

Coram Voice provided 86 advocacy episodes to 74 Children and Young People during the year. 12 young people were re-referred in the same period. There were 54 new referrals and 60 closures.

In addition, 14 children and young people were provided with advocacy funded by Coram Voice Outreach and Always Heard

Service Overview

Independent advocacy advice and support has been provided by Coram Voice advocates via our free phone advocacy support line, face to face in the community in Camden, but also across the country via our national team of advocates.

Our service is designed to be as accessible as possible, via our free phone helpline, text and website, outreach, referrals from professionals and carers, and promoted with age specific and translated promotional materials. All Camden young people have access to telephone interpretation where English is not their first language. Our specialist advocates for children with disabilities and young people 16+ means our service is well equipped to effectively support children and young people with specific needs. Advocates will also make initial referral visits for young people unable to communicate verbally via our helpline service.

Coram Voice advocacy is wishes and feelings based and led by the young people who request our support, where they have capacity and are able to instruct the service directly. If capacity is lacking on any particular issues the service uses a non-instructed advocacy model where the advocate will liaise with all those people who know the young person, visit them in all available settings, ascertain as much as possible about what the young person is communicating through non-verbal communication, and present a non-instructed advocacy report highlighting findings and whether all rights and entitlements are being met.

Our advocates aim to empower Camden young people by giving them information on their rights and entitlements in order to make informed decisions, also about ways in which they can engage with Children's Services and speak out about their wishes and feelings. The advocate will not seek to influence the child or young person with regard to their decision making, and operates a confidential service in regards to all personal information unless risks are identified in safeguarding situations which will need to be shared.

Our entire advocacy is undertaken in line with the *National Standards for the Provision of Children's Advocacy Services*.

The practice of our advocates depends on the needs of Camden children and young people, but is likely to include phone calls and other correspondence with their social worker, supporting them at meetings and reviews, and helping them through the Children’s Act complaints process if they request this. As our advocacy is child led Coram Voice advocates always explore how the child or young person would like this support to take place.

Coram Voice advocates work in an open and transparent way, so will always tell children and young people about any conversations they have had with professionals. However, they also understand that there may be times when it would be harmful, or inappropriate, for them to share particularly sensitive information which the professional needs to take time and care to communicate.

Types of Advocacy Cases

All young people are supported to explore options for resolving their concerns via informal resolution and representation or via the complaints process. Cases have been marked as complaint cases where substantive advice and complaints work has been undertaken and there are instances where a complaint has not been submitted due to issues being resolved informally or the young person changing their mind.

Period 2020/2021 (2019/2020 shown in brackets)	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year to date totals
Number of new cases regarding a complaint where an advocate has been allocated	0 (5)	4 (2)	1 (6)	3 (5)	8 (18)
Number of new cases where representation has been allocated (not related to a complaint)	7 (8)	12 (13)	13 (9)	14 (12)	46 (42)

Outcomes, reflections and projections

Please see attached *Camden Advocacy Final Q4 monitoring Data 2020-2021*

Based on the reports of young people and advocates, over the reporting period the main issues identified were:

- *Concerns about social workers/ personal advisors:* a high number of young people report inconsistent contact/ lack of availability from their allocated worker.
- *Housing/ request to move placements:* a significant number of young people seeking advocacy support for issues relating to wish to move from current accommodation, to gain access to long term stable housing and to secure a social housing tenancy.
- *Immigration:* a few of the young people receiving advocacy report difficulties navigating the immigration system and share feelings of being unsupported by the local authority in doing so.
- *Finances:* significant number of young people reporting difficulties with managing debt/ budgeting. Also, issues with some CYP not knowing/difficulty accessing their savings whilst they were in the care of the local authority.

Young people accessing advocacy

Coram Voice has been committed to providing an advocacy service that meets the needs of the full diversity of the children and young people in Camden eligible for the service.

