient Street		-	4 (0)	-	-
OPPD Assessment & Intake	3 (0)	7 (2)	4 (0)	11 (0)	3 (0)
OPPD Case Management	2 (0)	-	5 (0)	9 (0)	8 (2)
OPPD Occupational Therapy	1 (0)	-	1 (0)	5 (0)	2 (1)
OPPD Contact Team	6 (0)	8 (0)	9 (0)	7 (0)	9 (3)
OPPD Review Team	-	4 (0)	4 (0)	6 (0)	6 (1)
OPPD Reablement, Rehab and Hospital Discharge	3 (0)	1 (0)	2 (0)	7.5 (0)	3 (0)
Southwark Resource Centre	-	-	-	-	-
Service Development	-	-	-	-	-
Finance	4 (0)	10 (0)	-	15 (1)	3 (0)
Business Support, Customer Resolutions, Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total	21 (0)	33 (2)	32 (0)	67.5 (3)	38 (8)

We continue to seek agreement for resolutions without the need for a full, formal investigation. This rightly depends on the agreement of the complainant, and ordinarily a rapid turnaround time.

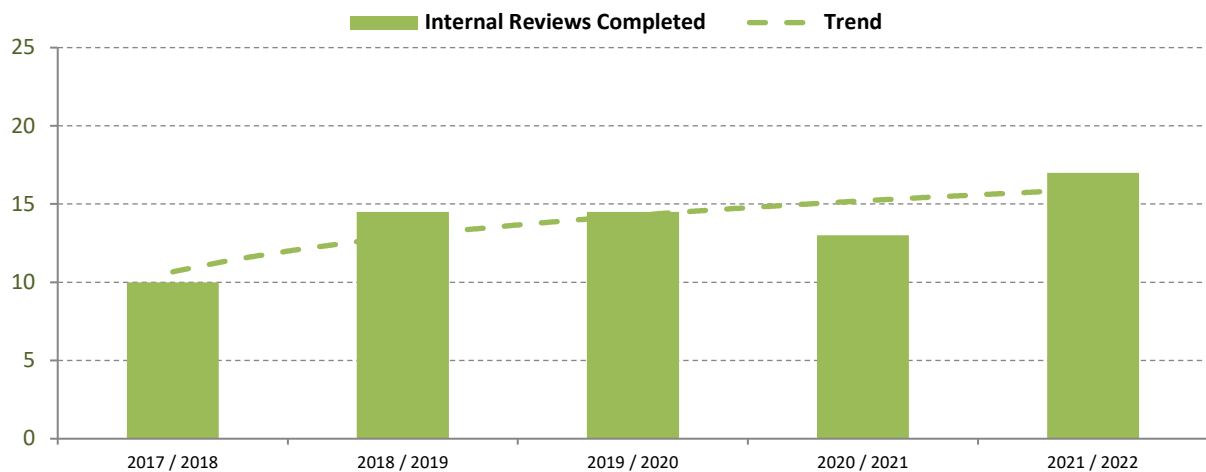
The 21 reported cases above equal 21 complaints which have been addressed and remedied 'on receipt' and represent 21 individuals for whom a 20 working day investigation period has been relieved.



Internal Complaint Reviews					
Adult Social Care	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
Mental Health Long Term / Substance Misuse	-	-	3	1	-
Mental Health Short Term Services	-	-	-	1	-
All-Ages Disabilities [18-25]	-	-	6	1	2
Learning Disabilities [25+]	3	5	-		
Family Link / Orient Street	-	-	-	-	-
OPPD Assessment & Intake	1	1	-	3	1
OPPD Case Management	3	-	0.5	1	3
OPPD Occupational Therapy	1	-	1	2	
OPPD Contact Team	1	1	-	-	-
OPPD Review Team	1	1	1	2	2
OPPD Reablement, Rehab and Hospital Discharge	2	4	0.5	1	-
Southwark Resource Centre	-	-	-	-	-
Service Development	-	-	-	-	-
Finance	5	1	2.5	2.5	1
Business Support, Customer Resolutions, Other	-	-	-	-	1
Total	17	13	14.5	14.5	10

Where a service user, representative, or stakeholder is dissatisfied with the stage one complaint response, they may request an internal review; irrespective of the Council's opinion on the merits of such a review.

