



Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday 27 January 2021 at 6.00 pm

This will be undertaken as an online virtual meeting.

The press and public are welcome to attend this online virtual meeting. The link to attend and view the meeting will be made available [here](#).

Membership:

Members

Councillors:

Mashari (Chair)
Kansagra (Vice-Chair)
S Choudhary
Johnson
Kabir
Hassan
Long
Mahmood
Miller
Perrin
Shah

Substitute Members

Councillors:

Aden, Daly, Ethapemi, Hector, Lloyd, Sangani,
Shahzad and Thakkar

Councillors:

Colwill and Maurice

For further information contact: Craig Player, Governance Officer
Tel: 020 8937 2082; Email: craig.player@brent.gov.uk

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Notes for Members - Declarations of Interest:

If a Member is aware they have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest* in an item of business, they must declare its existence and nature at the start of the meeting or when it becomes apparent and must leave the room without participating in discussion of the item.

If a Member is aware they have a Personal Interest** in an item of business, they must declare its existence and nature at the start of the meeting or when it becomes apparent.

If the Personal Interest is also significant enough to affect your judgement of a public interest and either it affects a financial position or relates to a regulatory matter then after disclosing the interest to the meeting the Member must leave the room without participating in discussion of the item, except that they may first make representations, answer questions or give evidence relating to the matter, provided that the public are allowed to attend the meeting for those purposes.

***Disclosable Pecuniary Interests:**

- (a) **Employment, etc.** - Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit gain.
- (b) **Sponsorship** - Any payment or other financial benefit in respect of expenses in carrying out duties as a member, or of election; including from a trade union.
- (c) **Contracts** - Any current contract for goods, services or works, between the Councillors or their partner (or a body in which one has a beneficial interest) and the council.
- (d) **Land** - Any beneficial interest in land which is within the council's area.
- (e) **Licences** - Any licence to occupy land in the council's area for a month or longer.
- (f) **Corporate tenancies** - Any tenancy between the council and a body in which the Councillor or their partner have a beneficial interest.
- (g) **Securities** - Any beneficial interest in securities of a body which has a place of business or land in the council's area, if the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body or of any one class of its issued share capital.

****Personal Interests:**

The business relates to or affects:

(a) Anybody of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management, and:

- To which you are appointed by the council;
- which exercises functions of a public nature;
- which is directed is to charitable purposes;
- whose principal purposes include the influence of public opinion or policy (including a political party or trade union).

(b) The interests a of a person from whom you have received gifts or hospitality of at least £50 as a member in the municipal year;

or

A decision in relation to that business might reasonably be regarded as affecting the well-being or financial position of:

- You yourself;
- a member of your family or your friend or any person with whom you have a close association or any person or body who is the subject of a registrable personal interest.

Agenda

Introductions, if appropriate.

Item	Page
1 Apologies for absence and clarification of alternate members – 6.00pm	
2 Declarations of interests	
Members are invited to declare at this stage of the meeting, the nature and existence of any relevant disclosable pecuniary, personal or prejudicial interests in the items on this agenda and to specify the item(s) to which they relate.	
3 Deputations (if any)	
To hear any deputations received from members of the public in accordance with Standing Order 67.	
4 Minutes of the previous meeting	1 - 8
To approve the minutes of the previous meeting held on 01 December 2020 as a correct record.	
5 Matters arising (if any)	
To consider any matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting.	
6 Budget Scrutiny - Quarter 2 and Quarter 3 Financial Report 2020/21 – 6.05pm	9 - 54
To review the Council's budget performance, including the current forecast of income and expenditure against the revenue budget for 2020/21 and other key financial data.	
7 Budget Scrutiny Report – 6.20pm	To follow
To agree a budget scrutiny report on the scrutiny of the budget proposals for 2021/22.	

- 8 Digital Customer Services – 6.30pm** 55 - 124
- To review the Council’s digital online customer service with a focus on the impact of the pandemic.
- 9 Annual Complaints Report 2019/20 – 7.30pm** 125 - 202
- To review the Council’s Annual Complaints Report 2019/20.
- 10 Forward Plan of Key Decisions** 203 - 224
- To review the Forward Plan of Key Decisions and to consider any issues that may be considered by the Committee.
- 11 Scrutiny Recommendations Tracker** 225 - 244
- To receive a report on the progress of implementing key council strategies, including the Policy Framework and the status of recommendations made by the Committee.
- 12 Any other urgent business – 8.00pm**
- In accordance with Standing Order 60, an additional item will be raised under this heading regarding the future of the borough’s high streets.

Date of the next meeting: Wednesday 14 April 2021



Brent

MINUTES OF THE RESOURCES AND PUBLIC REALM SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday 1 December 2020 at 6.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillor Mashari, Councillor Kansagra and Councillors S Choudhary, Johnson, Kabir, Hassan, Long, Miller and Shah

Also Present: Councillors McLennan (Deputy Leader and Lead Member for Resources), Krupa Sheth (Lead Member for Environment), Southwood (Lead Member for Housing & Welfare Reform), Tatler (Lead Member for Regeneration, Property & Planning) and Stephens (Lead Member for Schools, Employment & Skills).

1. **Apologies for absence and clarification of alternate members**

Apologies were received from Councillors Mahmood and Perrin. Apologies were also received from Sandra Ademola and Shaheen Pathan (representatives of the Department for Work and Pensions).

2. **Declarations of interests**

None.

3. **Deputations (if any)**

None.

4. **Minutes of the previous meeting**

Resolved

That the minutes of the last meeting held on 08 October 2020 and the call-in meeting held on 23 September 2020 be approved as a correct record.

5. **Matters arising (if any)**

None.

6. **Budget Scrutiny**

Resolved

That a Budget Scrutiny Task Group be established with the following members:

- **Councillor Mashari – Chair**
- **Councillor Ketan Sheth – Vice-Chair**
- **Councillor Johnson**
- **Councillor Miller**
- **Councillor Hector**

- **Councillor Thakkar**
- **Councillor Kansagra**

And with the following terms of reference:

- i. **To consider the Cabinet’s budget proposals.**
- ii. **To receive evidence from Cabinet Members, senior departmental officers and any other relevant stakeholders, and**
- iii. **To agree a draft report to comment on the budget proposals for submission to the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee for ratification and submission to Cabinet.**

7. Employment and the COVID-19 epidemic in Brent

Prior to the introduction of the report, it was noted that there were no Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) representatives present at the meeting. It was suggested that the DWP be invited to an extraordinary meeting of the Committee which would be held as soon as possible. In addition, the Committee would write to the DWP to outline its line of questioning for the proposed meeting.

Councillor Stephens, Lead Member for Employment, Schools & Skills and Councillor Tatler, Lead Member for Regeneration, Property and Planning introduced a report on the council and partner response to assist Brent residents into employment in a the current labour market and to support businesses and town centres to adapt to the impacts of COVID-19.

The Committee was then invited to raise questions on the report, which focused on a number of key areas as highlighted below:

- In response to a question from the Chair, it was noted that the Council had not put any additional funding into its support programmes for those seeking employment in Brent. Brent Works was funded largely through s106 contributions and Brent Starts was funded largely through the DWP, while other support projects had their own funding streams. The Committee was assured that both programmes were in a secure financial position and was able to maintain its service at its current level through its existing funding sources. The Council was committed to a partnership approach to employment within the borough, which was underpinned by its procurement strategy.
- It was noted that the Council had provided around 470 jobs to residents during the pandemic which had been achieved through close working relations with partner organisations. It had allocated £2 million in Neighbourhood Community Infrastructure Levy (NCIL) funding for areas disproportionately affected by COVID-19 and £1 million in employment support. The economic fallout of the pandemic had not yet been realised but the Committee was assured that the Council would continue to support residents into employment post-pandemic, with employment being a key priority of Brent Borough Plan.
- In response to a question from the Committee, it was noted that the Council did not have access to information regarding the amount of European Union (EU) funding the DWP had put towards employment in the borough. The

Committee was assured that the Council was doing its own work to survey the effects of Brexit and the pandemic on employers.

- It was also noted that there had been no assessments on the impact of Brexit on employment within the borough, although there had been national assessments. It was difficult to estimate the impact of Brexit on employment, and much would depend on whether or not a deal could be agreed with the EU. The furlough scheme had been extended until March and it was expected that it would therefore partially cover jobs lost due to Brexit in the short term.
- The Committee was assured that those with disabilities within the borough would have access to employment support from the Council. There were areas within the Brent Works programme that offered targeted support for those with disabilities, and staff were also employed to support those seeking employment benefits. Moreover, it supported apprenticeships for those with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), was a Disability Confident employer and had committed to improving employment outcomes for those with disabilities in its poverty strategy.
- It was noted that while the Brent Works programme prioritised employment within the borough, it also sought to provide employment opportunities to residents with employers in neighbouring boroughs. The Council also hoped to encourage large employers to establish themselves within the borough by providing the necessary workspace and transport links to support them to do so.
- In response to a question from the Committee it was noted that employment support was available to all residents that needed it, including the traveller community. There were specific areas of the Council's employment offer that covered the traveller community, and it was suggested that it needed to take more of a proactive approach in making the traveller community aware of the support available to it.
- It was noted that town centre vacancy rates were calculated through business rates data and engagement with town centre managers and property owners.
- Regarding graduate employment within the borough, it was noted that the Council was looking to attract big employers to the borough which in turn would create employment opportunities for graduates. It was recognised that the borough had historically had high levels of low-paid employment, and increasing employment in growth sectors, protecting and procuring workspace and raising the average wage were seen as key priorities.
- It was suggested that the Council should ensure its support programmes were targeting disadvantaged communities by benchmarking their work against the characteristics and backgrounds of those that were placed into employment.
- It was noted that the Council had not received information on the number of the borough's businesses that had closed during the pandemic. It did carry out assessments such as business surveys, though such assessments should not be seen as representative samples. It was suggested that the Council work alongside Brent MPs to reiterate the importance of national government sharing this data with local authorities.
- In response to a question from the Committee, it was noted that the Council was looking to support local businesses to increase their online presence

and their ecommerce platform. This had been a focus before the pandemic and would continue to be a focus post-pandemic.

Resolved

That the following areas of improvement be noted:

- 1. That the Council considers a joint employment strategy with the DWP.**
- 2. That support for cooperative businesses be included in the Procurement Strategy.**
- 3. That the Council encourages local MPs to lobby central government for more detailed employment and business data sharing.**

The Committee made the following information requests:

- 1. A breakdown of the funding the DWP received from the EU to support their employment programmes.**
- 2. How the Council supports small and medium-sized businesses to trade as cooperatives.**
- 3. A breakdown of the number of jobs the Council had provided through its employment programmes to residents prior to the pandemic.**
- 4. A breakdown of the employment opportunities the Council has offered residents through its employment programmes inside and outside of the borough.**
- 5. How the Council supports minority outreach communities, in particular the traveller community, into employment.**
- 6. Feedback from business surveys undertaken to evaluate the impact of the pandemic on businesses and the self-employed.**

8. The Climate Emergency

Councillor Krupa Sheth, Lead Member for Resources, introduced a report on the draft Brent Climate Emergency Strategy 2021-2030. The Committee was then invited to raise questions on the report, which focused on a number of key areas as highlighted below:

- In response to a question from the Chair, it was noted that the Council worked with developers to ensure new buildings were climate friendly. While new buildings were typically built to be climate friendly, it was recognised that more needed to be done to encourage cleaner construction. Ensuring existing buildings were climate friendly was seen as a harder issue to solve, although work was underway to facilitate this.
- In response to a question from the Committee regarding ground source heat pumps, it was noted that there were constraints in using them in tower blocks. The Council was looking at test pilots to assess their usage in tower blocks in the near future.
- The Committee was assured the Brent Climate Emergency Strategy would be output and outcome focused. Once the strategy was finalised, the Council would look at how these would be assessed. It was looking to engage with its partners and the private sector to ensure its outcomes were deliverable and measurable.

- It was noted that the strategy would be funded largely by capital expenditure and grant funding. Most of its funding would be met with existing resources, although extra funding would be made available should it be needed.
- In response to a question from the Committee, it was noted that the financing of the strategy would go through several stages of scrutiny. It would be scrutinised as part of the overall budget in the coming weeks, and the Committee was assured it would be brought back to a future meeting once the strategy was agreed.
- It was noted that the Council was utilising a number of alternative energy sources including solar panels with private home owners, air source heat pumps through the Green Homes grant fund and energy generated from fish oil.
- The Council was keen to continue supporting those residents in the borough that were in fuel poverty. For example, it was in the process of conducting home energy visits for those households identified as vulnerable. This work was being supported through central government grant funding.
- In response to a question regarding pension divestment, it was noted that the market was very different to what it had been previously and that there were now more opportunities for low carbon investment. The Pension Fund Sub-Committee agreed to invest £50 million in the London CIV Infrastructure Fund in 2019, which would ensure 25% of the fund would be invested in renewable energy projects. It also agreed to invest £28 million in a low carbon equity fund in the same year, and was committed to exploring further investment options in this area. However, it was difficult to give a precise timescale for divestment.
- It was also noted that the Pension Fund Sub-Committee recognised that investing in companies that follow environmental, social and governance (ESG) factors produced long-term sustainable gains. The Sub-Committee recently agreed to use the BlackRock Equity Tracker which follows ESG factors.
- The Committee was assured that the Council would continue to work with its partners to increase the level of recycling in blocks of flats. This work had been underway before the pandemic and would soon be restarted. It was recognised that the level was currently well below what it would ideally be.
- In response to a question regarding food waste, it was recognised that more needed to be done to engage with residents as to the benefits of food recycling. The Council would also continue to promote national campaigns.

Resolved

That the following areas of improvement be noted:

- 1. That the Brent Climate Emergency Strategy includes clear outcomes that are measurable and deliverable.**
- 2. To consider the ways in which the Council can encourage cleaner construction and ensure its properties were energy efficient.**
- 3. To consider how the Council can engage with residents to encourage food recycling.**
- 4. To consider how the Council can engage with residents in blocks of flats to encourage recycling.**

5. To consider how the Council could allocate funding for the delivery of the Brent Climate Emergency Strategy.
6. To consider devising a timetable for pension carbon divestment.

The Committee made the following information requests:

1. Whether climate friendly measures would be considered as part of i4B and FWH Asset Management Strategy.
2. Data on the potential loss of parking income resulting from any changes to parking policy.

10. **The Brent Poverty Commission Delivery Plan**

Councillor Southwood, Lead Member for Housing & Welfare Reform and Councillor McLennan, Deputy Leader and Lead Member for Resources introduced a report on the delivery plans to take forward the implementation of the Poverty Commission recommendations. The Committee was then invited to raise questions on the report, which focused on a number of key areas as highlighted below:

- In response to a question from the Committee, it was noted that there was flexibility within the delivery plan to engage with a range of stakeholders, even if that stakeholder had not been explicitly listed. It was suggested that the Council engages with trade union leaders to explore the ways in which they could help it deliver its aims.
- It was noted that i4B was working to capture opportunities to strengthen the borough's high streets through selective housing interventions, and that housing suppliers were increasingly looking to high streets for development opportunities. The Committee was assured that this would not contradict the Council's work to ensure suitable workspaces for businesses wishing to trade in the borough, and it would ensure the standards of such accommodation was high.
- In response to a question regarding credit unions, it was noted that the Council was working directly with a credit union operating within the borough and was in discussions to begin working with another. It was also exploring a payroll commitment on credit unions.
- It was noted that the Council had committed to alleviating period poverty within the borough and it was assured that consultative work was underway to establish the best means to do so.

Resolved

To note the Brent Poverty Commission delivery plans.

11. **Authority to Award Contract for Stonebridge Annexe Refurbishment**

The report to update the Committee on the status of the Stonebridge Annexe refurbishment works was noted.

12. **Forward Plan of Key Decisions**

The Forward Plan of Key Decisions for the December 2020 period was noted.

13. **Recommendations Tracker**

The Scrutiny Recommendation Tracker table, which tracks the progress of recommendations made by the Committee, was noted.


14. **Any other urgent business**

None.

The meeting closed at 8.00 pm

R MASHARI
Chair

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 Brent	Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee 27 January 2021
	Report of the Director of Finance
Budget Scrutiny – Quarter 2 and Quarter 3 Financial Reports 2020/21	

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Non Key Decision
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small>	Open
No. of Appendices:	Appendix 1 - Quarter 2 Financial Report 2020/21, report to Cabinet 12 October 2020 Appendix 2 – Quarter 3 Financial Report 2020/21, report to Cabinet 12 January 2021
Background Papers:	None
Contact Officer(s): <small>(Name, Title, Contact Details)</small>	Ravinder Jassar Head of Finance Tel: 020 8937 1487 Ravinder.jassar@brent.gov.uk

1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to present the Quarter 2 and Quarter 3 Financial Reports 2020/21, as part of the scrutiny of the Council's budget performance.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

2.1 That the Quarter 2 and Quarter 3 Financial Reports 2020/21 be noted.

3.0 Detail

3.1 As part of the scrutiny committee's remit for budget scrutiny, the committee considers the Council's budget outturn performance throughout the year.

3.2 At its meeting on 1 October, the committee received a report from the Director of Finance which included the Quarter 1 Financial Report. Attached to this report at Appendices are the Quarter 2 and Quarter 3 Financial Reports

2020/21, which were presented to Cabinet on 12 October 2020 and 12 January 2021 respectively, which the committee may use as reference.

4.0 Financial Implications

4.1 There are no financial implications for the purposes of this report.

5.0 Legal Implications

5.1 There are no legal implications for the purposes of this report.

6.0 Equality Implications


6.1 There are no equality implications for the purposes of this report.

7.0 Consultation with Ward Members and Stakeholders

7.1 None for the purposes of this report.

Report sign off:

Minesh Patel
Director of Finance

 Brent	Cabinet 12 October 2020
	Report of the Director of Finance
Quarter 2 Financial Report 2020/21	

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Key
Open or Part/Fully Exempt:	Open
No. of Appendices:	None
Background Papers:	None
Contact Officer(s):	Minesh Patel, Director of Finance minesh.patel@brent.gov.uk Tel: 020 8937 4043 Ben Ainsworth, Head of Finance ben.ainsworth@brent.gov.uk Tel: 020 8937 1731

1.0 Summary

- 1.1. This report sets out the current forecast of income and expenditure against the revenue budget for 2020/21 and other key financial data.
- 1.2. Excluding the impact of COVID-19, the Council is expecting an overspend of £0.6m on the General Fund (GF). Children and Young People are expecting to overspend by £0.6m. The HRA is expected to breakeven and DSG is expected to overspend by £3.2m before the impact of COVID-19 is taken into account.
- 1.3. The impact of COVID-19 is forecast to add an additional £35.2m of additional costs or loss of income to the general fund service areas in 2020/21. This is less than the projected cost of COVID-19 to the council as some significant costs, such as impairment of doubtful debt, have already been paid in 2019-20.
- 1.4. Offsetting this is £4.8m of COVID 19 related underspends within service areas. This brings the net overall forecast impact due to COVID-19 on the general fund to £30.4m. Overall, the projected overspend on the general fund is £31m.
- 1.5. The impact of COVID-19 on the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) within Children and Young People is forecast as £0.3m thereby increasing the overall DSG deficit position.
- 1.6. Currently, the impact of COVID-19 on the HRA is forecast as £2.9m, which is greater than the HRA reserves of £1.4m, therefore the HRA will need to consider mitigating

actions such as reduced or deferred capital expenditure, or some of the COVID-19 funding, detailed below will need to be used to offset this cost.

- 1.7.** Adding the £3.2m non-COVID-19 and £0.3m COVID 19 overspend on the DSG, to the £2.9m COVID-19 overspend on the HRA, and the total overspend of £31m on the General Fund gives a total forecast overspend of £37.4m (before additional COVID-19 grants).
- 1.8.** Offsetting the council's projected overspend of £37.4m is additional government funding of £27.8m for COVID-19. This includes an early estimate of £6m from central government's package of support for income losses: some income losses to be reimbursed where losses are more than 5% of a council's planned income from sales, fees and charges, with the government covering up to 75% of the remainder. Several items are excluded from eligibility for this support, such as loss of commercial rental income.
- 1.9.** In total, the Council is forecast to overspend by £9.6m.
- 1.10.** These figures are more uncertain than at any similar point in previous years due to uncertainty about how severe the impact of COVID-19 will be this winter. For the purposes of this forecast, it is assumed that the infection control measures implemented, such as social distancing, will be effective in stopping a major second wave of COVID-19 cases that necessitates a sustained local or national lockdown. A sustained second wave and/or second lockdown would significantly increase the overspend by both increasing costs and reducing income.

	Budget (£m)	Forecast Overspend / (Underspend) excluding COVID-19 (£m)	Additional costs/ loss of income due to COVID-19 and Savings shortfall (£m)	COVID-19 Related service underspends (£m)	Total Forecast Overspend/ (Underspend) (£m)
Assistant Chief Executive	7.5	0.0	0.8	(0.1)	0.7
Chief Executive Department	16.6	0.0	0.2	(0.3)	(0.1)
Children and Young People	48.2	0.6	3.2	(0.5)	3.3
Community and Well-Being	134.2	0.0	16.6	(2.4)	14.2
Customer & Digital Services	21.2	0.0	3.9	(0.6)	3.3
Regeneration & Environment	40.5	0.0	10.5	(0.9)	9.6

Subtotal Service Area Budgets	268.2	0.6	35.2	(4.8)	31.0
Central items (including Business Rates, Council Tax and Specific Grants, excluding specific COVID-19 grants)	(268.2)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total General Fund	0.0	0.6	35.2	(4.8)	31
DSG Funded Activity	0.0	3.2	0.3	0.0	3.5
Housing Revenue Account (HRA)	0.0	0.0	2.9	0.0	2.9
Overall Position before COVID-19 funding	0.0	3.8	38.4	(4.8)	37.4
Central funding for COVID-19	0.0	0.0	(27.8)	0.0	(27.8)
Overall Position before COVID-19 funding	0.0	3.8	10.6	(4.8)	9.6

1.11. For capital, the current forecast outturn is £226.9m against the revised budget and an underspend of £20m as broken down in the table below. An explanation of the variance of current forecast to the revised budget is provided in section four.

Directorate	Original Budget (Approved Feb20) (£m)	Revised Budget (£m)	Current Forecast (£m)	Over / (Under) Spend to Budget (£m)
Corporate Landlord	22.3	17.7	9.6	(8.1)
Regeneration	18.7	26.2	25.5	(0.7)
St. Raphael's Estate	0.3	0.6	0.5	(0.2)
Housing Care Investment	191.1	150.0	150.2	0.2
Schools	11.6	14.6	12.2	(2.3)
South Kilburn	24.2	9.6	8.1	(1.5)
Public Realm	24.2	28.1	20.8	(7.4)
Total	292.4	246.8	226.9	20.0

2.0 Recommendation

2.1. To note the overall financial position and the actions being taken to manage the issues arising.

3.0 Revenue Detail

3.1. Assistant Chief Executive (ACE)

Assistant Chief Executive (ACE)	Budget (£m)	Actual Forecast excluding COVID-19 (£m)	Forecast Overspend / (Underspend) excluding COVID-19 (£m)	Additional costs/ loss of income due to COVID-19 (£m)	COVID-19 Related service underspends (£m)	Total (£m)
Chief Executive Office	0.5	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Communications	0.4	0.4	0.0	0.7	0.0	0.7
Executive and Member Services	3.6	3.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
ACE Director	0.3	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Strategy and Partnership	2.7	2.7	0.0	0.1	(0.1)	0.0
Total	7.5	7.5	0.0	0.8	(0.1)	0.7

3.1.1 Excluding the various impacts of COVID-19, the department is expected to breakeven overall.

3.1.2 Taking account of the additional costs for COVID-19, the ACE department is currently forecast to overspend by £0.8m, made up of a £0.7m overspend in the Communications department and a £0.1m overspend in the Strategy & Partnerships department. Within Communications, there has been a loss of income due to cancellation of events in The Drum as well as lower than expected income from commercial advertising, roundabout sponsors and film production sites. Within Strategy & Partnerships, there are expenditure pressures from additional funding and capacity to support the voluntary sector. Additional costs also include the need to engage and build networks with smaller organisations in the borough in identifying COVID-19 impacts on vulnerable individuals and groups.

3.1.3 ACE is required to identify £0.1m of in-year COVID-19 related underspends and so far is on track to deliver this in full, which should reduce the overspend to £0.7m. The underspends are as a result of delayed recruitment to posts, holding posts vacant, reduced purchase of stationery and other equipment, underspends against training budgets and a general reduction in civic activities as a result of COVID-19.

3.2. Chief Executive Department (CE)

Chief Executive Department	Budget (£m)	Forecast excluding COVID-19 Impact (£m)	Forecast Overspend/ (Underspend) (£m)	Additional costs/ loss of income due to COVID-19 (£m)	COVID-19 Related service underspends (£m)	Total (£m)
Legal, HR and Audit	8.9	8.9	0.0	0.2	(0.2)	0.0
Finance	7.7	7.7	0.0	0.0	(0.1)	(0.1)
Total	16.6	16.6	0.0	0.2	(0.3)	(0.1)

3.1.1 Excluding the various impacts of COVID-19, the department is expected to breakeven overall.

3.1.2 With the impact of COVID-19, CE is currently forecast to overspend by £0.2m, primarily within the Legal, HR and Audit & Investigations department. Within Legal Support, there has been a loss of income from services offered to those in the construction industry and on client debt related matters due to reduced demand. There are also additional costs expected in providing specialist advice and upgrading of electronic services due to the lockdown of courts. Within HR, additional costs are expected in providing risk assessments and additional support for specialist counselling in respect of individuals or teams suffering from PTSD.

3.1.3 CE is required to identify £0.3m of in-year COVID-19 related underspends and so far is on track to deliver this in full, which should reduce the overspend to an overall £0.1m underspend. The underspends are a result of delayed recruitment to posts where COVID-19 has resulted in a short term reduction in demand, reduced energy usage in council owned assets, bringing forward savings planned for future years and various other activities related to changes in demand as a result of COVID-19.

3.2 Children and Young People (CYP) (General Fund)

CYP Department	Budget (£m)	Forecast (£m)	Forecast Overspend / (Under spend) (£m)	Additional costs/ loss of income due to COVID-19 (£m)	COVID-19 Related service underspends (£m)	Total (£m)
Central Management	0.7	0.4	(0.3)	0.0	0.0	(0.3)
Early Help	4.6	4.6	0.0	1.0	(0.2)	0.8
Inclusion	1.6	1.6	0.0	0.0	(0.1)	(0.1)
Localities	15.4	16.2	0.8	0.2	0.0	1.0
Looked After Children and Permanency	6.3	6.4	0.1	0.1	(0.1)	0.1

Forward Planning, Performance & Partnerships	17.6	17.6	0.0	1.2	(0.1)	1.1
Safeguarding and Quality Assurance	1.9	1.9	0.0	0.0	(0.0)	0
Setting and School Effectiveness	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.7	(0.0)	0.7
Total	48.2	48.8	0.6	3.2	(0.5)	3.3

- 3.2.1 The Children and Young People department is currently forecasting an overspend position of £0.6m excluding Covid-19 related pressures and this is a reduction from the previous quarter's position of £0.9m. Due to the impact of Covid-19, the department is forecasting an overall pressure of £3.2m arising from additional costs incurred; loss of income; and slippage against 2020/21 savings target. The forecast pressure reported is mainly against demand led Care at Home and Direct Payment budgets against the Children and Young People with Disabilities (0-25). These pressures are offset by contingency budgets held in central management and in-year underspends identified of £0.5m against a £5m corporate target.
- 3.2.2 Against the in-year underspend corporate target of £5m, the CYP's allocated target is £1m and across the department underspends of £0.5m have been identified. These underspends are mainly due to 13 vacant posts identified which will be held vacant for the rest of the financial year, reduced spend against costs of events and conferences and underspends expected against travel costs and subsistence for staff as a result of fewer face to face visits during the lockdown.
- 3.2.3 The Localities service is forecasting an overspend of £0.8m at the end of the financial year. There are pressures of £0.3m against the Children and Young People with Disabilities (0-25) care at home and direct payment budgets. The forecast is based on continuing demand pressures due to growing numbers of Education Health and Social Care plans (EHCPs) and the requirement to support the social care element of the plan. As at the end of 2019/20, there were 2,173 EHCPs and as at June 2020, this number increased by 18% to 2,570 despite the overall pupil population remaining broadly the same. The forecast includes a provision for additional demands for 25 Care at Home clients and 75 Direct Payment clients currently being assessed. There is also a £0.5m forecast pressure due to the cost of agency staff covering established social worker posts. Management action taken to reduce the number of agency social workers included the offer to agency social workers to opt to move to permanent contracts, a recruitment drive, career progression arrangements and the use of key worker housing. The forecast against agency staff is higher than the previous quarter's position of £0.3m because the quarter 1 position assumed that 20 agency staff would end their contracts part way through the year and the roles be filled by permanent staff. 5 Social Worker positions have been filled on a permanent basis and the forecast has been updated to project agency staff costs till the end of the financial year.
- 3.2.4 Localities caseload modelling is based on established national good practice and the current caseload is within the caseload ceiling. Where there is scope to safely reduce agency staff levels this will be undertaken. There remains a risk of increasing temporary agency staff numbers to cover a rise in demand. The Operational Director

considers all requests for any new agency staff and extension requests for agency workers and there is scrutiny of activity in this area.

- 3.2.5 The Forward Planning, Performance and Partnership (FPPP) service is currently reporting a breakeven position following an expected increase of £0.8m in grant funding to support unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC). There remains a risk within this service area, as the main cost driver against this budget is the volatility of demand for social care placements for Looked after Children and Care Leavers. These are demand led placements and new placements may have to be found at relatively short notice, which can be expensive. The department is managing to keep the numbers of children and young people taken into care at low levels when compared to neighbouring boroughs. However, a challenge remains that the children that come into care are often teenagers who have complex needs resulting in high cost placements.
- 3.2.6 In addition, the local authority is supporting a number of care leavers in semi-independent placements as part of their transition to adulthood. A number of care leavers who it had been expected would have moved into their own tenancies have had these tenancies delayed due to Covid-19 and are likely to be accommodated for longer than anticipated. Initial analysis indicated that this would lead to a £60k pressure, but further analysis indicates the pressure could equate to £0.3m and this will be tracked as part of the Covid-19 financial pressure reporting.
- 3.2.7 Management action in place to control spend includes establishing additional sign off processes at Children's Placement Panel; undertaking further work with finance colleagues to refine the forecast; more challenge and support around stepdown arrangements from residential placements to foster placements and/or semi-independent placements, monitoring and actively supporting the transition of care leavers to their own tenancies and reviewing financial policies and payments to carers for Special Guardianship support.
- 3.2.8 The Looked after Children and Permanency service is forecast to overspend by £0.1m, arising from the costs of commissioning of some adoptive placements, based on a child's best interests, with adoption agencies other than Adopt London West.
- 3.2.9 There is also a risk in the Early Help service where a balanced budget is reliant on an increased number of successful claims for the Troubled Families reward payments. Last year, the team successfully achieved 100% of their claims target. With 59 successful claims this year, the service was below the target number of claims for Q1, but is planning to increase claims in Q2 and Q3.
- 3.2.10 The forecast reflects COVID related pressures of £3.2m, which represents additional costs, loss of income and slippage against the 2020-21 savings target. The additional costs pressures and loss of income is currently forecast as £2.3m include;
- i. an estimate for the statutory support of school travel for under18s;
 - ii. the impact on the care at home and direct payment budgets;
 - iii. placement budgets (arising from the need to ensure there is greater supervision in foster and residential placements);
 - iv. in year temporary uplift to subsistence allowance for care leavers in line with universal credit increase and emergency payments for food and utilities.

- v. It also includes the impact of the loss of income in 2020/21 from traded services i.e. Brent Music Service and the Gordon Brown Centre.

3.2.11 The slippage expected against the department's two savings targets to be delivered in 2020/21 reported against the COVID-19 impact pressures amount to £0.9m. The targets include £1.5m to develop Family Wellbeing Centres (FWC) from children's centres. It is expected that the opening of these centres will now be December 2020 instead of September 2020 and the impact of this slippage is £0.8m. The other savings target of £0.1m, relates to developing a shared fostering service with two other West London Alliance (WLA) boroughs, resulting in staffing efficiencies. Progress is primarily dependent on the DfE starting the next round of funding to assist local areas in scaling up the models that have been agreed. It is estimated that savings of £30k can be identified in this financial year as the funding is unlikely to be agreed until Autumn 2020 resulting in a £70k slippage.

Key Assumption	Downside if worse	Upside if better	Mitigations
That total caseloads in the Localities and LAC & Permanency service remain within budgeted levels of c. 2,500.	The commitment to hold safe caseloads means that if the total number of cases increased by 15% for the majority of the year, there would be an additional spend on social work staff.	Up to one third of case holding staff in some front line teams are agency. If caseloads reduce spend could be brought down.	Caseloads are being monitored across the service to allow management of social work resources.
The forecast assumes that there will be a number of agency staff within the establishment.	If the projected agency staff reduction does not occur this would add a further pressure to the budget of c£1m.	Additional reductions in agency staffing could reduce spend further	Continued management action to recruit permanent staff and reduce the reliance on agency workers.
The current mix of 600 LAC and Care Leaver placements remains broadly stable throughout the year. Unit costs remain stable.	A new individual high cost residential / secure placement can cost up to £0.3m per annum. A net increase of 10 placements with Independent Foster Agency (IFA) carers at a cost of £850 per week would cost an additional £0.4m.	A reduction in demand or reduction in the use of expensive placements will see a reduction in costs.	Brent has a track record of maintaining stable and relatively low numbers of LAC. Targeted step down work to ensure more children are supported to transition from more expensive residential placements to semi-independent placements and fostering options. WLA commissioning function is being

			used to control unit costs. Joint commissioning with Health was successfully developed in 2019/20 and this will be built on to ensure further contributions to placement costs.
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3.3 Community Well-Being (CWB) (General Fund)

CWB Department	Budget (£m)	Forecast excluding COVID-19 Impact (£m)	Forecast Overspend/ (Underspend) (£m)	Additional costs/ loss of income due to COVID-19 (£m)	COVID-19 Related service underspends (£m)	Total (£m)
Housing	8.0	8.0	0.0	5.6	0.0	5.6
Public Health	21.8	21.8	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.3
Culture	5.1	5.1	0.0	1.2	0.0	1.2
Adult Social Care	99.3	99.3	0.0	9.5	(2.4)	7.1
Total	134.2	134.2	0.0	16.6	(2.4)	14.2

3.3.1 Excluding Covid-19 related pressures, CWB is forecast to break even. The impact of the pandemic on this department is currently estimated to be £16.6m.

3.3.2 COVID-19 is forecast to have the following impacts on the housing general fund totalling £5.6m: £2.5m for loss of rental income, £0.3m for reduced income from enforcement activities, £1.4m in additional costs tackling homelessness, £0.2m commissioning a homelessness support contract and £1.2m cost from delays in implementing the Temporary Accommodation reform plan.