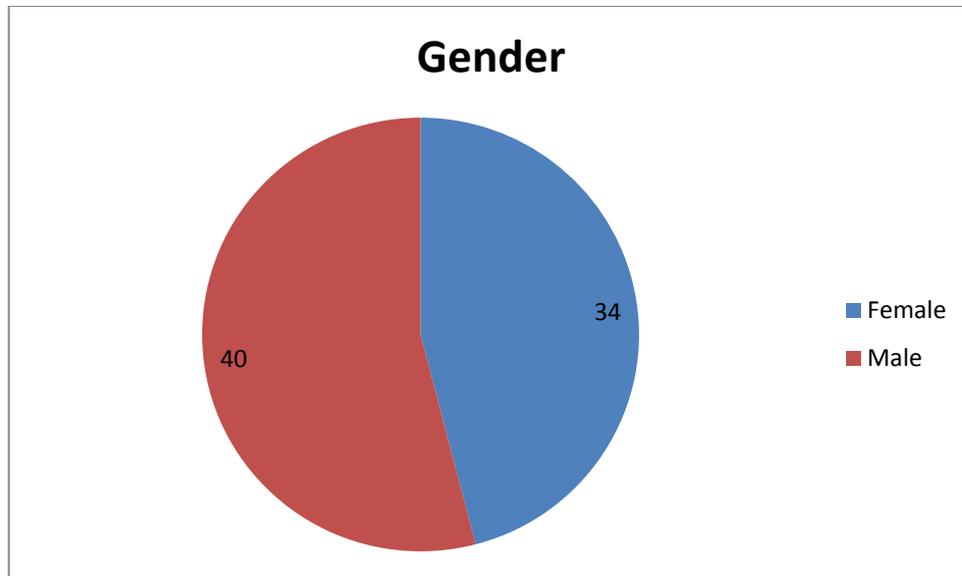
In Quarter 4, 40 young people were open to advocacy with 17 new referrals and 14 closures.

In the year 2020 – 2021, there were 86 advocacy episodes open, 54 new referrals and 60 closures.

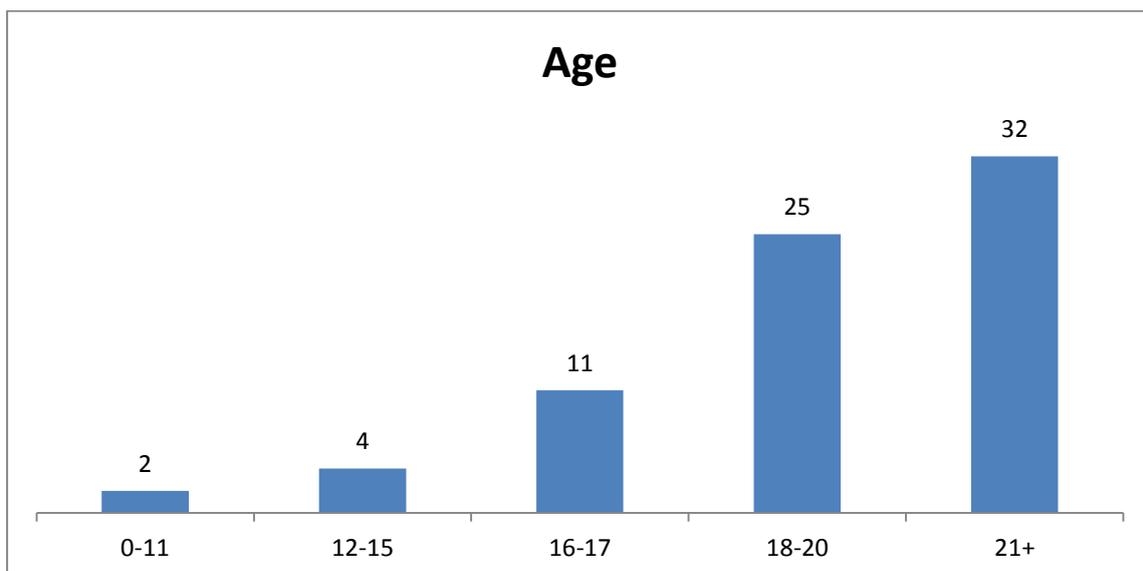
We provide the following annual data to allow us to work with Camden to ensure that we can identify areas where we need to develop our local model of service to ensure that ours is a truly representative service.

The annual graphs exclude the 12 re-referrals.