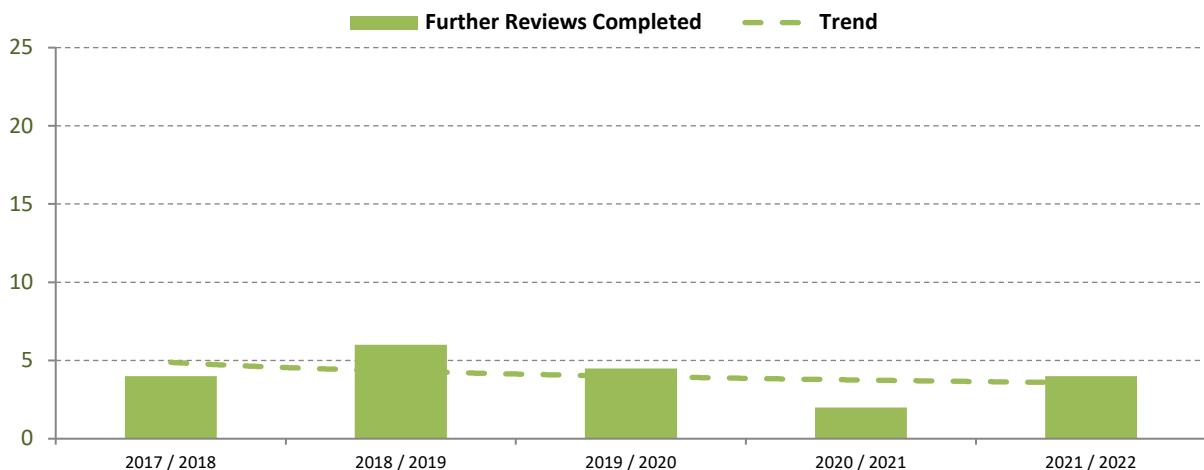
This should deliver an increased reassurance that persisting concerns are given full, objective consideration. An escalation rate of 17 internal reviews from 103 cases means the stage one outcome satisfaction rate has declined so we must redouble our efforts.



Further Complaint Reviews					
Adult Social Care	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
Mental Health Long Term / Substance Misuse	-	-	-	-	-
Mental Health Short Term Services	-	-	-	1	-
All-Ages Disabilities [18-25]	-	2	1	1	2
Learning Disabilities [25+]	-	-	-	-	-
Family Link / Orient Street	-	-	-	-	-
OPPD Assessment & Intake	-	-	2	1	-
OPPD Case Management	1	-	-	-	-
OPPD Occupational Therapy	-	-	-	1	-
OPPD Contact Team	-	-	-	-	-
OPPD Review Team	-	-	-	-	-
OPPD Reablement, Rehab and Hospital Discharge	-	-	0.5	-	-
Southwark Resource Centre	-	-	-	-	-
Service Development	-	-	-	-	-
Finance	3	-	1	2	1
Business Support, Customer Resolutions, Other	-	-	-	-	1
Total	4	2	4.5	6	4

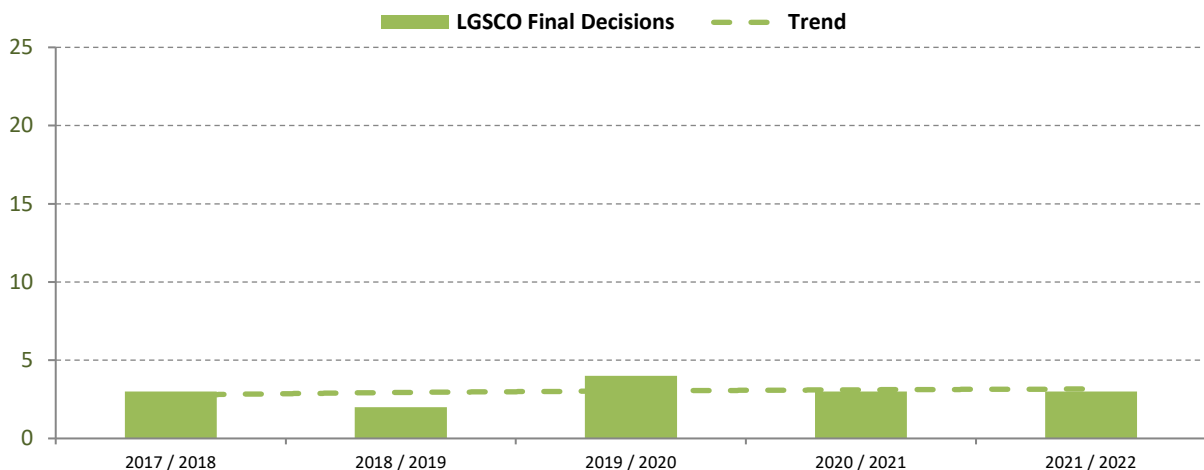
There were 124 stage one cases (complaints + representations) and only 3% reached the final stage of the Councils Adult Social Care Complaints Procedure.