3.3.3 The loss of rental income from Housing Needs tenants in General Fund properties is forecast to be £2.5m. The rent collection rates across broader Temporary Accommodation have dropped from circa 95% prior to the Covid-19 outbreak down to 77%. This can be partially attributed to delays in newly homeless people registering and receiving Housing Benefit towards their accommodation costs. However, another factor in the decline in rent collection is that tenants ineligible for Housing Benefit may be less able to pay rent due to the wider economic impact of Covid-19. The forecast also takes into account that a potential prolonged recession may impact the collection rates further in future quarters and increase the levels of bad debts incurred by the

Council. These projections will continue to be closely monitored as the impact of the pandemic and potential recession becomes more certain.

- 3.3.4 In addition to the rental income losses, a reduction in income is anticipated from enforcement activities, creating a funding gap of £0.3m in the Private Housing Services.
- 3.3.5 Within the Housing Needs service, an additional £1.4m is forecast to be spent on accommodating the increased demand and providing temporary accommodation to homeless people through the outbreak. Most of these clients are considered to be formerly hidden homeless and have been accommodated by the Council as part of the emergency response. The £1.4m includes cost of accommodation, food provision and security in hotels, as well as one-off costs for making permanent placements into the Private Rented Sector. However, whilst a significant proportion of clients will have their rents covered by Housing Benefit or EEA nationals grant, a residual ineligible group will result in ongoing housing costs to the Council. This forecast is net of specific secured government grants and assumed Housing Benefit income.
- 3.3.6 Of the total £1.4m forecast, £0.8m relates to the cost of continuing to support a cohort with no recourse to public funds (including housing benefit). Members have made a decision not to continue to accommodate this cohort post 1 July and the service will be lobbying MHCLG for additional funding to support this cohort. If successful, more of the costs above would be covered.
- 3.3.7 There are also potential costs of £0.2m forecast to be incurred on commissioning a homelessness support contract from the charitable sector and additional temporary staffing resource, both of which are necessary to cope with the increased demand.
- 3.3.8 The ongoing pandemic has also affected the deliverability of the planned savings. In Housing, £1.2m of planned savings that form part of the Temporary Accommodation reform plan, are at risk. The crisis has caused delays to the construction and procurement of new properties. The threshold for TA placement has also been reduced due to Covid-19, which has temporarily increased demand through the lockdown period. Whilst alternative plans and mitigations are in place, there is a risk that the full savings target will not be achieved in 2020/21 due to Covid-19. Covid-19 is also forecast to put £0.3m public health recommissioning savings at risk.
- 3.3.9 The Culture service, which encompasses Libraries and Leisure Centres, is expected to be impacted by Covid-19 by £1.2m. Sports centres have forgone their expected income during the lockdown and support has been provided for operational and mothballing costs for the leisure centres. The loss of income from leisure services at Bridge Park and Vale Farm is estimated to be £0.4m, and the cost of mothballing Vale Farm and Willesden Sports Centre is forecast to be £0.7m. In addition, £0.1m of income generated by libraries is expected to be lost across the full financial year.
- 3.3.10 The Covid-19 outbreak has not resulted in significant extra costs for Public Health. However, £0.3m of savings linked to re-procurement of contracts will not be delivered in 2020-21. The total grant for 2020-21 is £21.8m.

- 3.3.11 The forecast impact of COVID-19 on additional costs or loss of income in Adult Social Care is £9.5m. This consists of: £4.4m costs for PPE, £1.4m for additional residential and nursing placements, £0.4m in increased homecare payment rates, £0.6m for commissioned homecare packages from April to July, £2m in delayed NAIL savings, £0.4m in delays to daycare savings, and £0.3m in other small items. These additional costs are explained further in the paragraphs below.
- 3.3.12 In Adult Social Care, the major financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic for CWB is the cost of procuring Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and distributing it free of charge to care providers. The Council is better able to source and buy this equipment than many care providers who would struggle given the competitive market. Allocating it out to providers is part of the emergency response, but also prevents further pressure on cost of care as if this was left to providers themselves they may not achieve value for money and would pass on increased costs to the Council. As of the end of August £2.5m worth of PPE had been bought and the estimated usage rate is £58k per week, which results in a forecast of £4.4m for the year. This is somewhat reduced from the forecast in Q1 of £5.9m as the costs of PPE have reduced since the height of the pandemic and providers are able to source some of their own PPE through their supply chains. It is expected that this forecast could reduce further as the Government has recently announced that it will be able to provide PPE at no cost to all care homes for the remainder of this financial year but the forecast is currently unchanged as the Authority awaits further clarification of how this will be delivered.
- 3.3.13 For the duration of the Covid-19 pandemic period from March 19th until August 31st Brent CCG commissioned all Residential and Nursing placements. However from 1st September the Council will need to cover these costs. It is estimated that the CCG have made fifty-six more Residential and Nursing placements than what the Council would typically make during the same period. Additionally during the pandemic period the placements made by the CCG have typically 33% more expensive than the usual cost to the council. If all of these placements have to be funded by the Council from September onwards this creates a cost pressure of £0.2m per month which equates to £1.4m for this financial year.
- 3.3.14 As part of the response to the pandemic the payment rates for all homecare providers was uplifted by 5% to £16 per hour as an interim measure until the Council is able to implement London Living Wage. The above-inflation cost of this measure is £0.4m for this financial year. A further support measure was to pay homecare providers at commissioned levels for homecare packages from April to July which has an approximate cost of £0.6m. Homecare providers are being paid based on actual delivery of care from August onwards. Both measures are being funded out of £1.5m of budget was earmarked for starting to implement the London Living Wage for Homecare workers as these contracts will not be rolled out until quarter 4.
- 3.3.15 Also in the MTFs, there are some reported risks to savings such as an incomplete saving on Daycare from 2019/20 of £0.3m and a further Daycare saving of £0.3m for this year, but the delivery of these savings is dependent upon how Daycare will be delivered in a post-Covid environment. This is expected to create additional costs of

£0.4m in 2020-21, of which £0.3m can be mitigated by additional savings found from COVID-19 related underspends as detailed below.

- 3.3.16 There are some other direct minor costs as a result of COVID-19 such as paying directly for care home agency staff, equipping the Peel Road NAIL scheme as a discharge facility and providing shopping calls for those service users who were self-isolating. These costs total £0.3m.
- 3.3.17 The NAIL programme has been delayed because of Covid-19 as it has not been possible to move any clients into NAIL schemes for the duration of the pandemic period. It had previously been agreed that the £2m NAIL savings could be re-profiled from 2020/21 to 2021/22, this creates an overspend of £2m. In addition, due to the delays in moving clients some of these savings may be further delayed.
- 3.3.18 It is expected that Adult Social Care will be able to identify in-year COVID -19 related underspends of £2.4m largely from a reduction in demand from Residential and Nursing placements. Adult Social Care had been set a target of funding £2.1m savings, so the additional saving will be used to offset most of the £0.4m cost of not achieving the Daycare saving.
- 3.3.19 From March to July there has been a reduction in demand of 64 Residential and Nursing placements because of additional COVID-19 deaths. This equates to an annualised saving of £2m and an in-year saving of £1.5m.
- 3.3.20 The remainder of the target will be met through the £0.9m funding that the Council is expecting from Brent CCG arising from a pooled budget that has been created between the Council and the CCG to enable the Council to claim back additional costs arising from hospital discharges made during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Key Assumption	Downside if worse	Upside if better	Mitigations
That the additional numbers of homelessness can be brought down to c.25 people by the end of Q2, down from 50 at the moment.	Each person costs on average £380 per week to accommodate, so a delay for 13 weeks (1 quarter) of 10 people will cost an additional £50k.	Faster progress on homeless pathways will reduce expenditure by £380 per person per week.	Additional support (at additional cost) is being brought in to assist moving homeless clients along the various pathways. Bids for additional government funding and use of FHSG reserves can offset the overspend.
That the YTD collection rate for Housing Needs stays at 77%, compared to 95% last year.	A 5% worsening in the collection rate will cost £0.8m	A 5% improvement in the collection rate will recover £0.8m.	Collection rates are being closely monitored and investigations into the drivers for the movements in the collection rates are ongoing.

That the Council continues to provide PPE to social care providers free of charge at a cost of £58k per week.	Any additional PPE demands will add to the forecast £4.4m spend.	Stopping the supply of PPE could save on expenditure, but providers are likely to then demand higher fees.	Potential to fund some expenditure from the Public Health grant.
That the additional cost of CCG placements reverts to the council from September onwards.		Projected at £200k a month, so if the NHS continues to fund this will bring the forecast cost down.	Work with the CCG to prevent excessively priced care packages and review all care placements to ensure that social care only are responsible for funding those costs .

3.4 Customer & Digital Services (CDS)

Operational Directorate	Budget (£m)	Forecast excluding COVID-19 Impact (£m)	Forecast Overspend/ (Underspend) (£m)	Additional costs/ loss of income due to COVID-19 (£m)	COVID-19 Related service underspends (£m)	Total (£m)
Customer And Digital Services Director	0.7	0.7	0.0	0.6	(0.0)	0.6
Customer Services	9.9	9.9	0.0	2.3	(0.3)	2.0
Shared ICT Service	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.0	0.2
ICT Client And Applications Support	6.3	6.3	0.0	0.1	(0.2)	(0.1)
Procurement	1.3	1.3	0.0	0.6	0.0	0.6
Transformation	3.0	3.0	0.0	0.1	(0.1)	0.0
Total	21.2	21.2	0.0	3.9	(0.6)	3.3

3.4.1 Excluding the impact of COVID-19, it was expected that the department would break-even overall by year end.

3.4.2 The department is forecasting an overall impact of £3.9m due to COVID-19, primarily made up of £0.6m cost of supplies for residents who are shielding, £1.5m additional discretionary housing payments and cost of delays in processing housing benefit applications. In addition, the procurement team are now undertaking the purchasing of PPE on behalf of the council and is currently forecast to spend £0.6m.

3.4.3 CDS is required to identify £0.6m of in-year COVID-19 related underspends and so far is on track to deliver this in full, which should reduce the overspend to £3.3m. These understands have been found as a result of delayed recruitment to posts, holding posts

vacant, reduced use of ZIP cars, reduced use of resilience contracts and various other activities related to changes in demand as a result of COVID-19.

3.5 Regeneration & Environment (R&E)

R&E	Budget (£m)	Forecast excluding COVID-19 Impact (£m)	Forecast Overspend/ (Underspend) (£m)	Additional costs/ loss of income due to COVID-19 (£m)	COVID-19 Related service underspends (£m)	Total (£m)
Environmental Services	32.3	32.3	0	6.1	(0.2)	5.9
Regeneration Services	0.5	0.5	0	1.0	(0.5)	0.5
Property Services	6.1	6.4	0.3	0.3	0	0.6
R&E Directorate	1.6	1.3	(0.3)	3.1	(0.2)	2.6
Total	40.5	40.5	(0.0)	10.5	(0.9)	9.6

3.5.1 The department is currently forecasting a net overspend of £9.6m for 2020/21 based on current trends and assumptions around COVID-19 implications. This includes a £10.5m financial pressure due to COVID-19, offset by £0.9m COVID-19 related underspends.

3.5.2 The forecast breakeven position (excluding COVID-19) consists of:

- i. £0.3m overspend within Property & Assets due to additional staffing costs and an unbudgeted water bill.
- ii. Offsetting £0.3m underspend from the R&E directorate due to small efficiencies across the directorate, and releasing money set aside for the projects that are not expected to materialize.

3.5.3 The £0.9m COVID-19 related underspend has been identified within the department to contribute to the one-off corporate target. This is predominantly as a result of additional income generated by planning fees, the Mortuaries service, and underspends of staffing budgets from held staff vacancies.

3.5.4 The department's finances have been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak and the largest attributable costs and income losses include:

- i. £1.6m potential additional cost for SEN transport (Brent Transport Service). This relates to possible social distancing measures and additional buses required.

- ii. £3.3m estimated reduction in income for parking due to reduced motoring activity during 2020/21
- iii. £1.0m reduction in Highways & Infrastructure fees and charges
- iv. £1.3m pressure in Public Realm for acceptance of liability for increased residual tonnage, agreement to pay Veolia agency staffing costs and loss of income from garden waste and bulky waste

3.5.5 The impact of Covid-19 was previously estimated at £17.3m in Q1, but this has been revised down significantly as Covid-19 restrictions are revised, and the impact is further understood. The main changes to the financial impact are:

- i. Social distancing has not been required on SEN transport services. This reduced the worst-case scenario of £6.6m of additional costs for BTS, down to £1.6m.
- ii. Motoring activity has increased more quickly than expected in June, which combined with the redeployment of parking enforcement has meant the loss of anticipated income for the parking service has been revised down from £4.7m to £3.3m
- iii. The impact on planning fee income, previously forecast at £0.5m loss, has been removed. This is largely because three major developers have agreed costs in principle improving the PPA income forecast, and there has been confirmation that the GLA funding will be available for the full financial year.

3.5.6 There are a number of risks and uncertainties within the service that may affect the projected outturn and assumptions made. The uncertainties around SEN transport and Parking have been mentioned above. These continue to be analyzed as Covid-19 restrictions evolve. Commercial rental income is likely to suffer as tenants may be unable to pay rent and the recent introduction of new legislation that prevents the Council taking possessions for non-payment is also a factor. The longer-term impact on income anticipated from building control applications is also uncertain due to slow progress on current Major Projects and a potential reduction in the number of new Major Projects received

3.6 Central items - Collection Fund

3.6.1 The budgeted net collectible amount for Council Tax (after exemptions, discounts and Council Tax support) is £160.5m. The actual net collectible amount as at August 2020 has not changed since May 2020. It is expected that this figure may decrease during the year if new properties are not completed as expected and additional Council Tax Support granted to residents increases substantially due to COVID-19. This is being closely monitored to assess the overall impact over the timeframe of the medium term financial plan. As at the end of August 2020 the amount collected was 38.6% and in line with the revised in-year target. The amount collected in the same period last year was 41.8%.

3.6.2 The budgeted net collectible amounts for Business Rates (after exemptions, reliefs and discounts) is £130.5m. The actual net collectible amount as at August 2020 is £80.3m, a decrease of £50.2m since May 2020. The reduction is a direct result of additional reliefs granted to businesses as a result of COVID-19 which reduces their tax burden. The council will receive a direct grant to compensate for the loss of income from the government. This figure can vary during the year as new assessments are made, which may include additional premises, or reductions due to successful appeals. As at the end of August 2020 the amount collected was 32.14%, significantly lower than the amount collected in the same period last year, at 46.88%. This is primarily due to payment deferrals that have been granted to support businesses through the impact of COVID-19.

3.6.3 Movements between the budget and actual collectable amounts affect the overall level of balances held on the Collection Fund at year end after deducting charges. The income due to the General Fund from the Collection Fund is forecast on budget with no variation expected. As a result of COVID-19, it is expected that there will be a significant impact on the collection of council tax and business rates for the remainder of 2020/21. The impact of this reduction in income would be phased over three years as the deficit is repaid to the Collection Fund, in line with the revised national accounting rules governing the collection of council tax and business rates.

3.7 Central items - Capital financing and other central items

3.7.1 It is expected that people and organisations who owe the council money will be slower to pay these debts. In some cases council initiatives, such as payment deferrals and reduced recovery actions, will have a direct impact on debt collection and ultimately fewer debts will be repaid in full. Some of the council's debt has already been impaired to recognise this, but these costs are uncertain and could increase. As a result of the postponement of normal debt recovery action, it is too early to be able to estimate the short and long term impact on collection. However, the data will continue to be monitored and analysed accordingly as recovery action resumes.

3.7.2 The capital financing budget for 2020/21 is £23.4m and is currently forecast to spend to budget, as set out below.

	£m
Interest Payable	23.1
Interest Receivable	(7.2)
Capital Financing and Minimum Revenue Provision	7.5
Total	23.4

3.8 Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)

Funding Blocks	DSG Funding (£m)	Forecast excluding Covid-19 related pressures (£m)	Over/ (Under) spend (£m)	Additional costs/ loss of income due to Covid-19 (£m)	COVID-19 Related service underspends (£m)	Total (£m)
Schools Block	233.8	233.8	0	0	0	0
High Needs Block	62.2	65.4	3.2	0.3	0	3.5
Early Years Block	22.9	22.9	0	0	0	0
Central Block	2.2	2.2	0	0	0	0
Total DSG	321.1	324.3	3.2	0.3	0	3.5

- 3.8.1 The DSG is forecast to overspend by £3.5m against grant funding due to increased demand on the High Needs Block and additional costs incurred due to Covid-19. The High Needs block funding allocation for 2020-21 increased by £5m which represents an 8% increase however further growth in Education Health Care plan (EHCP) numbers has resulted in forecasted overspends in top-up funding predominantly in out of borough special schools, mainstream schools, independent residential schools and post-16 placements. There has been an 18% increase in the number of EHCPs, which have risen from 2173 at the end of 2019/20 to 2570 as at the end of June 2020 and numbers are still rising.
- 3.8.2 The growth in EHCPs is a London and national trend whereby the number of children assessed as meeting the threshold for support continues to increase, but High Needs funding has not increased in line with the exponential growth in overall pupil numbers creating financial pressures. The average cost of funding the services required by an EHCP is £20k and costs currently range from £4k for support in a mainstream school to £176k in specialist independent out of borough settings
- 3.8.3 Apart from the pressures arising from EHCPs, there is a projected overspend of £0.5m against the SEN service budgets primarily due to spot purchases in the Speech and Language Therapy service to accommodate needs of children over and above the budgeted contract value and there are also pressures against the under 5s specialist nursery panel due to increased demand.
- 3.8.4 There is an estimated cost against the high needs block of £0.3m incurred to support the vulnerable children and young people during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown and support post lockdown to fund additional tuition, therapy and specialist equipment costs.
- 3.8.5 At the end of 2019/20, the DSG budget was in deficit of £4.9m and including the current forecast overspend this could result in an overall DSG deficit of £8.4m at the end of 2020/21. The regulations make clear that the deficit can be carried forward to be funded from future year's funding and/or recovery plans agreed with the DfE. A task group has been set up by the council to coordinate and monitor actions that may

recover the deficit. The blocks will continue to be monitored and reported to the Schools Forum in addition to Cabinet.

3.9 HRA

HRA	Budget (£m)	Forecast excluding COVID-19 Impact (£m)	Forecast Overspend/ (Underspend) (£m)	Additional costs/ loss of income due to COVID-19 (£m)	COVID-19 Related service underspends (£m)	Total (£m)
HRA	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.9	0.0	2.9

3.9.1 The budgets for the Housing Management function are contained within the ring-fenced Housing Revenue Account (HRA), which has a balanced budget set for 2020-21. The total potential budgetary pressure as a result of the ongoing pandemic is currently estimated to be £2.9m.

3.9.2 Of the total £2.9m potential budgetary impact, £2m is attributed to an increase in rent arrears. This is based on the decline in rent collection rates experienced to date, extrapolated to forecast the impact for a full year, and accounting for the potential future impact of a possible recession depressing the collection rates and increasing the levels of bad debts further.

3.9.3 Setbacks to new build developments are expected to result in a delay in letting new properties out to tenants, therefore increasing the loss of rental income further by £0.2m. However, it is not anticipated that the expenditure on new builds will be significantly lower than the annual capital budgets.

3.9.4 In addition, it is forecast that 10% of service charges income will be under-recovered, which is estimated to be £0.5m. This is in line with Bank of England forecasts on consumer credit and debt recovery.

3.9.5 Additional costs of £0.2m are forecast to be incurred on providing estate caretaking services through the pandemic without compromising on the standards of service. This includes sourcing additional personal protective equipment and employing additional temporary staffing resource to provide cover for colleagues staying in isolation.

3.9.6 The HRA operating reserve currently stands at £1.4m and the identified pressures will continue to be closely monitored. Mitigating action, such as re-scheduling major works and new build capital investments, will be considered if required, to avoid the HRA going into deficit.

4 Capital Programme

4.1 Table 2 below capital programme shows the forecast to budget position as 31 July 2020. The original approved capital programme for 2020/21 totaled £292.5m. It should be noted that the revised budget reported at July cabinet for 2020/21 was £350.9m.

4.2 The budget has been revised to £246.8m to reflect the programme slippage, additions and re-profiling of schemes since July cabinet. The main changes are set out and explained in table 1 below.

Table 1

Directorate	Revised Budget (Cabinet July 2020)	Revised Budget	Budget Movement
	£m	£m	£m
Corporate Landlord	27.8	17.7	(10.1)
Housing Care Investment	226.4	150.0	(76.4)
Public Realm	28.1	28.1	0.0
Regeneration	22.2	26.2	4.0
Schools	19.3	14.6	(4.7)
South Kilburn	26.5	9.6	(16.9)
St Raphael's	0.6	0.6	0.0
Total	350.9	246.8	(104.1)

4.2.1 Corporate Landlord - £11m loan planned to be advanced to United Colleges Group (UCG) has been re-profiled to future years.

4.2.2 Housing Care Investment:

- i. General Fund – realignment and re-profiling of planned spend to future years undertaken on a number of schemes (£20.8m Allotment Roundwood scheme, £11.5m Learie Constantine, Brent Indian Community Centre (BICC) and Preston Community Library schemes and £5.4m on Honey Pot Lane and £2m on Clock Cottage).
- ii. HRA – realignment and re-profiling of planned spend to future years undertaken on a number of schemes (£18.8m New Homes Programme, £1.2m Major works). In addition £14m planned spend on Infill schemes will not be required. HCIB has agreed the underspend from the Infill schemes to be repurposed to fund Grand Union homes.

4.2.3 Regeneration – £8.7m Olympic Way Improvements budget has been brought forward, this is being offset by the re-profiling of the £3.4m Brent contribution to the CCG medical centres and £1.7m on Picture Palace to future years.

4.2.4 Schools – Due to the Secondary School expansion project being put on hold for a year the planned spend of £6.8m has been re-profiled to future financial years. The Asset Management Programme (AMP) budget has been accelerated by £0.5m in addition to £1.3m from the contingency budget and a new budget of £0.2m was requested for Roundwood Free School Provision.

4.2.5 South Kilburn – Due to delays the planned spend has been re-profiled to reflect the progress on property acquisitions across the schemes.

Table 2

Directorate	Original Budget (Approved Feb20) (£m)	Revised Budget (£m)	Current Forecast (£m)	Over / (Under) Spend to Budget (£m)
Corporate Landlord	22.3	17.7	9.6	(8.1)
Regeneration	18.7	26.2	25.5	(0.7)
St. Raphael's Estate	0.3	0.6	0.5	(0.2)
Housing Care Investment	191.1	150.0	150.2	0.2
Schools	11.6	14.6	12.2	(2.3)
South Kilburn	24.2	9.6	8.1	(1.5)
Public Realm	24.2	28.1	20.8	(7.4)
Total	292.4	246.8	226.9	20.0

4.3 The current forecast outturn is £226.9m against the revised budget and an underspend of £20m. An explanation of the variance of current forecast to the revised budget is provided in the paragraphs below.

4.4. Corporate Landlord

4.4.1. Reporting £8.1m underspend due primarily to the £7.5m Utilising Surplus property budget which has not been spent. It is proposed that the budget is paused as part of the capital programme review. In addition there is £0.8m underspend on the Energy programme which is offset by historic overspends in ICT projects.

4.5. Regeneration

4.5.1. Reporting £0.7m underspend due to £0.4m on Bridge Park and £0.2m for Liveable Neighbourhoods programme which has been paused indefinitely by TFL but has not been cancelled officially.

4.6. St Raphael's

4.6.1. Reporting £0.2m underspend to budget due to the impact of COVID-19 on our ability to engage with residents to support decisions internally about viability of redevelopment.

4.7. Housing, Care and Investment

4.7.1. The New Council Homes Programme (HCHP) is underspending by 0.8m due to delays in start on sites at Kings Drive Mason Court, Gloucester Close, Frontenac and Hindhurst Close schemes. In addition due to increase in demand, Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) is expected overspend by £1m. HCIB recommended an increase in the DFG budget to be funded from the DFG reserve.

4.8. Schools

4.8.1. Reporting £2.3m underspend of which £1.9m is projected on the phase 3 Primary Schools projects at Uxendon Manor and Elsley. In addition there are underspends of £0.4m forecasted on the AMP programme and Ark Elvin project.

4.9. South Kilburn

4.9.1. The £1.5m is underspend due to delays in securing property acquisitions on the whole programme. The forecast has been revised down to reflect progress on property acquisitions.

4.10. Public Realm

Reporting a £7.4m underspend across a number of infrastructure improvement programmes. £2.3m relates to the LIP grant allocation for 2020/21 paused by Transport for London (TfL) due to the COVID-19 outbreak. Instead TfL has replaced this with funding for the Mayor's Streetspace Plan for improvement in infrastructure to enable social distancing on high streets and walking and cycling routes. In addition, £3m spending on planned footways works which were paused due to the pandemic outbreak has been re-profiled to next financial year. There are also additional underspends of £2.1m forecasted in landscaping, sports and street lighting.

4.11. The capital programme is continually reviewed to assess the financial and delivery implications of the COVID-19 crisis on programmes and projects planned to be completed during this financial year. There are some savings anticipated from the recent review undertaken. A report will be brought to CMT once the review has been completed.

5 Financial Implications

5.1 This report is about the Council's financial position in 2020/21, but there are no direct financial implications in agreeing the report.

6 Legal Implications

6.1 Managing public money responsibly is key legal duty, but there are no direct legal implications in agreeing the report.

7 Equality Implications

7.1 There are no direct equality implications in agreeing the report.

Report Sign Off

MINESH PATEL
Director of Finance

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Cabinet
12th January 2021

Report of the Director of Finance

Quarter 3 Financial Report 2020/21

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Key
Open or Part/Fully Exempt:	Open
No. of Appendices:	None
Background Papers:	None
Contact Officer(s):	<p>Minesh Patel, Director of Finance Minesh.patel@brent.gov.uk Tel: 020 8937 4043</p> <p>Ben Ainsworth, Head of Finance Ben.ainsworth@brent.gov.uk Tel: 020 8937 1731</p>

1. Summary

- 1.1. This report sets out the current forecast of income and expenditure versus the revenue budget for 2020/21 and other key financial data. Total pressures for the year (COVID and non-COVID) amount to £36.9m. This is partially offset by the remaining emergency grant funding tranches 1 - 4 (£25.1m), compensation for lost fees and income totaling (£3.7m) and service COVID-19 underspends (£4.8m) resulting in a net overspend of £8m for the year. The £8m pressure can be attributed to:
- COVID-19 net pressures (£3.4m),
 - General Fund (£0.6m) and;
 - DSG (£4m).

- 1.2. Approximately £6m out of the £31.3m emergency funding awarded to date was drawn down in 19/20 to fund a bad debt impairment caused by the pandemic outbreak, leaving a balance of £25.1m to be utilised in 20/21.

General Fund / Dedicated Schools Grant / Housing Revenue Account (Excluding COVID-19)

- 1.3. Excluding the impact of COVID-19 the Council is expecting to overspend by £4.6m. £0.6m relates to Children and Young People (CYP) and £4m to the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is forecast to breakeven before the impact of COVID-19 is taken into account.

COVID-19 Related Pressures 2020/21

- 1.4. In addition to the £4.6m noted above, the impact of COVID-19 is predicted to add a further £37.1m of costs and income losses to services in 2020/21 (and £6.2m in 2019/20).

- 1.5. These pressures are shared between the General Fund (£34.2m), DSG (£0.2m) and the HRA (£2.7m). Further details are contained in Table 1 and throughout this report.
- 1.6. The pressures have been partially offset by emergency funding from MHCLG which totals £35.1m to date and compensatory COVID-19 related underspends totaling £4.8m.

COVID-19 Related Pressures 2019/20

- 1.7. In 2019/20 the council impaired £6.2m of debt following the pandemic outbreak. This cost provision has been reported in the council's COVID cost tracker and was funded from the Tranche 1 allocation of £9.3m received on 27th March. Whilst this does not impact in 20/21 it nonetheless counts towards the councils overall position reported periodically to MHCLG. When factoring in this additional cost, overall estimated COVID costs (for 2019/20 and 2020/21) increases from £37.1m to £43.3m.

Table 1	Budget	Forecast Overspend / (Underspend) excluding COVID-19	Additional costs/ loss of income due to COVID-19 and Savings shortfall	COVID-19 Related service underspends	Total Forecast Overspend/ (Underspend)
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
Assistant Chief Executive	7.9	0.0	0.9	(0.1)	0.8
Chief Executive Department	16.9	0.0	0.2	(0.3)	(0.1)
Children and Young People	48.2	0.6	4.2	(0.5)	4.3
Community and Well-Being	134.2	0.0	15.6	(2.4)	13.2
Customer & Digital Services	28.5	0.0	4.2	(0.6)	3.6
Regeneration & Environment	40.5	0.0	9.1	(0.9)	8.2
Subtotal Service Area Budgets	276.2	0.6	34.2	(4.8)	30.0
Central items	(276.2)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Grand-total General Fund Budgets	0.0	0.6	34.2	(4.8)	30.0
DSG Funded Activity	0.0	4.0	0.2	0.0	4.2
Housing Revenue Account (HRA)	0.0	0.0	2.7	0.0	2.7
Position before COVID-19 funding	0.0	4.6	37.1	(4.8)	36.9

Tranche 1 - 4 (see paragraph 1.2) (25.1)

Fees & charges compensation (3.8)

Position after COVID-19 funding **8.0**

- 1.8. These figures are more uncertain than at any similar points in previous years due to uncertainty around the severity of the pandemic during the winter period. This forecast includes updated projections following the announcement of the second national lockdown, but at the time of writing it is unclear what will follow this.

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 To note the overall financial position and the actions being taken to manage the issues arising.

3. Revenue Detail

3.1 Assistant Chief Executive (ACE)

Assistant Chief Executive (ACE)	Budget (£m)	Actual Forecast excluding COVID-19 (£m)	Forecast Overspend / (Underspend) excluding COVID-19 (£m)	Additional costs/ loss of income due to COVID-19 (£m)	COVID-19 Related service underspends (£m)	Total (£m)
Chief Executive Office	0.5	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Communications	0.4	0.4	0.0	0.8	0.0	0.8
Executive and Member Services	3.7	3.7	0.0	0.0	(0.1)	(0.1)
ACE Director	0.4	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Strategy and Partnership	2.9	2.9	0.0	0.1	0.0	0.1
Total	7.9	7.9	0.0	0.9	(0.1)	0.8

Summary

- 3.1.1. The ACE department is currently forecasting a net overspend of £0.8m for 2020/21 based on current trends and assumptions around COVID-19 implications. This includes a £0.9m financial pressure due to COVID-19, offset by £0.1m COVID-19 related underspends.

Forecast excluding COVID-19

- 3.1.2. The results presented in the table above show a forecast breakeven position (excluding COVID-19) expected at the year end.

Additional costs/loss of income due to COVID-19

- 3.1.3. The department's finances have been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak and the most significant attributable costs and income losses include:

- Communication - £0.8m loss of income from venue hire at The Drum; film productions not using council sites and parking services; and loss of commercial advertisers on the bridge and banner.
- Strategy & Partnership - £0.1m additional costs from capacity development support to Voluntary Sector Organisations.

3.1.4. The impact of COVID-19 was previously estimated at £0.6m in Q2 but this has been revised to £0.9m as COVID-19 restrictions are revised and the impact is further understood. The main change to the financial impact is £0.3m within Communications, cause by further loss of income due to cancellation of events held at The Drum and lower than expected income from film production sites.

COVID-19 Related service underspends

3.1.5. The £0.1m COVID-19 related underspend has been identified within the department to contribute to the one-off corporate target. This is predominately as a result of the deferring non-essential procurement, reduced stationery spend across the council and vacant posts being held within the department.

Risks and uncertainties

3.1.6. There are a number of risks and uncertainties within the service that may affect the projected outturn and assumptions made. The uncertainties around the income from conferences and events, which is heavily affected by lockdowns, continues to be reviewed as COVID -19 restrictions evolve.

3.2. Chief Executive Department (CE)

Chief Executive Department	Budget (£m)	Forecast excluding COVID-19 Impact (£m)	Forecast Overspend/ (Underspend) (£m)	Additional costs/ loss of income due to COVID-19 (£m)	COVID-19 Related service underspends	Total
Legal, HR and Audit	9.2	9.2	0.0	0.3	(0.2)	0.1
Finance	7.7	7.7	0.0	(0.1)	(0.1)	(0.2)
Total	16.9	16.9	0.0	0.2	(0.3)	(0.1)

Summary

3.2.1. The CE department is currently forecasting a net underspend of £0.1m for 2020/21 based on current trends and assumptions around COVID-19 implications. This includes a £0.2m financial pressure due to COVID-19, offset by £0.3 COVID-19 related underspends.

Forecast excluding COVID-19

3.2.2. The results presented in the table above show a forecast breakeven position (excluding COVID-19) expected at the year end.

Additional costs/loss of income due to COVID-19

3.2.3. The department's finances have been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak and the largest attributable costs and income losses include:

- Legal, HR and Audit & Investigations- £0.3m consisting of loss of income from services offered to the construction industry and on client debt related matters due to reduced demand. Additional costs expected in providing specialist advice and upgrading of electronic services due to the lockdown of courts. Within HR,

additional costs are expected in providing risk assessments and additional support for specialist counselling in respect of individuals or teams suffering from PTSD.

- Finance - £0.1m reduction in energy costs from council owned buildings.

3.2.4. The impact of COVID-19 was remains at £0.2m since the iQ2 forecast

COVID-19 Related service underspends

3.2.5. The £0.3m COVID-19 related underspends have been identified within the department to contribute to the one-off corporate target. This is a result of delayed recruitment to posts where COVID-19 has resulted in a short term reduction in demand, bringing forward savings planned for future years and various other activities related to changes in demand as a consequence of COVID -19 .

Risks and uncertainties

3.2.6. There are a number of risks and uncertainties within the service that may affect the projected outturn and assumptions made. The uncertainties around the income of Legal continues to be reviewed as COVID -19 restrictions evolve.

3.3. Children and Young People (CYP) (General Fund)

CYP Department	Budget (£m)	Forecast (£m)	Forecast Overspend /(Under spend) (£m)	Additional costs/ loss of income due to COVID-19 (£m)	COVID-19 Related service underspends (£m)	Total (£m)
Central Management	0.7	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Early Help	4.6	4.6	0.0	1.1	(0.2)	0.9
Inclusion	1.5	1.5	0.0	0.0	(0.1)	(0.1)
Localities	15.4	16.0	0.6	0.4	0.0	1.0
Looked After Children and Permanency	6.3	6.5	0.2	0.1	(0.1)	0.2
Forward Planning, Performance & Partnerships	17.7	17.7	0.0	1.8	0.0	1.8
Safeguarding and Quality Assurance	1.9	1.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Setting and School Effectiveness	0.1	(0.1)	(0.2)	0.8	(0.1)	0.5
Total	48.2	48.8	0.6	4.2	(0.5)	4.3

Summary

3.3.1. The department is currently forecasting a net overspend of £4.3m for 2020/21 based on current trends and assumptions around COVID-19 implications. This includes a £0.6m pressure unrelated to COVID-19 and £4.2m financial pressure due to COVID-19. These pressures are offset by £0.5m COVID-19 related underspends.