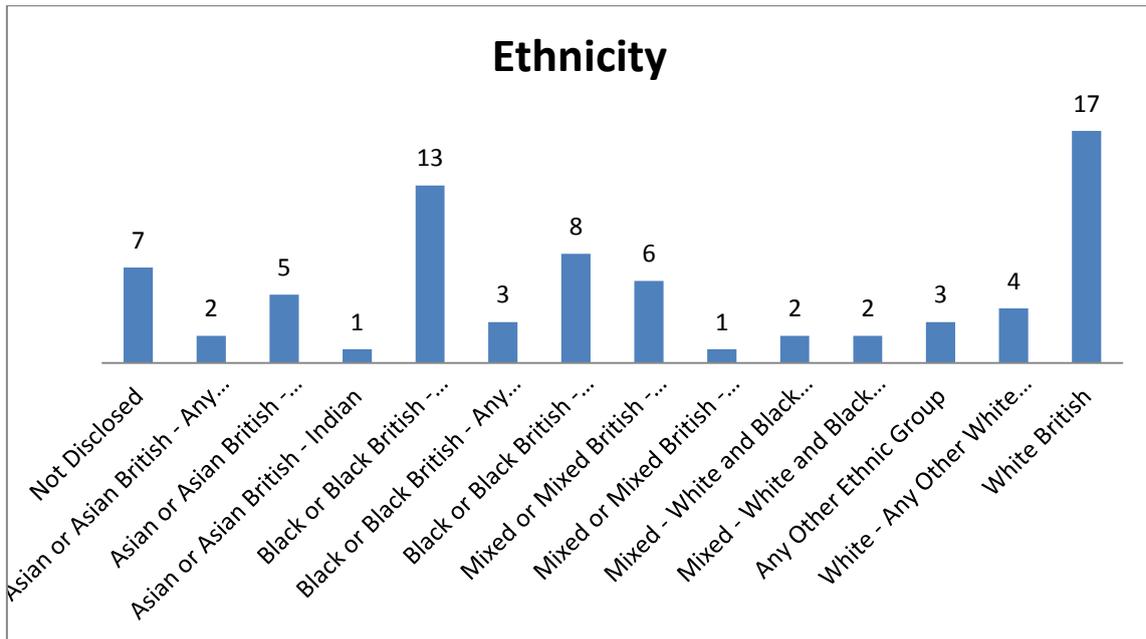
Gender: The gender breakdown of children and young people accessing the service was **46% female** (34) to **54% male** (40).



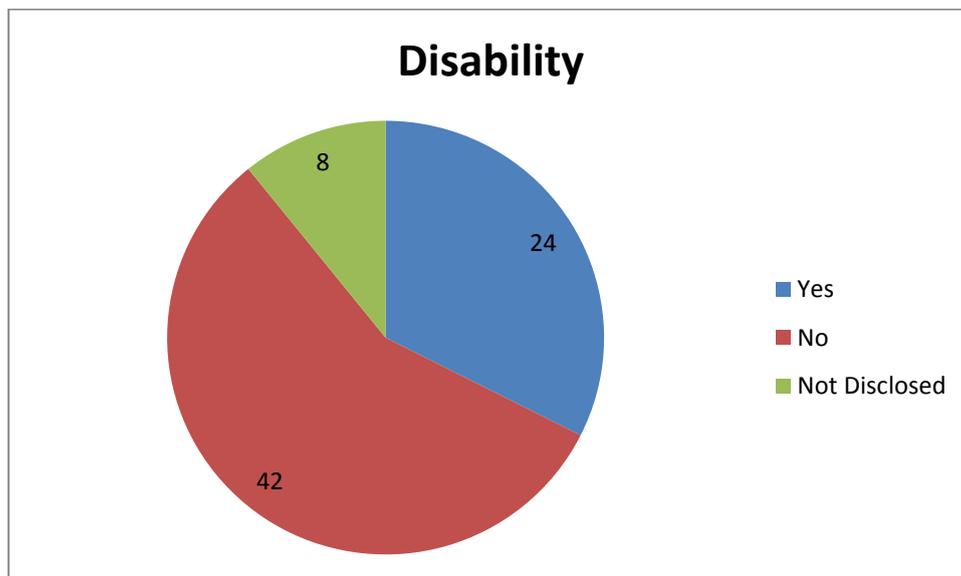
Age: The age breakdown of children and young people accessing the service were 2 children aged 0 – 11yrs, 4 young people were 12 – 15yrs, 11 young people were 16 – 17yrs, 25 were 18 -20yrs, and 32 were 21yrs or over. The data shows that the majority of children and young people accessing advocacy are in the 18+ group, making up 77% of the referrals received.