The three Finance cases were mainly upheld, in part, across all three stages and each case had a different root cause. Had it been the case that these cases were not being upheld and were attributable to the same issues, then this would have been more a cause for concern.



Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Investigations (Final Decisions)					
Adult Social Care	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
Mental Health Long Term / Substance Misuse	-	-	-	1	1
Mental Health Short Term Services	-	2	1	-	-
All-Ages Disabilities [18-25]	-	-	-	-	-
Learning Disabilities [25+]	-	-	-	-	-
Family Link / Orient Street	-	-	-	-	-
OPPD Assessment & Intake	-	-	-	-	-
OPPD Case Management	-	-	1	1	1
OPPD Occupational Therapy	1	-	2	-	-
OPPD Contact Team	-	-	-	-	-
OPPD Review Team	-	-	-	-	-
OPPD Reablement, Rehab and Hospital Discharge	2	-	-	-	-
Southwark Resource Centre	-	-	-	-	-
Service Development	-	-	-	-	-
Finance	-	1	-	-	1
Business Support, Customer Resolutions, Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total	3	3	4	2	3

Of the 3 cases, fault was found in 2, producing a small number of actions for the Council. The performance of Southwark and other boroughs can be found here : <https://www.lgo.org.uk/your-councils-performance/> The Ombudsman's annual letter to the Local Authority is also published here, in addition to data on the number of upheld complaints and details relating to requested service improvements and compliance with Ombudsman recommendations.

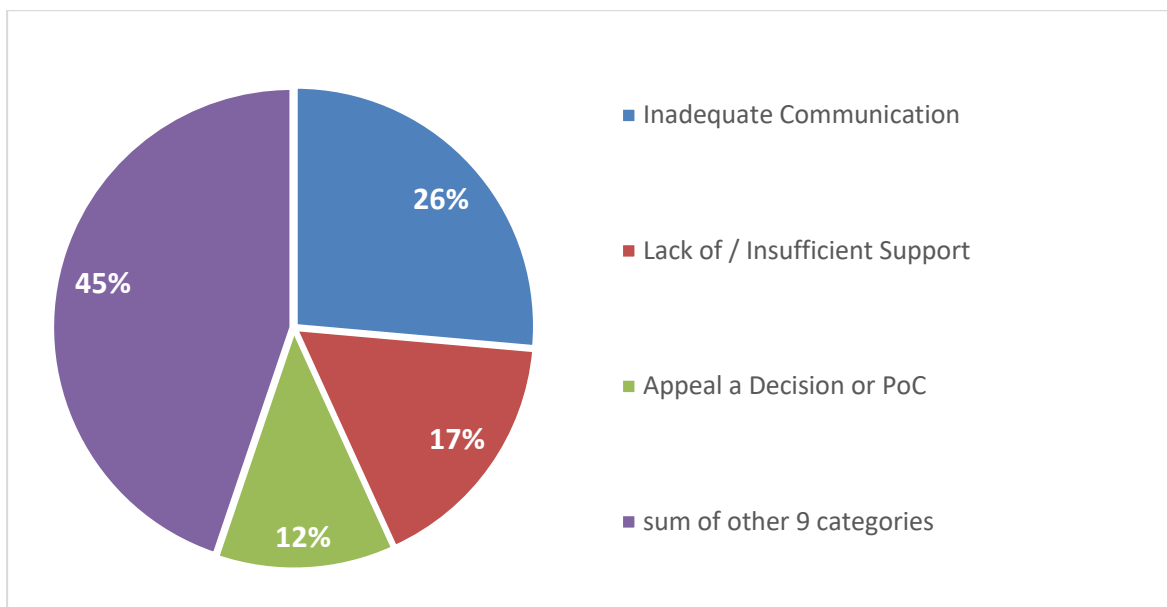


Outcomes, all Stage One and Representations					
Adults Social Care	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
Partly Upheld	28%	21%	19%	8%	16%
Upheld	17%	20%	16%	30%	15%
Not Upheld	24%	26%	34%	19%	30%
No Findings / Resolved	18%	24%	25%	32%	26%
Unresolved, Escalated (representations only)	0%	3%	0%	2%	1%
Withdrawn / Rejected	13%	6%	6%	9%	12%