Forecast excluding COVID-19

3.3.2. The forecast £0.6m projected overspend position (excluding COVID-19), the same as the Qtr. 2's reported position of £0.6m. The forecast overspend consists of:

- £0.6m pressure against the Localities service budget which is a £0.2m reduction from the position reported at Qtr. 2 due to a transfer of unallocated growth held against the central management budget to the service. The overall pressure is mainly due to staffing pressures of £0.4m because of the use of agency staff to cover hard to fill social worker posts at the right levels and £0.2m arising from demand led pressures against the Care at Home and Direct Payment in Children with Disabilities.

There remains ongoing management action to look to reduce the number of agency social workers and fill positions with permanent staff by offering agency social workers the option to move to permanent contracts, a recruitment drive, career progression arrangements and the offer of key worker housing from 2021.

- £0.2m pressure against the Looked after Children and Permanency budget has arisen mainly from the costs of commissioning six adoptive placements with adoption agencies other than Adopt London West (ALW). This is based on a child's best interests, in line with regulatory guidance, that the most suitable adoptive placement should be found for a child, regardless of the type of adoption service provider.

There is currently management action for scrutinising and challenging ALW's performance at board meetings in relation to providing sufficient adopters to meet the needs of the children in the borough. It is expected that more adopters will be approved and numbers of local matches will increase over time.

- (£0.2m) underspend against a non-ring fenced grant within the Setting and School Effectiveness service.

Additional costs/ loss of income due to COVID-19

3.3.3. The forecast includes £4.2m additional costs incurred as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and these attributable costs and income losses include:

- £1.7m pressures consisting of £0.5m delays in stepdown arrangements from residential placements to foster placements and/or semi-independent placements. £0.3m additional placement costs for care leavers, where the lockdown has caused a delay in bidding for and moving into their own tenancies. £0.3m pressure due to an increase in the number of looked after children cases as a result of the lockdown. £0.4m placement costs as a result of additional costs incurred for placing a child with complex needs moved from hospital due to the lockdown. £0.2m due to an increase in the number of parent and baby assessment placements.
- £0.3m additional payments for short break activities for Children with disabilities; for families with children in need (s17 Children Act 1989) who needed emergency payments for food, utilities or other hardship issues; increased subsistence allowance to care leavers by £20 per week; and providing care leavers with emergency payments at points of crisis e.g. loss of employment since March 2020.

- £0.2m temporary staffing cost pressures to deal with increased capacity needed for caseloads as a result of the pandemic. It is anticipated that this pressure will rise further by the end of Q3 due to increased workload activity for frontline child protection services. There has been a 100% increase in child protection investigations compared to October 2019. This increase in activity will result in more children subject of child protection plans, a projected growth in numbers of looked after children and a rise in caseloads for social workers. The department is closely monitoring these trends to ensure safe practice can be maintained over the medium term and whether additional Covid-19 related resource is required to manage current demand.
- £0.1m cost of keeping children centres open for an additional three months thereby extending existing contracts with the current providers and as a result of the pandemic related delay in the introduction of the Family Wellbeing Centres (FWC).
- £1.0m estimated loss of income in 2020/21 from traded services with schools with the largest losses being the Gordon Brown Centre £0.4m and Brent Music Service £0.3m due to the impact of the lockdown. There is also the loss of £0.1m income from a Council owned Nursery for fee-paying families for whom a childcare place has been discontinued. £0.2m relates to loss of revenue in issuing Education Penalty notices, training income and reduced income from other local authorities utilising the Ade Adepitan Short Break centre in the borough.
- 0.9m pressure arising from slippage in the delivery of 2020/21 savings target. £0.8m is due to the delayed opening of the FWC and £0.1m relates to the developing of a shared fostering service with three other West London Alliance (WLA) boroughs which would result in staffing efficiencies. This is delayed due to an unsuccessful funding bid to the DfE. Alternative funding sources to carry out this work are now being sought with other boroughs.

3.3.4. The Qtr 3 forecast reflects a net £1m increase from the reported Qtr 2 position and the main changes are:

- The removal of the £0.7m potential impact of Transport for London's (TFL) decision to suspend free travel for under 18s as this decision is no longer going ahead. However there is the addition of £1.6m against Looked after Children's placement costs.
- An increase in the estimated loss of income of £0.1m against the Gordon Brown Centre.

COVID-19 Related service underspends

3.3.5. £0.5m COVID-19 related in year underspends have been identified within the department to contribute to the one-off corporate target. These underspends are mainly due to vacant posts identified which can be held vacant for the rest of the financial year; reduced spend against costs of events and conferences; and underspends expected against travel costs and subsistence for staff as a result of fewer face to face visits during the lockdown.

Risks and uncertainties

3.3.6. There are a number of risks and uncertainties within the department that may affect the projected outturn such as:

- The volatility of the placement budgets for Looked after Children and Children with Disabilities as an individual high cost residential or secure placement can cost over £0.3m per annum;
- The forecast assumes a level of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Children (UASC) grant income from the Home Office and if there are fewer UASC within the LAC cohort, this will reduce the income expected from the Home Office;
- Caseloads in the Localities and LAC & Permanency service excluding the impact of Covid-19, remain within budgeted levels of circa 2,500 but a significant increase in caseloads will require an increase in the number of social work staff as described in paragraph 3.3.3 above;
- The risk in the Early Help service where a balanced budget is reliant on an increased number of successful claims for the Troubled Families reward payments. Last year, the team successfully achieved 100% of their claims target and the service continues to work towards this.

3.4. Community Well-Being (CWB) (General Fund)

CWB Department	Budget (£m)	Forecast excluding COVID-19 Impact (£m)	Forecast Overspend/ (Underspend) (£m)	Additional costs/ loss of income due to COVID-19 (£m)	COVID-19 Related service underspends (£m)	Total (£m)
Housing	8.0	8.0	0.0	5.0	0.0	5.0
Public Health	21.8	21.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Culture	5.1	5.1	0.0	1.2	0.0	1.2
Adult Social Care	99.3	99.3	0.0	9.4	(2.4)	7.0
Total	134.2	134.2	0.0	15.6	(2.4)	13.2

Summary

3.4.1. Based on current trends and assumptions around COVID-19 implications, the Community Wellbeing department is forecasting a net overspend of £13.2m for 2020/21. This overspend is fully attributable to COVID-19 and includes a £15.6m financial pressure which is offset by underspends of £2.4m.

Forecast excluding COVID-19

3.4.2. The table above shows an expected break-even position across the department (excluding COVID-19) at year-end.

Additional costs / losses of income due to COVID-19

3.4.3. The department's finances have been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak and the largest attributable costs and income losses include:

Housing

- £3.0m loss of rental income from Housing Needs tenants. This is based on extrapolating the current drop in rent collection rates (from 95% to 80%) and also takes into account the future impact of a potential prolonged recession increasing the levels of bad debts incurred by the Council further.
- £0.6m additional spend over budget to accommodate the increased demand in temporary accommodation for homeless people through the first lockdown period. The broadening of homelessness criteria has led to an increased number of people being housed, not all of whom were eligible for Housing Benefit. This forecast is net of specific secured government grants and assumed Housing Benefit income. The total cost that would have been incurred by the Council is estimated to be £1.4m, however £0.8m of this relates to expenditure incurred on supporting a cohort with no recourse to public funds (including housing benefits), which will be funded from the homelessness specific government grants received.
- £0.9m potential additional cost for providing temporary accommodation to homeless people through any further lockdowns. Earlier in the year, the Homelessness Duty criteria was relaxed during the first lockdown, leading to a significant increase in the requirement for temporary accommodation. If this was to reoccur to a similar level in Q4, it would result in this additional cost to the Council.
- £0.3m reduction in income from enforcement activities in the Private Housing Services
- £0.2m costs associated with commissioning a homelessness support contract from the charitable sector and additional temporary staffing resource, both of which are necessary to cope with the increased demand

Culture

- £0.6m additional expenditure on operational and mothballing costs for Willesden Sports Centre, Bridge Park and Vale Farm leisure centres
- £0.5m forgone income from leisure services at Bridge Park and Vale Farm
- £0.1m expected loss of libraries income across the full financial year

Adult Social Care

- £3.2m additional cost for procuring Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and distributing it free of charge to care providers. The Council is better able to source and buy this equipment than many care providers who would struggle given the competitive market. Allocating it out to providers is part of the emergency response, but also prevents further pressure on cost of care as providers may not achieve value for money on their own and would pass on increased costs to the Council. As of the end of October £3m worth of PPE had been bought. The Government announced in September that it would provide PPE at no cost to all care homes for the remainder of this financial year. Therefore, the Council is no longer providing PPE to care homes who are able to source PPE from the Government's PPE portal. However, the Council has a strategic stockpile of PPE available to any providers who are either unable to

source their own PPE, or need additional PPE at short notice which they are unable to source from their regular supply channels.

- For the duration of the Covid-19 pandemic period from March 19th until August 31st Brent CCG commissioned all Residential and Nursing placements. However, from 1st September the Council may need to cover these costs. It is estimated that the CCG have made 56 more Residential and Nursing placements than what the Council would typically make during the same period. Additionally during the pandemic period the placements made by the CCG have typically been 33% more expensive than the usual cost to the council. The Council is still determining with the CCG who is responsible for the cost of these placements. If all of these placements have to be funded by the Council from September onwards this creates a cost pressure of £0.2m per month which equates to £1.4m for this financial year.
- £0.8m of potential additional social care costs arising from increased hospital admissions during the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- As part of the response to the pandemic the payment rates for all homecare providers was uplifted by 5% to £16 per hour as an interim measure until the Council is able to implement London Living Wage. The above-inflation cost of this measure is £0.4m for this financial year. A further support measure was to pay homecare providers at commissioned levels for homecare packages from April to July, which has an approximate cost of £0.6m. Homecare providers are being paid based on actual delivery of care from August onwards.
- Also in the MTFs, there are some reported risks to savings such as an incomplete saving on Daycare from 2019/20 of £0.3m and a further Daycare saving of £0.3m for this year, but the delivery of these savings is dependent upon how Daycare will be delivered in a post-COVID environment. This is expected to create additional costs of £0.4m in 2020/21; of which £0.3m can be mitigated by additional savings found from COVID-19 related underspends as detailed below.
- The NAIL programme has been delayed because of Covid-19 as it has not been possible to move any clients into NAIL schemes for the duration of the pandemic period. It had previously been agreed that the £2m NAIL savings could be re-profiled from 2020/21 to 2021/22, this creates an overspend of £2m. In addition, due to the delays in moving clients some of these savings may be further delayed.
- There are some other direct costs as a result of COVID-19 such as paying directly for care home agency staff, equipping the Peel Road NAIL scheme as a discharge facility and providing shopping calls for those service users who were self-isolating. These costs total £0.3m. The Council has also procured some agency social workers to help meet additional demands in Safeguarding and Mental Health arising because of Covid-19. These costs total a further £0.3m.

Public Health

- To date, there has been no financial impact on the pre-existing activities of Public Health as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak. A £2m grant has been provided to cover any Test and Trace activities which the Council may be required to provide.

3.4.4. The impact of COVID-19 was previously estimated to be £16.6m in Q2, which has now been re-evaluated as COVID-19 restrictions are revised, government support is being provided and the overall impact is understood further. The main changes to the previously estimated financial impact are:

- £1.8m reduction due to additional government support allocated towards supporting homeless people with no recourse to public funds and revising assumptions around the deliverability of Housing and Public Health savings.
- £0.9m potential additional cost for providing temporary accommodation to homeless people through any further lockdowns.
- £1.2m reduction relating to PPE as the Government announced it would provide PPE at no cost to all care homes for the remainder of the financial year.
- £0.8m potential additional social care costs arising from increased hospital admissions during the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- £0.3m additional cost from agency social workers in Safeguarding and Mental Health.

COVID-19 Related service underspends

3.4.5. It is expected that Adult Social Care will be able to identify in-year Covid-19 related underspends of £2.4m largely from a reduction in demand from Residential and Nursing placements. Adult Social Care had been set a target of funding £2.1m savings, so the additional saving will be used to offset most of the £0.4m cost of not achieving the Daycare saving.

3.4.6. From March to July there has been a reduction in demand of 64 Residential and Nursing placements because of additional COVID-19 deaths. This equates to an annualised saving of £2m and an in-year saving of £1.5m.

3.4.7. The remainder of the target will be met through the £0.9m funding that the Council is expecting from Brent CCG arising from a pooled budget that has been created between the Council and the CCG to enable the Council to claim back additional costs arising from hospital discharges made during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Risks and uncertainties

3.4.8. There are a number of risks and uncertainties within the service that could affect the assumptions made and the overall forecast outturn. The key risks and uncertainties relate to:

- The time required for the significant fall in rental income collected to reverse. Any improvement to rent collection rates will need to be sustained in order to provide assurance that the upward trend will continue. Further lockdowns or a recession are likely to slow this recovery in collection rates, leading to a greater income shortfall within the Housing service. The current housing forecast assumes that the rent collection rate experienced to date will follow a similar trend for the rest of the year. Collection rates are being closely monitored and there are continuous investigations to better understand the drivers for the movements.

- Any potential future relaxations of the eligibility criteria for accommodation, similar to those which occurred during the first lockdown, are likely to lead to increased costs which may not be covered by Housing Benefit income.
- The impact on leisure centres due to further lockdowns or restrictions on activity. These additional measures could lead to both an impact on income during further closures and a potential increase in costs to support the Council's leisure centre partners where necessary. The Council continues to work closely with its leisure centres in order to minimise their costs and to maximise the opportunities so that the centres can re-open safely and promptly when permitted.
- £0.9m of the Covid-19 related underspend is dependent upon Brent Council agreeing a pooled budget with Brent CCG for Covid-19 hospital discharges. However, until this pooled budget is formally signed off, the Council cannot invoice Brent CCG for these additional costs.

3.5. Customer & Digital Services (CDS)

Operational Directorate	Budget (£m)	Forecast excluding COVID-19 Impact (£m)	Forecast Overspend/ (Underspend) (£m)	Additional costs/ loss of income due to COVID-19 (£m)	COVID-19 Related service underspends (£m)	Total (£m)
Customer And Digital Services Director	0.7	0.7	0.0	0.6	(0.0)	0.6
Customer Services	16.6	16.6	0.0	2.5	(0.3)	2.2
Shared ICT Service	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.3
ICT Client And Applications Support	6.3	6.3	0.0	0.1	(0.2)	(0.1)
Procurement	1.3	1.3		0.6	0.0	0.6
Transformation	3.6	3.6	0.0	0.1	(0.1)	0.0
Total	28.5	28.5	0.0	4.2	(0.6)	3.6

Summary

3.5.1. The CDS department is currently forecasting a net overspend of £3.6m for 2020/21 based on current trends and assumptions around COVID-19 implications. This includes a £4.2m financial pressure due to COVID-19, offset by £0.6m COVID-19 related underspends.

Forecast excluding COVID-19

3.5.2. The results presented in the table above show a forecast breakeven position (excluding COVID-19) expected at the year end.

Additional costs/loss of income due to COVID-19

3.5.3. The department's finances have been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak and the largest attributable costs and income losses include:

- £0.6m attributable to the purchasing of food and other supplies for residents being shielded.
- Customer Access - £2.5m mainly due to increased discretionary housing payments (£1.2m), additional staff costs (£0.7m), admin delays in benefit

processing and benefit overpayments (£0.3m) and reduced income from Registration and Nationality (£0.2m).

- SICTS (Digital Services) - £0.3m attributable to additional equipment, additional Mobile data costs and software licenses.
- ICT Client and Applications Support – £0.1m due to the loss of income from IT support services.
- Procurement – £0.6 related to cost of undertaking the purchasing of PPE on behalf of the council for council staff.
- Transformation - £0.1m for Dynamics online form and power BI dashboard development.

3.5.4. The impact of COVID-19 was previously estimated at £3.9m in Q2 but this has been revised to £4.2m, as COVID-19 restrictions are revised and the impact is further understood. The main change to the financial impact is:

- Customer Access –£0.4m increase in staffing costs, £0.1m Discretionary Housing payments to support tenancy arrears and a revised reduction of £0.3m in housing benefit administration cost.

COVID-19 Related service underspends

3.5.5. The £0.6m COVID-19 related underspend has been identified within the department to contribute to the one-off corporate target. This has been achieved through delayed recruitment to posts, holding posts vacant, reduced use of Zip cars, reduced use of resilience contracts and various other activities related to changes in demand as a consequence of COVID-19.

Risks and uncertainties

3.5.6. There are a number of risks and uncertainties within the service that may affect the projected outturn and assumptions made. The uncertainties around the income from the Registration and Nationality department continues to be reviewed as COVID -19 restrictions evolve.

3.6. Regeneration & Environment (R&E)

R&E	Budget (£m)	Forecast excluding COVID-19 Impact (£m)	Forecast Overspend/ (Underspend) (£m)	Additional costs/ loss of income due to COVID-19 (£m)	COVID-19 Related service underspends (£m)	Total (£m)
Environmental Services	31.8	31.8	0.0	6.4	0.0	6.4
Regeneration Services	0.1	(0.1)	(0.2)	0.6	0.0	0.4
Property Services	6.0	6.4	0.4	0.4	0.0	0.8
R&E Directorate	2.6	2.4	(0.2)	1.7	(0.9)	0.6
Total	40.5	40.5	0.0	9.1	(0.9)	8.2

Summary

3.6.1. The department is currently forecasting a net overspend of £8.2m for 2020/21 based on current trends and assumptions around COVID-19 implications. This includes a £9.1m financial pressure due to COVID-19, offset by £0.9m underspends.

Forecast excluding COVID-19

3.6.2. The forecast breakeven position (excluding COVID-19) consists of:

- £0.4m overspend within Property & Assets due to higher than expected business rates relating to the Civic Centre (£0.2m), additional staffing costs and an unbudgeted water bill;
- £0.2m underspend in Planning & Development Services due to vacancies within Transportation and higher than forecast pre-app income; and
- £0.2m underspend from the R&E directorate due to small efficiencies across the directorate and releasing money set aside for the projects that are not expected to materialize.

Additional costs/ loss of income due to COVID-19

3.6.3. The department's finances have been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak. The largest attributable costs and income losses include:

- £3.2m estimated reduction in income for parking due to reduced motoring activity during 2020/21
- £1.3m pressure in Public Realm for acceptance of liability for increased residual tonnage, agreement to pay Veolia agency staffing costs and loss of income from garden waste and bulky waste
- £1.2m relating to costs incurred on overflow mortuary at Marsh Road and additional pan London Mortuary costs
- £1.0m reduction in Highways & Infrastructure fees and charges.

3.6.4. The financial impact of COVID-19 was previously estimated at £10.5m in Q2. Since then it is no longer estimated that there will be additional costs relating to COVID-19 for SEN transport. The impact if social distancing was required on school transport was estimated as £1.6m for 2020/21.

COVID-19 Related service underspends

3.6.5. The £0.9m COVID-19 related underspend has been identified within the department to contribute to the one-off corporate target. This is a result of efficiency savings imposed across the Directorate based on recent outturn figures and subject to a strict budget monitoring regime.

Risks and uncertainties

3.6.6. There are a number of risks and uncertainties within the service that may affect the projected outturn and assumptions made. The uncertainties around SEN transport and Parking have been mentioned above. These continue to be analyzed as Covid-19 restrictions evolve. These uncertainties are exacerbated by the November lockdown. Commercial rental income is likely to suffer as tenants may be unable to pay rent and the introduction of legislation that prevents the Council taking possessions for non-payment is also a factor. The longer-term impact on income anticipated from planning

applications and building control applications is also uncertain due to slow progress on current major projects and a potential reduction in the number of new major projects received.

3.7. Central items - Collection Fund

- 3.7.1. The budgeted net collectible amount for Council Tax (after exemptions, discounts and Council Tax support) is £160.5m. The actual net collectible amount as at October 2020 has reduced to £159.9m, a reduction of £0.6m since May 2020. It is expected that this figure may decrease further during the year if new properties are not completed as expected and additional Council Tax Support granted to residents increases substantially, due to COVID-19, producing a small cumulative council tax deficit on the collection fund of £0.3m. This is the position before accounting estimates are taking into account such as impairment for doubtful debt. However, if this were to transpire, under the new regulations this would be paid off over three years rather than one year under the previous regulations. This is being closely monitored to assess the overall impact over the timeframe of the medium term financial plan. As at the end of October 2020 the amount collected was 61.3%, 3% lower than the revised in-year target. The amount collected in the same period last year was 67.6%.
- 3.7.2. The budgeted net collectible amounts for Business Rates (after exemptions, reliefs and discounts) is £130.5m. The actual net collectible amount as at November 2020 is £76.3m, a decrease of £4.0m since August 2020. This reduction is a direct result of additional reliefs granted to businesses, due to COVID-19, where the council will receive a grant to compensate for the loss of income. The reduction to the overall rateable value will initially leave the collection fund in deficit of around £66m, a timing difference to reflect the difference between the amount of business rates estimated and actually collected. As at the end of October 2020 the amount collected was 49.5%, significantly lower than the amount collected in the same period last year, at 65.19%. This is primarily due to payment deferrals that have been granted to support businesses through the impact of COVID-19. The in-year collection rate for 2020/21 is forecast to be between 80-90% of amounts due by the end of the year, increasing the levels of debt outstanding that will be pursued over time.
- 3.7.3. Movements between the budget and actual collectable amounts affect the overall level of balances held on the Collection Fund at year-end after deducting charges. The income due to the General Fund from the Collection Fund is forecast to exceed the budget by around £20m due to a timing difference between the additional COVID-19 reliefs that it will receive directly from central government (to compensate for NDR discounts) on top of the precept demand (agreed at the beginning of the year). The surplus will be transferred to a reserve at year-end to repay the collection fund, which together with contributions from other preceptors and a new irrecoverable lost income compensation scheme announced by the government, will bring it back into balance over three years, in line with the revised national accounting rules governing the collection fund.

3.8. Central items - Capital financing and other central items

- 3.8.1. It is expected that people and organisations who owe the council money will be slower to pay these debts. In some cases council initiatives, such as payment deferrals and reduced recovery actions, will have a direct impact on debt collection and ultimately fewer debts will be repaid in full. Some of the council's debt has already been impaired to recognise this, but these costs are uncertain and could increase. As a result of the postponement of normal debt recovery action, it is too early to be able to monitor and analyse accordingly as recovery action resumes.

3.8.2. The capital financing budget for 2020/21 is £23.4m and is currently forecast to spend to budget, as set out below.

	£m
Interest Payable	23.5
Interest Receivable	(7.6)
Capital Financing and Minimum Revenue Provision	7.5
Total	23.4

3.9. Dedicated Schools Grant

Funding Blocks	DSG Funding (£m)	Forecast excluding Covid-19 related pressures (£m)	Over/ (Under) spend (£m)	Additional costs/ loss of income due to Covid-19 (£m)	COVID-19 Related service underspends (£m)	Total (£m)
Schools Block	233.8	233.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
High Needs Block	62.2	66.2	4.0	0.2	0.0	4.2
Early Years Block	22.9	22.9	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Central Block	2.2	2.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Total DSG	321.1	325.1	4.0	0.2	0.0	4.2

Summary

3.9.1. The DSG is forecast to overspend by £4.2m against grant funding for 2020/21 based on current trends and includes a £0.2m forecast pressure due to COVID-19 implications.

3.9.2. This will lead to an increase in the DSG deficit from £4.9m to £9.1m by the end of the financial year.

Forecast excluding COVID-19

3.9.3. The £4m pressure has mainly arisen against the High Needs block because of growth in Education Health Care plan (EHCP) numbers which has resulted in forecasted overspends in top-up funding predominantly in out of borough special schools, mainstream schools, independent residential schools and post-16 placements. The growth in EHCPs is a London and national trend whereby the number of children assessed as meeting the threshold for support continues to increase, but High Needs funding has not increased in line with the exponential growth in overall pupil numbers creating financial pressures. There has been a 19% increase in the number of EHCPs, which have risen from 2173 at the end of the financial year 2019/20 to 2680 as at the end of September 2020 and numbers are still rising. The forecast position is due to the following pressures:

- £1.7m forecast pressures against independent, out of borough special schools and top up funding due to increased numbers;

- £1.3m forecast pressure due to growth in the numbers of young people remaining in education in post-16 who have EHCPs and who may have to be supported from the High Needs block until the age of twenty-five;
- £0.6m DSG income reduction and the most significant variance is on the High Needs Block, where a £0.9m recoupment import-export adjustment has been made which accounts for school place funding for Brent pupils in other local authority areas. This is offset by some underspends on forecast Early Years Block income, where income has been increased by £0.1 million relating to a prior year adjustment, and the 2020/21 allocation has been increased by £0.2 million following confirmation of the January 2019 Early Years census.
- £0.4m forecast pressures against SEN support services which include the Speech and Language Therapy service due to spot purchases to accommodate needs of children over and above the budgeted contract value, the Education Psychology services and transport costs are the knock on effects of the increased demand;

3.9.4. The DfE requires Local Authorities to have a management plan agreed by the Schools Forum in place to recover the deficit over a number of years. To recover the deficit, options being reviewed by the task group set up by the Strategic Director of CYP include;

- Looking to establish more SEND provision in the borough as part of the School Place Planning Strategy Refresh including developing new Additionally Resourced Provisions (ARPs);
- Ensuring there is full cost recovery from other local authorities that place pupils in Brent special schools including administration and other specific costs;
- Review of the DSG funded SEN support services currently underway;
- Continued central government lobbying.

Additional costs/ loss of income due to COVID-19

3.9.5. There is an estimated cost against the high needs block of £0.2m incurred to support the vulnerable children and young people during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown and support post lockdown to fund additional tuition, therapy and specialist equipment costs.

3.10. HRA

HRA	Budget (£m)	Forecast excluding COVID-19 Impact (£m)	Forecast Overspend/ (Underspend) (£m)	Additional costs/ loss of income due to COVID-19 (£m)	COVID-19 Related service underspends (£m)	Total (£m)
HRA	0.0	0.0	0.0	2.7	0.0	2.7

Summary

3.10.1. The budgets for the Housing Management function are contained within the ring-fenced Housing Revenue Account (HRA), which has a balanced budget set for 2020/21.

- 3.10.2. The total budgetary pressure is forecast to be £2.7m and is fully attributable to the effects of the ongoing pandemic. Excluding the financial pressures arising as a result of COVID-19, the HRA is expected to break-even.
- 3.10.3. The HRA operating reserve currently stands at £1.4m and the identified pressures will continue to be closely monitored. Mitigating actions to avoid the HRA going into deficit., such as re-scheduling major works and new build capital investments are being considered. In addition, the COVID-19 support grant received from the government is not ring-fenced against the General Fund and could be used to relieve pressures within the HRA if required.

Forecast excluding COVID-19

3.10.4. The forecast break-even position (excluding COVID-19) is the net result of a £0.7m overspend being mitigated through a £0.4m underspend and utilising a £0.3m provision. The individual variances consist of:

- £0.4m overspend arising from settling a backlog of disrepair cases
- £0.1m additional spend over budget to increase borough wide waste bin capacity in response to tenant complaints
- £0.1m additional spend over budget for the implementation of estate parking enforcements on 5 pilot sites
- £0.1m reduction on service charge billing to leaseholders, reflecting reduced volume of responsive communal repairs
- (£0.3m) underspend on external works and communal responsive repairs
- (£0.1m) underspend against staffing budgets due to vacancies
- (£0.3m) anticipated utilisation of disrepairs provision

Additional costs/ losses of income due to COVID-19

3.10.5. The HRA finances have been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak and the recognised and forecast pressures include:

- £2m forecast increase in rent arrears based on extrapolating the decline in rent collection rates experienced to date to forecast the impact for a full year, and accounting for the potential future impact of a second wave of COVID-19 and a possible recession
- £0.4m (10%) forecast under-recovery of service charges, which is in line with the Bank of England forecasts on consumer credit and debt recovery
- £0.2m loss of rental income due to delays to new build completions arising from stoppages on site during the first lockdown resulting in delays in letting new properties out to tenants
- £0.1m additional costs incurred on employing additional temporary staffing resource in estate caretaking services to provide cover for colleagues staying in isolation

3.10.6. The estimated impact of COVID-19 was previously estimated to be £2.9m in Q2, which has now been revised down by £0.2m. The revised impact of delays to new build schemes and slippages on rental income resulted in a £0.1m reduction to the previous forecast. The cost of PPE for estate caretaking services is now accounted for centrally and amounts to £0.1m.

Risks and uncertainties

3.10.7. There are a number of risks and uncertainties within the HRA that could affect the projected outturn and assumptions made. The impact on rental income collection rates and the subsequent increase in arrears due to the ongoing pandemic is uncertain. Scenario analysis has been undertaken in order to evaluate a range of potential options and explore the extent of possible mitigating actions required.

3.10.8. Any further reduction of planned and major works will further reduce the level of service charges collected, which will consequently reduce the HRA's borrowing capacity and the ability to deliver improvements in future years.

3.10.9. Following court rulings in relation to local authorities' water charge agreements with water companies, it was determined that these local authorities, including Brent, have been overcharging social housing tenants for water and sewerage and will therefore need to reimburse them. For Brent, the financial exposure has been estimated to be between £5m and £7m. In 2019/20, Brent set aside a provision of £2.7m for the water case, however additional mitigating actions, such as re-profiling planned works and utilising unreserved capital receipts, may need to be considered in order to fund the full reimbursement.

4. Capital Programme

4.1.1. The table below sets out the capital programme current forecast to revised budget position at 30 September 2020.

4.1.2. As set out in the table below the current revised budget is £226m. This reflects programme slippages, additions and re-profiling of schemes undertaken in year. The budget changes were reported in previous reports to Cabinet for noting and approval.

Capital Programme Monitoring at 30 September 2020

Directorate	Original Budget (Approved Feb20) (£m)	Revised Budget (£m)	Current Forecast (£m)	Over / (Under) Spend to Budget (£m)
Corporate Landlord	22.3	11.2	11.0	(0.2)
Regeneration	18.7	17.9	17.2	(0.7)
St. Raphael's Estate	0.3	0.6	0.6	0.0
Housing Care Investment	191.2	148.5	146.4	(2.1)
Schools	11.6	14.6	12.6	(2.0)
South Kilburn	24.2	8.4	7.6	(0.8)
Public Realm	24.2	24.8	21.6	(3.2)
Total	292.5	226.0	217.0	(9.0)

4.1.3. An underspend of £9m is being forecast against the current revised budget. An explanation of the variance of current forecast to the revised budget is provided in the paragraphs below.

Corporate Landlord

4.1.4. Reporting £0.2m underspend due primarily to pausing of College of North West London planned spend.

Regeneration

4.1.5. Reporting £0.7m underspend comprising of £0.4m on Bridge Park and £0.3m for Liveable Neighbourhoods programme which has been paused indefinitely by TFL but has not been cancelled officially.

St Raphael's

4.1.6. Reporting forecast spend come in line with budget.

Housing, Care and Investment

4.1.7. Reporting £2.1m underspend due to £1.6m slippage in major works and repair programme (£0.6m on external fabric work, £0.7m on lifts installation and £0.3m on Kilburn Square Tower Block) and New Council Homes Programme (NCHP) which is underspending by £0.5m due to delays in start on sites on some schemes (Anuerin Bevan Court and HRA - Pharamond Fho).

Schools

4.1.8. Reporting £2.0m underspend of which £1.3m is projected on the phase 3 Primary Schools projects at Uxendon Manor and Elsley. In addition £0.6m underspend is forecast on the Asset Management Programme (AMP) programme and Ark Elvin project.

South Kilburn

4.1.9. Reporting £0.8m underspend due to delays in securing property acquisitions and design works on various schemes. The forecast has been revised down to reflect progress on property acquisitions.

Public Realm

4.1.10. Reporting a £3.2m underspend across a number of infrastructure improvement programmes (including parks, sports and culture, landscaping and street lighting) and TfL/LIP funded projects. £2.3m of the underspend relates to the TfL/LIP formula grant allocation for 2020/21 paused by Transport for London (TfL) due to the COVID-19 outbreak. TfL has confirmed that the Council will be reimbursed for its sunk costs and a decision is awaited on future funding allocations including the Mayor's Streetspace programme July bid.

4.1.11. The capital programme is continually reviewed to assess the financial and delivery implications of the COVID-19 crisis on programmes and projects planned to be completed during this financial year.

5. Financial Implications

5.1. This report is about the Council's financial position in 2020/21, but there are no direct financial implications in agreeing the report.

6. Legal Implications

6.1. Managing public money responsibly is key legal duty, but there are no direct legal implications in agreeing the report.


7. Equality Implications

7.1. There are no direct equality implications in agreeing the report.

Report sign off:

Minesh Patel
Director of Finance

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	<p align="center">Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee 27 January 2021</p>
	<p align="center">Report from the Strategic Director of Customer and Digital Services</p>
<p>A Review of Digital Online Customer Services in Consideration of the Covid-19 Epidemic</p>	

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Non-key
Open or Part/Fully Exempt:	Open
No. of Appendices:	Appendix 1 - Citizens Online Report
Background Papers:	Brent Digital Strategy 2019-23
Contact Officers:	<p>Sadie East, Head of Transformation Sadie.East@brent.gov.uk 020 8937 1507</p> <p>Rehana Ramesh, Digital Transformation Lead Rehana.Ramesh@brent.gov.uk 020 89371935</p>

1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To outline the Brent Digital Strategy 2019-2023, with a particular focus on the digital initiatives to support customer access. To outline how the customer access strand of the strategy is being delivered, progress against it, how Covid has affected delivery and progress, and how vulnerable group are being supported and equalities issues addressed.

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee note the report.