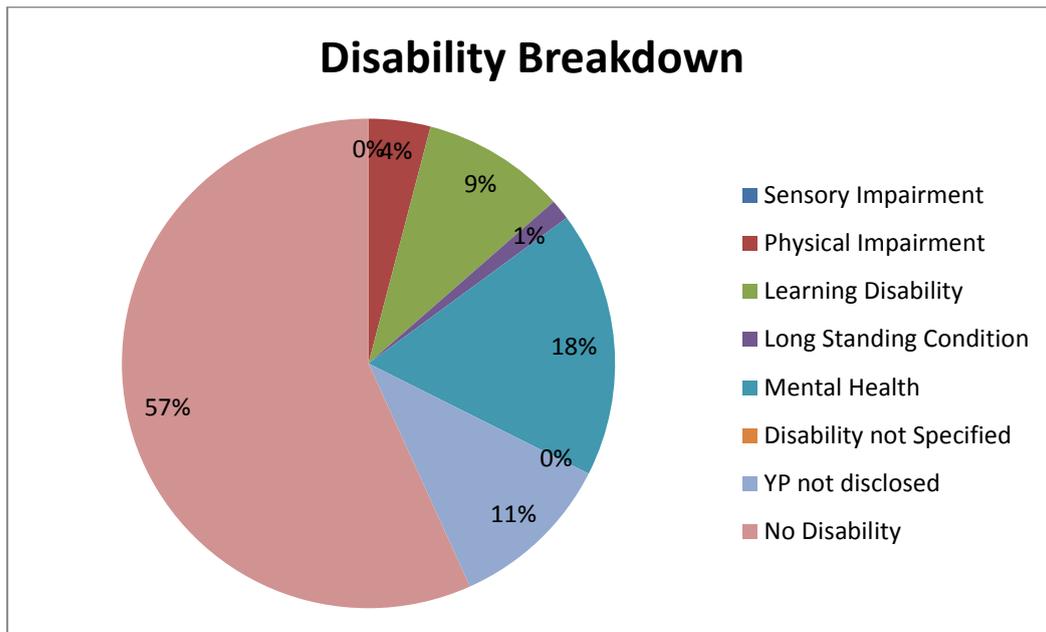
Ethnicity: The pie chart below illustrates the wide range of ethnicities of the young people accessing the service.



Disability: Advocacy was accessed by 24 young people in the reporting year that self-identify as having a disability, representing 32% of all the services users. 42 young people (57%) identified as not having a disability. 8 young people (11%) identified as not having a disability.



The pie chart below illustrates the different types of disabilities identified by the young people:



Quality Assurance

All advocates working with Camden young people have casework supervision on a monthly basis. Coram Voice also undertakes casework and supervision audits to ensure that both are compliant with our internal expectations and with those required by this contract. Advocates are also monitored on the hours used for each case as well as hours recorded against total available hours to ensure we become as efficient and effective as possible.

Outcomes for Young People

Coram Voice recognises that the issue based outcomes wanted by the young people cannot always be achieved, might be unrealistic, may change or even be beyond the scope of an advocate. As a result they are not always reliable indicators of high quality advocacy. We therefore measure the impact on each young person of having advocacy support by measuring how far they “travel” whilst the support is in place.

Young people self-assess against a range of indicators of how they felt at the start and then at the end of the advocacy relationship. This helps provide both us and the user a sense of what the young person has gained as a result of advocacy. The indicators we use are:

Motivation

I feel that I can achieve the aims and ambitions I have in my life

Safety

If something happened I was not happy with I would be able to tell someone

Wellbeing

I feel positive about my life.

Being Responsible

I feel able to make decisions for myself

Relationships

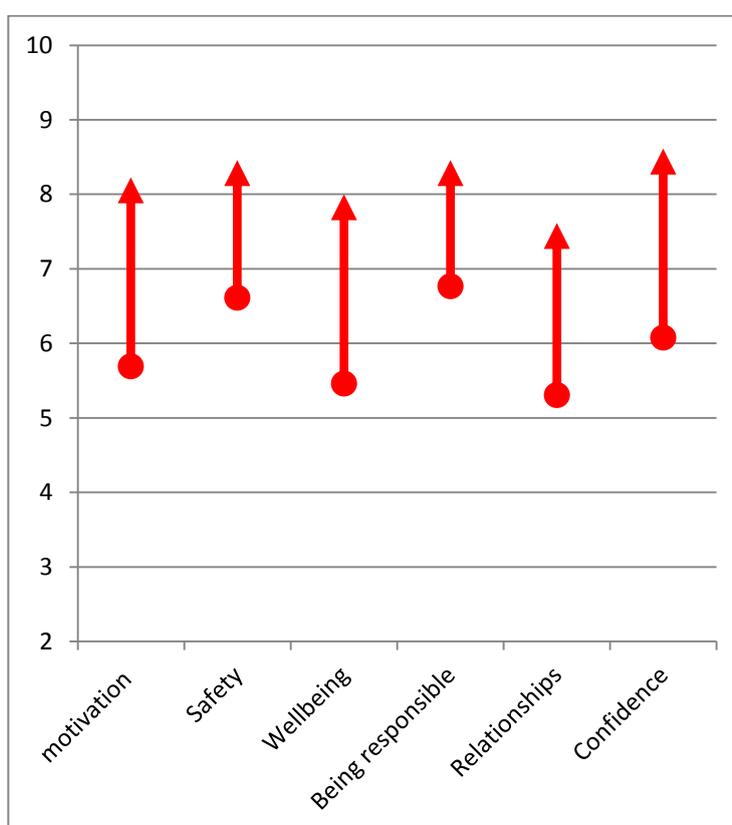
I feel I have a good relationship with the professionals and carers in my life

