

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGO) Complaints 2018/19

Background and Context

This briefing note is in response to the annual review letter issued by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman on 24th July 2019 (copy attached as Appendix 1), for the year 2018/19, published on their website on 31st July 2019.

Number of Complaints

Croydon has the largest population out of all London boroughs. To put this into context Croydon's population is 372,752 compare to Kensington & Chelsea's population 155,594 and the average population in London is 262,777, therefore Croydon has on average a 50% higher population than any other London borough.

During 2018/19 the LGO received 213 complaints /enquires relating to the Croydon, this was the highest number across London boroughs. However if you put this into context in relation to per head of population Croydon is not the highest. See table 1 below.

Table 1.

	Borough	Population	Complaints raised to the LGO	Complaints raised as a percentage of population
1	Lambeth	314,242	207	0.066%
2	Barking and Dagenham	194,352	127	0.065%
3	Haringey	263,386	166	0.063%
4	Waltham Forest	265,797	167	0.063%
5	Newham	318,227	199	0.063%
6	Merton	203,223	117	0.058%
7	Hillingdon	286,806	164	0.057%
8	Croydon	372,752	213	0.057%
28	Tower Hamlets	272,890	96	0.035%
29	Kensington and Chelsea	155,594	54	0.035%
30	Bexley	236,687	72	0.030%
21	Richmond upon Thames	191,365	57	0.030%
32	Wandsworth	310,516	90	0.029%

As you can see Croydon are 8th in the league table when you compare number of complaints against per head of population, with Lambeth being at the top of the league table and Wandsworth at the bottom. (City of London is excluded)

The volume of complaints in 2018/19 fell by 6% (13) complaints when compared to 2017/18.

Upheld Complaints

Table 2 below reflects the number of upheld complaints against the number of complaints investigated by the LGO. (It should be noted that the number of complaints made to the LGO and the number of complaints investigate by the LGO is not the same.)

Table 2.

	B	F	H	I
	Borough	Complaints investigated by the LGSCO	Upheld	Percent Upheld
1	Greenwich	22	18	81.82%
2	Brent	29	23	79.31%
3	Bromley	42	33	78.57%
4	Newham	35	27	77.14%
22	Croydon	65	38	58.46%
29	Islington	26	11	42.31%
30	Kensington and Chelsea	12	5	41.67%
31	Richmond upon Thames	13	5	38.46%
32	Camden	37	10	27.03%

As you can see Croydon are 22nd in the league table with 58% of complaints being upheld, Greenwich having the highest number of upheld complaints at 81%, and Camden having the lowest upheld complaints at 27%.

Of the 213 complaints made to the LGO table 3 provides a breakdown of the service areas for which the complaints was made and also the number of up held complaints again the service area.

Table 3.

Department	Division	No of Complaints Made	No of complaint Investigated Upheld
Place	Planning	19	5
	Environmental	31	3
	Anti-Social Behaviour		1
	Highways & Transport	34	
Children's Families & Education	SEN	31	6
Health Well-Being & Adults	Adult Social Care	25	6
Finance Investment & Risk	Revenues & Benefits	31	12
Gateway Housing		34	5
Other		8	0
Total		213	38

The highest number of complaints received was for Gateway Housing and also Highways and Transport although it should be noted that 28 complaints for Highways and Transport were all relating to Addiscombe Court Road, with 1 resident making 28 complaints on behalf of others.

It should also be noted that Croydon are 100% compliant with the LGOs recommendations and this is not the case with all London Boroughs.

Root Cause for Upheld Complaints

Table 4 provides the number of upheld complaints and the root cause for these.

Table 4.

No of Complaints Upheld	Service	Root Cause
6	SEN	Child out of education
		Poor complaint handling
		Parents unhappy with care plans
6	Adult Social Care	Delays
		No care plan
		No annual review
		Poor record keeping
5	Gateway	Medical evidence ignored
		No suitable accommodation
		Delays
12	Revs & Bens	Officer quality
		Delays
		Incorrect Enforcement action
		Poor complaint handling
5	Planning	Officer quality
		Poor complaint handling
3	Environmental	Delays
1	Anti-social Behaviour	Poor complaint handling

As you can see delays in communication and poor complaint handling at stage 1 are common themes within the upheld complaints.

Lessons Learned

The Corporate complaints team are currently running a programme of complaint handling training across the organisation, the outcome is to improve the quality of stage 1 complaint handling.

The Corporate complaints team are engaging with all service areas regarding delays in answering correspondence from residents. As a result of the new CRM system there is better reporting which highlights this, in addition to this monthly bulletins from the Corporate complaints team are shared with all service areas, and this reminds services of the importance of keeping up to date with answering customer correspondence, and the consequences of not doing so.

Within Revenues and Benefits a new officer quality checking system has been introduced to improve officer quality, when dealing with residents accounts.

A formal review of processes within the SEN team was undertaken to improve the service for children out of education.

A formal review of policy and procedures for allocating temporary accommodation also took place, to ensure that priority was given to families that were living in unsuitable accommodation.

A review of all placements in residential accommodation took place to ensure that all residents had an appropriate care and support plan in place.

Appendix1

Annual Review Letter Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman dated 24th July 2019 (attached separately)