3.0 Detail

What we set out to do

- 3.1 The Brent Digital Strategy 2019-2023 sets out how Brent's ambition to become a truly digital borough will be realised through achieving the dual and interdependent aims of becoming a digital place and a digital council. One of the key benefits set out in the strategy is that "customers are able to transact and participate securely, easily and conveniently in a way that meets their needs"; and one of the key principles is that "we will ensure that our services are accessible to everyone".
- 3.2 Central to the strategy is the desire to provide residents with a quick, easy and consistent experience, however they contact the council, and for it to be faster and simpler for them to access services. We are delivering this through a more user-friendly website where customers will be able to quickly and easily find out about and book and pay for services and a single customer portal where residents can access their accounts and track progress themselves rather than make a phone call.
- 3.3 A good digital customer experience is reliant on residents being able to access a borough-wide digital infrastructure providing instantaneous connectivity, with a greater number of residents getting access to full fibre broadband. Complementing this is the aim to develop a training and education framework that nurtures digital skills and expertise, getting residents support to improve their digital skills and get online and working with the voluntary and community sector to improve their digital infrastructure and skills.
- 3.4 To ensure alignment with other strategies, the themes in the Digital Strategy align with those of the Brent Borough Plan 2019-2023. Additionally, one of the key principles of the Digital Strategy is that we "will embed our digital vision within our policies and strategies including HR, Planning, Regeneration, Employment and Skills and ICT. We will also reflect this in our engagement with the community and models of working with the Community and Voluntary Sector".
- 3.5 Delivery of the Digital Strategy is overseen by the Customer and Digital Board and championed by the Deputy Leader of the Council. The Brent Digital Board is chaired by the Strategic Director of Customer and Digital Services – the digital lead for the Council Management Team. Programme benefits are also reported to the Capital Programme Board,
- 3.6 Brent Council works closely with partner organisations on the delivery of the Digital Strategy. The council is:
 - working very closely with other West London Alliance boroughs to create the optimum conditions to stimulate market investment in West London's digital infrastructure

- working with the Old Oak and Park Royal Development Corporation on Local Full Fibre Network project to build full fibre connections to lighting columns in Park Royal
- working with the Greater London Authority and Transport for London to develop grant funded full fibre roll out projects
- sharing good practice and lessons learnt from digital infrastructure and smart cities work through a pan-London officers' network
- putting wayleaves in place with Community Fibre and Hyperoptic who are building full fibre internet connections to Brent's housing stock. This work is also providing social value, including, connections to community buildings, support around digital skills and employment opportunities
- liaising with voluntary and community sector organisations to understand better digital exclusion and pilot ways of tackling it. For example, we are working with Age UK on a pilot which will look at how best to support older people to prevent social isolation and enable them to better access services online
- working with the GLA on their Covid recovery response
- working closely with Microsoft and our development partners Infosys on the delivery of the digital programme, specifically Microsoft Dynamics related projects

3.7 Brent is a founder member of LOTI (London Office of Technology and Innovation) and has been involved in work on digital inclusion and developing common Internet of Things standards. The council is also a signatory of the Local Digital Declaration.

Where we have got to

3.8 The programme to deliver the digital strategy runs until 2023, but there have been some significant achievements so far in regard to customer access and digital inclusion. The programme has enabled:

- Rapid development and delivery of online systems to support the response to the pandemic including online forms and back end systems for shielding, test and trace visitor logs, discretionary business grants and the resident support fund (Brent funding to help residents that need additional help due to Covid-19).
- Support for a smooth transition to home working following lockdown including working with the Shared ICT service (SICTS) to roll out and support staff in using Teams, supporting work to develop use of Zoom for council meetings, developing and sharing tools and techniques to help managers and staff work effectively from home. In last 90 days (7 Oct 2020 to 4 Jan 2021) there have been 2,993 active users on Teams and 54,534 total meetings. The first public virtual meeting was held at the end of April and between then and mid-November, 69 council meetings have been run virtually. The average number of users logging in remotely to the Brent system is approximately is currently around 2,100 per day.

- Improvement in Brent’s web performance in the Sitemore Local Government league table published in June 2020. Brent’s website is now placed at 54 (up 154 places over the last year), and is second in London. At the same time, significant progress has been made in designing a framework for a new council website, which will be launched in 2021, and progress has also been made to implement the 2018 public sector body accessibility requirements.
- In the last 12 months the recycling and waste chatbot (software that simulates human like conversations with users via text) has had 2,293 users and the numbers have increased during the course of the year
- Improved full fibre to the premises access in Brent, including connections to circa 8,300 social housing properties and free connections rolled out to community assets, including the South Kilburn Hub, SUFRA foodbank, two Family Wellbeing Hubs and tenant meeting rooms.
- Delivered social value gains for residents through the digital infrastructure programme estimated at £2,573,000

3.9 Very recent achievements include:

- A new resident feedback and complaints system went live in November 2020 and allows residents to track the progress of their complaints without phoning the council
- The move to a new “My Account” customer portal in December 2020 allows residents to reset and manage their account and enables Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA). This is part of our ongoing effort to ensure that we keep our customer data safe and secure. MFA is an additional layer of security to ensure the person logging into an online account is who they say they are. This is the first phased of a project which will result in customers being able to access more services in one place with a single account. Since the new MyAccount portal went live on 7 December 2020; over 19,000 residents have registered
- Council Tax and Housing benefits portals went live at the same time, allowing people to manage their council tax and housing benefit at a time that suits them and see live status updates on service requests.

3.10 The Digital Strategy recognises that while many residents would prefer to interact quickly and conveniently with the council via digital channels, there are others who find it difficult to access online services, including those with more complex needs. Community hubs are an integral part of our offer and provide face to face and telephone support to residents who are vulnerable, digitally excluded and have issues cannot be dealt with via a simple transaction.

3.11 In terms of pre-existing channels, in 2020, the council received an average of 18,409 phone calls a month (10.8% increase on same period 2019). 3,546 people visited community hubs (in person or via the phone) during the first three quarters for 2020. During 2020, the website has had 2,006,521 users; 1,952,225 new users and 4,502,322 sessions. It is most used by people under 44 and least used by over 65s. 52,512 emails were received by the Contact

Centre, including Adult Social Care, in 2020. As part of the Digital Programme, we are working to rationalise and improve the forms on the website. In 2020, there were 244,826 unique viewings of forms¹.

- 3.12 Further improvements to the website are planned for 2021 and the new site is scheduled for the summer of 2021. A wide range of user research has taken place over the past few months, despite the challenges of Covid-19. This is being used to inform the development of the improved site. Activities included benchmarking of council websites, Google Analytics data, results from a six-month user experience survey that we ran on our website (over 2,500 responses), feedback from an internal staff survey and the outputs from a number of staff surgery sessions conducted pre-lockdown. We also conducted interviews with Brent frontline staff and reached out to staff residents, Members, landlords and charity partners. In the summer of 2020, we recruited almost 100 external participants, via a shout out in the weekly Your Brent email newsletter. Finally, using the Brent Connects network, we invited local residents to give us feedback in a series of one-to-one video interviews.

Impact of the pandemic

- 3.13 In terms of progress against the Digital Strategy, although there has been some slight slippage as a result of Covid in terms of go live for a small number of projects, significant progress has been made on planned activities alongside a range of additional work to develop forms and systems to support the response to the Pandemic which have supported the council in making grants and other support quickly available and accessible for residents and businesses.
- 3.14 The infrastructure put in place to deliver the programme has made it possible to develop rapidly a number of systems to support the council's response to Covid-19, for example the Covid-19 resident support fund, shielding and inbound calls questionnaire and business grant form. The epidemic has also probably accelerated partnership working as all public sector organisations are confronted with similar challenges and a sense of urgency.
- 3.15 The restrictions in place in response to the Covid outbreak have magnified the importance of ensuring that Brent has effective digital services in place for customers who find themselves suddenly unable to access face-to-face support. Covid has meant the closing of face-to-face services during all three lockdowns. Phones became the preferred mode of customer contact, but there was a general channel shift to digital, with online death registration and death certificates ordered online as an example. From the start of April to the start of November 2020, 1,993 deaths were registered online. Support for the most vulnerable via the hubs has also continued to be provided by phone when face to face services have not been available.

¹ This does not include all forms as some forms come up as webpages when we assess website usage.

- 3.16 In regard to website usage, the figures for 2020 are slightly higher than 2019. There were 1,971,099 users and 1,864,716 new users for 2019, with 4,543,888 sessions. This compares to 2,006,521 users, 1,952,225 new users and 4,502,322 sessions for 2020. It should be noted that Wembley events days typically account for a lot of traffic to the site and the pandemic reduced these, so users accessing the site for Council services are likely to have increased.

Digital inclusion

- 3.17 Digital inclusion has been recognised as a significant issue which has become even more key during the Pandemic. Since before Covid-19, the Digital Programme has been working with Citizens Online to review digital skills and access across the borough and map that against need. The work resulted in a report on digital inclusion in Brent which is available at Appendix 1. In November 2020, the council held a workshop attended by over 80 representatives from the voluntary and community sector to feed back on the recommendations from Citizens Online report and gain views and buy-in for the way ahead.
- 3.18 Following this workshop, the Digital Inclusion Action plan is being developed and it applies across Council teams; CVS organisations; Registered Providers and Health. Its themes are:
- Champions – recruitment; platform / consistency; support for champions; models for remote support; sustainability/funding; support for voluntary sector organisations
 - Bespoke offers – Disability; older people; neurodiversity; coaching
 - Hosted network – good practice; opportunities
 - Service mapping - creation; where it goes; how to maintain it
 - A placed based pilot
 - Access - devices / connections /skills
 - Supporting SMEs
- 3.19 In light of the increased need to support Brent businesses, particularly SMEs, as part of the recovery process, the scope of the Citizens Online work has been widened to include them. The Digital Team is also supporting a project led by the Young Brent Foundation that is looking at inter-generational digital inclusion for residents living in social housing in the Borough.
- 3.20 While the Digital Inclusion Action Plan is being finalised, in response to Covid, the programme had undertaken a series of digital inclusion pilots including:
- CCG/NHS pilot for residents who have complex health needs to ensure they can interact with their GPs digitally
 - Pilot with Age UK for elderly residents
 - Pilot with day care centres to ensure that residents can retain their quality of life in spite of the pandemic

- Working with Citizens Online to roll out devices to residents who have specific learning disabilities

3.21 The Digital Programme was enabled the fibre to the premises (FTTP) coverage in Brent to increase to 25% (8,300 more properties connected) and has supported the development of Digital skills in the borough. The council is developing a digital skills inclusion programme with Microsoft that will provide free training for both staff and residents.

3.22 Currently, with the closure of schools to most pupils it is essential that children who need to learn from home have access to the internet. Schools can secure internet access for some pupils through schemes run by the Department for Education (DfE). However, so that pupils who still need support with internet access for home learning do not fall through the net, we are putting additional arrangements into place for Brent residents. Schools will be able to refer children unable to access the DfE schemes to the Brent Residents' Support Fund. If a home is able to benefit from a Community Fibre, full fibre fixed broadband connection, the family will be provided with one, free of charge, for 12 months. Where properties are not served by Community Fibre, eligible residents will be sent a mi-fi device and unlimited data for a period of 12 months.

4.0 Financial Implications

4.1 An improvement in digital technology and digital customer services requires investment. On 14 October, Cabinet approved Brent's Digital Strategy 2019 - 2023 and the outline business case to support it. Progress on delivery is reported to the Customer and Digital Board and financial benefits are reported to Capital Programme Board quarterly.

5.0 Legal Implications

5.1 Legal implications will be considered for new individual projects that make up the Digital Programme at the appropriate time.

6.0 Equality Implications

6.1 An equality impact assessment (EIA) was complete alongside the Brent Digital Strategy 2019-23. Individual projects within the programme have also undertaken EIAs and accessibility audits have been completed. Equality implications are key to both the customer access and digital inclusion strands of the programme.

7.0 Consultation with Ward Members and Stakeholders

7.1 Engagement has included two Member Development sessions on Customer Access and Digital, the most recent in December 2020. Members are provided with updates via the Members' bulletin and have also been engaged in specific projects such as the website development project.

REPORT SIGN-OFF

Peter Gadsdon

Strategic Director of Customer and Digital Services



Digital Inclusion in Brent

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Citizens Online

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AUTHOR:

Citizens Online

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ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report has been produced by Citizens Online to provide analysis of digital inclusion issues within London Borough of Brent.

The report aims to:

- Improve understanding of digital exclusion and inclusion issues
- Identify opportunities to improve delivery of Essential Digital Skills support
- Ensure stakeholders are equipped to develop their strategies and make business cases for digital and social change

Motivating digitally excluded citizens to engage with the digital world can be difficult. To do this successfully requires compelling 'hooks' for each person, and each organisation.

Simply 'selling' or presenting a new digital service or technology does not create digital journeys. People and organisations need to understand what is beneficial for them and what an improved life or service might feel like in a digital world. Understanding people's motivations is key.



Citizens Online promotes a collaborative partnership approach to tackling digital exclusion.

We collate information about current assets and resources, and promote working together in local areas, to improve the lives of residents. We have made recommendations in this report for how best to tackle digital exclusion in Brent.

We understand that things change quickly in the world of digital transformation and skills. During writing this report there may be more activity within the Council to support these issues not documented here.

INTRODUCTION

This report has been commissioned by Brent Council (BC). BC is in the process of digital transformation with an aim to become ‘a truly Digital Council and making Brent a truly Digital Place’. The Council are aware that there are still significant numbers of residents that lack Essential Digital Skills¹ and have commissioned this research to try to change that. In the context of digital transformation, the Council is making a bold statement of support for inclusivity and accessibility. They recognise the importance of digital skills, and have the ambitious aspiration that their residents will not be left behind in the digital age. Digital inclusion must be the heart of any digital transformation program and central to any transformation conversation from the start. There is no point in having brilliant online services if your customers can’t use them.

The Coronavirus pandemic has had a huge impact on the way we are living our day to day lives. It has amplified just how important digital technology is to help us get through these times. For those not online, especially vulnerable people who are shielding, it is an extremely difficult and worrying time. We talk more about this in the report.



The pandemic also highlighted to BC that many SMEs² in the borough do not have a digital presence. The Council wants to support businesses to improve digital skills to ensure they are resilient. It’s important for residents and businesses to upskill digitally to help aid economic recovery from COVID-19. Social Isolation and loneliness are also key concerns for the Council and we have included information on both these topics for how digital technologies and skills can help these groups of people.

The good news is that the number of people using the internet and digital technology in the UK is gradually increasing. However, those who remain offline or lack essential digital skills, are also increasingly harder to reach and motivate. Meaning that as the digital skills gap narrows, it also deepens.

As a result of our research, we’ve made recommendations for BC and other organisations in Brent to improve digital skills for their residents and workforce. We hope these are taken on board to embed digital skills and inclusion into business as usual. Helping to deliver fantastic digital customer service and enabling everyone to benefit from the digital world we now live in. We hope you enjoy the report.

¹ The Essential digital skills framework defines the digital skills adults need to safely benefit from, participate in and contribute to the digital world: [Essential digital skills framework](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/essential-digital-skills-framework) (gov.uk), accessed 16/12/2019.

² Small and Medium Enterprises

Adults in Brent Digital Exclusion Stats



Have no laptop

7%

**Have no internet
access at home**



6%

**Have no
Foundation
Digital skills**



18%

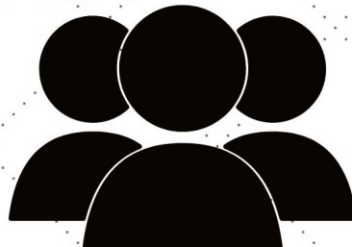
**Don't have the
Essential
Digital Skills
for life**



11%

**Only use a
smartphone
to go online**

7% Are offline



HEADLINE DIGITAL INCLUSION STATS

Borough population: ³	330,795
Approximate Number of households: ⁴	110,286
Working age population (16-64): ⁵	220,379
People aged 65+: ⁶	39,992
Working age population in receipt of benefits: ⁷	49,697
State Pension age population in receipt of benefits:	37,609

DIGITAL EXCLUSION-RELATED ESTIMATES FOR BRENT

Non-internet users (adults): ⁸	17,600 (6.8%)
Non-internet users aged 65+: ⁹	13,241 (5%)
People without:	
• Essential Digital Skills ¹⁰ :	48,500 (18.4%)
• Foundation Digital Skills ¹¹ :	40,000 (15.1%)
• All 6 Foundation Digital Skills ¹² :	16,000 (6%)
• Transactional Digital Skills ¹³ :	40,300 (15.3%)
Adults with no laptop/PC at home:	50,000 (18.7%)
Adults with no internet access at home:	17,800 (6.7%)
Smartphone-only users:	30,000 (11%)

³ Population figures in this report are based on the ONS 2018 Mid-Year Estimate

⁴ 2015 estimate of "[occupied addresses](#)" using experimental methodology. This is close to the number of households from the 2011 Census: 50,943

⁵ This is 66.6% of population - higher than for England 62.6%

⁶ At 12.1% of the population this is considerably lower than for England as a whole, 18.2%

⁷ Excludes benefits administered by HMRC (Child benefit, Child tax credits). DWP StatXplore, Aug 19.

⁸ 6.8% - lower than 9.2% across England

⁹ 56.5% of all non-internet users

¹⁰ [Essential Digital Skills](#) Framework is a Department of Education system, which informs the [Lloyds Bank Consumer Digital Index](#), from which the estimates above are made.

¹¹ [Foundation Digital Skills](#) underpin all essential digital skills - e.g. ability to turn on devices, connect to Wi-Fi, access the internet, understand passwords and keep personal information safe.

¹² 2019 Lloyds Consumer Digital Index

¹³ 2020 Lloyds Consumer Digital Index

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“Digital” permeates everything. How we communicate, work, learn, travel and entertain ourselves today is a world away from 20 years ago. Organisations transforming digitally must be clear in their culture that digital is everyone’s responsibility as it is an essential part of our lives both in and out of work.

The Coronavirus pandemic has also demonstrated the vital importance of digital solutions. They enable us to; have food delivered, work from home, claim benefits, order prescriptions, pay bills and videocall loved ones. Yet **17,600 (6.8%) of adults in Brent are not online** and **18% of adults don’t have all of the ‘Essential Digital Skills¹⁴** for life. With groups of people more vulnerable to the virus (older, disabled and with long term health conditions) also more likely to lack digital skills, this is a worrying problem.

As well as the people classed as offline,¹⁵ there are a larger group of people classed as ‘narrow’ users. These people only engage in up to 4 of 15 types of online use¹⁶. **We estimate there are 53,200 adult narrow users in Brent** (20% of the adult population).

We know that being online and having good digital skills has a wide range of benefits¹⁷. It helps people to connect and feel less isolated, save money, access better paid work, live healthier lives and help their children. These aims are also all within the BC Borough Plan¹⁸ so supporting residents to improve their digital skills is a win-win situation.

From our research, there is now a clear picture for where those most at risk of digital exclusion are based. We’ve ranked wards¹⁹ in Brent in order of **digital exclusion risk** and produced a Ward Risk Heatmap (pages 19-20). The top three are: **Harlesden, Stonebridge and Dollis Hill**. Digital exclusion is closely linked to poverty, disability, age and social isolation²⁰. We would recommend focusing resources and marketing aimed at digitally excluded groups in these areas as a priority.

Like all local authorities across England, BC has faced significant funding cuts. Transacting online provides one way to make savings, yet continue to deliver excellent

¹⁴ [Essential Digital Skills](#) Framework is a Department of Education system

¹⁵ From Office for National Statistics data. This refers to people who have never been online or last used the internet over three months ago.

¹⁶ The 15 types of use are: email; transactions; instant messaging; banking/ paying bills; social media; finding/ downloading information; news; health information; watching short video clips; local government sites; audio services; TV or film content; remote access e.g. accessing files through a cloud service; uploading content e.g. photos, blog posts; and playing games online.

¹⁷ People with the highest digital engagement, who earn less than £20,000 per year, [save 42% on monthly utility bills compared to those with the least digital engagement](#)

¹⁸ [Brent Council Borough Plan](#)

¹⁹ Strictly speaking, we have used data at Census LSOA level and combined this to Ward level using the ONS best-fit lookup. LSOAs do not always nest exactly into wards, so ward-level results are a best approximation.

²⁰ See, for example, [“The emergence of a “digital underclass” in Great Britain and Sweden: Changing reasons for digital exclusion”](#) (2017)

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services.²¹ BC has already made progress on their digital transformation journey. The Council has a digital strategy and over 80% of services are now available online. There is a centralised transformation team and digital themes and leadership are of high importance.

It's important to recognise that when talking about people lacking digital skills and confidence online, this can also include staff. We identified some gaps in knowledge about staff digital skills and confidence; the extent to which the digital strategy and vision is embedded; how well the assisted digital process is working, and how technology supports staff to work more efficiently. We would recommend survey work to gather this information and help digital transformation.

Brent has listened to feedback from staff²², residents and Crisis²³ and is working with Nomensa to develop a new website and resident's portal. A user centred design approach has been adopted to ensure the new product meets end user needs. The recent Brent residents' survey revealed that 45% of respondents agreed with the statement, 'It is easy to carry out online Council transactions'. We would hope with improved design of the website, resident's portal and with digital champion support, which more residents will find it easy to transact digitally with Council services.

The COVID-19 outbreak has hindered our research, especially with health and third sector organisations. We have only engaged with 14 organisations to date so we acknowledge that there may be more information to emerge as the crisis passes. From our findings so far, BC could perhaps benefit from more connections with the health sector. There is a health and wellbeing board and various types of social prescribing, which potentially offer opportunities for digital champion approaches to support residents.

Brent Council is working hard to support digitally excluded residents, especially in response to COVID-19. They are working with CVS Brent and the Young Brent Foundation to provide laptops young people. Digital support and drop-ins are also available in BC Hubs. Brent Start²⁴ will offer courses based on the Essential Digital Skills Framework from September 2020. There is also a Financial Inclusion Group to support residents who are struggling financially.

With COVID-19 recovery in mind, BC were interested in research into: 1. Small businesses 2. Loneliness and Social Isolation. The Council is supporting businesses with COVID-19 recovery, as the pandemic has highlighted weaknesses in businesses that lack e-commerce and digital infrastructure. Brent surveyed businesses in Kilburn and found that 46% of independent businesses had no digital presence. A digital champion

²¹ Online services often result in improved customer satisfaction as many residents prefer the ease and convenience of 24/7 access in your own home.

²² Brent staff were surveyed about the Council website but tellingly only 4% of respondents used the site solely for personal use as a resident. Also the sample size (47 respondents) was small so caution is required when analysing the results.

²³ Crisis raised concerns about the usability of the 'My Account' and 'Homelessness Portal' in a report.

²⁴ <https://www.brent.gov.uk/services-for-residents/employment-training-and-skills/brent-start/>

DIGITAL INCLUSION IN BRENT

approach can also be used to support businesses to digitally transform. Enabling them to become more resilient and aid economic recovery of the borough.

With residents vulnerable to Coronavirus shielding, the risk of experiencing loneliness and becoming socially isolated is also increased. Digital skills are one potential way to alleviate these unpleasant conditions.

The Council acknowledges that more could be done to tackle digital exclusion by working in partnership with other organisations. **The problem of digital exclusion is deeply entrenched**, with those still offline often the most difficult to reach. Most people will need multiple prompts, support, nudges and interventions to raise confidence and skill levels with digital technology. We advocate that the best way to do this is through a cross sector network, as this problem is too big for a single organisation to tackle alone.

A digital inclusion group and a fully networked system would:

- grow the Digital Champion (DC) provision with both volunteer and embedded DCs
- create a clear triage and referral system
- centralise information for help with digital skills, potentially on the BC website
- promote digital skills training for staff

We would recommend that a **Digital Inclusion Network is put in place for the Borough**. This could be as light touch as a regular agenda item on another existing group meeting with similar aims (e.g. welfare, health and wellbeing, financial inclusion), or it could be a more formal group. Either way a network will need dedicated resource and the more resource that can be allocated, the more successful it will be.

There has been an amazing community response to the COVID-19 crisis forming mutual aid groups with many volunteers. We would urge these groups to ask the vulnerable people they are supporting about their digital capability and train volunteers to be digital champions and offer remote support.

Using Digital Champions (DCs)²⁵ to help people improve their digital skills is a proven method²⁶. We advocate that the most sustainable way of digital skills support is by using 'embedded' DCs²⁷. These are people already working within organisations. Brent recognises the importance of this support and work is already in place to support staff in Brent Hubs and Libraries to access the Digital Champion Training as part of this project.

From our research we also know of DCs (most of which are now offering support remotely) in the following organisations: AgeUK Hillingdon, AbilityNet and Leonard Cheshire. There are also organisations where residents can access help with specific

²⁵ A Digital Champion is someone who is confident to guide and support others to do things online

²⁶ [Recent NHS DC Study](#)

²⁷ Support for this comes from the independent evaluation of the One Digital programme test and learn phase (Sara Dunn Associates, *The One Digital collaboration: Evaluation of the 'test and learn' year 2016*, December 2016).

DIGITAL INCLUSION IN BRENT

tasks online i.e. benefits forms. These include: Personal Independence Payment Online, Catch 22, Citizens Advice, Job Centre Plus (JCP). BC could also signpost to these services if overwhelmed with demand.

In the 'digital age', digital skills are essential. We recommend that **digital skills and digital champion skills are written into all job descriptions**. We recommend that digital skills and inclusion are embedded into the HR process by being included in interviews, induction, appraisals and learning and development policy. A culture of lifelong learning and allowing staff time to improve digital skills should also be promoted by management. This will futureproof organisations for digital change and in turn help residents to improve their digital skills.

Senior Management should encourage and support the rollout of DC training using the Digital Champions Network.²⁸ We also recommend DCs in other organisations as part of a Digital Inclusion Network. Organisational policy regarding how to help residents with digital skills should be clarified and communicated to all staff. **Everyone must be aware of where they can signpost residents for help** if they cannot offer that help there and then. This would apply to any other organisation as part of a Digital Inclusion Network.

Senior leaders should ensure that digital inclusion and accessibility are embedded into policies and procurement frameworks. BC has a Social Value and Ethical Procurement Policy²⁹ which does include provision of digital skills training. We would suggest adding digital inclusion and accessibility to it where appropriate.

We've enjoyed working with Brent Council and are impressed to see how quickly action has been taken to initiate a digital champion programme. The Borough has great assets and a wealth of community groups. We would hope in time that a strong local digital inclusion partnership will develop to help digital skills support flourish in the Borough to improve residents lives.



²⁸ [An online training platform for digital champions](#). Access to the platform is included with this project.

²⁹ [BC Social Value Policy](#)

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Set up an Brent Digital Inclusion Network

We have struggled to engage with as many organisations as we would've liked because of the Coronavirus. But we know that there are at least 12 organisations already offering some sort of digital inclusion support; such as free WIFI, access to equipment or digital champions. We expect that there will be many more. It's imperative that organisations work together to raise the digital skill levels of residents and a network is an ideal place to; encourage joint working, partnerships, sharing of resources and best practice. We must stress that **a network will require dedicated resource to run it**. Similar networks in other areas of the country have been successful in securing funding for inclusion projects.

Partner with other key strategic organisations in Brent to maximise impact for residents. Such as NHS North West London, a consortium of 30 organisations focussed on better health outcomes for residents which includes digital skills aims.

2. Increase the number of Digital Champions (DCs)

Including Brent Council staff and staff in other organisations in the digital inclusion network.



Embedded DCs are people who support others with digital skills as *part of their job*. Examples of this might include essential digital skills support given by:

- Welfare advisors while assisting something with benefits claim
- Library staff while helping someone access their e-books service
- Employment support workers as part of helping someone to look for a job

This is a more sustainable way of delivering digital skills support, as they are already employed by organisations. As their roles are often customer facing, they

also have good skills to be able to engage with residents who may have more complex needs or be higher risk of digital exclusion. Research indicates that digital inclusion projects that use an embedded digital champion approach were able to maintain participant engagement for longer.³⁰

In our experience it takes a ratio of **around 1 DC to 100 digitally excluded people**, to record a significant amount of digital support activity and evidence that there is some **genuine impact in an area**. Recruiting DCs at a ratio of 1:100 is likely to increase any organisation's chances of being able to evidence and evaluate the positive impact of the work.

Brent Borough has around **50,000 residents that lack digital skills**, suggesting Brent should aim to recruit around **485-500 DCs** across the borough working in a range of contexts from senior leaders and customer facing staff to volunteers working in the community sector.

Brent Council has already thought about how to progress this and are talking with library, hubs, customer contact centre teams as a starting point to become digital champions.

Prior to COVID-19 the following organisations were offering face to face support. They are now offering **remote skills help and support**. Brent Council and other organisations in the Borough can signpost residents to:

- AbilityNet – 0800 269 545
- Leonard Cheshire – for disabled people – 0300 303 0074

Volunteer DCs are also valuable resource to help people with digital skills, often libraries run volunteer digital champion schemes. Again, we want to stress that volunteer DCs take dedicated resource to manage – even if they are being hosted by other organisations (embedded volunteer DCs), coordinating efforts and matching learner needs with available volunteers takes time.

Brent could support community organisations by providing access to the Digital Champion Network (DCN) to help train volunteer digital champions working in other community organisations. Funding to cover volunteer induction and room hire for sessions etc would also help to stimulate provision, if any funding is available.

³⁰ SCVO Digital Participation Challenge Fund Review 2017 https://storage.googleapis.com/scvo-cms/digitalparticipation/reports/Charter_Fund_Review_Report.pdf

3. **Create and embed a Brent Borough ‘Triage and Signposting System’** for Essential Digital Skills³¹. Empowering employees and volunteers in all sectors to know:
 - a) How to spot people who have barriers other than motivation
 - b) What questions to ask (and when)
 - c) Where to refer people to get help that they need

There are many referrals pathways from Council services to other support organisations, e.g. for health concerns or addiction. **Digital skills support could be added to these referral forms** to highlight when this support is needed and remind frontline staff about the need to consider digital inclusion. We understand that referrals are also often made incorrectly for example, JCP has referred people to the libraries where currently the provision isn't in place to support Universal Credit claimants. A shared triage and signposting system in the borough would help residents to get the support they need.

4. **Target the wards with the highest risk of digital exclusion. The three top wards are Harlesden, Stonebridge and Dollis Hill.** Postcodes in this high risk wards could benefit from targeted marketing to signpost to over the phone DC support such as the organisation listed in Recommendation 2.



³¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/essential-digital-skills-framework/essential-digital-skills-framework>

5. Be responsive to COVID-19 by engaging people in essential digital journeys and finding out about their digital capability.

Motivation is a key barrier for people doing more online. Over a third of those offline say the internet 'doesn't interest me' and 48% of the digitally excluded state that 'nothing' could motivate them to go online.³² The current crisis has given many people clear reasons to go online - being able to order shopping and see family and friends on video, and so on.

During the recent COVID-19 pandemic, Brent Council and Mutual Aid groups, have been phoning vulnerable people to help with essential needs. They are asked if they need help with food delivery, medicine, walking pets etc but **we urge all organisations to also ask about people's digital capability**³³. This is an ideal opportunity to start someone on their digital journey. Ask if they have a device to connect to the internet, an internet connection and the skills and confidence to get online. If they don't offer help or signpost to other agencies who can help such as those mentioned in Recommendation 2.

There is also potential to launch a digital champion remote volunteer help service within mutual aid groups but such a scheme will need resource to manage.

6. Strategic Leadership Recommendations

- a) **Ensure Senior Leaders** in all organisations involved in the digital inclusion network **support the work of the group and promote inclusion** within transformation programmes.
- b) **Ensure that digital inclusion and accessibility**³⁴ **is embedded in the policies, procurement frameworks and work programmes of all network members.** Include digital skills and inclusion clauses into procurement frameworks and contracts. Especially for any IT contracts, digital products and services, or support services for higher risk digitally excluded groups.
- c) Promote **Digital Leadership and a culture of life-long learning.** Senior leaders in all organisations of the network must lead by example to promote new skills and ways of working.
- d) **Include digital skills and inclusion in HR processes.** All job specifications, recruitment advertising, interviews, on-boarding, appraisals and learning and development policy should include reference to digital skills. The key

³² <https://www.lloydsbank.com/banking-with-us/whats-happening/consumer-digital-index.html>

³³ <https://www.citizensonline.org.uk/we-all-need-to-be-asking-people-about-their-digital-skills/>

³⁴ [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines \(WCAG\) 2.0](#)

to changing culture is bringing your people with you. Highlighting the importance of digital skills to staff both new and old will convey the understanding that digital inclusion is everyone's responsibility. The role of a Digital Champion will not be seen as an additional responsibility, with time, it will be an agreed part of someone's role.

- 7. Centralise all information about digital skills in one place, such as BC Website.** The page could include links and information about how to access: online learning, remote support, 1-2-1 support, home help, learning sessions and courses, free Wi-Fi and computer access. **Promote this resources page** by ensuring every **member of the digital inclusion network is linking to them** from their webpages.
- 8. Support economic recovery in Brent by supporting businesses with digital skills.** Recommendations for action are made on page 21.



1. DIGITAL EXCLUSION RISK ANALYSIS

Our analysis identifies three Brent wards that are within the 30% of wards in England with the highest risk of digital exclusion, and within the 10% of wards in London most at risk:

- Harlesden
- Stonebridge
- Dollis Hill

Harlesden is in the 15% of wards most at risk nationally. This is due to higher numbers of:

- people with no qualifications
- people receiving benefits to top up low incomes (e.g. unemployed, in low-wage employment, or retired)
- older and/or disabled people.

Kilburn ward is fourth in our list as it has a relatively high numbers of older people living alone and a relatively high number of premises without access to Superfast broadband connections.

The table below shows the data that we've used for the calculations. In each case, people in these demographic groups are more likely to be offline and less likely to have digital skills. We also include the number of premises without access to Superfast broadband (SFBB). Even where there are a low number of premises without access, take-up of SFBB may still be very low due to affordability and other considerations.

Note that risk is calculated based on a combination of absolute numbers of people in each area within the risk-factor populations, *and* percentage of people within an area in the at-risk categories³⁵. This means that a ward such as Harlesden can be ranked as a higher risk than, say, Stonebridge, despite having lower *numbers* in most categories shown in the table. Since its overall population is lower, the risk of digital exclusion is higher overall when percentage figures are included.

Additionally, because ward level risk is calculated from the subsidiary LSOA statistics, a ward containing one or two high-risk LSOAs, with the rest being moderate risk, may end up being ranked lower overall than another ward where all of the LSOAs are moderately high but none is especially high. Thus ward-level maps may omit smaller areas of high risk.

³⁵ This approach aims to balance the *scale* of the issue, in terms of the numbers of people affected, against the *character* of particular areas (local prevalence). Areas that are not particularly highly deprived overall, but simply have larger populations, can dominate a numbers-only approach; areas that have smaller populations but higher prevalence of forms of deprivation would dominate a percentage-only system but fail to point to where there are actually more people at risk.

DIGITAL INCLUSION IN BRENT

Ward	Premises without Superfast (SFBB)	People aged 65+	People aged 65+ living alone	Disabled adults (estimate)	Adults with no qualifications	Housing Benefit and Universal Credit claimants	DE risk score decile (*London region)
Harlesden	20	1,739	461	1,202	1,971	4,195	1
Stonebridge	221	1,885	510	1,330	1,950	4,343	1
Dollis Hill	318	1,757	355	922	1,454	2,297	1
Kilburn	456	1,754	592	1,181	1,405	3,115	2
Welsh Harp	14	1,844	463	993	1,403	1,877	2
Willesden Green	82	1,521	447	948	1,434	3,063	3
Kensal Green	81	1,529	396	930	1,445	2,524	3
Barnhill	13	2,274	539	1,001	1,253	2,108	3
Wembley Central	329	1,870	232	1,020	1,552	1,694	4
Dudden Hill	206	1,927	366	932	1,464	2,409	4
Sudbury	16	1,887	425	925	1,227	1,668	4
Bronesbury Park	7	1,831	593	935	857	1,505	4
Queensbury	34	2,168	348	974	1,420	1,391	5
Kenton	64	2,622	426	769	731	582	5
Fryent	1	1,849	438	764	1,208	1,325	5
Preston	18	2,306	479	886	1,140	1,431	5
Alperton	19	1,767	271	779	1,680	1,473	6
Mapesbury	360	1,751	414	840	1,159	2,263	6
Tokyngham	750	1,984	374	926	1,351	1,651	7
Queens Park	0	1,615	380	798	941	1,378	8
Northwick Park	43	2,112	299	704	682	756	9

Table 1: Digital Inclusion Risk ranked by ward (* risk decile refers to a London-wide ranking: 1 means the ward is within the 10% of highest-risk wards in London).

