

APPENDIX A – OVERVIEW OF COMPLAINTS PERFORMANCE IN THE HOUSING DIRECTORATE

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This supplementary report provides a summary of corporate complaints performance in Brent Housing Partnership (BHP) and Housing Management Services (HMS) as a joint entity, Housing Needs and Private Housing Services (PHS) within Brent Council in 2017/18. The report covers the period from April 2017 to March 2018 and comparative data going back to 2015/16 has been provided where available. Commentary on wider council complaints performance is also provided for context.
- 1.2 The Housing Partnerships service receive very few complaints each year, therefore they have not been represented in the data tables within this appendix. Where appropriate commentary has been added to give a perspective of the numbers.

2. BRENT COUNCIL’S COMPLAINT FRAMEWORK

- 2.1 The Council operates a 2-stage corporate complaints process, 2-part Adult statutory complaints process and a 3-stage Children’s statutory complaints process.

Complaint Type	Stages	Timescales (Written Response)
Corporate	2 stages + Ombudsman	Stage 1 - 20 working days Stage 2 - 30 working days
Adults (Statutory)	1 stage (provision/final stage) + Ombudsman	Stage 1 - 20 working days (extension up to 6 months in complex cases)
Children (Statutory)	3 stages + Ombudsman	Stage 1 - 10 working days (extension to 20 working days in complex cases) Stage 2 - 25 days (extension to 65 working days in complex cases) Stage 3 - 45 working days
Service Requests	N/A	10 working days

- 2.2 Initial acknowledgements should be sent within 5 working days for all of the complaint types shown above, with the exception of Stage 3 Children Statutory complaints where acknowledgements should be sent within 2 working days.
- 2.3 Service areas are responsible for the management and resolution of all corporate and statutory Stage 1 complaints. The corporate Complaints Service team manages final review/Stage 2 corporate complaints on behalf of the Chief Executive. Children’s statutory complaints are reviewed by an independent investigator and independent person at Stage 2 and by an independent panel at Stage 3.
- 2.4 The outcome of a complaint is decided in one of these ways:
- **“Upheld”** – this is where the Council has accepted responsibility for the matter arising. The complaint response will offer an apology, clarify what happened

and the remedy to the problem. We will also identify actions to prevent this from happening again.

- **“Partially Upheld”** – this is where the Council accepts some responsibility for part of the complaint. We will send a complaint response as above also highlighting our reason for not accepting the whole complaint.
- **“Not Upheld”** – this means the investigation into the complaint has not found the Council at fault. The complaint response will explain our reasons for this decision.

3. DATA CAVEATS

- 3.1 The data in this report has been produced from the iCasework complaints system and reflects the information captured on the system by council officers. The quality and consistency of the data has improved over the years and system changes have been made to improve the quality of management information. For example, the broad root cause categories were revised during 2016. The ‘Other’ category was removed and the ‘Disagreement with Policy’ category was added to help improve the high level analysis of the root causes of complaints. The service-specific categories of complaints have been updated on an ongoing basis to provide a more granular understanding of the root cause of complaints. This more detailed analysis of the root cause of complaints has been provided in Appendix B for the Housing directorate.
- 3.2 Complaints data for 2017/18 is based on the current departmental/service area structure. The composition of the Housing directorate expanded when the new Housing Management Service (HMS) was brought in-house in October 2017. All Brent Housing Partnership (BHP)/HMS complaint cases in the transitional 2017/18 year and previous years has been collectively reported.
- 3.3 PHS receive a low number of complaints so it should be noted that small changes in numbers can show as large percentages and should be considered in context with other data provided in the report.

4. HOUSING DIRECTORATE – COMPLAINTS PERFORMANCE

- 4.1 This section of the report sets out the Housing directorate complaints performance for 2017/18 and the previous 2 years where available.
- 4.2 Complaints performance for the Council and for Housing directorate have been analysed and reported across four broad aspects – complaint volumes, nature of complaints, outcomes and timeliness. Appendix B also includes detailed root cause analysis improvements from complaints.