Confidence

I am able to speak up for myself in meetings

Young people are asked to score themselves out of 10 in regard to how they felt at the start of the advocacy relationship and again at the end.

Of the 60 young people who closed during the year, 13 young people completed the outcomes chart. The reasons for non-completions are shared quarterly. The chart below shows improvement across all the measured areas for the young people that completed the outcomes questionnaires over the year across all indicators.



Feedback and evaluation

Quarterly reports collate and share feedback gathered throughout the year.

Young person, feedback to advocate

"I'd like to say that the services provided by my advocate was amazing and really made the viability assessment a lot easier to comprehend as well as having the extra clarification provided by her made me feel like I understood everything I was being told. My advocate would contact me regularly to keep me up to date and check if I had anything to add. She would also provide help when she can. Overall, I feel that my advocate has advocated for me greatly."

Young person, feedback to advocate

"Thank you. I wouldn't be able to stay there (at placement) without your help."

Young person, feedback to advocate

"Thank you for being my advocate and help teach me how Camden should treat me. It's really helped develop my sense of self-worth!"

Young Person, Outcomes Chart

"Thank you, because of you Camden were quick to solve my problems. Because of you I have been able to speak to my family again and I feel happy again."

Young Person, Outcomes Chart

"I had a lot of them (social workers). I was a 1 before because I was very shy and I found it very quite hard to talk to my SW- and previous ones. Now I am number "10"- I feel more confident, before I was like not into talking. Now I feel more confident."

Young person, feedback to Local Authority, closure summary

"I have a phone now to call my family and a laptop and this happened very quickly because of my advocate. I have been waiting one year to get a laptop and my social worker told me that managers said I can't get one but now they changed their mind quickly and I will get a laptop this week so thank you for that."

Young person, feedback to Advocate, Outcomes Chart

"Thank you very much for all your help. I hit a lot of barriers this whole time but you really helped me and you kept trying until social gave what I needed. I'm doing well now."

Young person, feedback to Advocate, Outcomes Chart

"I thought advocacy was very helpful, it was very efficient, punctual and reliable. When my advocate said she would commit to something e.g. send an email, I would see that it was done promptly and efficiently."

Young Person, feedback to Local Authority, closure summary

"They (CS) could find ways and strategies to make the moving process easier. I was waiting for 6 months to move, I was supposed to move in March 2020 and it's taken until November. I think that there was a lack of communication within the local authority, not with my PA but more at a management level, I feel that they were dragging their feet which hindered any progress."

Young Person, Outcomes Chart

"Now I am able to speak up for myself more and express my points more confidently."

Young Person, Outcomes Chart

"Thank you for being here for me every time and calling always.(to advocate)"

Young Person, Outcomes Chart

“Coram Voice has been a great help. I have managed to achieve a lot of my goals. I wouldn't have been able to do it without an advocate helping to get my voice heard.”

Young person, feedback to Local Authority, closure summary

“Camden should follow their procedures a bit better and hopefully not make the mistakes to other young people as they made with me. I am thankful for the support from Coram Voice and happy that my voice finally got heard.”

Young person, feedback to Local Authority, closure summary

“I was outside of London and stayed for long time because of Covid but I wanted to be back. Now I am in London I am much happier. I am waiting for my permanent place now but my PA knows this now and it is the plan for me to go.”

Young Person, Outcomes Chart

“Yeah I think I will be able to advocate for myself now. It was hard, before I felt they weren't hearing me or my nan, but now that it is a completely different circumstance I am able to advocate for myself in meetings.”

Young person, feedback to Advocate,

“Amazing thank you so much for your amazing help, I don't think I would be were I was if it wasn't for you, once again I thank you and take care.”