DIGITAL INCLUSION IN BRENT

Digital Exclusion risk by ward (Brent), with location of GP surgeries and community assets

Sources: Citizens Online, Brent Council, ONS OpenGeography

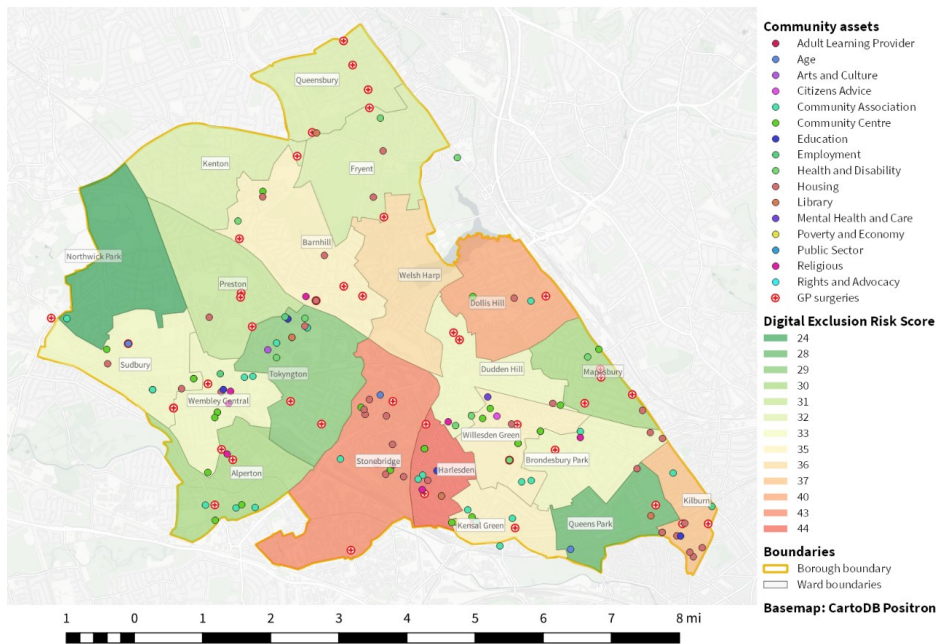


Figure 1: Digital Exclusion risk score by ward, Brent: red and orange are the wards with the highest levels of risk, with yellow areas being moderate risk overall and green areas being at lowest risk.

1. FOCUS ON HIGHER RISK WARDS

HARLESDEN

Digital exclusion risk by LSOA, and community assets, Harlesden ward, Brent

Data sources: Brent Council, Citizens Online, NHS Digital, ONS OpenGeography

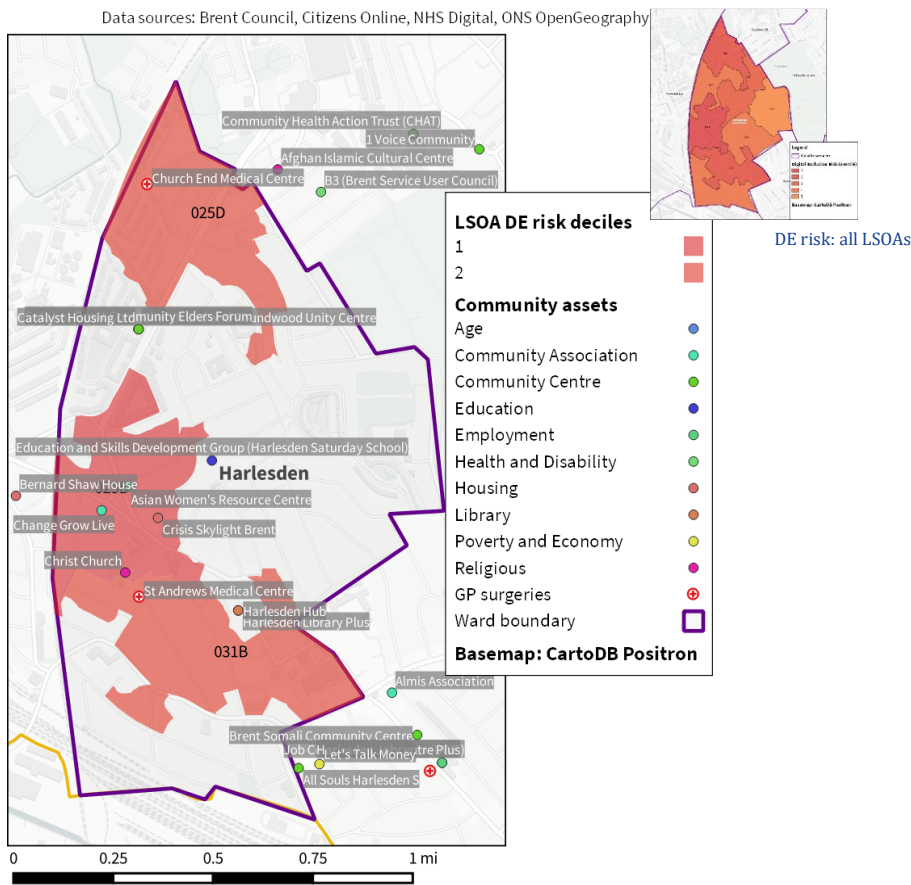


Figure 2: Digital exclusion risk by LSOA (highest risk only), and community assets, Harlesden ward

All 8 LSOAs in Harlesden ward are ranked as within the top 40% of areas at risk of digital exclusion in London. Three of these areas are found within the 20% most at risk, and these are highlighted on the map above.

DIGITAL INCLUSION IN BRENT

The majority of the community assets within Harlesden are found in or very near these areas of highest concern, and these cover a range of types:

- Community associations such as the **Asian Women's Resource Centre** and **Change, Grow, Live**, as well as **Let's Talk Money** just outside the ward in Kensal Green
- **Harlesden Library and Harlesden Hub**
- Community centres such as the **Church End and Roundwood Unity Centre**
- Employment and education resources such as the **Education and Skills Development Group** and the nearby **Jobcentre Plus** in Kensal Green
- Housing providers such as **Catalyst** and **Crisis Skylight Brent**
- GP surgeries: **Church End Medical Centre** in the north of the ward and **St Andrew's** in the south, as well as the **B3 Brent Service User Council** based in neighbouring Dudden Hill ward.

St Andrew's Medical Centre is one of the 10 surgeries in the borough with the lowest % of patients registered for GP online services (16.2%) while **Church End Medical Centre** has one of the lowest rates of usage of these services relative to the number of patients registered (0.2 transactions per patient in January 2020).

While Harlesden does not have a particularly high number of older residents, it does have a high number and of residents claiming disability-related benefits (PIP, DLA and/or ESA) and claiming Universal Credit or Housing Benefit. It also has a high number of residents who do not have any educational qualifications. This points to a high level of social need within the ward and a large number of residents likely to need support to carry out tasks online; such as online forms to initiate and maintain a claim for UC.

Support with employment-related training may be a crucial area of need in Harlesden. Due to the number of people on lower incomes, working on digital financial literacy – avoiding scams and using apps to help with budgets and to save money – through community associations including **Let's Save Money** may be a great and helpful hook for residents to get into digital.

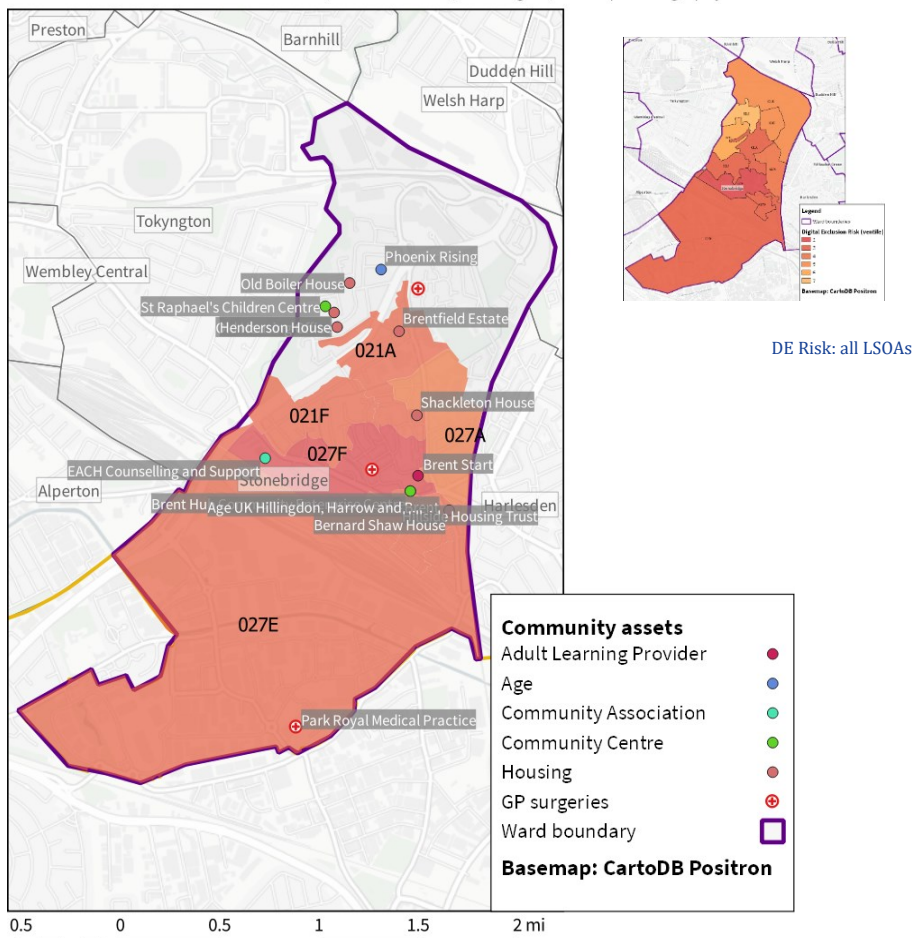
A joined-up approach involving the local council, statutory agencies and a network of local community and voluntary sector organisations is the most effective way of helping residents with the essential digital skills. Digital Champions working in GP surgeries, the local library, the Jobcentre and through housing providers can provide a multitude of touchpoints where residents can gain and reinforce their digital capabilities.

STONEBRIDGE

Of the 10 LSOAs in Stonebridge ward, five are within the top four ventiles (top 20%) for digital exclusion risk nationally. One of these (027F) is within the top ventile (5%).

Digital exclusion risk by LSOA, and community assets, Stonebridge ward, Brent

Data sources: Brent Council, Citizens Online, NHS Digital, ONS OpenGeography



DE Risk: all LSOAs

Figure 3: Digital exclusion risk by LSOA (highest risk only); community assets, Stonebridge ward

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Within this high-risk neighbourhood are located the **Brent Start** adult education service, **EACH Counselling and Support** and **Hilltop Medical Practice**, with the **Brent Hub Community Enterprise Centre** – where the local Age UK office is located – and **Hillside Housing Trust** being located very close by.

Housing schemes such as **Bernard Shaw House** and **Shackleton House** are also found within the higher-risk areas of Stonebridge, along with the Brentfield Estate (including **Brentfield Medical Centre**). The **Asian People's Disability Alliance**, based on Alric Avenue in Stonebridge, may be able to support digital inclusion work in this area.

On the north side of the A406 North Circular, another estate, centred on Pitfield Way – home to **St Raphael's Children's Centre**, **Phoenix Rising** and **Henderson House** – is within the top 30% of areas at risk.

DOLLIS HILL

Three of the seven LSOAs in this ward are within the top 6 ventiles (30%) at risk nationally, with one (O10F) in the west of the ward being in the top 10% at risk. This neighbourhood is home to **Kingfisher Youth and Community Centre**, a venue that may be able to host or provide digital skills support sessions for local residents.

There are very few community venues we are aware so far of in this ward: as well as Kingfisher, there is **Dollis Hill Residents' Association** and **Comber Close** (social housing); **Oxgate Gardens Surgery** is the only GP surgery in the ward itself.

While Dollis Hill does not have very high numbers of people in most risk categories compared to some other wards, in terms of the overall picture - and as a ward with a relatively low population – the digital exclusion risk here is still high. That said, the population at risk is probably very concentrated in the few LSOAs that are most at risk, with others being relatively low-risk, so digital inclusion efforts here will benefit from being especially tightly targeted.

Digital exclusion risk by LSOA, and community assets, Dollis Hill ward, Brent

Data sources: Brent Council, Citizens Online, NHS Digital, ONS OpenGeography

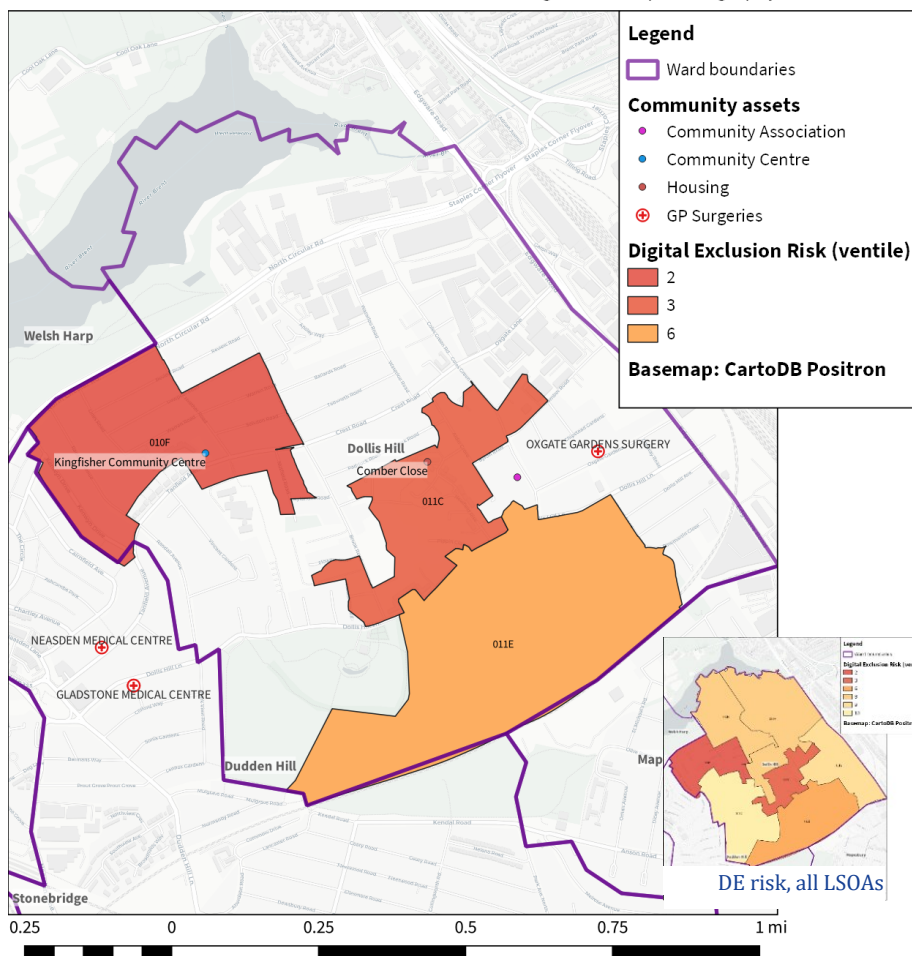


Figure 4: Digital exclusion risk by LSOA (highest risk only), and community assets, Dollis Hill ward

2. FOCUS ON SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES

The recent pandemic has highlighted how businesses need digital technologies to be resilient. This pathfinder would audit and attempt to improve digital support for small and medium enterprises. With the aim to increase the number of businesses with an online presence and using technology to run a business more efficiently. For example: having a website, using social media, cloud-computing, digital finance and HR systems, remote working and online booking systems.

OUTCOMES

Increased:

- Uptake of Superfast Broadband for self-employed, Micro and SMEs
- Confidence in staff in using online services and business tools. Specifically in: wholesale and retail sectors, human health and social work, accommodation and food services.
- Uptake in business related online digital journeys
- Income and profit for individuals and businesses to improve economic development in the area

BACKGROUND

There are 35,500 people in Brent who are self-employed. At 16% this is a considerably higher rate than across either London (13.2%) or Great Britain as a whole (10.9%). There are 15,485 Micro, Small or Medium sized enterprises (16,945 units). The largest portion of these will be employment either directly or related to wholesale and retail trade (19.4% of Brent employees – compared to 15.2% across Great Britain and just 12% across London as a whole).

Other significant sectors are human health and social work (15.3% - compared to 10.3% across London), and accommodation and food services (8.1% compared to 7.6% across Great Britain).

Earnings in Brent for full-time workers (£610.20/gross per week) are higher than those across Great Britain on average (£587), but are significantly below the London average (£699.20).

A higher proportion of employees in Brent are involved in so-called “Elementary occupations” – 20,500 people or 12.4% of employees – compared to 10.3% across Great Britain and just 8% across London. Earnings can potentially be improved by helping people improve their digital skills, and businesses to diversify their income streams including digital channels.

DIGITAL INCLUSION IN BRENT

UK Business Counts (2019)				
Enterprises	Brent	Brent	London	London
	(numbers)	(%)	(numbers)	(%)
Micro (0 to 9)	14,385	92.6	473,875	90.7
Small (10 to 49)	925	6	38,570	7.4
Medium (50 to 249)	175	1.1	7,650	1.5
Micro, Small and Medium Subtotal	15,485	99.7	520,095	99.6
Large (250+)	45	0.3	2,145	0.4
Total	15,530	-	522,240	-
Local Units				
Micro (0 to 9)	15,240	89.7	509,415	87.2
Small (10 to 49)	1,350	7.9	59,570	10.2
Medium (50 to 249)	355	2.1	12,885	2.2
Large (250+)	50	0.3	2,315	0.4
Total	16,990	-	584,185	-

Source: Inter Departmental Business Register (ONS)



New income sources increasingly rely on digital skills and connectivity. According to the recent Lloyds Bank Business Digital Index³⁶, the **most digitally capable** small businesses are **more than twice as likely to report an increase in turnover**, than the least digital.

Digitally capable charities are also 28% more likely to report an increase in funding. However, a study by the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) found that 25% of SMEs don't think digital skills are important for their growth³⁷ despite 22% believing that a lack of

digital skills within their organisation is preventing them from increasing their digital and online presence.

The study also found **more than a quarter of SME owners were not confident in their own basic digital skills**, and 46% of SMEs say their staff lack knowledge. Nationally, three-quarters (75%) of small businesses see talent as the biggest obstacle to their future success.³⁸ Retail sector small businesses are "nearly twice as likely as Service sector

³⁶ <https://resources.lloydsbank.com/businessdigitalindex/>

³⁷ <https://www.computerweekly.com/news/450431691/Quarter-of-SMEs-say-digital-skills-not-important-for-business-growth>

³⁸ <https://www.dnb.co.uk/perspectives/small-business/sme-change-wakeof-brex.html>

DIGITAL INCLUSION IN BRENT

companies to say they lack the time to make their business more digital (39% to 22%)³⁹. Many sectors including retail cite recruitment as the most significant factor that impacts their growth. This is unsurprising as the UK is suffering from a digital skills gap. It has been estimated that the UK has around [800,000 positions](#) left unfilled as 'digital vacancies'.

The 2019 Lloyds Business Digital Index reported that, in that year, small businesses who used Cloud-based IT systems, online accounting software and digital training tools had £262,000 higher annual turnover than those using none. This rose from a difference of £103,000 in the previous year - more than two and a half times in a single year. The report argued that, "whilst there is no silver bullet when it comes to increasing productivity for small businesses, we have identified five key digital ingredients that can help businesses to thrive":

1. Using data to make decisions on how to improve their online presence
2. Using cloud-based IT systems
3. Allowing customers to view products and services on their website
4. Planning to grow their marketing capabilities
5. Using or intending to use 'smart' devices in the next two years.

The Longitudinal Small Business Survey (LSBS) conducted by the Enterprise Research Centre in 2019 "aimed to build a representative picture of established micro-businesses in the UK and collect comparative data on representative groups of micro-businesses in the US and Ireland". This found that "Web-based account software and cloud computing are the most commonly used digital technologies among UK micro-businesses, with over 40 per cent of firms using these technologies. E-Commerce is used by 30 per cent of firms, with 25 and 18 per cent of firms using CAD and CRM respectively"

Figure 5: Percentage of micro-business adopters of digital technologies (2012-2018)

	2012	2015	2018
Customer Relations Management	7%	12%	18%
E-Commerce	12%	21%	30%
Web-based Accounting Software	15%	25%	42%
Computer Aided Design	13%	19%	25%
Cloud Computing	9%	22%	43%
Artificial Intelligence	1%	2%	3%
Machine Learning	3%	5%	9%

On a local level, Brent Council have recently conducted a "Digital overview of Kilburn town centre" in May 2020. This found that 46% of independent businesses in Brent had no digital presence (though 43% had their own website, and 54% were on social media). The proportion without a digital presence was significantly higher than in the Camden part of the town (39%) – though the proportion on social media was higher (50% in Camden). Across Kilburn, "Of the 134 independent businesses that have an

³⁹ Lloyds Business Digital Index 2019

DIGITAL INCLUSION IN BRENT

active website, 106 (79%) also have a social media presence. Cafes, supermarkets and convenience stores catering for local audiences are less likely to have any digital presence”.

The document highlights that many businesses are utilising bespoke platforms for their sector, such as Treatwell for the (female) beauty sector, and Deliveroo, Just Eat and Uber Eats for takeaway food businesses: “44 (63%) out of 70 hospitality businesses are signed up to an external delivery platform... Of the 26 that are not, 15 (58%) have an active website. However 7 (27%) have no digital presence at all”.

Historically small produce sellers, retail and hospitality businesses would have had to commission their own websites and pay to have them updated, maintained and search-optimised by professionals. Increasingly the trend is away from this and towards sophisticated third party platforms that act as the intermediary and ‘do the tech’ including search optimisation, advertising and payment processing such as Shopify, BigCommerce or Squarespace. However, to use these platforms, people still need an internet connection and Essential Digital Skills. Users also need to know these approaches are available and how to use them.

Engaging with businesses is a huge barrier. BCs Town Centre Manager told us that it’s ‘difficult to speak with the right people’ in local SMEs. SME owners are incredibly busy and need good reasons to give up their time, if they can be contacted at all. In the recent pandemic 86% of business in Brent have applied for small business grants at the time of this report. In an ideal world these applications would provide a good opportunity to promote digital skills support available, but the business rates systems are not well linked to systems in the Economic Growth team and the data held across both is inconsistent. The Economic Growth team is trying internally to get this data.



ACTION PLAN

Increasingly, there is no real boundary between the business community and local households. In order to develop understanding and mobilise support from SMEs the community will need to be engaged. Therefore work under this pathfinder would be well placed with employability and welfare reform work at BC or other key organisations. Support for improvement of digital skills and assisting people in finding employment, should also include training in order to access a wider variety of jobs – particularly with local SMEs - or even to start their own businesses.

Ultimately the aim is a community of individuals and small businesses that understand and actively support the development of digital skills and infrastructure development. Within this there will be a need to develop community, third sector and SME leaders, but ultimately the aim needs to be to develop and harness grass roots support.

1. Consider working in partnership with similar business support agencies, such as Federation of Small Businesses, Harrow Chamber of Commerce, The Local Enterprise Partnership for London. There is a lot of support aimed at economic support for COVID-19. SMEs can be difficult to engage with so a partnership approach may prevent SMEs being overwhelmed with similar offers from multiple organisations.

2. Develop a diagnostic tool for businesses, to help prioritise and decide where to focus resources in **developing digital journeys**. Trying to embark on too much digital change at once can be overwhelming. For example, moving to online HR software may free up more time to develop an online sales channel rather than the other way around.

The Lloyds Business Consumer Index report lists five top recommendations:

1. Using data to make decisions on how to improve their online presence
2. Using cloud-based IT systems
3. Allowing customers to view products and services on their website
4. Planning to grow their marketing capabilities
5. Using or intending to use 'smart' devices in the next two years.

3. Offer Digital Champion support to businesses to develop a recovery plan to include their planned digital journey from the diagnostic tool broken down into manageable steps.

4. Signpost businesses to free training and support from a wide range of sources such as: Google Garage, iDEA, Lloyds Bank Academy or Cisco Academy⁴⁰. Use DCs to offer support with these resources.

5. Facilitate peer to peer support, mentoring and sharing of learning. For example businesses that have undergone successful digital transformation acting as mentors for others. This could be hosted in a Facebook group, Slack channel or WhatsApp group or use an existing business network that may now be online.

⁴⁰ See Appendix 1 for a list of resources

3. FOCUS ON LONELINESS AND ISOLATION

12% of people in Brent would like to see more money spent on help for older people, according to the 2018 Resident attitudes survey. This could include funding to reduce loneliness and isolation amongst older people – who can be at particular risk.

The 2020 Lloyds Consumer Digital Index reports that:

- 38% of the online population agree that being online “helps me feel less alone”
- 47% identified feeling “more like part of a community” as a benefit of being online.
- “34% of those online benefit from using the Internet to manage their physical and mental health. Those with the highest levels of digital engagement are more than twice as likely to benefit from this (44% compared to 21% of the least digitally engaged).”



Photo by Siavash Ghanbari on Unsplash

DIGITAL INCLUSION IN BRENT

In common with the Government's strategy for tackling loneliness⁴¹, we adopt the framework used by the Campaign to End Loneliness and the Jo Cox Commission, to define loneliness as:

"a subjective, unwelcome feeling of lack or loss of companionship. It happens when we have a mismatch between the quantity and quality of social relationships that we have, and those that we want."

The Government strategy notes though "Loneliness is often used interchangeably with isolation, [and] while they are linked and can often overlap, they are not the same."

"It is possible to be isolated without feeling lonely and conversely to feel lonely while surrounded by people. Isolation is observable: for example, we may look at how many relationships someone has or how often they speak to other people to help us understand whether someone is isolated. We cannot measure loneliness in this way. Similarly, loneliness is not the same as solitude – which some people enjoy – as loneliness is an unwelcome feeling."

THE LOCAL PICTURE

It is difficult to identify geographic data that would identify people who are likely to feel alone. But, there are some proxy indicators that may be helpful to us. Across Brent there were in the 2011 Census, there were **8,808 single occupancy households where the resident was aged 65 or over**.

We can also look at Carer's Allowance (CA) as Carers UK report that 80% of carers have felt lonely or socially isolated⁴². There were 5,378 people with entitlement to receive Carer's Allowance in Brent as of November 2019, which suggests **there could be 4,300 carers in Brent who have felt lonely or socially isolated**.⁴³

Entitlement to CA also acts as a "passport" to the carer premiums/additions in means-tested benefits such as: Income Support, Pension Credit and Housing Benefit. Under a third of Carer's Allowance claimants in Brent receive the benefit alone (1,538 or 28.6%). 2,514 also receive Universal Credit, Housing Benefit, Pension Credit, Income Support or a combination of these. This indicates lower financial means and therefore greater risk of digital exclusion. Those who receive Housing Benefit will move to Universal Credit and be required to apply online, so this represents a group that are

⁴¹ [A connected society. A strategy for tackling loneliness – laying the foundations for change](#), published 15th October 2018.

⁴² ["Alarming numbers of people feel isolated and lonely as a result of caring for their loved ones"](#), Carers UK, 2015, accessed 26/02/2019.

⁴³ The DWP explain on the StatXplore site that "Totals for all entitled cases show both the number of people in receipt of an allowance and those with entitlement where the payment has been suspended, for example if they are in hospital." There were over 813,804 recipients of Carer's Allowance in Great Britain in August 2017. To be entitled to Carer's Allowance, a person must be providing at least 35 hours of care a week for someone in receipt of a qualifying disability benefit, not be in full-time education, and, if in paid work, have earnings after certain deductions of no more than £110 a week.

likely to need digital skills support – as well as one that may be more likely to feel socially isolated or lonely.

Research by the South West Academic Health Science Network in 2014 found 45% of people over 75 admitted to A&E said they were socially isolated.⁴⁴ Triage sessions at GP surgeries to identify people who are socially isolated or lonely and who lack digital skills could be effective in signposting people to other support; including gaining digital skills which may be able to reduce perceptions of isolation or feelings of loneliness.

As indicated in the Lloyds Consumer Digital Index, being online may help people to feel part of a community, less lonely, and help them to manage and improve their health. Such a programme of work may need to involve the creation of bespoke courses on the Digital Champions Network for Digital Champions. Courses along the lines of “identifying and supporting people who are socially isolated” or “Supporting Carers with digital skills” could be developed.

Carers UK’s research with the Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness⁴⁵ found that 32% of employees currently juggling work and care have felt lonely or isolated in the workplace because of their caring role. These employees may be more likely to be ‘sandwich carers’, caring for both sick, disabled or older relatives and dependent children, and as such “more likely to experience symptoms of mental ill-health (27%) – which can include anxiety and depression – than the general population (22%)”⁴⁶. Carers UK report that carers’ top priority for workplace support is improved and consistent manager awareness of caring issues (37%) and more flexible / special leave arrangements (37%)⁴⁷.

Loneliness and social isolation do not only affect older demographics and those who are carers. An ONS analysis of children’s and young people’s experiences of loneliness⁴⁸ found that 27.5% of children receiving free school meals (FSM) reported that they are often lonely, compared to just 5.5% of children who did not receive FSM. The report highlights children’s and young people’s suggestions for tackling loneliness:

- create a culture of openness about loneliness
- create opportunities to make social connections
- encourage positive uses of social media to alleviate loneliness
- prepare young people to understand loneliness and equip them to deal with it

⁴⁴ “Top urgent care doctor: [Impact of loneliness at Christmas causes spike in A&E numbers](#)”, NHS England, 23rd December 2014, accessed 26/02/2019.

⁴⁵ [The world shrinks: Carer loneliness \(pdf\)](#), CarersUK.

⁴⁶ [More than one in four sandwich carers report symptoms of mental ill-health](#), ONS, January 2019.

⁴⁷ [Caring and isolation in the workplace](#), CarersUK, March 2015.

⁴⁸ [Analysis of Children’s and young people’s experiences of loneliness](#), ONS, December 2018.

These suggestions highlight a key point. **While digital inclusion can help, through being an enabler or a catalyst, it cannot resolve these issues alone. Loneliness and isolation are usually more complicated and multi-faceted issues than can be addressed by relatively small amounts of support to use technology.**

Indeed, loneliness and isolation are major issues in our society despite the fact that we now live in the most digitally connected age our society has ever experienced. Over-use or even addiction to digital communication can result in the opposite—it can completely isolate people (whether at work or socially) and actually increase people’s experience of loneliness. So as well as building in more digital skills support, organisations should be mindful of “the need to plan for connection and design in moments of human contact” identified in the Ministerial Foreword to the Strategy:

Government can also work with communities and other sectors on the way our neighbourhoods, public services, businesses and working environments are designed and run so they consider social relationships, not just efficient transactions.

The loneliness risk map in Figure 2 is based on an approach developed by the Office for National Statistics’ [Data Science Campus](#), which uses NHS Digital GP prescription data to find areas with above-average prescriptions for five conditions where loneliness has been shown to be a risk factor (*Alzheimer’s, depression, high blood pressure, anxiety and insomnia*).

The data is available only at MSOA level⁴⁹. These areas are roughly similar in size to council wards and in some — but by no means all — cases have similar boundaries and names to wards.

⁴⁹ In this map we have used the [unofficial MSOA names](#) developed by the House of Commons Library; these names may not match local usage.

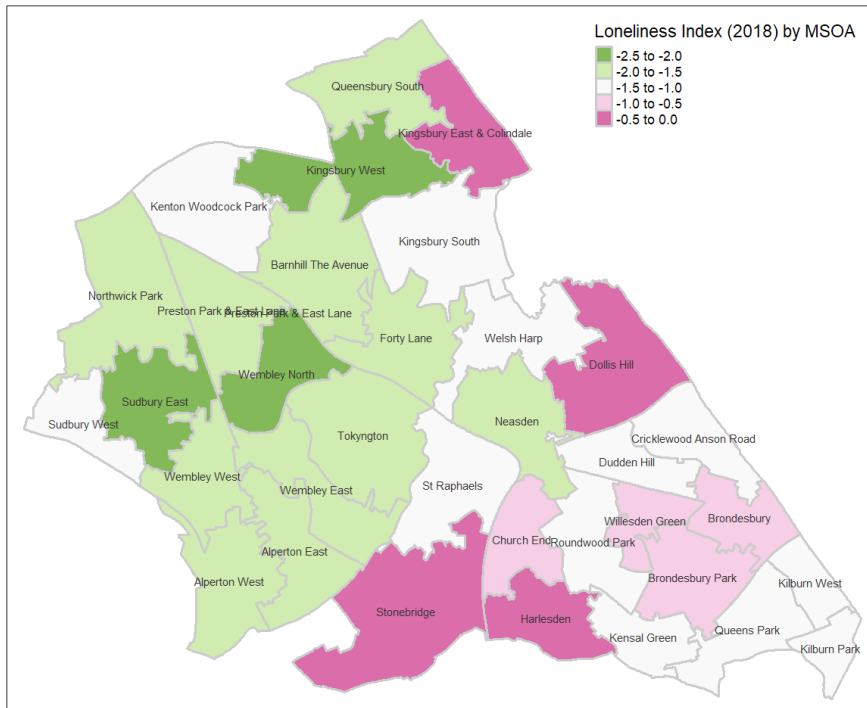


Figure 6: Loneliness Index (2018) by MSOA, London Borough of Brent. Source: ONS Data Science Campus, 2020

The darker pink areas on the map show MSOAs where the prescription data indicates the highest risk of residents experiencing loneliness. These are:

- Dollis Hill
- Harlesden
- Kingsbury East & Colindale
- Stonebridge

What characteristics and circumstances are associated with feeling lonely?

The ONS Community Life Survey (2016-17) enabled analysis of the characteristics and circumstances associated with loneliness in England. Results from this survey show that, nationally:

- 5% of adults in England reported feeling lonely “often” or “always”
- Younger adults aged 16 to 24 years reported feeling lonely more often than those in older age groups.
- Women reported feeling lonely more often than men.

DIGITAL INCLUSION IN BRENT

- Those single or widowed were at particular risk of experiencing loneliness more often.
- People in poor health or who have conditions they describe as “limiting” were also at particular risk of feeling lonely more often.
- Renters reported feeling lonely more often than homeowners.
- People who feel that they belong less strongly to their neighbourhood reported feeling lonely more often.
- People who have little trust of others in their local area reported feeling lonely more often.