Volume of Complaints

Stage 1 & Stage 2 - Corporate Complaint Volumes

4.3 The tables below show the volume of new Stage 1 and Stage 2 Corporate complaints received.

- **All Brent**
 - Over the past 3 years, Stage 1 corporate complaints have fallen by 14% and Stage 2 complaints have fluctuated between 187 and 197 cases.
 - In 2017/18, 1 in 7 cases were escalated to Stage 2 across Brent.
- **BHP/HMS**
 - The volume of BHP/HMS Stage 1 corporate cases compared to the rest of Brent is quite high. BHP/HMS account for over 40% of corporate complaints received.
 - Stage 1 complaints have increased significantly since 2015/16, Stage 2 case volumes have also followed the same pattern of increase. The increase in first stage complaints is mainly due to improved logging of all casework in HMS.
 - In 2017/18, 1 in 6 BHP/HMS corporate cases were escalated to Stage 2.
- **Housing Needs**
 - The overall number of Stage 1 complaints received accounts for less than 10% of all Brent cases in 2017/18.
 - The volume of Stage 1 complaints has decreased by 28% or 54 cases since 2015/16.
 - 1 in 4 cases were escalated to Stage 2 in 2017/18.
- **PHS**
 - The overall number of Stage 1 complaints is very low (less than 2% of all Brent cases in 2017/18).
 - The volume of Stage 1 complaints has remained low.
 - Stage 1 complaints have fluctuated between 24 and 26 cases over the past 3 years.
 - The volume of Stage 2 complaints has remained low, with less than 10 cases per year.
- **Housing Partnership**
 - There was only one Stage 1 corporate complaint received in 2015/16 and one Stage 1 corporate complaint received in 2016/17 for Housing Partnership. There were no Stage 1 complaints received in 2017/18.
 - There were two Stage 2 complaints received in 2017/18, one of which was escalated from the previous year and another that bypassed Stage 1.

Stage 1 – Corporate Complaints Received				
Year	All Brent	BHP/HMS	Housing Needs	PHS
2015 - 2016	1,696	451	191	24
2016 - 2017	1,521	618	128	38
2017 - 2018	1,475	605	137	26

Housing partnership received two Stage 1 cases, one in 2015/16 and one in 2016/17.

Stage 2 – Corporate Complaints Received				
Year	All Brent	BHP/HMS	Housing Needs	PHS
2015 - 2016	187	51	35	3
2016 - 2017	213	79	21	9
2017 - 2018	197	91	28	8

Housing Partnership received two Stage 2 complaints in 2017/18.

Nature of Complaints

- 4.4 The broad root cause categories are sometimes used interchangeably by staff (e.g. Service Failure and Communication) and only provides us with a limited understanding of complaint themes. Service-specific root causes of complaints gives us a better understanding of complaint themes.
- 4.5 Appendix B lists the root cause of complaints in the Housing directorate and also includes the improvement actions taken to address complaint themes.
- 4.6 The table below summarises the top 3 service-specific complaint themes in 2017/18:

Top 3 Complaint Themes in 2017/18			
All Brent	BHP/HMS	Housing Needs	PHS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer care (17%) • Repairs (8%) • Parking enforcement (6%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer care/service delivery (39%) • Repairs/building services (23%) • Communication (17%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication (24%) • Temporary Accommodation/ Bed and Breakfast (16%) • Assessments (15%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PHS Grants (50%) • PHS Enforcement (50%)

Complaint Outcomes

Stage 1 & Stage 2 - Corporate Complaint Outcomes

- 4.7 The tables below show the proportion of corporate complaints upheld/partly upheld at the first and second stage:
- *All Brent*
 - Over the past 3 years the volume of new cases has decreased, however the proportion of cases upheld/partly upheld has increased at the first stage to 50%.
 - The upheld/partly upheld rate has gradually decreased to 40% at the second stage in 2017/18.

- **BHP/HMS**
 - The volume of BHP/HMS corporate Stage 1 complaints upheld/partly upheld has increased significantly over the past 3 years, a rise of 27% points since 2015/16.
 - The Stage 2 upheld/partly upheld cases have increased at a slower rate, however it still remains high when compared to the rate across Brent with 66% of cases upheld/partly upheld in 2017/18.
- **Housing Needs**
 - The volume of Stage 1 complaints have remained almost the same when comparing 2015/16 to 2017/18.
 - The rate of cases upheld/partly upheld has increased with 41% upheld/partly upheld in 2017/18 at Stage 2.
- **PHS**
 - The volume of Stage 1 complaints in 2017/18 has decreased by 14% from the previous year.
 - 2015/16 saw a 100% upheld/partly upheld rate, however this was based on a total of 2 cases.
 - The rate of Stage 2 cases upheld/partly upheld within PHS were minimal in 2017/18 with only 14% upheld/partly upheld.
- **Housing Partnership**
 - Over the 3 year period, only two Stage 1 cases were received, both cases were not upheld.
 - There were two Stage 2 cases received in 2017/18. None of these cases were upheld/partly upheld.