Young Person, feedback to Advocate,

*“Thanks for all your help but I am back home with ***** now just like it should be, I didn't mean to ignore you; everything is okay. I wish you the best thank you so much for everything.”*

Young Person, feedback to Advocate,

“I appreciate your service and you made a difference in my life. My circumstances would be different if i did not have your support.”

Young person, feedback to Local Authority, closure summary

“I think they can keep the families that they are dealing with up to date with what is happening as I was left for quite a while not knowing what was going on or taking place.”

Advocate, feedback to Local Authority, closure summary

“Housing- YP was moved to a new property by Children's Services and there was significant damp. If a professional had visited the property with the YP during the move they would have seen the damp and been able to support YP as this was stressful for her with a baby.”

Advocate, feedback to Local Authority, closure summary

“There was significant delay to YP receiving his savings and this was a source of tension for YP and was starting to affect his trust with CS as he felt that CS were being dishonest and withholding information and finances. I would encourage CS to be transparent with YP and to give clear timeframes for all agreed actions. There were also delays in YP being allocated PA- it is important

that CS manage all transitions into 18+ provision with care to prevent any unnecessary disruption for YP. YP also needed a laptop, however CS had already provided a laptop which YP broke- PA supported YP to access free laptop via college."

Advocate, feedback to Local Authority, closure summary

"It is a disappointment that the failings highlighted in subsequent Stage 2 never seem to be taken into account in future practice. The level of delays in the complaint procedure causes frustration and perceptions of injustice."

Advocate, feedback to Local Authority, closure summary

"Failure to agree to the Stage 3 resulted in having to go through the time consuming process of going to the LGO and additional stress for the yp. It is hoped that lessons will be learnt for the future."

Advocate, feedback to Local Authority, closure summary

"Social Services left it up to yp's keyworker to support him apply for the EU settlement scheme. Solicitor advised that social services ought to provide specialist support in EUSS applications and not assign this task to key workers."

Advocate, feedback to Local Authority, closure summary

"This young person had a Pathway Plan, an EHCP and underwent a Care Act Assessment. Having these 3 documents caused a lot of concern and was very confusing for the young person - each document seemed to be written in isolation. It could help young people in this situation if the representatives from the relevant agencies reviewed how they produce these documents to see whether a young person would feel they had a single plan rather than three separate plans."

Advocate, feedback to Local Authority, closure summary

"YP was initially homeless when he came out of prison. PA supported yp to identify suitable college course that would support his needs however this was in Birmingham and yp needed accommodation. CS said they would not fund accommodation as yp needed to first evidence that he was attending and settling into course. This directly conflicts the conditions needed to engage in a course as yp's basic housing needs were not being met. YP's sister paid for hotels for yp and CS were extremely vague as to whether they would reimburse and initially refused, then offered only half, at which point a second complaint was submitted and the decision was overturned. CS must support the best interests of yp and have appropriate support plans in place so that yp are able to transition into mainstream society."

Advocate, feedback to Local Authority, closure summary

"YP lived with father under SGO from age 9-11. During this time he experienced physical abuse and neglect and the step-father facilitated contact with a pedophile where yp was sexually abused and groomed. When yp left the care of his step-dad, he reported the physical abuse to police who informed CS and also highlighted yp's comments about "strange things" that would happen at weekend with this other man. The yp says that the abuse could have been avoided if CS had been attentive and forthcoming. The Pedophile has recently be charged and sentenced.."

Advocate, feedback to Local Authority, closure summary

“YP’s PA was very proactive in responding to emails and providing updates. Advocate sent an email directly to the team manager who did not respond or acknowledge email.”

Advocate, feedback to Local Authority, closure summary

“There were significant delays to yp receiving adequate support from CS following abuse allegations. YP was due to be discharged from hospital and did not feel safe returning home. During this time yp turned 18 and CS closed yp case. YP was referred to a solicitor who continues to support yp to challenge CS. CS must respond in timely and thorough manner to all cases to ensure that yp are assessed from initial point of contact. The delays in this case have resulted in yp entitlements changing and legal challenge being further complicated causing more delays and potentially putting yp at serious risk.”

Advocate, feedback to Local Authority, closure summary

“LA very supportive throughout my involvement.”

Advocate, feedback to Local Authority, closure summary

“The LAC review was child focused. I have observed that there are occasions when contact is made by me I do not always receive a response. There is often a delayed response from SW, therefore I often have to chase up for a reply. This has a knock on effect as this has caused a bit of drift in terms of outcomes being achieved in a timely manner

Further information

The Coram Voice lead for the Camden advocacy service is:

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