The Community Life Survey analysis enabled three profiles of people at particular risk from loneliness to be identified:

- Widowed older homeowners living alone with long-term health conditions.
- Unmarried, middle-agers with long-term health conditions.
- Younger renters with little trust and sense of belonging to their area.

Further investigation of these factors among the population in Brent may enable us to pinpoint, to a greater degree of accuracy than the MSOA map, where pockets of residents at higher risk of loneliness may be found.



5. UNDERSTANDING DIGITAL EXCLUSION FACTORS

Digital exclusion is not something we can measure directly. However, we can explore factors which contribute to it so we can understand which people are more likely to be affected. **People who are older and/or disabled are less likely to be online, have a range of devices to access the internet, or have the full range of digital skills.**

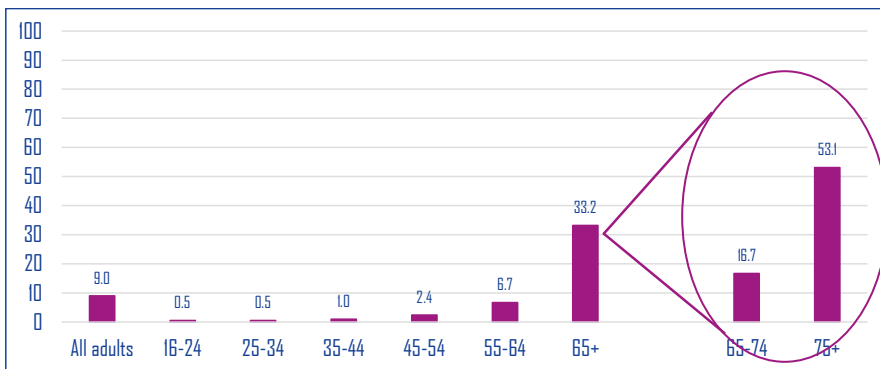
These issues are compounded by poverty – people on lower incomes, and receiving benefits such as Pension Credit – are more likely to be offline, to lack access to devices, and to have low/no digital skills.

AGE

Older people are more likely to be digitally excluded – to be offline, to lack digital skills, and to be less likely to have access to digital devices.

- 33% of people aged 65+ have not been online *within the last 3 months* – hence they are effectively not online (ONS, figure 5).
- The great majority of these (86%, or 29% of all people aged 65+) have *never* been online.
- **More than half of the population aged 75+ (53.1%) are effectively not online** and most (89%, 47% of people aged 75 or over) of these have never been online⁵⁰.
- We have used this age data as the basis of our estimates that **around 50,000 adults in Brent lack Essential Digital Skills**

Figure 7: Proportion (%) of people nationally who are not online, by age band



⁵⁰ [ONS: Internet Users, UK \(2019\)](#), accessed 25/09/2019

LOWER INCOME AND BENEFITS

- Lower income is associated with lower likelihood to have all digital skills. **25% of people earning under £11,499/year have skills in each of the five Essential Digital Skills groups**, compared to 61% of people earning over £25,000⁵¹.
- We estimate that at least **12,600 people in Brent will need support making a UC claim, and 9,100 will need ongoing support**.
- 43% of applicants said they needed more help making a Universal Credit (UC) claim – which is almost always required to be done online (DWP survey).
- A third of claimants need ongoing support using their UC digital account (31%).⁵²

In Brent, there are 42,500 people claiming either UC or Housing Benefit (HB). 29,400 of these are currently claiming HB, but will move to UC. In all but exceptional cases this will require a digital application and digital entries to an online journal. We estimate that **12,600 people will need support making their UC claim, and 9,100 will need ongoing support**. We think this is a conservative estimate as there will be other groups of people that need to claim UC, not just those already claiming HB.

DISABILITY

- There are around 20,000 disabled adults in Brent (*estimate from disability-related benefit claims*).
- 21.6% of disabled people, nationally, are not regular internet users (2.7 million people) - *considerably higher than for adults who are not disabled (5%)*⁵³
- Technological developments can help those with impairments to access services online, but **we estimate 4,300 disabled adults in Brent are offline**.

⁵¹ Lloyds [Consumer Digital Index, 2019](#). Likewise, The [2018 Lloyds CDI](#) found that just 64% of those earning under £17,499 a year had all five Basic Digital Skills, compared to 84% of those earning up between £17,500 and £39,999, and 94% of those earning over £40,000

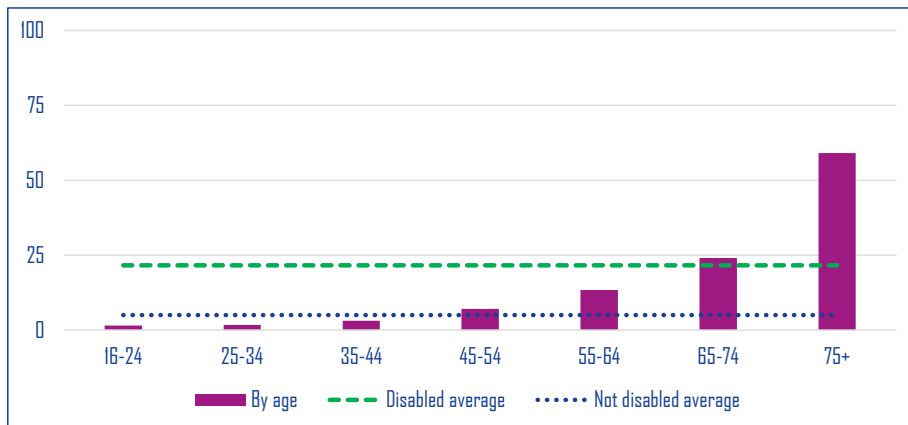
⁵² Universal Credit full service claimant survey – DWP, June 2018, accessed 26/02/2019. The estimates of people who need help with UC claims may be underestimates as they only cover digital exclusion among those people claiming UC at that point of the rollout. The initial roll out cases were not expected to be the most difficult and may not overlap with the claimants or areas of the country that are most digitally excluded – particularly at a point when many people who would not have expected to need to claim UC are finding it is the only income stream available to them.

⁵³ According to the ONS Internet Users data for 2019, 18.2% of disabled people have never used the internet (2.3 million people), compared to 4.9% of those who are not disabled (1.7 million people). A further 3.4% last used the internet over three months ago, and may thus also be considered effectively offline. This makes a total of 21.6% of disabled people who are never, or not regularly, online (2.7 million people).

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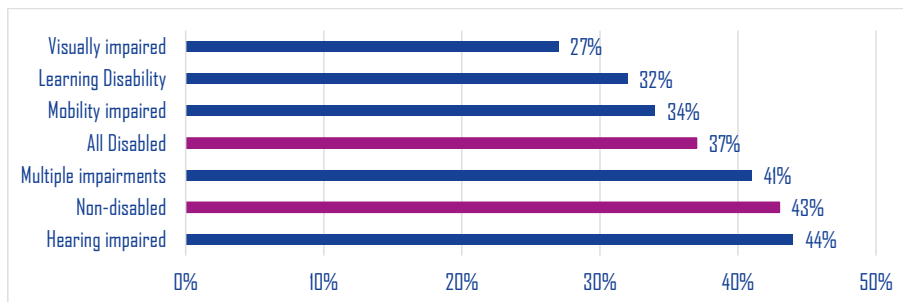
There is a clear intersection between age and disability: disabled people are less likely to be internet users the older they are (figure 9). **Among disabled people aged 75 and over, 59% are not internet users, more than ten times the rate for adults who are not disabled.**

Figure 8: Proportion of people who are not internet users: disabled people by age (ONS, 2019)



Disabled internet users are less likely to access public services online than non-disabled internet users: 37% vs. 43%.⁵⁴ This gap varies among people with different impairments: it is largest for visually impaired people (27% vs. 43%), while hearing impaired people are as likely as non-disabled people to use the internet to access public services (44% vs. 43%, see figure 9).

Figure 9: Proportion of people using the internet to access public services (benefits, government, council), by disability type

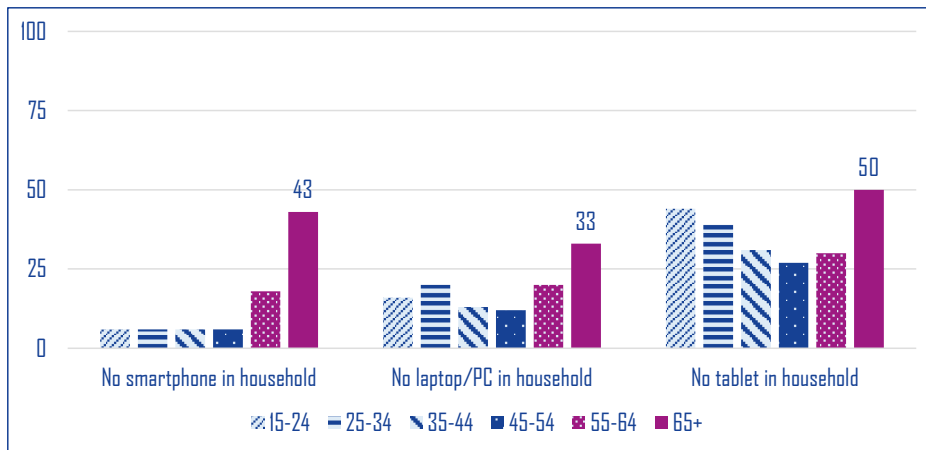


⁵⁴ Ofcom, 2018 Access and inclusion in 2018 report, available online at: <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/research-and-data/multi-sector-research/accessibility-research/access-and-inclusion>, accessed 15/01/2020.

DEVICES

- Between **34,000 and 98,000 adults in Brent lack access to one or more digital devices** (between 13% and 37% of the adult population).
- Older people are on the whole less likely to have access to digital devices in their households.
- The 2019 Lloyds Consumer Digital Index⁵⁵ provides data on the proportion of households without smartphones, laptop/PCs, and tablets. In each case, the proportion is highest for people aged 65 or over (see Figure 9).⁵⁶

Figure 10: Proportion (%) of people without certain devices in their household, by age band



In Brent, we estimate that between **34,000 and 98,000 adults lack access to one or more of these digital devices, between 13% and 37% of the adult population** (Figure 11). These are significant proportions, in line with the proportions for England as a whole. We can't tell from this data what proportion of the population lacks any type of device capable of connecting to the internet.

Smartphones are the most popular device. But people who only use a smartphone to get online can have problems with completing online tasks. Many sites are not formatted very well for mobile use and the screen and keypad on many smartphones is small. Ofcom research estimates that around a quarter of UK adults “only use devices other than a desktop or laptop to go online”.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Lloyds [Consumer Digital Index, 2019](#) – data derived from Appendix 24, based on an Ipsos MORI face-to-face Omnibus survey of 4,190 participants aged 15+ years in Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

⁵⁶ The picture for tablets is marginally more complicated as younger people seem less likely to have these, likely due to preference for other devices, but

⁵⁷ [‘Smartphone by default’ internet users - A qualitative research report, Ofcom, 2016 \(pdf\)](#)

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Figure 11: Number and proportion of adults in Brent without smartphones, laptop/PCs, tablets

	No smartphone in household	No laptop/PC in household	No tablet in household
Adults, Brent	34,808	49,494	97,234
% of adults, Brent	13.2	18.7	36.8
% of adults, England	16.0	19.9	37.6

Research by Citizens Advice Scotland found people reliant on smartphones to access the internet were less likely to say that they can use a computer 'very well' (28% compared to 41%), and less likely to access their email 'daily' (37% compared to 48%).⁵⁸

The proportion of smartphone-only users who report they can complete a benefits application online 'no problem' is, at under a third – 31% - less than half that for users of all devices, 76%. This leaves a large proportion of smartphone-only users who experience some problem at least when filling in such applications.

⁵⁸ [Locked out: the Smartphone Deficit, Citizens Advice Scotland, 2018 \(pdf\)](#)

6. CORONAVIRUS RISK AND DIGITAL EXCLUSION

The maps we present below use 2011 Census Output Areas (OAs). Rather than using percentages or raw numbers of people, in these maps we have used a risk ranking algorithm that combines:

1. The number of residents who had a long-term health condition that limited their day-to-day activity a lot (2011 figures). We've used this as a proxy for people self-isolating due to greater risk from COVID-19-19-19 related to an underlying health condition.
2. An age-adjusted risk ranking based on people aged 70 or over. We've taken the number of people in each 5 year age band over 65 (65-69, 70-74, 75-79, 80+) and weighted these to show areas where a higher number of older people are at risk⁵⁹.

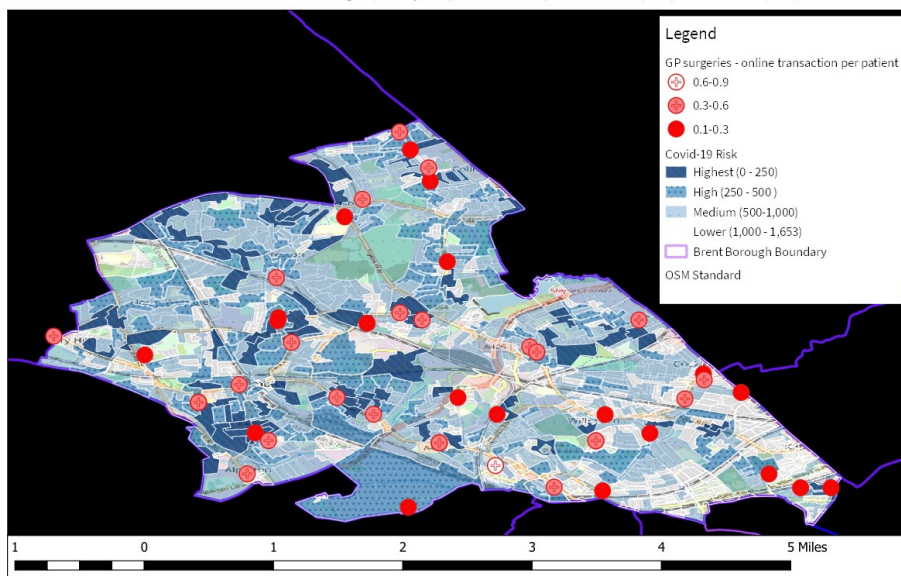
We ranked each OA on those measures, where 1 is the area with the highest risk, and then added the ranks. Areas with lower numbers therefore contain a higher number of older people and/or people with a long-term health condition that limits their day-to-day activity a lot.

⁵⁹ People aged 65-69 in 2018 multiplied by 0.5, aged 70-74 multiplied by 1, 75-79 by 1.1, and 80+ by 1.2

Figure 12: GP surgeries by online transactions per patient vs COVID-19-19-19 risk by Census Output Area

Brent: GPs by online transactions per patient, vs Covid-19 Risk by Census Output Area

Source: Citizens Online calculations based on data from NHS Digital (January 2020), ONS Mid-Year Population Estimate (2018), and the Census (2011)



This map shows the level of use of online services. It gives an indication of where surgeries will have to adapt most to a shift to online, regardless of how many patients are nominally registered for online services.

No surgery in Brent saw more than 1 online transaction per patient (TPP) registered for online services during January 2020. In 41 of a total of 53 surgeries in the borough, there were less than 30 transactions per 100 patients registered online. Most of these surgeries are in locations where the level of coronavirus risk in nearby Output Areas (likely members of the patient list) is highest.

The surgeries detailed below will require additional digital skills support to onboard patients to online services, and/or their local areas will require additional paper/post- or landline-based information about coronavirus and support available.

DIGITAL INCLUSION IN BRENT

Figure 13: GP surgeries with lower levels of online transactions per patient registered for the service

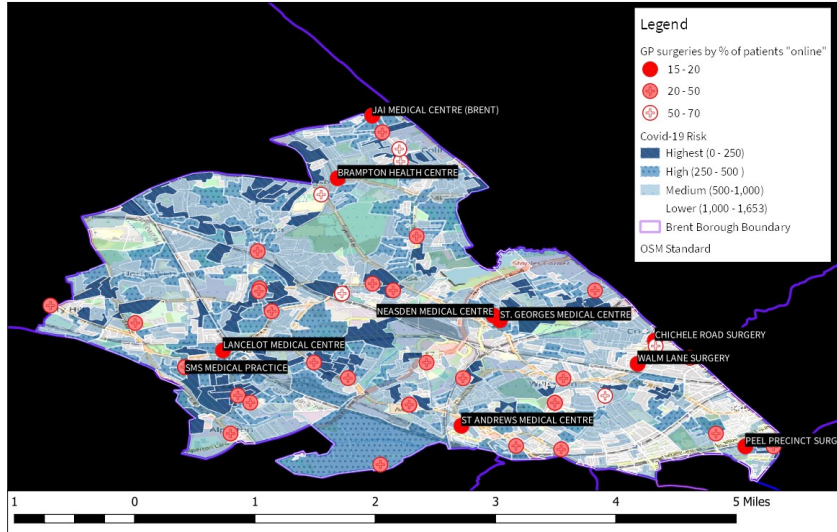
Practice Name	Number of Patients	Patients registered for an online service	Online transactions (January 2020)	Online transactions per online patient
PEEL PRECINCT SURGERY	1,240	211	11	0.1
KILBURN PARK MEDICAL CENTRE	8,093	3,114	414	0.1
CHICHELE ROAD SURGERY	5,807	1,073	164	0.2
STAVERTON SURGERY	9,025	5,871	927	0.2
THE FRYENT WAY SURGERY	8,478	5,956	942	0.2
CHURCH LANE SURGERY	8,963	3,421	570	0.2
CHALKHILL FAMILY PRACTICE	7,164	3,794	636	0.2
WILLOW TREE FAMILY DOCTORS	16,070	9,313	1,573	0.2
STANLEY CORNER MEDICAL CENTRE	6,250	2,519	432	0.2
GLADSTONE MEDICAL CENTRE	9,227	3,466	600	0.2
THE LONSDALE MEDICAL CENTRE	23,448	11,643	2,035	0.2
PEARL MEDICAL PRACTICE	4,773	2,001	351	0.2
SUDBURY SURGERY	8,833	2,933	529	0.2
THE LAW MEDICAL GROUP PRACTICE	18,004	8,289	1,497	0.2
CHURCH END MEDICAL CENTRE	8,048	3,651	666	0.2
PRESTON ROAD SURGERY	6,997	3,266	609	0.2
PARK ROYAL MEDICAL PRACTICE	7,586	2,791	526	0.2
BRENTFIELD MEDICAL CENTRE	9,106	2,029	402	0.2
ELLIS PRACTICE	8,975	5,234	1060	0.2
KINGS EDGE MEDICAL CENTRE	3,590	1,438	292	0.2
MAPESBURY MEDICAL GROUP	9,248	3,325	698	0.2
PRESTON MEDICAL CENTRE	4,253	1,601	341	0.2
ROUNDWOOD PARK MEDICAL CENTRE	4,171	2,583	554	0.2
THE WILLESDEN MEDICAL CENTRE	13,406	4,879	1,063	0.2
THE STONEBRIDGE PRACTICE	7,247	4,063	984	0.2
NEASDEN MEDICAL CENTRE	9,892	1,789	456	0.3
FORTY WILLOWS SURGERY	6,632	1,868	488	0.3
THE WEMBLEY PRACTICE	12,964	2,711	718	0.3
THE SURGERY	5,375	1,907	510	0.3
HILLTOP MEDICAL PRACTICE	4,026	978	264	0.3
FREUCHEN MEDICAL CENTRE	6,448	1,544	443	0.3
ALPERTON MEDICAL CENTRE	5,943	2,249	648	0.3
PREMIER MEDICAL CENTRE	8,374	4,398	1,328	0.3
AKSYR MEDICAL PRACTICE	7,455	1,975	602	0.3
LANCELOT MEDICAL CENTRE	6,822	1,021	312	0.3
KINGSBURY HEALTH AND WELLBEING	4,781	2,597	823	0.3
LANFRANC MEDICAL CENTRE	6,150	1,823	586	0.3
THE SUNFLOWER MEDICAL CENTRE	3,201	973	317	0.3
BURNLEY PRACTICE	8,908	2,427	807	0.3
UXENDON CRESCENT SURGERY	5,544	2,086	709	0.3
OXGATE GARDENS SURGERY	6,695	1,841	631	0.3

DIGITAL INCLUSION IN BRENT

Figure 14: Census Output Areas by COVID-19-19-19 risk vs proportion of GP patient list "online"

Brent: GPs by proportion of patients "online", vs Covid-19 Risk by Census Output Area

Source: Citizens Online calculations based on data from NHS Digital (January 2020), ONS Mid-Year Population Estimate (2018), and the Census (2011)



This map shows the potentially digital included/digitally excluded nature of each surgery's patient list. We can assume that patients registered for an online service are likely to be capable of using these services – even if they have not been using them previously or recently. The map identifies 10 surgeries in Brent where fewer than 20% of patients are registered for an online service (though in each case at least 15% are registered).

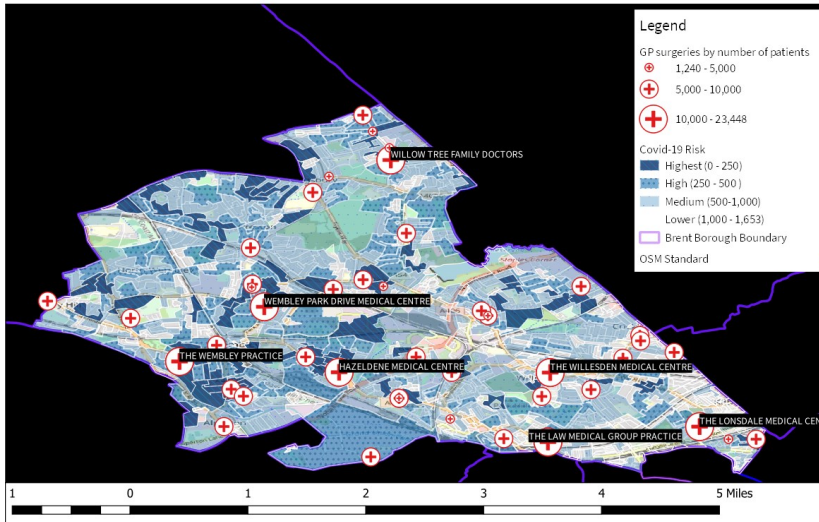
Figure 15: Ten GP surgeries where under 20% of patients are registered for an online service, Brent

Practice Name	Number of Patients	Patients registered for an online service	Proportion of patients registered for an online service
SMS MEDICAL PRACTICE	4,587	675	14.7
LANCELOT MEDICAL CENTRE	6,822	1,021	15.0
ST ANDREWS MEDICAL CENTRE	1,956	321	16.4
PEEL PRECINCT SURGERY	1,240	211	17.0
JAI MEDICAL CENTRE	6,163	1,102	17.9
ST. GEORGES MEDICAL CENTRE	2,278	411	18.0
NEASDEN MEDICAL CENTRE	9,892	1,789	18.1
BRAMPTON HEALTH CENTRE	4,860	889	18.3
CHICHELE ROAD SURGERY	5,807	1,073	18.5
WALM LANE SURGERY	8,149	1,614	19.8

Figure 16: Census Output Areas by COVID-19-19 risk vs size of GP patient list

Brent: GPs by number of patients, vs Covid-19 Risk by Census Output Area

Source: Citizens Online calculations based on data from NHS Digital (January 2020), ONS Mid-Year Population Estimate (2018), and the Census (2011)



This map shows which GP surgeries have the highest numbers of patients from the local area. The map identifies six GP surgeries (figure 6) with over 5,000 patients on their list (up to 11,700 patients). Two of these are among those with the lowest proportions of patients registered for online services, and the lowest numbers of online transactions relative to their number of patients.

Figure 17: GP surgeries with over 10,000 registered patients, Brent

Practice Name	Patients	Patients registered for online services	Proportion of patients registered for online services	Online transactions January 2020	transactions / online patients
THE LONSDALE MEDICAL CENTRE	23,448	11,643	49.7	2,035	0.2
THE LAW MEDICAL GROUP PRACTICE	18,004	8,289	46.0	1,497	0.2
WILLOW TREE FAMILY DOCTORS	16,070	9,313	58.0	1,573	0.2*
HAZELDENE MEDICAL CENTRE	14,304	3,046	21.3	1,117	0.4
THE WILLESDEN MEDICAL CENTRE	13,406	4,879	36.4	1,063	0.2
THE WEMBLEY PRACTICE	12,964	2,711	20.9*⁶⁰	718	0.3
WEMBLEY PARK DRIVE MEDICAL CENTRE	12,639	4,163	32.9	1,490	0.4

⁶⁰ *The Willow Tree Family Doctors Practice has the third lowest level of online transactions relative to the number of patients who are registered for online services. Wembley Practice is the eleventh lowest proportion of patients registered for an online service in Brent.

7. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 A BRENT DIGITAL INCLUSION NETWORK

Citizens Online advocates a partnership working model as the most effective way to sustain digital skills provision. Many organisations are already offering some sort of provision that is helpful for improving digital exclusion, such as free Wi-Fi, access to technology, digital champions or help in people's homes. A network facilitates organisations working together to share resources and avoid duplication. Information is shared so that people are clear where they can signpost those who need help with digital skills.

In other projects where the network is a stand-alone project, we have found they have worked well with a 'three tier' approach (adopted by our projects in Brighton & Hove and Gwynedd). This is constituted of:

Board	Organisations who finance activity and projects.
Steering Group	Board members + organisations with a large stake in digital inclusion and skills work e.g. Citizens Advice, DWP etc.
Network	Any organisation including voluntary organisations, individual independent digital champions, third sector support, training providers that have an interest in digital inclusion and skills.

In practice, the Board and Steering Group may end up being the same and may not need to meet separately. There may be benefits to splitting these groups out as above if the Steering Group membership is large.

It is worth stressing that a network requires resource to run. This resource could be shared with another, or group of steering group organisations. There may be key organisations that are funded by BC to carry out similar support needs that would fit with digital inclusion. There may be joint initiatives such as with local CCGs or JCP where digital inclusion would fit with the agenda. Ideally we would recommend a full-time project manager as detailed in the Digital Brighton & Hove (DBH) case study below. A network and digital champions programme could also still be successful with a part-time role but obviously the more resource, the more that can be achieved.

CASE STUDY - THE DIGITAL BRIGHTON & HOVE NETWORK

In Brighton & Hove the network has grown over almost four years to include 241 organisations, of which 90% are actively engaged in the project. There is a steering group consisting of: Brighton & Hove City Council, the local DWP office/JobCentre Plus, Citizens Online, Possability People, Brighton & Hove CCG, Brighton & Hove Citizens Advice, and Brighton Housing Trust. The steering group meets quarterly.

The wider network also meets quarterly, with the DBH Project Manager organising and facilitating the meetings. The Project Manager is also a Super Champion, training DCs in partner organisations and reporting to the steering group on progress. Producing case studies and marketing the project is also part of their full-time role.

The PM has organised a range of guest speakers for the network events to share knowledge and good practice on digital inclusion and digital transformation themes. External speakers have included people from organisations such as AbilityNet, Diversity and Ability (DnA), SCVO Digital, the Centre for Acceleration of Social Technology (CAST) and Lloyds TSB.

Digital Brighton & Hove (DBH) has also taken part in a series of citywide working groups to ensure that digital support needs were monitored and addressed in different areas. For example, they have been represented on the Work and Learning Working Group chaired by BHT, which led to new connections being made with number of local charities such as YMCA, The Passage, Just Life and The Clocktower Sanctuary.

DBH has also played an active role on the Citywide Connect Partnership Board, which brings together key stakeholders to tackle social isolation, delivering two Digital Showcases at the Citywide Connect Hub Events and leading on a collective presentation at the inaugural Ageing Well Conference.



Steering Group



Organisations engaged

... and
more!

7.2 RECOMMENDED DIGITAL CHAMPION NUMBER ESTIMATE

We have estimated that a ratio of 1 DC to every 100 digitally excluded people is a good benchmark to make an impact on digital skills in a local area. There are number of caveats about this approach.

- We're not suggesting that the problem of digital exclusion can be solved once a certain number of Digital Champions are recruited. The issue is systemic and continually changing, as we detail elsewhere in this report.
- Registering people as members of an online learning platform like the Digital Champions Network (DCN) is a positive way to track the number of Digital Champions in an area who are 'signed up' to the cause – but it doesn't mean that all of these DCs are actively helping people.
- There is wide variability in how active DCs are, and not all DCs in an area are likely to be registered on a learning platform like the DCN. Digital help activity is likely to be happening that is not being recorded.
- The estimate of digitally excluded people across areas is only an estimate and is also subject to change and influence from other factors such as age, local policy changes and new support services coming on / going off line.

However, from our previous experience we do know that the 1:100 ratio can be a useful guide to help areas understand the scale of the challenge and provide an aspirational number of Digital Champions to aim for that, if recruited, trained and supported, could then evidence significant impact across an area.

Figure 18 shows Digital Champion recruitment over the duration of three different Citizens Online projects. Figure 19 uses the same underlying data to provide a comparison of the number of digitally excluded people in the local area⁶¹ per Digital Champion recruited.

This shows that in our Digital Gwynedd project we were able to recruit 1 Digital Champion for every 70 digitally excluded people. By comparison in Brighton & Hove we were able to recruit one Digital Champion for every 112 digitally excluded people. Projects with higher DC: Excluded Population ratios are better able to evidence impact.

⁶¹ For consistency, this is based on a simple estimate: 21% of adults without all five Basic Digital Skills.

DIGITAL INCLUSION IN BRENT

After three years, a figure of 1 Digital Champion to every 100 digitally excluded people (between the Gwynedd and Brighton & Hove project numbers), would suggest **485-500 DCs registered to the DCN in Brent.**

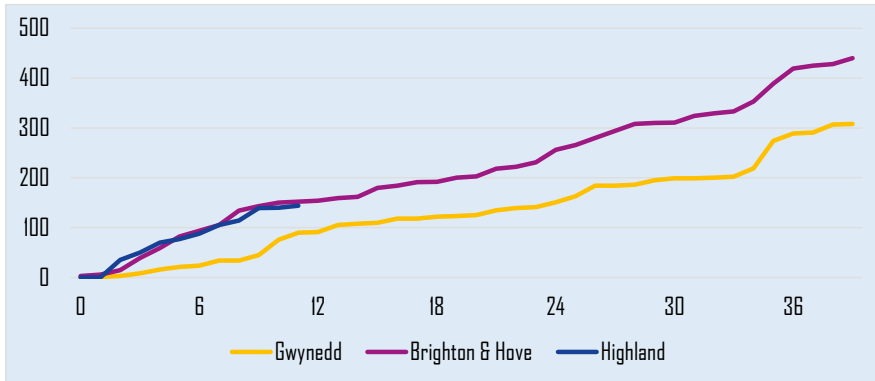


Figure 18: Cumulative DCs recruited to DCN from Month 0

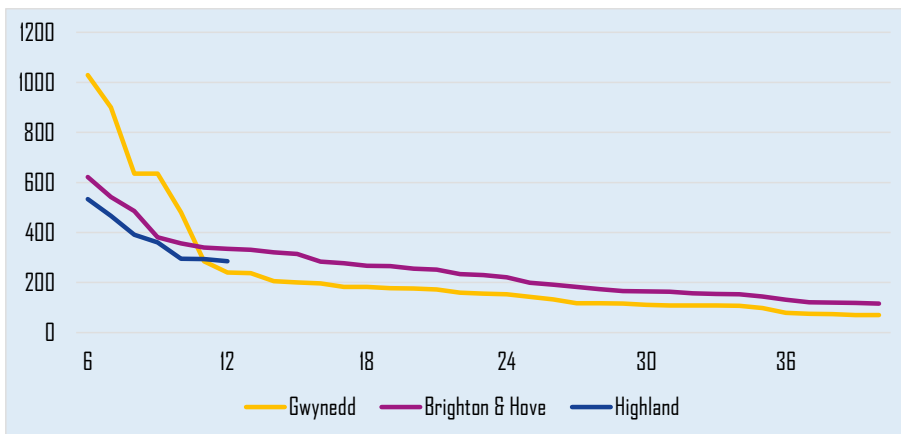


Figure 19: Digitally excluded people per DC recruited to the DCN.

7.3 ENGAGING LEARNERS

From our experience of running digital skills sessions, we know that it can be difficult to encourage learners to attend. Drawing from our work in other areas we would recommend the following pointers for advertising sessions:

- **Using images of real people that look like they come from target populations when possible** – to create a sense that sessions are for ‘people like me’
- **Including the DC helpline phone number** on all posters

- Wherever possible **communicating** with learners **via SMS**
- **Avoiding jargon** – some examples below:
 - **Avoid using 'Android/Apple'** – often people refer to their tablets as 'iPad', no matter who made it or what system it is on. Using 'device' is a catch all.
 - **Using the word 'Internet' rather than 'computers'**. People can be uncomfortable with the use of the word 'computers' as it gives the idea of high tech/office work/spread sheets/beyond their ability – and they may not think of their tablet or smartphone device as a computer. However, do bear in mind that often potential learners do not understand that applications such as 'Facebook' use the internet so internet isn't a universally understood word. Being specific about workshops to help people with Facebook / WhatsApp / Online Banking / Universal Credit application is more useful than generic offers about help with 'the internet'.
- **Changing 'we can help you' to 'we can show you how'** - otherwise potentially you will get people attending with no interest in learning
- **Being safe online is a key concern for many people.** Especially when dealing with finance they are wary of falling victim to a scam. Addressing these concerns can be a good way to hook people in
- **Finding a hook is important.** Family / local history, hobbies (online knitting patterns), access to archive TV footage, streaming music and skype can be enticing to first time internet users

The BBC Media Literacy research⁶² is now a little dated but emphasises approaches that we continue to endorse around the need to disarm common concerns about the internet, using language carefully to emphasise:

- the ease of getting started and making progress
- taking steps at a pace set by the learner – guiding them to gradually build confidence
- 'discovering the benefits' – communication and convenience stand out initially
- 'enjoying the benefits' – that it can enhance and empower their lives or businesses
- avoiding judgements that it will make their life 'better' - they want to discover that

⁶² Media Literacy – Language & Branding Qualitative Research, 2013 - BBC Audiences North & Optimisa Research

Phrases that work well include: 'World at your fingertips', 'At your fingertips', 'Discover a new world', 'Explore', 'Open opportunities', 'Find out more', 'Explore more'. There is further information on language in the BBC Media Literacy research report.

7.4 DIGITAL CHAMPION PROJECT CASE STUDIES - WHERE DO YOU START?

To successfully launch a DC programme it's essential that there is a 'Super Champion' in the first instance to train and support other DCs and be a point of contact. There could be multiple 'Super Champions' in various organisations keen to be part of a network. Running a formal DC programme with reward and recognition is also a good motivator for staff and can encourage more digital skills provision.

In Digital Brighton and Hove network, the 'Super Champion' has trained staff in Brighton and Hove City Council services including; Revenues and Benefits, Libraries, Housing, Healthy Lifestyles, Health and Adult Social Care to become DCs. The training was online training through the Digital Champions Network and face-to-face.