Stage 1 – Corporate Complaint Outcomes - % Upheld/Partially Upheld				
Year	All Brent	BHP/HMS	Housing Needs	PHS
2015 - 2016	40%	53%	35%	29%
2016 - 2017	54%	71%	21%	39%
2017 - 2018	50%	80%	37%	25%

Housing partnership received two Stage 1 cases over the 3 year period, none of which were upheld/partly upheld.

Stage 2 – Corporate Complaints Outcomes - % Upheld/Partially Upheld				
Year	All Brent	BHP/HMS	Housing Needs	PHS
2015 - 2016	43%	49%	21%	100%
2016 - 2017	38%	63%	44%	13%
2017 - 2018	40%	66%	41%	14%

Housing Partnership received two Stage 2 complaints in 2017/18. Both of these cases were not upheld.

Housing Ombudsman – Decisions

- 4.8 The Housing Ombudsman (HO) does not provide annual reports and data in the same way the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGO) does. The data provided in the table below on HO cases is taken from the information recorded on Brent’s iCasework system. It should also be noted that the HO has been clearing a backlog of cases and therefore there has been an increase in the number of cases decided during 2017/18.
- 4.9 Brent Council figures on Housing Ombudsman cases below do not include Housing Needs and PHS as those cases are investigated separately by the Local Government Ombudsman.
- 4.10 The table below shows the number of Housing Ombudsman (HO) cases upheld against Brent Council (we do not have data available on the number of cases referred yearly to the HO).

The increase in the number of cases upheld against Brent from 4 cases in 2015/16 to 8 cases in 2017/18 reflects the increased number of cases investigated by the HO.

Housing Ombudsman Decisions			
Year	Closed after initial enquiries	Not Upheld	Upheld/Partly Upheld
2015 - 2016	1	3	4
2016 - 2017	1	4	7
2017 - 2018	4	8	8

Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) – Number of Referrals

- 4.11 The table below shows the number of referrals made to the LGO about Brent Council and how many of these were categorised as “Housing Services” by the LGO.

Number of referrals made to the LGO		
Year	Brent Council	Housing Services
2015 - 2016	195	43
2016 - 2017	168	49
2017 - 2018	162	49

LGO – Upheld Cases

- 4.12 The table below shows the number of LGO cases upheld against Brent Council:
- 4.13 The number of cases upheld by the LGO against Brent Council in the past 3 years has decreased, however the cases upheld against Housing Services has remained more or less the same.

LGO Upheld Cases		
Year	Brent Council	Housing Services
2015 - 2016	26	8
2016 - 2017	17	8
2017 - 2018	21	9

- 4.14 The 21 cases upheld against Brent Council in 2017/18 were in the following services:
- Housing (Housing Needs) – 7
 - Housing (Private Housing Services) - 2
 - Adult Care Services – 5
 - Benefits & Council Tax – 3
 - Concessionary Travel – 2
 - Education & Children Services – 2
- 4.15 In most of these upheld cases the complainant or their family member was a vulnerable person and the LGO prescribed specific remedies according to individual needs. Additionally the LGO recommended reviews or reconsiderations of our policies, practices and communication/interactions with (vulnerable) service users.
- 4.16 In Housing Services, the 9 upheld cases concerned the suitability of temporary accommodation and assessment of eligibility. The LGO awarded compensation totalling £9.3k in 5 out of the 9 upheld cases. Significant compensation payments of nearly £6k and £2k awarded in two of these cases reflect the seriousness of the impact on the health and lives of the families placed in temporary accommodation.
- 4.17 The table below shows compensation paid at all stages including Ombudsmen cases for corporate cases:
- *All Brent*
 - Just over £73k was awarded in 135 cases in 2017/18. The average amount of compensation awarded was £546 per case.
 - *BHP/HMS*
 - There was a spike in the number of cases awarded compensation in 2016/17, but in 2017/18 the amount of compensation payments and cases were lower than the 2015/16 levels.
 - In 2017/18, compensation averaged £461 per case (lower than the Brent average)
 - *Housing Needs*
 - The number of cases that received compensation has increased over the past 3 years.
 - The total amount of compensation awarded tripled from 2015/16 to 2017/18.
 - In 2017/18 the average compensation awarded per case equated to £1,107.

- *PHS*
 - PHS had very few cases that were awarded compensation.
 - In 2017/18 there were 3 cases awarded compensation which totalled £1,020 and an average of £340 per case.
- *Housing Partnership*
 - In 2017/18 Housing Partnership offered £50 of compensation in one case that involved a Housing association.