There is a year-on-year shift towards complaints being upheld in whole or in part. This provides evidence of our clear intention of investigating objectively and finding the ‘truth’. Were the proportion of ‘not upheld’ complaints to increase significantly then we would rightly need to ask if our complaint responses were avoiding the identification of ‘fault’.

What would be a concern is if we found uphold rates fell at the same time as escalations and new complaint increased. However this is not what we observe.

Root Causes, all Stage One Complaints and Representations



Although communication issues are more prevalent in Adult Social Care Complaints than in some other areas, there are notably few concerns about the ‘conduct’ or ‘attitude’ of professionals.

The full range of 12 categories are listed in **appendix a** on page 26.

Stage One Complaints Completed (with assistance of an advocate in brackets)					
Commissioning	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
Care at Home	18 (0)	15 (0)	34 (0)	56 (0)	7 (0)
Care Homes	1 (0)	2 (0)	-	-	4 (0)
Other	0 (0)	2 (0)	-	-	-
Total	19 (0)	19 (0)	34 (0)	56 (0)	11 (0)

Although 19 complaints versus 19 in the previous year represents no change, when combined with 'representations' (see the following table) there has been a 26% reduction in cases.

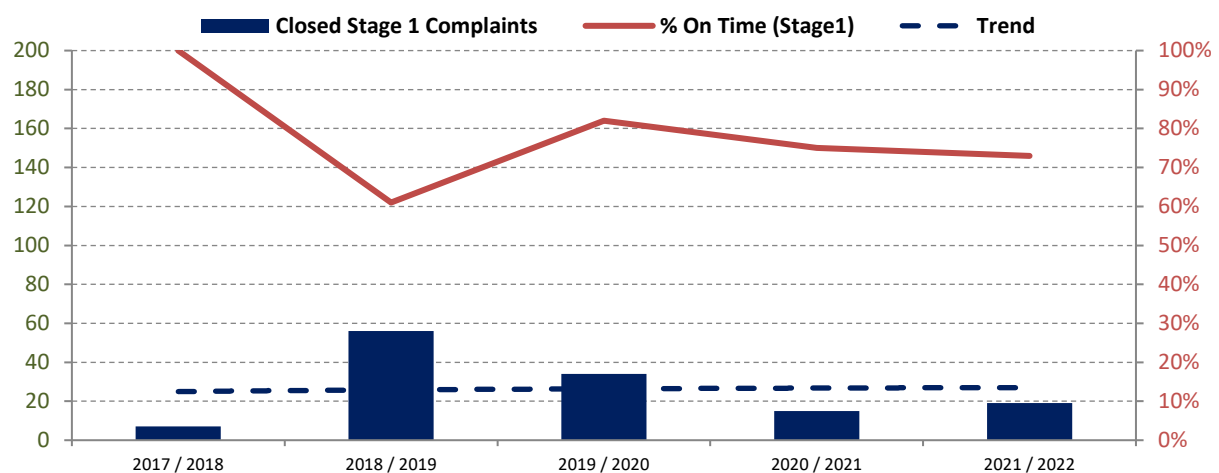
There are no cases being brought with the support of Advocates although there are many which are raised by family members.

Councils are required to report on the performance of our third party providers and this section of the report addresses the requirement.

Service users may contact their provider, or Care Home, directly and request a complaint response in accordance with the contractor's own policy. However, because of the 'golden thread of accountability' for the services we provide via our commissioned partners, we will administer and investigate all complaints which are raised directly with the Council.

It is those cases which are reported on in this section.

We have done a little work this year to re-examine and correct some of the historical data and so the figures for previous years have been amended and broken down across the three categories now seen in these tables. The following tables have also been updated in the same way.