Revenues & Benefits: Working collaboratively with the Revenues & Benefits Service Manager contributed to supporting Revenues & Benefits Officers (frontline staff) delivering a 'self-help' customer service, switching from face-to-face to online services in the council's Customer Service Centre. This involved providing both face-to-face and online 'Digital Champion' training to over 20 Revenues & Benefits officers. The collaboration also involved collating and sharing activity records and other relevant data to help us monitor digital support activity and provision in the Customer Service Centre.

Libraries: All Library Officers and Connect Volunteers were trained as DCs. They monitor activity, demand and provision using the Digital Champions Network.

In Dorset, the network is called 'Routes to Inclusion'. A Digital Inclusion Officer manages a network of over 100 volunteer DCs. The funding for this post and recruitment came from the rollout of Superfast Broadband across the county. The Digital Inclusion Officer recruits and inducts volunteer Digital Champions who work in a variety of locations across the county. Another part of the remit is to liaise with new venues and develop relationships with community groups and other stakeholders to allow volunteer DCs to run drop in sessions within the venues. There has been a coordinated marketing campaign to recruit the volunteer DCs and promote the sessions including a phone number to call to book residents onto sessions. Dorset Council Customer Contact Team are also known as 'Digital Advisors'; essentially they are embedded DCs and can signpost residents to the volunteer DC sessions if they can't help the resident to transact online over the phone. The Digital Advisors follow a script to help residents.

The Digital Champions in Dorset as part of the Routes to Inclusion group are well publicised, with a coordinated marketing campaign county wide for residents and employees of Dorset Council, to 'normalise' digital skills. The campaign features 'Digital Norm' who is encouraging residents to take up superfast broadband and improve digital skills.

Case Study:

Customer Service Centre

Our Community Digital Champions have provided digital skills support in the council's Customer Service Centre on a regular basis over the past year, helping customers to manage their queries digitally. This work focused primarily on filling the gaps in provision in the Customer Service Centre on non 'self-help' days, that is when Embedded Digital Champions from other councils teams were not present in the Customer Service Centre.



Glenn (right) helping a customer to get online.

Based on the data recorded on the Digital Champions Network (DCN), 383 digital support sessions took place at the Customer Service Centre.

A further 444 interventions were recorded by Embedded Digital Champions who received training between March and November 2018, namely staff from the Revenues and Benefits team helping customers during the 'self-help' days.

“

“It was useful to learn about the free online resources that are available and to think about how to engage people to get online. It helped to discuss case scenarios where we might be able to signpost a customer to an online service.”
(BHCC Revenues & Benefits Officer)

“The training course was brilliant, really enjoyed it – the signposting website is very useful.” (BHCC Customer Service Officer)

”

7.5 SETTING UP A DIGITAL CHAMPIONS PROGRAMME CHECKLIST

Recruit and train 'Super Champions' (at least one) – these are go-to people for other Digital Champions

Agree your induction list for Digital Champions using the Digital Champions Network (DCN). For example, DCs may be required to complete the 'Digital Champions Essentials' and 'Using your role to help customers online' training modules.

Decide on a name and brand for the Digital Champions. They are often called digital friends / advisors / helpers etc. When promoting the digital champion role to internal staff, do stress that not everyone will be able to do things online. So the more people transacting online, the more people your staff can help 1-2-1 with assisted digital. If possible promote internally with events and a marketing campaign.

Ensure a Senior Leader is supporting the programme to champion to senior management. Some courses on the Digital Champions Network are CPD accredited so this could also be part of staff development. A reward and recognition programme may be appropriate.

Communicate to managers to get them on board. Often staff will be able to perform a DC role as part of their day job. It can be a very light touch interaction such as raising awareness by letting residents know that they can do something online as part of a conversation, or signposting residents to get help to get online elsewhere. In some cases, DCs may be released from roles for a couple of hours a week to 'floor walk' in customer centres, asking residents waiting if they knew they can do certain services online and DCs can help them. Or, drop in sessions within council buildings, where residents can bring anything they like online for help i.e. using Skype, streaming music, using Google Maps etc.

Start with those most interested in being a DC. Often a DC programme is launched within a team. However, inviting all staff who have expressed an interest will start to embed DCs into part of the culture across departments. DCs can also help colleagues. Shared learning with peer to peer sessions can also aid roll out of new internal technologies and can also be a part of the DC role.

Keep persevering. Keep communicating with DCs and tracking activity using the DCN to report to management and more importantly to give DCs a pat on the back. The DCN has lesson plans, supporting materials and resources to help DCs and make it as easy as possible for them to perform this role. Showcase successes with case studies and videos of learners. Use recognised digital events such as, 'Get Online Week,' 'Safer Internet Day', 'Ada Lovelace Day', or 'World Emoji Day' to keep momentum going. The DC programme will grow over time.

Work in partnership. Through a network, encourage other organisations to use the DCN and encourage their staff and volunteers to become DCs. A network will also help to

standardise signposting with lists of where residents can get help locally. Also to triage residents, depending on what type of help do they need?

7.6 SIGNPOSTING AND TRIAGE

Effective triage relies on people being able to identify the different levels of digital skills need that customers may present with. Effective signposting relies on people understanding where other help and resources can be found in an area. Effective referral relies on organisations having good working relationships with each other and referral pathways being in place.

Supporting staff to triage, signpost or refer people to the digital help that they need is essential. There are often many organisations providing digital skills support and in order to reach people, all organisations need to understand where they can find information about what help is available.

We recommend adopting a universal triage tool for Brent, ideally designed in partnership within a digital inclusion network, which can be embedded within training and support information (e.g. procedure documents, inductions, presentations). Having a central information resource available such a webpage or signposting and resource website would be preferable. All partner organisations need to review their websites to ensure there is easily accessible information for staff and the public on where to find digital skills help and free access points across the Borough. Ideally they are linking to one agreed central place such as the BC website.

The diagrams below illustrate the workflow for basic essential skills triage (Figure 20), starting with first assessing if a resident can turn on a device. Figure 21 outlines the Essential Digital Skills Framework, which can be a useful reference in triage and monitoring of digital skills support work.

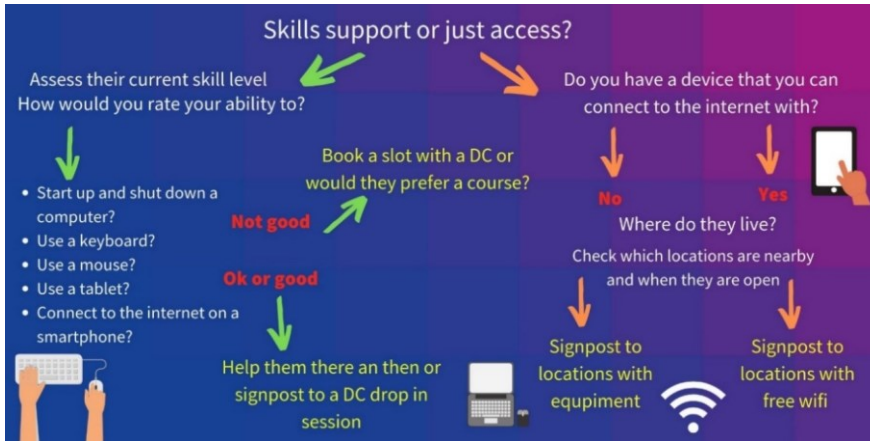


Figure 20: Workflow for essential digital skills triage



Figure 21: The Essential Digital Skills Framework

EXAMPLE QUESTIONS TO ASSESS LEARNER SKILLS AND NEEDS

Where can you access the internet? (If at all)

- Home / Work / Public place / Friends or families home / I don't have access to the internet

Do you have access to a device that can connect to the internet? If so, where? (This could be through family, or at a library for example.)

- I have my own device / I use a friend or family member device / I use devices in public places

How would you rate your ability to do any of the following? [Scale from: Very good /Quite good /Ok /Not great /I can't do that /I've never tried this]

- Switching on a computer
- Using a keyboard
- Using a mouse
- Using a tablet
- Accessing the internet on a mobile phone

How would you currently rate your confidence in being able to complete the tasks below? [Scale from: Very confident /Quite confident /Neutral /Not very confident /Not at all confident /I need help /I've never tried this]

- Scale from: Very confident /Quite confident /Neutral /Not very confident /Not at all confident /I need help /I've never tried this
- Searching and using the internet (e.g. using Google)
- Using LBBB online council services
- Using a word processor to write documents (e.g. letters and CV)
- Shopping and saving money online
- Sending and receiving emails -plus attachments
- Understanding how to fill in online forms
- Searching for work online (using Job boards and Find a Job)
- Using social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Skype, WhatsApp etc.)
- Being safe and secure online
-

Are there any areas in particular you would like additional help with?

7.8 BRENT STAFF WEBSITE SURVEY

Brent conducted a survey amongst staff about the website. The survey sample size was relatively small compared to staff numbers with 47 responses. The key take away for us reading this survey was that it cannot be used as ‘user’ research, as 60% of respondents do not use the site as a resident.

Only 4% of staff used the site solely for personal use as a resident. 36% used it for both personal and work use. Also only 2 people said that they accessed the site on tablet or mobile, with the vast majority accessing the site on desktop. Again, this does not match with residents’ web traffic behaviour.

7.9 BRENT RESIDENTS’ SURVEY

When asked ‘It is easy to carry out council transactions online?’:

45% agree, 22% neither agree nor disagree, and 26% disagree, with 14% don’t know / no opinion.

Q12. Which of the following online services have you used or would be happy to use in the future?

	Used	Likely to use	Not likely to use	Unsure
Make a payment to the Council	46%	22%	27%	5%
Look for information about services	41%	30%	24%	4%
Report an issue or problem	30%	34%	30%	6%
Make a complaint	21%	38%	33%	8%
Apply for a service	32%	32%	29%	6%
Make an appointment	20%	34%	35%	11%

Q13. Have any of the following prevented you from doing more on the council website?

I didn't know I could	6%
I haven't needed to	40%
I don't think it's secure	4%
The website is difficult to use / I can't find what I need	7%
I am not confident it will work / do what I need it to	3%
There is no online option to do the thing I want	2%
I don't know how to use the internet	4%
I prefer to talk to a real person	18%
I do not have internet access	3%
My partner does it	*0%
My parents do it	*0%
Prefer offline methods	*0%
Other	1%
None	32%

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Q17. How much time do you spend on the internet per day?	
Do not use the internet	11%
Less than 30 minutes	4%
30 minutes to 1 hour	8%
1 - 2 hours	19%
2 - 3 hours	21%
3 - 5 hours	18%
5 - 7 hours	11%
7 - 10 hours	6%
Over 10 hours	2%
Unsure	1%

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Television is still the most popular place to get news and info

Where you use the internet	
Q17A. How do you access the internet?	
Laptop or PC	63%
Tablet	46%
Smartphone	85%
Internet TV	10%
Other	*%

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Are you a member of the following social networks?:


Facebook	72%
YouTube	59%
Whatsapp	76%
Linkedin	17%
Twitter	20%
Instagram	26%
Google	*%
Snapchat	1%
Other	*%
None of the above	9%

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 <p>Brent</p>	<p>Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee 27 January 2021</p> <hr/> <p>Report from the Assistant Chief Executive</p>
<p>COMPLAINTS ANNUAL REPORT 2019 – 2020</p>	

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Non-Key Decision
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small>	Open
No. of Appendices:	Appendix A - Adult Social Care Complaints Appendix B – Children’s Social Care Complaints Appendix C - Complaints Root Cause Summary & Improvement Actions by Department Appendix D – Housing Ombudsman’s Code & Self-Assessment
Background Papers:	N/A
Contact Officer(s): <small>(Name, Title, Contact Details)</small>	Katie Smith Head of Executive and Member Services Brent Council 0208 937 1399 Mariza Barros Complaints and FOI Manager Brent Council 0208 937 1381

1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 This annual report sets out complaints performance in Brent Council for the period April 2019 to March 2020 and focuses on the nature of complaints and the learning they provide to inform Brent’s future approach to service improvement.
- 1.2 Complaints concerning Adult Social Care and Children’s Social Care come under separate statutory complaint procedures and separate summary reports have been provided in **Appendices A and B** respectively.
- 1.3 A summary of the root causes of all Stage 1 complaints and improvement actions by Council departments in 2019/20 is provided in **Appendix C**.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

2.1 Members of the Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee are asked to note Brent's performance in managing and resolving complaints.

2.2 To note the comments in the Council's self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Code in Appendix D.

3.0 Summary

3.1 The Council has three different processes for managing complaints:

- a two stage corporate complaints process;
- a two part Adult statutory complaints process; and
- a three stage Children's statutory complaints process.

3.2 The complaints data and information provided in this report is based on information recorded on iCasework and CRM – Microsoft Dynamics. The latter is the Council's new complaints management system, which was introduced in November 2019, and has been replaced by an updated version in November 2020.

3.3 Due to the transition between the two systems, it has been difficult to collate and reconcile some of the information.

3.4 The key headlines from complaints performance in 2019/20 are as follows:

- The number of Brent Stage 1 complaints (corporate & statutory) have decreased by 1% (25 complaints) (↓)
- The number of Brent Stage 2 complaints (corporate & statutory) have increased by 22% (45 cases) (↑)
- There were 19 LGSCO cases upheld against Brent in 2019/20, compared with 23 cases in 2018/19 (↓)
- The total amount of compensation paid by Brent decreased by 4% in 2019/20 compared with the previous year – c£3k (↓)
- Stage 1 statutory and corporate performance has dropped in 2019/20 from 3% points for corporate complaints and 6% points for statutory complaints. (91% corporate and 84% statutory responded to on time) (↓).
- The top three root causes of complaints are: Housing Repairs (11%), Parking (9%), and Council Tax/Recovery (7%).
- A range of remedial actions have been put in place. These entail specific changes to the way services are delivered, for example:
 - better coordination between the housing repairs service and other required interventions (for example decants, asbestos and tenancy issues);
 - improved parking enforcement plan has introduced more geographically targeted enforcement across the borough;
 - a revised debt recovery policy.

4.0 Detail

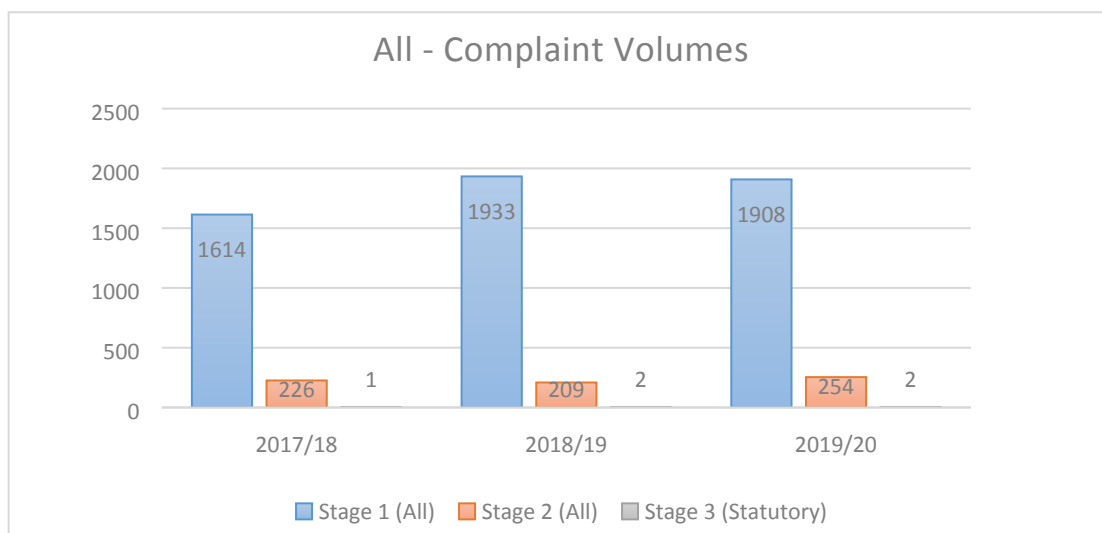
Volume of Complaints received

4.1 The chart below shows the volume of corporate and statutory complaints received at Stage 1, Stage 2 and Stage 3 over the past 3 years. The key points to note are that:

- In 2019/20 Brent received 1,908 Stage 1 complaints (corporate and statutory). This is a decrease of 25 complaints compared to the previous year.
- Stage 2 complaints (corporate & statutory) has increased by 22% to 254 cases during 2019/20 compared with the previous year.
- There were two Stage 3 Review Panels convened during 2019/20, which corresponds with the previous year 2018/19.

4.2 The increase in stage 2 complaints were in relation to corporate complaints. Housing Management Services attributed to the majority of the increase. In 2018/19 a total of 48 Housing Management related complaints were received, however this year this doubled to 97 stage 2 complaints received.

4.3 The Complaints Team are working with the Housing Management Service to implement some new measures to improve complaints handling within the service as a result of the increase and due to the Housing Ombudsman Code, which comes into effect in January 2021. The new changes include; the introduction of a dedicated complaints lead within the Housing Management Service, a rolling list of actions identified and to be completed following a stage 1 response, and training and behaviour change. Further details on actions to be taken within the Housing Management Service can be found in the self-assessment in appendix D.



Timeliness of Complaints

4.4 The table below shows the percentage of complaints closed on time. The overall timeliness of complaints has improved for Stage 2 statutory cases. Stage 2 corporate complaints performance has remained consistent with last year's performance. Stage 1 complaints have dipped by 3% points for corporate complaints and 6% points for statutory complaints. The Complaints Service

team is continuing to work with departments to improve complaints performance and improve the Stage 2 statutory process, which involves appointing an Independent Person and Investigating Officer to carry out an independent investigation.

Year	Brent - % of Cases Closed on Time			
	Stage 1 - Corporate	Stage 1 - Statutory	Stage 2 - Corporate	Stage 2 - Statutory
2017-18	90%	88%	81%	59%
2018-19	94%	90%	87%	47%
2019-20	91%	84%	87%	59%

Complaints Outcomes

- 4.5 The percentage of cases upheld or partly upheld at stage one of the corporate complaints procedure has dropped by 3% points whereas the cases upheld or partly upheld at stage 2 of the corporate complaints procedure has increased by 12% points. The proportion of statutory cases upheld/ partly upheld has increased by 1% at stage 1 and decreased by 1% at stage 2.

Year	Brent - % of Cases Upheld or Partly Upheld			
	Stage 1 - Corporate	Stage 1 - Statutory	Stage 2 - Corporate	Stage 2 - Statutory
2017-18	50%	39%	40%	48%
2018-19	47%	46%	39%	60%
2019-20	44%	47%	51%	59%

Compensation

- 4.6 The table below shows the total amount of compensation paid in Brent at all stages of the corporate and statutory process, including Ombudsmen cases. In 2019/20, the total amount of compensation paid by Brent decreased by 4% on last year and a 21% decrease compared to 2017/18. However, the total number of cases awarded compensation has increased year on year, with a 25% increase in cases this year compared with 2018/19.
- 4.7 Compensation has remained broadly consistent, however the Council has offered compensation in more cases this year. Compensation can be awarded due to time and trouble, distress, as goodwill or in the form of a refund, reimbursement, or the offset/waving of arrears. The case increase shows that the Council is proactively offering remedies including compensation where it is warranted. Offering remedies earlier on in the process prevents the need to offer more compensation at a later stage. There is no specific correlation between the amount of compensation awarded one year compared to compensation awarded in another as each complaint is unique.

Year	All Brent		
	Cases	Total Comp.	Avg / Case

2017-18	135	£73,794	£547
2018-19	141	£61,257	£434
2019-20	176	£58,553	£333

Root Cause and Improvements Resulting from Complaint Investigations

4.8 Departmental analysis of the root causes of complaints and service-specific improvements resulting from the learning from complaints have been highlighted in Appendix C.

4.9 Overall, the top 3 specific root causes of complaints in Brent concerned:

- Housing Repairs (11%),
- Parking (9%),
- Council Tax/Recovery (7%)

Housing Repairs

- Housing Management Property Services receive a large number of complaints due to the nature and volume of work the service provides.
- In 2019/20 the majority of complaints received were in regards to delays in repairs works being carried out. The complexity of repairs and determining the cause can delay in resolving the problem. Weather conditions and other mitigating circumstances are also contributing factors.
- The service have used a number of complaints to review their processes and systems so that they can track and effectively manage repairs. They now have a number of case trackers which are reviewed on a weekly basis to ensure cases are progressed in a timely manner and residents updated in advance, where delays are identified.
- The team have worked closely with IT service to build in tracking / referral flags where support is required from colleagues in other teams to progress repairs, for example decants, asbestos and tenancy issues.
- The service also hold complaint reviews, which include their main contractor Wates, as part of a lessons learnt process and to enable them to identify where the blockages are. For example, there were a large number of complaints received which related to leaks and the inability to gain access to undertake the necessary repair, so the service worked with Wates and the Customer Experience Team to develop a no access procedure to address this issue, and as a result, complaints of this nature have reduced.
- In order to improve complaints handling a new role is to be included in the structure to monitor the quality of responses to stage one complaints in line with the new housing ombudsman requirements. This role will also support regular audits and address live issues / breakdown in communication between Property Services and Housing and Neighbourhoods.
- The amount of Housing Management – Property Services complaints have decreased from 262 in 2018/19 to 224 complaints in 2019/20, so there is an improvement within the service. The focus is now on the escalations, which is attributable to a number of factors outlined above as well as ensuring contractors are held accountable and made aware of their expectations in terms of complaints handling. Weekly meetings are taking place with contractors to highlight key issues of complaints and confirm remedial actions going forward.

Parking

- Parking complaints usually arise as a result of Penalty Charge Notices (PCN) being issued to motorists. Although there is a statutory appeal process, motorists tend to raise further complaints if they do not receive their desired outcome when challenging or appealing a PCN.
- There were a number of complaints received due to a lack of enforcement, where residents would like enforcement action taken in a particular location. As a result, the Parking service regularly review the Parking enforcement plan and target enforcement activity to address hotspots.
- Complaints received at stage 1 also involved issues with the online permit application system, as a result, changes have been made to the system.
- Other parking related issues escalated to stage 2 involved a complaint regarding an enforcement agent acting on the Council's behalf to recover a debt owed not honouring a commitment to await for further evidence before removing a vehicle, and the attitude of a civil enforcement officer whilst issuing PCNs from a CCTV vehicle.
- There were however, 74 fewer complaints about Parking services than in 2018/19, 119 parking related complaints in 2019/20 compared to 193 stage 1 complaints in 2018/19. Although the number of stage 1 complaints received were quite high, there were only nine complaints escalated to stage 2 in the same period. This shows there is an improvement within the service but it still remains one of the key topics of complaint due to the nature of the service provided.

Council Tax/Recovery

- Complaints about debt collection services generate complaints as they often relate to the work done to collect historic debts that may include tracking customers who have previously absconded or assumed a debt had been forgotten.
- The rise in stage 1 complaints from 77 stage 1 complaints in 2018/19 to 139 stage 1 complaints in 2019/20 in relation to Council tax and recovery was mainly attributed to an issue in July 2019, where historical debt was sent to enforcement agents without any prior notification to customers. There has been a change in management and a new process has since been put in place, which has reduced the number of complaints regarding this matter.
- Complaints escalated to stage 2 related to the administration of a Council Tax account and the lack of consideration for the individual debtor's circumstances. As a result, the service will be reviewing the current Debt Recovery Policy, in line with the guidance as set out in the LGSCO's Focus Report, and any other applicable legislation.
- Other complaints related to correspondence and communication with customers and adhering to promises made to put enforcement action on hold.
- Moving into 2020/21 the service has put more emphasis on ethical and empathetic collection combined with better accuracy to enhance the customer experience while still seeking to maintain collection.

Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) Decisions and Learning Points

LGSCO Volumes & Outcomes

- 4.10 There were 126 enquiries and complaints referred to the Ombudsman in 2019/20. The LGSCO made decisions on all 126 cases received, however only 28 cases required a detailed investigation, 19 cases of which were upheld and 9 cases not upheld.
- 4.11 Categories of cases not taken up for investigation include: ‘advice given’ ‘referred back for local resolution’; ‘incomplete or invalid’; and ‘closed after initial enquiries’.
- 4.12 The overall number of complaints referred to the Ombudsman has decreased year on year, as have the number of upheld cases by the Ombudsman. The number of upheld cases is four lower than 2018-2019, however still slightly higher than 2017-2018. The table below shows a 3-year comparison of LGSCO outcomes of Brent Council cases:

Year	LGSCO Outcomes						Total
	Not upheld	Upheld	Advice given	Referred back for local resolution	Invalid or incomplete	Closed after initial enquiries	
2017 - 2018	12	21	5	77	6	41	162
2018 - 2019	6	23	8	53	7	37	134
2019 - 2020	9	19	6	55	5	44	126

- 4.13 Brent in 2019/20 compared to the other 33 London boroughs:
- 15th highest in number of referrals to the LGSCO
 - 19th highest in number of detailed investigations undertaken
 - 19th highest in number of LGO upheld cases
 - 21st highest LGSCO uphold rate (68%) in 2019/20, which is 11% points lower than last year.

LGSCO Upheld Cases

- 4.14 There were 19 cases upheld against Brent in 2019/20 in the following services:
- Housing - 7
 - Adult Care Services – 4 (including Blue Badge, Freedom Pass)
 - Education & Children Services – 3
 - Highways and Transport – 2
 - Planning and Development – 2
 - Benefits and Tax – 1
- 4.15 Brent came top of all London councils for upheld cases where a satisfactory remedy had already been provided before the complaint reached the Ombudsman. Of the 19 cases which were upheld for 2019-2020, the Council had already offered a satisfactory resolution to the complaint before it reached the Ombudsman on 8 occasions. This equates to 42% of the total upheld cases and is significantly above the London average of 15%. This suggests that when issues are identified through the complaints process, corrective actions are effectively carried out to rectify issues or compensate where necessary. For

these eight cases, the Ombudsman confirmed no further action was required. The Complaints Service Team are working to improve decision making in accordance with the Local Government and Social care Remedies guidance. In some cases, there were only minor amendments to decisions that the Council had made.

- 4.16 A brief summary of the cases upheld by the LGSCO for each area has been provided below. The Council categorises complaints about Parking and Lighting, and complaints regarding Highways as two separate services within the Regeneration and Environment department. Blue Badge and Freedom Pass complaints are categorised under Brent Customer Services rather than the Adult Social Care department. For the purposes of this report, the categorisation of complaints by the LGSCO has been followed.

Adult Care Services (including Blue Badge, Freedom Pass)

- 4.17 Two of the complaints upheld within the LGSCO's category of Adult Care Services related to applications for a disabled badge, which falls within the Council's Customer and Digital service. In both cases, the Council failed to fully show how it made its decision and how it considered any medical evidence provided. Of the other two cases, one case involved delays in reviewing the care needs of the customer, and the other regarding the actions of a care home, which is commissioned by the Council.

Housing

- 4.18 Since most housing matters are referred to the Housing Ombudsman, the majority of the upheld complaints to the LGSCO focused on issues with Housing Needs. Most cases related to how the Council handled homelessness applications. The other complaints upheld covered bidding for housing, a transfer request and a delay in the Council requesting a landlord to carry out repair works. The Ombudsman awarded a total of £2,125 compensation across the seven cases.

Highways and Transport

- 4.19 Both cases reported under "Highways and Transport" concerned parking related issues. A historic case from 2015 was raised with the Ombudsman as a result of confusion about the remedy that was agreed at the time. The other case concerned an administrative error, which was rectified as soon as it was identified and no investigation or further action was required.

Education and Children's

4.20 There were three complaints upheld by the Ombudsman:

- The first complaint related to the handling of a safeguarding investigation. The complaint had been investigated through the statutory three stage process and the Ombudsman was satisfied that there was no fault in how the investigation was undertaken, and the remedies identified through the process were judged to be sufficient.
- The second complaint concerned a foster carer who was approved to foster older children, had agreed to foster younger children, but was not provided with all the necessary equipment to care for the young children.
- The last complaint related to the Special Guardianship Allowance, which had not been paid by the Council between 2015 and 2017. The Council backdated the allowance and paid £3,300 at Stage 2 of the complaint process in acknowledgment of the injustice caused.

Planning and Development

4.21 The complaints upheld related to the lack of enforcement action taken by the Council at a site, and an extension that was permitted by the Council but which failed to consider the neighbours' comments on the impact it would have on their property. The Council had already provided a suitable remedy in regards to the extension by means of compensation, however in regards to the enforcement action the Ombudsman felt that the Council should have explained its decision in regards to not taking action during working hours.

Benefits and Tax

4.22 The only complaint upheld for Benefits and Tax related to housing benefit entitlement and recovery of overpayments. The Council delayed dealing with the complainant's requests, however the Council had paid several sums in recognition of the fault.

LGSCO Compensation

4.23 In 2019-2020 the Ombudsman asked the Council to pay an additional £3,325 in compensation. The compensation was spread across six cases, five of which related to Housing Needs and the other a Parking complaint. This is slightly higher than last year 2018-2019, where £3,150 was awarded from five cases.

Housing Ombudsman (HO) Decision & Learning Points

4.24 The Housing Ombudsman does not provide annual reports and data in the same way the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) does. The data provided in the table below on HO cases is taken from the information recorded on Brent's complaints system.

Year	Total Cases Decided	Upheld	Not Upheld	Uphold Rate
2017 - 2018	20	6	14	30%
2018 - 2019	13	6	7	46%
2019 - 2020	9	3	6	33%

- 4.25 The Housing Ombudsman decided on nine cases, of these, three cases were upheld in 2019/20, an uphold rate of 33%. Although there were less cases decided in 2019/20 the uphold rate on the cases decided is relatively better compared to the previous year. The Council has in fact had a 31% reduction in the number of cases decided by the Housing Ombudsman. A short description of the three 'Upheld' cases has been provided below:

Complaint 1

- 4.26 The Housing Ombudsman upheld a Housing Management complaint which had previously been investigated under the Council's complaints procedure and upheld. The Council's final review complaint decision, concluded in October 2018, accepted that there had been some minor lapses in communication regarding a roof repair and awarded £25 compensation.
- 4.27 The Ombudsman decided that £300 compensation was appropriate for failings in the repairs service and complaints handling.

Complaint 2

- 4.28 The Housing Ombudsman upheld a Housing Management complaint which had previously been investigated under the Council's complaints procedure and upheld.
- 4.29 The Council's final review complaint response, concluded in October 2018, accepted that there had been delay in addressing damp in the complainant's home and awarded £300 compensation.
- 4.30 The Ombudsman decided that the £300 compensation was appropriate for the period up to October 2018, but noted that there were further delays after the final review complaint response, up to the date of its decision in July 2019, partly because commitments made in the final review complaint response were not met. The Ombudsman therefore ordered an additional £700 compensation to be paid on this basis.

Complaint 3

- 4.31 The Housing Ombudsman upheld a Housing Management complaint which had previously been investigated under the Council's complaints procedure and upheld.
- 4.32 The Council's final review complaint response, concluded in October 2018, accepted that there had been delay in addressing damp in the complainant's home and awarded £250 compensation. The property is a First Wave property where the Council does not own the freehold. The final review complaint response also said that the Housing Management Service should provide the complainant with clarity on whether a decant would be offered.
- 4.33 The Ombudsman ordered that a further £750 compensation should be paid. This was primarily for further delay, after the final review complaint response, in addressing the damp and providing clarity on the decant issue.

4.34 The complainant was eventually rehoused in September 2019.

Housing Ombudsman Code: Review

4.35 The Housing Ombudsman published a new, more stringent complaint handling code in July 2020, which comes into operation on 1 January 2021. The Code will affect complaints received for Housing Management and does not cover complaints in relation to Housing Needs, Private Housing Service and Housing Supply & Partnerships. Complaints concerning these services fall within the remit of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

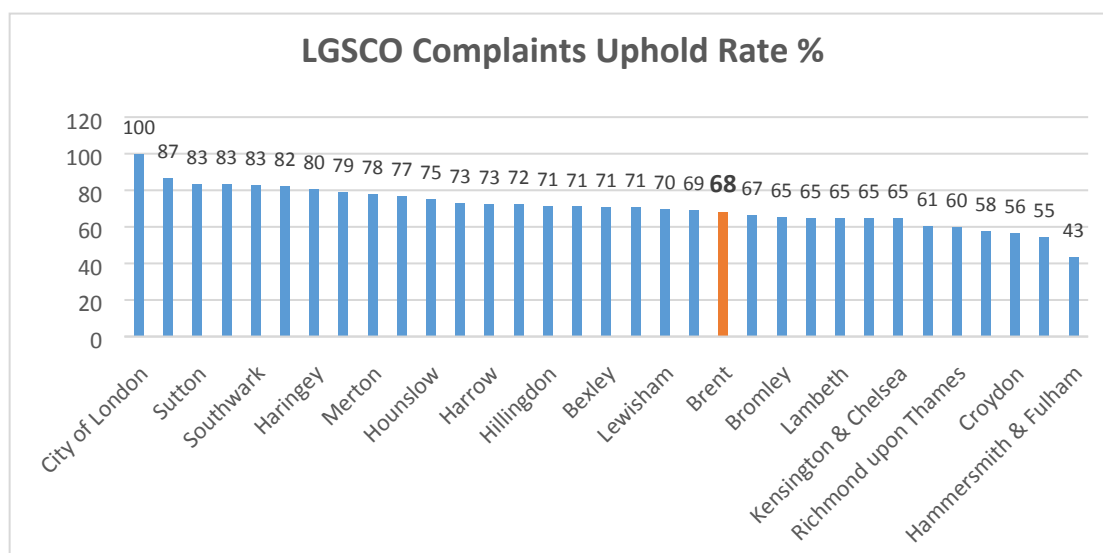
4.36 A copy of the Housing Ombudsman's Code has been provided in Appendix D along with the Housing Management Service's self-assessment against the Code.

Compliments

4.37 There were 85 compliments recorded on the Council's case management system in 2019/20. This is a drop of 10 compliments compared with 95 compliments logged in 2018/19. Managers and staff have been encouraged to log their compliments on iCasework so it is reflective of all the compliments that are received.

Benchmarking

4.38 Due to the current pandemic and competing priorities, it has been difficult to gather statistics from other London boroughs. However, benchmarking data has been provided by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. Of the detailed investigations undertaken, the percentage of complaints which were upheld (68%) compares favourably with other London boroughs.



5.0 Financial Implications

- 5.1 The details provided on compensation payments in section 4.4 and throughout this report reflects the monetary impact of not getting things right the first time as an organisation and the need to improve the customer experience thus minimising the financial penalties incurred by the Council.
- 5.2 The data shows that whilst the total number of cases awarded compensation has increased year on year the total amount of compensation paid at all stages of the corporate and statutory process has fallen.
- 5.3 In 2019/20, the total amount of compensation paid by Brent was £58k. This reflects a 4% decrease compared to 2018/19 and 21% when compared to 2017/18. This is despite the fact that the total number of cases awarded compensation has increased year on year, with a 25% increase in 2019/20 when compared with 2018/19. This change is reflected in the average cost per case, which has fallen by 39% from an average cost of £547 in per case in 17/18 to £333 per case in 19/20.

