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Complaints fall at relocated London county court

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Satisfaction levels with the Central London County Court appear to have improved since last year's move to the Royal Courts of Justice, new figures suggest.

The number of complaints about the court fell by 17% in the first full year after relocation from two properties in west London in May 2014.

Total complaints from May 2014 to May 2015 added up to 371, down from 449 in the previous 12 months, with the number of complaints from legal representatives falling from 253 to 236. The figures were provided following a freedom of information request from the *Gazette*.

Of the complaints made in the first year of the court being located at the Thomas More building, more than half (233) were partly or fully upheld.

A total of 204 were made in relation to delay in administrative process, with 61 complaints made for correspondence or the telephone not being answered.

Practitioners in previous years had bemoaned the problems of delivering skeletons and speaking with court staff, in part accelerating the need for relocation.

The response also revealed that HM Courts and Tribunals Services almost offset the costs of moving within the first year of relocation.

The direct cost of relocation in May 2014 was £2.71m, with HMCTS saving £2.65m in running costs in 2014/15. In subsequent years the move is expected to reap savings of £3.6m every year.

Francesca Kaye, the immediate past president of the London Solicitors Litigation Association, said the savings made from the move should now be used to address the growing problems in the county court system.

'The continued absence of investment in the court service and/or IT, and with more cuts planned, means the challenge to improve the administration of the courts is now even greater, said Kaye, who is also a partner with London firm Russell-Cooke.

'Resources are at breaking point and administrative delay is increasingly a problem in the CLCC and the county court more generally.'

She added that with increasingly higher-value, more complex cases being transferred from the High Court to the CLCC, there is an 'urgent need' for improvement.