

Introduction

The case of Camille highlights systemic challenges in safeguarding children with complex needs, particularly those requiring urgent placements. Camille was placed in temporary accommodation under emergency circumstances, but the setting was not suitable to meet her needs, leading to incidents that required police intervention and multiple hospital admissions. This case exposed significant gaps in placement sufficiency, inter-agency communication, and legal considerations.

The challenges faced in Camille's case are not isolated but part of broader systemic issues in securing appropriate care for children with complex needs. A lack of available therapeutic placements often results in the use of temporary accommodation that does not provide the stability, safeguarding, and support required. Additionally, delays in information-sharing between agencies and across boroughs can lead to inconsistent care and hinder timely interventions.

This briefing summarises key findings from Camille's case and raises critical questions for professionals to reflect on, ensuring improvements in safeguarding practice and inter-agency collaboration.

This case underscores the importance of coordinated systems, strengthened professional practice, and continuous learning. While systemic challenges such as placement sufficiency and funding constraints persist, there are meaningful local actions that can improve outcomes. Alignment with national reform through the Families First Partnership (FFP) Programme provides an opportunity to embed sustainable change and promote integrated, family-centred safeguarding approaches ([view the FFP guide](#))

Findings

Placement Sufficiency

Lack of appropriate placements, particularly for children with complex needs, led to a reliance on inadequate emergency accommodation.

Inter-Agency Communication

There were delays in notifying the receiving local authority about Camille's placement, leading to fragmented safeguarding responses. The timely sharing of safety plans by Children's Social Care was identified as good practice.

Legal and Ethical Considerations

The detention of children in inappropriate settings due to placement shortages raises human rights concerns. There is an urgent need for national and regional commissioning strategies to address placement sufficiency.

Voice of the Child

Ensuring children's perspectives inform decision-making remains a challenge in high-risk, high-pressure situations. Professionals must balance professional judgement with listening to the child's wishes and feelings.

Learning from Past Cases

Similar themes emerged in a previous case '[Cassie 7](#)', reinforcing the need for improved commissioning of placements. The South West London Complex Needs Audit aligns with these findings, suggesting regional collaboration as a possible solution.

Improving Practice

Work together as one system

Pre-placement joint planning:

Convene multi-agency meetings before crisis or out-of-area placements to map therapeutic and safeguarding needs collectively. Document decisions and interim supports where suitable placements are unavailable.

Reflective supervision and learning audits: Embed multi-agency supervision focused on complex placements. Audit whether intended safeguards and interventions were delivered and what learning has been applied.

Rapid notification and information sharing:

Implement a standard protocol to notify the receiving authority within 24 hours of placement. Use consistent templates to share essential information securely and promptly.

Targeted workforce development:

Managers should actively promote participation in multi-agency courses and create space for staff to reflect on learning within supervision or team discussions.

"One plan, one assessment" approach: Build on existing assessments rather than starting anew. Keep plans live, revisiting them regularly to maintain continuity and shared accountability

Align with the FFP Programme's integrated "Family Help + Child Protection" model. This encourages seamless transitions between early help, targeted support, and statutory child protection, avoiding duplication and delay.

Children's voices must be central to all safeguarding decisions. Within 48 hours of placement, involve a trusted adult, advocate, or peer mentor to help the child share their views in a way that feels safe and comfortable. This could include age-appropriate conversations, drawings, digital tools, or other creative methods.

Professionals should adapt their approach for neurodivergent children or those with communication challenges to ensure their perspectives are fully understood. The child's views should shape care planning and review meetings, and if their wishes cannot be met, this should be explained clearly to maintain trust.

Regular engagement and feedback, such as using a "[You Said, We Did](#)" approach, show children that their input is valued and can make a real difference.

Embedding Learning and Sustainability

- Revisit the case in supervision or team learning sessions to review whether these steps have been implemented and to discuss any ongoing challenges.
- Build learning from this case into closure debriefs, asking: *What worked well? What would we do differently next time?*
- Incorporate lessons from Camille in future training, audits, and reviews to strengthen multi-agency responses.
- Where appropriate, capture children's and families' lived experiences to assess whether changes in practice are leading to better outcomes.
- If professional disagreement or unresolved concerns arise during similar cases, practitioners should follow the [CSCP Escalation and Resolution Policy 7](#) to ensure swift and constructive resolution through the appropriate partnership channels.