# Council ordered to compensate disabled mother for inadequate housing



A South London council has been ordered to compensate a disabled mother over £3,500 following a decision by the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO), which found that the council violated her human rights by housing her in inadequate temporary accommodation for a prolonged period. The mother, referred to as Mrs X, experienced significant hardship after fleeing from an abusive relationship and was separated from her child for ten months due to the unsuitable living conditions provided by Lewisham Council.

The investigation revealed that the flat Mrs X was placed in had several serious issues, including a sewage problem, lack of hot water, and insufficient central heating, which made it difficult for her to maintain personal hygiene and carry out daily activities. Her carers, who assisted with washing, meal preparation, and laundry, informed the council soon after her relocation that there was not enough space for them to provide care safely.

Emails reviewed by the Ombudsman indicated that Lewisham Council was aware of the flat's unsuitability as early as August 2023, yet a formal assessment of the property was not conducted until five months later. This delay in addressing the housing situation exposed Mrs X to potential danger, as her former partner managed to track her down to the location. The LGO highlighted that Mrs X’s health conditions would have hindered her ability to escape if her partner had appeared at the property.

The LGO stated, "The impact on Mrs X of being left in the unsuitable property was profound," adding that she was hindered from attending medical appointments and receiving necessary health procedures due to the inadequate living environment. Furthermore, the Ombudsman underscored the emotional toll on Mrs X, who lived in fear of further abuse during this time.

Ultimately, in June 2024, Mrs X was moved into alternative accommodation, and the LGO mandated Lewisham Council to pay her £3,550 in compensation and provide a formal apology for their mishandling of her situation. The investigation also noted similarities to another case involving a mother and her children, who were similarly placed in unsuitable temporary accommodation for over a year.

In response to the LGO's findings, Councillor Will Cooper, Lewisham's Cabinet Member for Better Homes, acknowledged the significant negative impact of unsuitable accommodation and the frustrations surrounding waiting times for council decisions. He commented, "We are already making sure that the findings from this investigation are being shared among all relevant departments, with a particular focus on best practice when working with victims of domestic abuse."

Cooper also pointed to the broader housing crisis affecting Lewisham and London, citing increasing costs and limited availability of housing that place undue pressure on local governments and staff, resulting in subpar outcomes for residents in need.

The council has been instructed to produce an action plan to address the identified issues in its handling of such cases, with the LGO requesting updates on its progress.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.insidehousing.co.uk/news/london-council-at-fault-after-placing-disabled-mother-and-children-in-mouldy-accommodation-ombudsman-rules-87924> - This article discusses Lewisham Council's handling of a different case involving a disabled mother and her children, highlighting issues with temporary accommodations and council responses.
* <https://www.lgo.org.uk/information-centre/news/2024/jul/homeless-lewisham-mother-placed-in-mouldy-accommodation-near-to-her-abuser-ombudsman-reports> - Similar to the first URL, this article details another case where Lewisham Council faced criticism for its handling of temporary housing, highlighting themes of unsuitable accommodations and failure to address health concerns.
* <https://www.localgov.co.uk/Lewisham-apologises-over-family-placed-in-poor-accommodation/60883> - This article also covers the case of a family experiencing poor accommodation provided by Lewisham Council, emphasizing the council's apology and agreement to pay compensation.
* <https://councilmeetings.lewisham.gov.uk/documents/s19482/07AnnualComplaintsReport100113.pdf> - This document provides information on Lewisham's approach to complaints and special circumstances in housing, which could relate to how the council handles similar cases.
* <http://councilmeetings.lewisham.gov.uk/documents/s93752/Annual%20Complaints%20Report%202020-2021.pdf> - This report offers a broader view of Lewisham Council's complaint handling and performance, which may be relevant to general issues with temporary accommodations.
* <https://www.noahwire.com> - While the source article is from Noah Wire Services, the specific article URL is not provided, and it seems the article itself is not directly linked in the search results.
* <https://www.mylondon.news/news/south-london-news/south-london-woman-separated-son-31423084> - Please view link - unable to able to access data