Other Representations (with assistance of an advocate in brackets)					
Commissioning	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
Care at Home	1 (0)	6 (0)	6 (0)	23 (0)	2 (0)
Care Homes	-	1 (0)	-	2 (0)	1 (0)
Other	-	1 (0)	-	-	2 (0)
Total	1 (0)	8 (0)	6 (0)	25 (0)	5 (0)

These are complaints addressed 'on the spot'. It may not be possible to address concerns about contracted providers without meaningful dialogue and so the number of 'representations' to 'formal complaints' may be lower than for some other areas.

Internal Complaint Reviews					
Commissioning	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
Care at Home	1	2	1.5	-	-
Care Homes	-	-	-	-	-
Other	1	-	1	-	-
Total	2	2	2.5	0	0

2 complaints not being addressed to the complainants satisfaction at the first attempt is a very low number, but one for which we cannot draw any additional understanding.

Further Complaint Reviews					
Commissioning	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
Care at Home	1	1	0.5	-	-
Care Homes	-	-	-	-	-
Other	1	-	-	-	-
Total	2	1	0.5	0	0

Only 2 complaint did not, in the opinion of the complainant, satisfactorily address their concerns at Internal Review. It is encouraging, that, as in the table above, this is so few.

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Investigations (Final Decisions)					
Commissioning	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
Care at Home	-	1	-	1	-
Care Homes	1	-	-	-	-
Other	-	-	-	-	-
Total	1	1	0	1	0

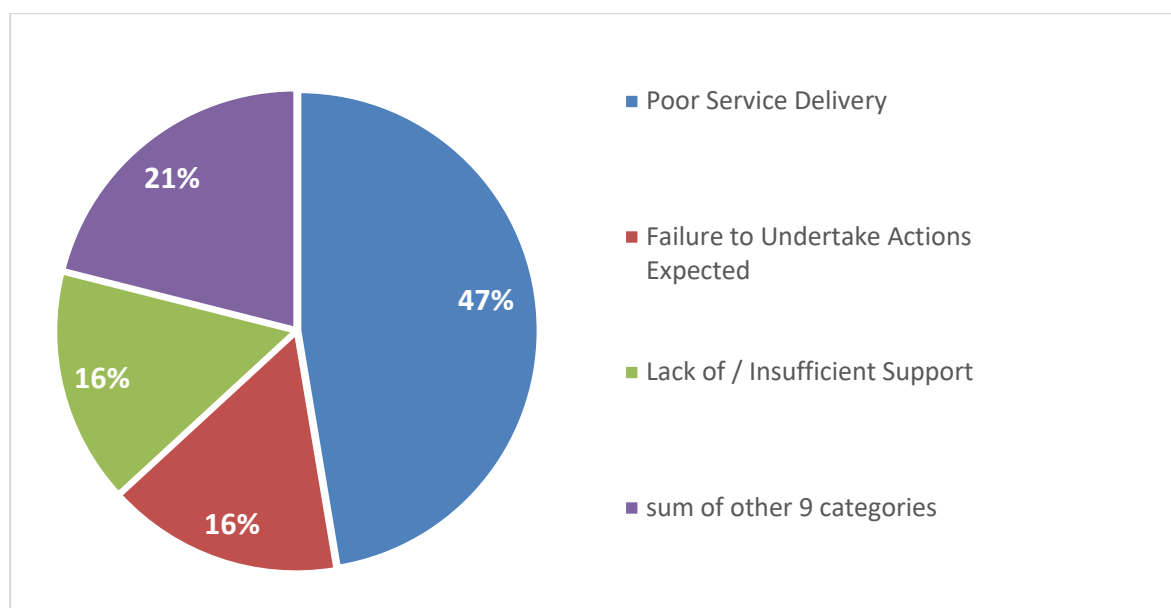
Some fault was found on the part of the Local Authority, in the one case investigated. The performance of Southwark and other boroughs can be found here : <https://www.lgo.org.uk/your-councils-performance/>

The Ombudsman’s annual letter to the Local Authority is also published here, in addition to data on the number of upheld complaints and details relating to requested service improvements and compliance with Ombudsman recommendations.

Outcomes, all Stage One and Representations					
Commissioning	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
Partly Upheld	32%	22%	10%	8%	16%
Upheld	42%	30%	53%	30%	15%
Not Upheld	5%	11%	7%	19%	30%
No Findings / Resolved	5%	30%	18%	32%	26%
Unresolved, Escalated (representations only)	0%	0%	0%	2%	1%
Withdrawn / Rejected	16%	7%	12%	9%	12%

The numbers of complaints investigated in the year are too low to reliably draw intelligence from the comparative ‘uphold rates’ reported above. When case numbers are low, we should expect the figures reported above to deviate more markedly.