Compensation – No. of Cases & Total Awarded					
Year		All Brent	BHP/HMS	Housing Needs	PHS
2015/16	Cases	170	75	15	4
	Total (£)	£62,765	£27,809	£7,800	£526
2016/17	Cases	204	117	9	2
	Total (£)	£77,602	£42,248	£5,460	£1,845
2017/18	Cases	135	58	19	3
	Total (£)	£73,794	£26,777	£21,035	£1,020

Housing Partnership received one case in 2017/18 of which £50 of compensation was awarded.

Timeliness of Complaints

Stage 1 & Stage 2 – Timeliness of Corporate Complaints

- 4.18 The table below shows the percentage of corporate complaints closed on time at the first and second stage:
- *All Brent*
 - The timeliness of All Brent Stage 1 corporate complaints has significantly improved over the past 3 years. The timeliness of Stage 2 complaints has remained consistent over the 3 year period. 90% of Stage 1 cases and 81% of Stage 2 cases were completed on time in 2017/18.
 - *BHP/HMS*
 - In 2017/18 BHP/HMS completed 83% of their cases on time. This is a slight improvement from 2015/16.
 - 2016/17 figures were over reported therefore cannot be used for comparison.
 - *Housing Needs*
 - Housing Needs have significantly improved timeliness performance over the past 3 years. Housing Needs have maintained a high standard of timeliness in completing casework with 98% of Stage 1 complaints completed on time in 2017/18. The timeliness of Stage 2 complaints has remained consistent over the past 3 years with 73% of Stage 2 complaints completed on time.
 - *PHS*
 - The performance figures for PHS in 2017/18 has improved from the previous year by 16% points with 92% of cases in Stage 1 completed on time.
 - There were 8 Stage 2 cases for PHS in 2017/18 with 75% of cases completed on time.

- **Housing Partnership**
 - There were two Stage 1 cases and two Stage 2 cases received in Housing Partnership over the 3 year period. All of the cases received were completed on time.

Stage 1 – Corporate Complaint Timeliness (%)				
Year	All Brent	BHP/HMS	Housing Needs	PHS
2015 - 2016	88%	82%	95%	88%
2016 - 2017	95%	99%	91%	76%
2017 - 2018	90%	83%	98%	92%

Housing partnership timeliness rate for Stage 1 complaints was 100% for 2015/16 and 100% in 2016/17.

Stage 2 – Corporate Complaint Timeliness (%)				
Year	All Brent	BHP/HMS	Housing Needs	PHS
2015 - 2016	88%	90%	89%	67%
2016 - 2017	82%	81%	71%	88%
2017 - 2018	81%	76%	73%	75%

Housing partnership timeliness rate for Stage 2 complaints was 100% for 2017/18.

Compliments

- 4.19 There were 126 compliments for Brent Council departments recorded on iCasework in 2017/18 compared with 22 compliments logged in 2016/17. Although this is a significant improvement from the previous year, there is still an under-recording of compliments on the system and staff are reminded to record this information on iCasework to give a more balanced picture of complaints as well as compliments.
- 4.20 The table below shows the number of compliments received in the Housing directorate. Some BHP/HMS examples are included below:

2017/18	All Brent	BHP/HMS	Housing Needs	PHS
Compliments received	126	7	0	0

- 4.21 Three examples of compliments received by BHP/HMS are as follows:

Compliment 1:

“I would like to thank you and your colleagues for your support with the issues we had for my Mother-in-Law, and for your understanding and prompt responses. We thank you all very much we are very grateful.”

Compliment 2:

“The tenant has told our Surveyor that she wants to pass on here thanks to the guys who did they job, she said they did a good job, and she is very happy. Thanks. “

“Hi, i can say Troy Francis was fabulous dealing with out of hours after I sent email to all concerned and has been in contact Saturday, Sunday as well as this morning. “

Compliment 3:

“I would like to thank you for your speed and attention to detail in the matter of Parking Issues In Your response was well within 24 hours of my complaint being raised.

I would also like to add and express my gratitude for the speed at which you have dealt with the above pending matter at hand.

In closing I would also like to thank you and your department for who has shown nothing more than outstanding professionalism in his approach to tackling this matter which has been worrying me for a period of time. The speed of his response from inception by this gentleman is a credit to the service, the manner by which he has performed his duty and the angle of his approach explaining the situation has been nothing short of admirable. He addressed my concerns and issues immediately with a face to face meeting that was extremely unexpected yet warmly appreciated. His meticulous approach to detail was refreshing and he has truly reinstated my confidence. In Brent Councils Housing Management approach to such matters.”