Root Causes, all Stage One Complaints and Representations



The full range of 12 categories are listed in **appendix a** on page 26.

Complaints System Review

Are our investigations objective, sufficient and successful ?

- The strongest evidence available is to look at complaints which were not successfully resolved at the first opportunity and to look at whether subsequent investigations return the same findings.
- The escalation rates after stage one across each of the Directorates [11%,15%, 17%, 11%] remains comparable to previous years and remains at an expected level across each Service. The total escalation rate is 13% and the team are discussing what will make an appropriate target in respect of escalations.
- We also look at the outcomes from subsequent investigation stages to see where previous findings are changed. In Children & Families and Education, around two thirds of stage two investigations resulted in additional learning being found, beyond that which was identified at stage one. In Adult Social Care and Commissioning about half of complaints derived additional learning at the first escalation stage. There is a possible message here either about the objectivity of stage one investigations or first-level escalation investigations.
- Additional direct evidence can be derived from the numbers of complaints which have to be investigated by the Ombudsman and these numbers remain satisfactorily low – 7 final decisions, following 8 cases in the previous year, and in the year prior.

Survey Results

The team is using new software to manage and administer complaints and 'surveying' is a built-in function of the software. We shall, in the coming year, explore further how this functionality will be rolled-out and what intelligence it can provide to us. We have to finely balance an open-minded inquisition of our own activities with the priorities of those who raised a complaint. Our experience is the complainants are more invested in the particulars of their own complaint than responding to generalised questions about how the complaints process works. This needs to be central to future survey activities.

Habitual Contact / Single Point of Contact

There is now only 1 correspondent subject to restrictions under the Habitual Contact Policy. This from a cohort of 330 000 Southwark inhabitants. As public servants, it is very seldom appropriate to control the contact which complainants have with us. It can be said that this action of last resort is not being abused. We will continue to assist this one resident as best we can, within the provisions of the Habitual Contact Policy, and in such a way that is sufficiently respecting of their own needs.

Compliments

We cannot say that an increased number of compliments means that services have performed better. Rather what we must do is ensure a system exists to record praise received from external parties and that it is used alongside learning from our mistakes, to inform good practice.

What we have seen in 2021/2022 is a relatively consistent number of compliments across Children & Families, and a close to 50% increase in compliments reported under Adult Social Care, when compared to the previous year.

Whilst we cannot say this means improved performance, it is surely more reassuring than if the numbers of compliments was falling.

Are Complaints activities understood and are our services being accessed equally and fairly ?

At the time of writing, the data acquired from the 2021 census has not yet been published.

- The 2011 Census showed the mean age for a Southwark resident is **34 years**
The mean age, where known, of our complainants in the period was : **43 years**
- The ratio of male to female, in the 2011 census was Male **49% : 51%** Female
The ratio of male to female complainants this year was : Male **33% : 67%** Female

Ethnicity (where known)	Complainants 2021 - 2022	Previous Year	2018 - 2019	Last Census (2011)
White	31%	42%	43%	54%
Black incl. Black British, African and Caribbean	52%	47%	43%	27%
Asian incl. Asian British	1%	3%	6%	10%
Mixed / Multiple	8%	5%	5%	6%
All Other	8%	3%	3%	3%

- We have discussed with The Head of Performance and Systems the data we have which compares outcomes with complainant's backgrounds. The study reflects on all 9 protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act and further work will follow to understand better.
- We look also at prevalence of complaints made by those young people who are in care, or who have previously been. 1 in 8 complaints relating to children and families were made by the young person themselves.
- In the two previous years, new complaints made with a formal advocate had increased from 7% to 9% of cases. In this year, the rate reduced to 6%. A majority of these cases were statutory Children Act cases, which itself is a positive because the Council contracts a third sector organisation to assist young people to raise complaints. A low incidence of advocate-use in other areas generally supports that people were enabled and empowered to raise their concerns without specialist assistance.

Are we learning from complaints ?

The most obvious data is the number of new complaints cases, and whilst there are some variations at the team level (see tables on pages 4, 10, 13 and 19) overall we see only a small change.

Our recently update range of 'root causes' assists us to understand if the same mistakes continue to be made.

Although the root cause categories have changed, what we can understand is that the root causes across the four Directorates shares a common prevalence for issues around communications and client expectations. It may also be possible to say that there is a small difference from one Directorate to another.

To answer the question, we may be learning from complaints, but this in itself is not enough to reduce complaints about communication. It may be said that, such a large organisation with so many inter-dependencies between teams is likely always to have challenges around communication. It may also be said, that when asked by service management 'what one thing can we learn from better?' the communication and client expectations is the answer, and so the key to making the most substantial improvements.

There is a helpful indicator in the form of financial remedies paid, as this provides a quantitative measure of the more significant faults identified through the course of our investigations.

Although this cannot be interpreted as a qualitative assessment of the Councils performance, when taken in to account alongside some of the factors described above, we are able to start to gain an impression for whether all the work we are doing to share and report learning is sufficiently effective.

What we wish to see here is a consistent and low total cost, spread across each area. We feel this supports the idea that the appropriate principle for being prepared to make symbolic payments, is understood and applied equally. We feel the data reported below does show a consistent spread and a realistically acceptable total cost.

	2021 - 2022	2020 - 2021	2019 – 2020	2018 – 2019	2017 – 2018
Children & Families	£9250.00	£7900.00	£ 6240.00	£ 15451.00	£ 0.00
Education	£300.00	£0.00	£ 0.00	£ 0.00	£ 0.00
Adult Social Care	£1900.00	£2596.40	£ 7200.00	£ 0.00	£ 2877.92
Commissioning	£1300.00	£0.00	£ 0.00	£ 0.00	£ 0.00

Complaints Team Update

The year has seen our Investigator who covers Adult Social Care and Commissioning return from maternity leave whilst our manager Clare has moved temporarily in the opposite direction. The team have returned to the office, in part, as the Council begins to slowly return to the desk-based ways of working we were so used to prior to the pandemic.

The Social Care Complaints Team work ever more closely with the Councils Corporate Complaints Team, and we share a common line of reporting. We recently held a 'return to work' event in which we presented to corporate team colleagues about some of the nuances and features of our work, and we will continue information-sharing and collaborating until the seams where our teams join are no longer visible.

The 'new normal' appears for mixed home and office working, and the team can report feeling supported in this new, flexible environment. New technologies are assisting us to speak-with and meet with people in a way which offers new efficiencies of time, particularly with the increased prevalence of online meetings and events. Our officers have sought, in years gone by, to spend time at other Council buildings, so as to be on-hand for unplanned discussions and working with video conferencing being so familiar to colleagues may have helped us to develop better relationships and better understanding.

Most stages of our complaints procedures demand collaboration between complaints and social care professionals and so one of our duties has always been to promote appropriate complaint handling philosophies. We seek out guidance and best practice and we present to a range of audiences, ranging from events organised by third parties to social care management meetings and direct meetings with Councillors.

In this section, for the 2020-2021 report, we explained a number of specific activities we were undertaking for the purpose of continuous improvement and service development.

We introduced a new range of 'root causes' which are now firmly embedded in our activities and are generated valuable organisational intelligence. The reasons for complaints brought are represented in this report on pages 9, 12, 18 and 22.

We explained that we were taking a more involved role in promoting the learning from complaints and we believe our quarterly management reports represent the best possible practice in this area.

We explained our intentions to extending surveillance of complainant backgrounds to each of the protected characteristics defined by the Equality Act. We have a full year of data now so that we can indeed analyse complaint outcomes to ensure complainants of each background are being provided with equal complaint outcomes.

Whilst the nature of our work is always challenging, we are confident that our proactive and self-directed efforts are resulting in an unsurpassed service to our residents. We cannot necessarily prevent complaints but we are confident that the process which follows is appropriately professional, compliant and sympathetic.

Appendix a All 'root cause' categories

The full list of complaint root causes, which are referred to primarily on pages 9, 12, 18 and 21, are :

Failure to Undertake Actions Expected	Poor Service Delivery
Lack of / Insufficient Support	Payment Failure
Inadequate Communication	Inappropriate Communication or Action
Process Delays	Assessment or Reports
Invoicing or Account Issue	Case Handover / Ownership
Appeal a Decision or Package of Care	Multiple or Other Concerns

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