Year	All Brent		
	Cases	Total Comp.	Avg / Case
2017-18	135	£73,794	£547
2018-19	141	£61,257	£434
2019-20	176	£58,553	£333

6.0 Legal Implications

- 6.1 Complaints concerning Adult Social Care and Children's Social Care come under separate statutory complaint procedures. It is a legal requirement to produce annual reports for these areas and these are included in appendices A and B with reference to the statutory frameworks for the management of these statutory complaints.

7.0 Equality Implications

- 7.1 Under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the Council has a duty when exercising their functions to have 'due regard' to the need:
- (a) to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act;
 - (b) advance equality of opportunity; and
 - (c) foster good relations between those who share a "protected characteristic" and those who do not.
- 7.2 This is the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). The 'protected characteristics' are: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.
- 7.3 Although there have been no equality implications identified as a result of this report, the Council are improving the complaints system so that equalities data

is captured and data analysis can be used to identify issues that may disproportionately affect different equality groups.

8.0 Consultation with Ward Members and Stakeholders

8.1 None

9.0 Human Resources/Property Implications (if appropriate)

9.1 None

Report sign off:

SHAZIA HUSSAIN
Assistant Chief Executive

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Complaints Annual Report 2019 – 2020

Appendix A – Adult Social Care Statutory Complaints

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of complaints made about Adult Social Care (ASC) during 2019–2020, as required under The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009, the Health and Social Care Community Health & Standards Act 2003 and the Local Authority Social Services Complaints (England) Regulations 2006.

2. Statutory Complaints Process

- 2.1 The Department of Health defines a complaint as, *“an expression of dissatisfaction or disquiet about the actions, decisions or apparent failings of a Council’s adult social care provision which requires a response”*.
- 2.2 Anyone who has received a service, is currently receiving a service or is seeking a service from the Council can make a complaint. This includes anyone affected by decisions the Council make about social care, including a service provided by an external provider acting on behalf of the Council. In such a case they can complain directly to the provider or to the Council. External providers are required to have their own complaints procedures and must comply with them. They are also required to share information on complaints and outcomes with the Council.
- 2.3 There is only one stage in this statutory process which the Council has interpreted as a provisional response and a final decision. All complaints made to the Council are logged and acknowledged. The Council will try to resolve the provisional complaint as soon as possible, and within 25 working days. If delays are anticipated, the complainant is consulted and informed appropriately. All responses, whether or not a timescale has been agreed with the complainant, must be completed within six months of receiving the complaint.
- 2.4 All complaints are signed off by the Head of Service and complainants are given the opportunity to have their complaint reviewed by the Strategic Director, Community Wellbeing or the Operational Director, Adult Social Care. In some cases, some complaints may need to be passed on to the Safeguarding leads as appropriate, where the complaints process may be suspended in order to allow the safeguarding process to be completed. In cases where the complaint is across several organisations, one organisation will act as the lead and co-ordinate a joint response to the complainant. The final complaint response must set out the Council’s standard paragraph advising of their right to approach the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) should the complainant remain dissatisfied.

3. Headlines

3.1 The main headlines from ASC complaints performance are:

- 81 complaints received at the initial stage in 2019/20 a decrease of 20% on 2018/19.
- Highest volume service areas for first stage complaints – Complex Care 26%, Urgent Care 26%, Commissions, Contracting and Market Management 21%
- 45% of Stage 1 cases were upheld or partly upheld
- 50% of stage 2 cases were upheld or partially upheld
- 92% of Stage 1 complaints were responded to on time.

4. ASC Service Users

4.1 In order to provide some context in relation to complaints submitted, ASC received 2702 contacts from individuals including contacts made through Brent Customer Services (BCS) and the Duty Team in 2019/20. ASC assessed 1,145 service users for homecare services and 168 were assessed for residential / nursing services. There were 3,213 individuals who received section 5 hospital discharge assessments. This means that 1.1% of ASC service users or someone acting on their behalf raised a complaint about a service that they had received in 2019-20.

5. Complaints Received

5.1 ASC received 81 (101 in 2018/19) Statutory Complaints in 2019/20. This figure has reverted back to similar figures the Council had received in preceding years, following a spike in complaints received in the period 2018/19.

5.2 There have been a number of changes in the team structures in ASC during the year which has not been replicated in both complaint management systems currently used and therefore may not be reflected in this report.

5.3 A new complaint system went live on the 25 November 2019, and as a result statistics in this report have been collected from the two complaint management systems, the legacy system iCasework, and the new implemented system CRM Dynamics. Unfortunately, the matrix of the two complaint systems do not match and consequently there has been considerable difficulty in reconciling the complaints data from the systems. The current system has been replaced by an updated version in November 2020.

5.4 Statutory complaints centre on the Care Act and largely relate to a service users' care needs assessment or the provision of social care needs either through, homecare services or residential care. Anyone can approach the Council and are entitled to receive a care needs assessment. There has been a decrease in complaints received by the Complex Care team and the Urgent Care teams, although this has been offset by an increase in complaints in the Commissioning, Contracting and Market Management team.

- **Complex Care:** received 26% of all statutory complaints made to ASC which is 13% down compared to last year. This team handles the more complex support cases as well as annual reviews and are expected to manage the realistic expectations of the families and service users in regards to the package of care

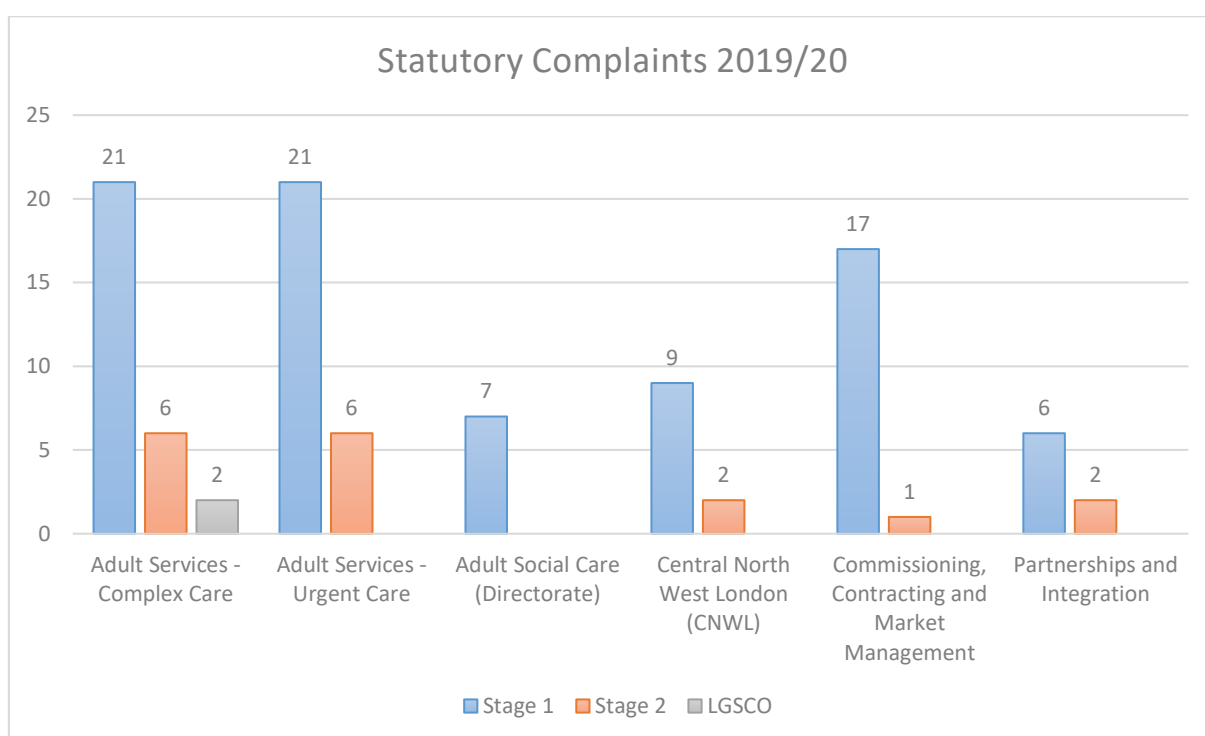
they are entitled to. The total of 21 complaints received for the year reflects on the work completed by the team. This compares to an active case load of approximately 600 cases. The complaints that are received by the team relate to disagreements with the decisions around care packages / assessments, delays in receiving an assessment or Occupational Therapy assessments and complaints concerning communication from social workers. The service users and their families often have a higher expectation of the services the Council is actually able to provide. The Council has to consider value for money, as well as the needs of the service user when it is providing services. These are complex and sensitive matters and can lead to disputes between the parties. There has been a concerted effort to improve case and complaint handling in the team and a willingness to work with the Complaint Service team to reduce the number of complaints. There have been a number of complaints from some families which have bordered on vexatious and need to be managed.

- **Commissioning Contracting and Market Management:** this team manages the services / contracts for residential nursing homes, homecare providers direct payments and supported living. They accounted for 21% of all complaints received by ASC, which is an increase of 14% on the preceding year. In reality the complaints have increased from 7 to 17 complaints, which is minimal in context to the areas that the team cover. There is a perception that the Council receives a lot of complaints about its home care providers, however, this is not borne out in the statistics. There were 7 cases received in 2019/20, about homecare providers which accounts for 8.5% of the overall complaints received in relation to ASC. This is similar to the preceding year. The Council does a lot of work with its home care providers in order to resolve problems at the first point of contact. The majority of concerns received are reported directly to the home care provider and resolved by them. Concerns can also be raised directly with the commissioning team who will resolve such matters with the provider, but service users are also made aware of the Council's complaints process if they wish for their concerns to be investigated by the Council. Other areas of complaints concern placements in a residential setting and supported living.
- **Urgent Care:** includes the Duty team and Hospital Discharge teams and accounted for 26% of all complaints received by ASC. This is a 14% decrease on the preceding year 2018/19. There has been an improvement through the year on reducing the waiting list and ensuring that care assessments are completed. In the preceding year, there had been 19 complaints around this issue. However, although there is improvement in this area, there is concern in the relationship between Brent Customer Services and the Duty Team in relation to the triaging of requests for assessments. The nature of complaints is around communication / feedback, disagreement / delays in packages of care being put in place (home care) and delays in being assessed for the home or placing patients in a residential setting, and co-ordination with the NHS.
- **Partnerships & Integration:** This team manages our Direct Services such as the John Billam Resource Centre and the Council's partnerships with the NHS Reablement team. This team accounted for 7% of the complaints received for ASC which is a decrease of 4% on 2018/19.

5.5 There is a general trend in all areas around communication, whether it be regarding communicating a decision made or explaining the position at that point in time.

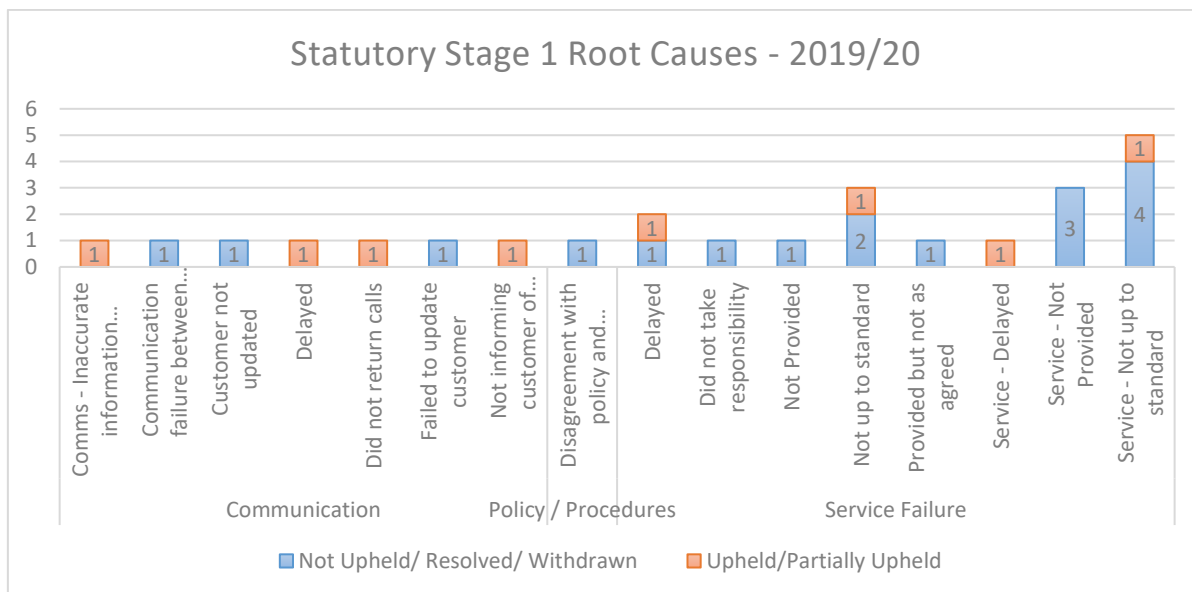
5.6 When complaints are received they are directed to the Complaint Service team for triaging. Of the complaints received, the team received 43% by email, 39% by self-service on line, 11% by telephone and 5% by letter. The ASC Complaint Legislation is explicit that the Council must receive complaints by any means, and in discussions with various disability groups, they have highlighted that access to the ASC complaints process should be easy for all and that not everyone has or is capable of accessing the complaint form on the web-site. The team have provided a telephone number on the web site especially for ASC clients.

5.7 The chart below shows the number of ASC statutory complaints received in 2019/20. Of the 81 statutory complaints received, 17 were escalated to the final review stage and 2 complaints were escalated to the LGSCO. With a reduction in complaints being received at the provisional review stage, this has therefore increased the escalation rate. Simpler complaints are being resolved at the early stage and the more complex cases which strand different teams are the cases that tend to escalate.



5.8 The escalation rate for statutory complaints is 21% compared to 18% in 2018/19. This is an escalation increase of 3% and reflects on the complex nature of the complaints being received. Outcomes from these cases are discussed later in the report. ASC actively try to resolve problems or concerns; however, the more complex cases do escalate, hence the reason the majority of the stage 2 requests came from Urgent and Complex Care teams. The Complaints Service team continues to work with the ASC Operational Director and their management team to ensure complaints are proactively responded to. The Complaints Service team held two complaint training sessions for ASC managers and staff throughout the year and also attended team meetings to explain the complaint process and present complaint data and feedback.

6. Nature / Reasons for Complaints

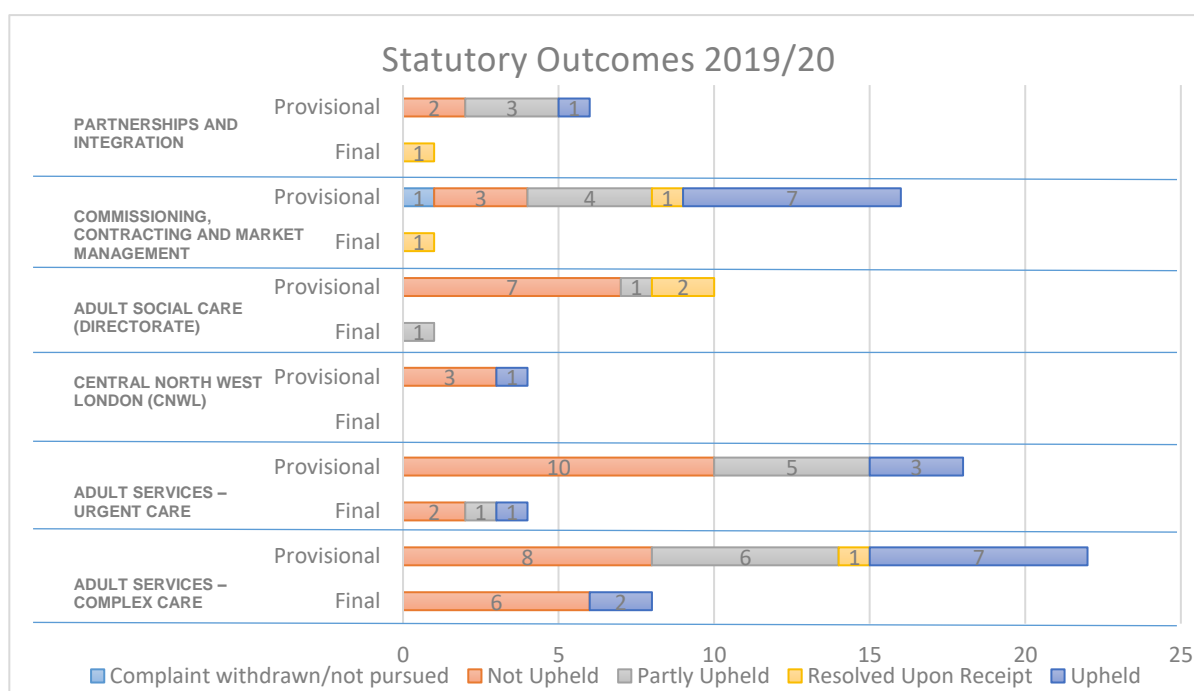


6.1 The recording of root causes has been poor 24 out of 81 cases. This was mainly due to a technical issue with the complaints system that allowed officers to close down complaints without providing a root cause. Complaints about service failure accounted for 67% of those complaints of which fault was found in 19% of cases (3 out of 16). The other main area was Communication accounting for 29% in which fault was found in 57% of cases

6.2 Where some fault was found, these concerned explaining the process and how decisions have been reached.

7. Complaint Outcomes

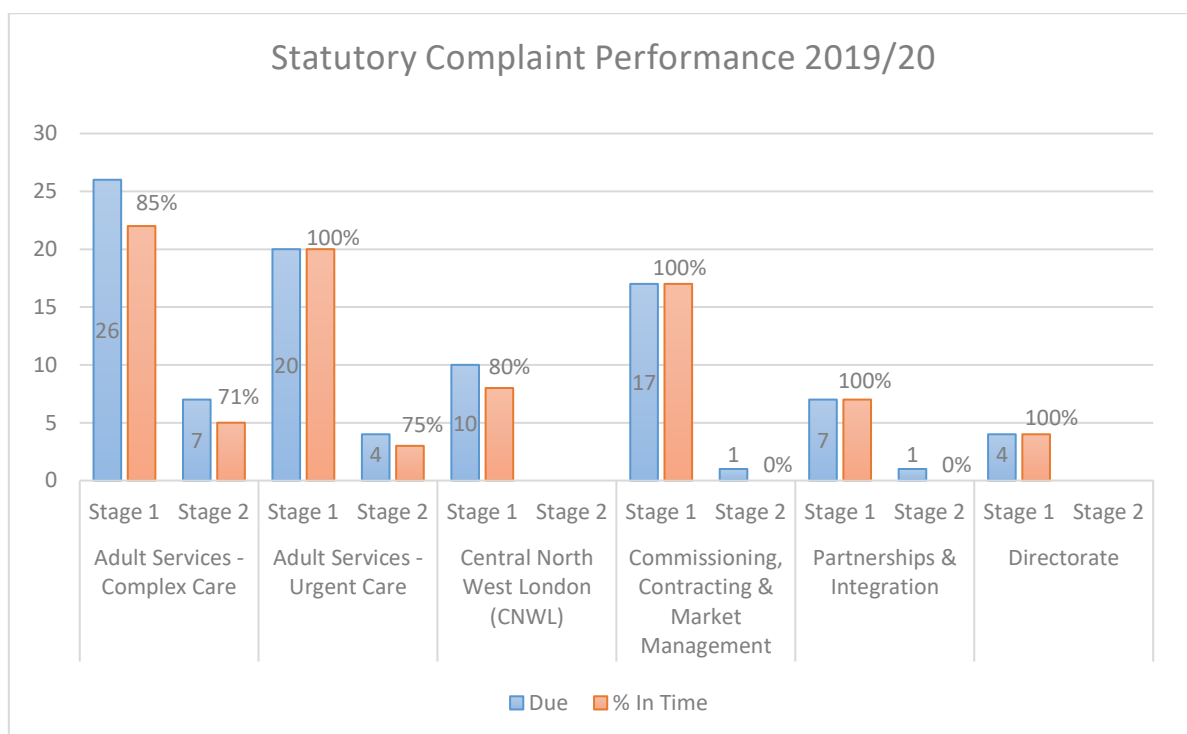
7.1 The chart below shows the outcome of statutory complaints at Stage 1 and final review stage:



- 7.2 Complaints received at the first / provisional stage shows that some fault (upheld or partly upheld) by the Council was found in 38% of cases; this compares to 45% in 2018/19. The Council welcomes complaints from service users about the services we provide, and outcomes from complaints feed into service improvement and the transformation of services.
- 7.3 At the final review stage some fault was found in 50% of cases, which is up from 38% in the previous year 2018/19. The number of final review complaints increased from 13 in 2018/19 to 16 in 2019/20. The reason why there has been an increase in cases where fault has been found at final review is due to the complexity of the cases being escalated to the final review stage.
- 7.4 The complaint escalation rate has increased despite fewer cases received in 2019/20 in comparison to the previous year.
- 7.5 Where complaints are complex and involve a number of teams, they tend to escalate to the final review stage. The complaint service team continues to work with ASC to review the accuracy and quality of the stage 1 responses, where they have escalated to the final stage, and will be reporting the findings to the ASC management team in order to implement strategies to reduce the number of escalations.
- 7.6 Although ASC has introduced an appeal service, numbers show that the appeal process is rarely used. This indicates that service users are still using the complaint process in order to argue their case to retain or improve their care package and protect their services. Service users should be encouraged to appeal decisions made.
- 7.7 The Complaints Service team continues to work with managers in ASC to ensure the quality of complaint investigation and responses provided to the complainant address all issues raised. The Complaint Service team are also working to ensure that the different teams within ASC work together when dealing with complaints about services that crossover the various teams. The very nature of some of the complaints are complex and service users and their families will take their complaint through to the final stage.
- 7.8 Some service improvements identified at the Final Review stage have been included in point 14 - Learning from Complaints.

8. Timeliness of Responses

- 8.1 The chart below shows Stage 1 complaint response times across the various ASC service areas in 2019/20:



8.2 ASC responded to 92% of all complaints within timescales, this is a slight decrease on the same period for the preceding year. In effect out of 85 complaints replied to, only 7 were slightly overdue and considering the complexity of some of the cases investigated, in which some cases required consultation with our external partners, i.e. the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS), the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), and homecare companies, the performance is as expected. Although this figure is below the Council's target of 100%, there has been considerable improvement in performance in recent years. The commencement of the Corona virus pandemic did affect performance in March 2020. ASC have a continued focus to ensure that they achieve the Council's target of 100%.

9. Compensation

ASC	Total	
	No of Cases	Amount
Stage 1 / Provisional	0	£0
Stage 2 / Final	3	£800
Ombudsman	0	£0
£ per Case	£267	£800

9.1 ASC paid a total of £800 in compensation for the year 2019/20, which comprised of three cases and is £300 down on the preceding year. In all three cases compensation was paid at stage 2 of the complaints process and ASC have not been requested to pay any compensation by the Local Government and Social care Ombudsman. In two cases compensation was paid due to the delay in providing a service and the third case was due to the lack of communication when reducing a care package. The total amount paid compares favourably when you reflect on the numerous services being provided. The Council follows the guidelines that are published by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman when considering compensation.

10. Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Decisions in 2019/20

10.1 The Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman received 16 complaints and enquiries regarding Adult Social Care. This is a decrease of 48% compared to last year 2018/19, where 31 complaints and enquiries were received. In 2019/20 the LGSCO made decisions on 21 ASC cases. Of the decisions made, 11 cases were referred back to the Council for local resolution as they had not completed the Council's complaints process. One case was closed by the Ombudsman after initial enquiries with no further action to be taken, and two cases were closed as invalid/incomplete due to insufficient information provided. Of the remaining 7 cases, 3 cases were 'not upheld' and 4 cases were 'upheld'. This is a significant decrease of the 6 upheld cases (60%) in 2018/19. Two of the four cases upheld concerned blue badge decisions. In both these cases the complaints were referred directly to the Ombudsman without the Council being given the opportunity to address them through the complaints procedure. The Council agreed in both cases to reconsider the decisions and the Ombudsman was satisfied that the remedy had been completed. The LGSCO classify complaints regarding blue badges under Adult Social Care, but in Brent these are reported under Customer and Digital Services and categorised differently, therefore these have not been included in this report. The remaining two cases which were upheld are detailed as follows:

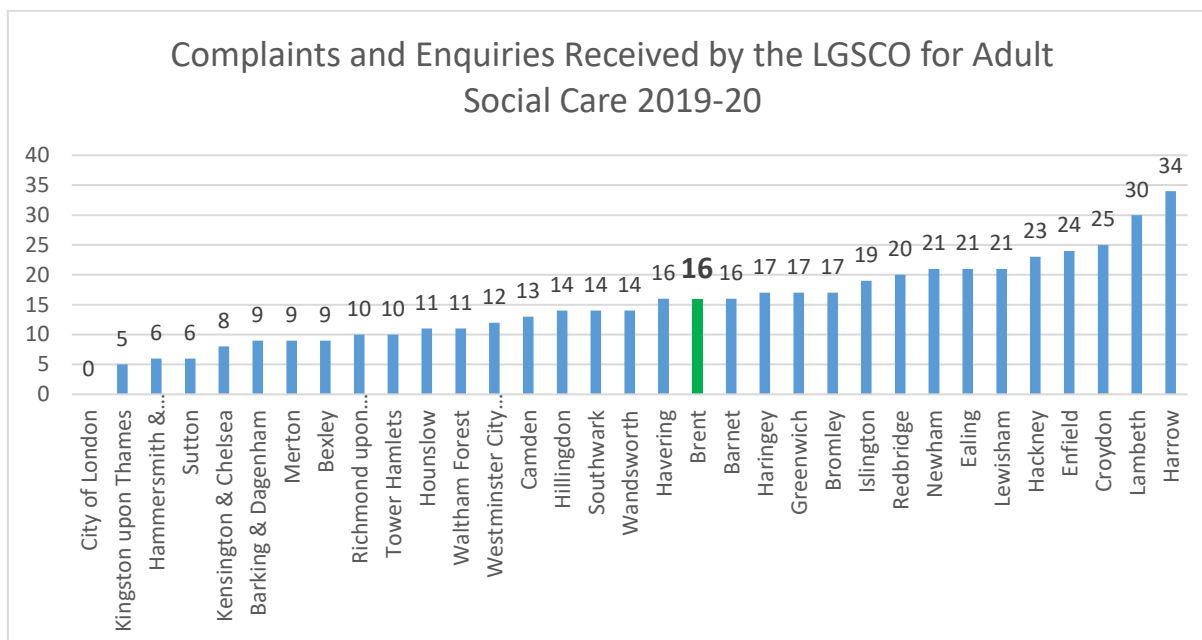
- **Case 1:** The LGSCO upheld the complaint, which had previously been investigated under the Council's complaints procedure. The complainant complained that the Council delayed in reviewing their needs and responding to their requests for more help. There was some delay on the part of the Council in reviewing the complainant's needs but no evidence that caused them significant injustice as a result. The Council put in place an additional allocation of time for socialisation and referred them for floating support to help them with paperwork. The Council also reminded all officers of the customer promise service standards in relation to correspondence and communication with customers.
- **Case 2:** The LGSCO upheld the complaint which had previously been investigated under the Council's complaints procedure. The complainant complained that the Council failed to let the service user return to the family home and did not help attending church. There were serious safeguarding concerns in this case. The Ombudsman decided there was no fault with the Council's handling of our service user decision to remain living at the care home. The Council had assessed their mental capacity to make a decision to where they live and had provided an Independent advocate. However, although in his care plan, the council could not evidence that the care home was assisting the service user to attend Church. The Council have asked its contractors to clearly follow care plans and record actions they take including when services are refused.

11. Benchmarking Data

11.1 Brent Council belongs to the North West London Social Care Complaint managers group. Unfortunately, due to the current pandemic it has been difficult to gather benchmarking data. Many Councils have not yet completed their Complaints Annual Report and therefore the data is not available. Data from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman has been provided in regards to complaints in relation to

Adult Social Care services. The number of complaints will include corporate and statutory complaints for the department and complaints concerning Blue Badges.

11.2 Brent Council is joint 19th lowest with Havering and Barnet Councils for complaints that were escalated to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. This is over 50% less than the borough with the highest amount of complaints received by the LGSCO, Harrow with 34 Adult Social Care complaints received.



12. Customer Feedback and Engagement

12.1 The majority of customer contact with the Complaints Service team is reactive in that the team responds to direct contact from customers and their representatives when they report a problem with a service. Through the initial contact, the team has managed with ASC managers, to resolve a number of complaints at the first point of contact e.g. delayed OT assessments / care assessments. Finding early resolutions to invoicing / billing queries that could have turned into more formal complaints. The team has conducted presentations to Disability Forum and have also attended meetings to introduce the ASC complaints procedure and provide advice on the ASC complaint processes.

13. Compliments

13.1 Customers and their representatives are encouraged to tell the Council if they are satisfied with their care or to highlight good service. People can send feedback to the Complaints Service team or ASC directly. In 2019/20, ASC and the Complaints Service team received 33 compliments about ASC. The Complaints Service team is working with ASC to ensure they capture all the compliments received by the service. Below are examples of compliments that staff in ASC have received:

- *Hospital Discharge Team*

Firstly, I must say it is so nice to work with you! You are so efficient and a fabulous communicator, and an excellent Social Worker.

Secondly, thanks for the update! Amazing that the carpet has been replaced already. I will get in touch with her then about when she thinks it will all be done by, so we can get equipment delivered. If they've already done the carpet and started on the furniture then we might be able to discharge from here shortly."

- *Commissioning - Supported Living including NAIL programme*

"I wanted to send you this email to convey how much my family and I have appreciated the social worker's help during the transition in care homes. Despite my father being his primary concern, I feel the SW has gone the extra mile in order to ensure the family have been fully involved and informed of my father's move. He has gotten involved and has been far more hands on with my father's move than he has had to be - and this shows the passion and dedication he has for his job. I received updates every step of the way and he ensured the family were comfortable and answered as many questions as he could. The SW often saw things that needed to be addressed far earlier than I could and this also helped considerably."

- *Community & Preventative – Commissioning*

"Thank you so much for your help in locating a residential home placement for my mother. I would like to express to you that I appreciate everything you have done to assist, especially when sometimes I became somewhat indecisive. Thank you for your time, patience and extra effort you spent explaining the process involved, in great detail. You certainly know your job. I am happy with the decision I eventually made. I am pleased to say that without delay, my mother has now moved into her new care home and is adjusting. I believe that she will settle in her new home very well. To you I am so grateful."

- *Complex Care Team*

The service user had a privately funded placement in a care home and had now extinguished their funds and were looking for assistance from ASC.

"Well what can I say except here is an angel of a person who has come to assist us and without a shadow of doubt they have been absolutely terrific. Me and my family heard so much about how stretched social services are and how difficult it is to work with Social workers and how one keeps chasing and chasing and seldom gets a quick response.

Well to tell you the truth what we have experienced is complete opposite. They have been attentive, caring, and displays tremendous patience and empathy and above all is punctual and responds to things effectively and quickly. We could not have asked for anything more and there is without no negative or adverse things we have to say about them. Had it not been for them and their approach to their job and desire to truly help people I am not sure we would have got where we did in speed with which things happened. They have worked close with me and my

family though out and also helped us deal with the NHS.

It's been an absolute pleasure to deal with the SW and they have displayed and provided significate care and support to me and my family and all there work has been of high quality and well beyond our expectations.”

14. Learning from Complaints

- 14.1 Learning from complaints provides opportunities for services to be improved and shaped by customer experience.
- 14.2 Improvement in services, in which complaints feed into have been led with the employment of a Principal Social Worker. As part of this work ASC have introduced the practice of only a monthly basis of reflecting on their work. There has also been the implementation of a skills academy for staff and pathway Training. In conjunction to this there has been a drive to use less agency staff and employ more permanent staff which has improved the skills level and responsibility to our service users.
- 14.3 ASC managers are encouraged not only to respond to complaints fully but to identify learning points that can help improve services. Here are some examples of how complaints have changed and improved service delivery:

Customer Feedback - 'You Said'	Service Area Changes - 'We Did'
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You told us that you had requested a care assessment and attached documents. Our computer system had quarantined the email and no notifications were sent out. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brent council's IT department have installed new software to prevent this happening again.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You have complained that you were offered incorrect advice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ASC have reminded all managers and staff about providing the correct information to service users.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You told us you had been advised that you had been referred for a Level Access Shower. Due to delays this took 12 months to approve. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ASC have reminded staff to ensure all actions are followed through. There is presently a difficulty in employing and retaining Occupational Therapists and ASC are continually reviewing their recruitment practice.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You felt that in a case where someone is suffering from dementia that a face to face care assessment should have taken place and that a telephone assessment is not suitable as the service user just agrees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ASC has reminded all staff that although we do telephone assessments they must consider the health of a person and if required should arrange face to face care assessments.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The LGSCO upheld a case where ASC had commissioned a care home for a service user. The Home had not assisted our service user to either attend Church or record that they had declined to attend 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ASC have reminded Care homes to ensure they follow Care Plans and keep appropriate records

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Complaints Annual Report 2019 – 2020

Appendix B – Children’s Social Care Statutory Complaints

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of complaints made about Brent Council Children’s Social Care Services (CYP) during 2019/20 as required under The Children Act 1989 Representation Procedure (England) Regulations 2006.

This report provides information about all statutory complaints made during the twelve months between 1 April 2019 and 31 March 2020 under the complaints and representations procedures.

2. Statutory Complaints Process

- 2.1 The purpose of the Children’s Act 1989 Representation Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 is to ensure local authorities have a formal complaints handling procedure in place for children and young people who wish to make a representation or complaint about social care.

- 2.2 It is helpful to be clear on what constitutes a complaint. The guidance “Getting the best from Complaints” produced by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) provides advice for local authorities on implementing the Children Act 1989 complaints procedure for children and young people. It defines a complaint as: **‘A complaint may be generally defined as an expression of dissatisfaction or disquiet in relation to an individual child or young person, which requires a response.’**

- 2.3 Complaints concerning Child Protection Conferences are dealt with under a separate complaint procedure

2.4 **Who Can Make a Complaint?**

Section 26(3) and section 24D of the Children Act, 1989 and section 3(1) of the Adoption and Children Act, 2002 require Councils to consider complaints made by:

- any child or young person (or their parent or someone who has parental responsibility for them) who is being looked after by the local authority or is not looked after by them but is in need
- any local authority foster carer (including those caring for children placed through independent fostering agencies)
- children leaving care
- special guardians
- a child or young person (or parent of his) to whom a Special Guardian order is in force
- any person who has applied for an assessment under section 14F (3) or (4)
- any child or young person who may be adopted, their parents and guardians
- persons wishing to adopt a child

- any other person whom arrangements for the provision of adoption services extend
- adopted persons, their parents, natural parents and former guardians
- such other person as the local authority consider has sufficient interest in the child or young person's welfare to warrant his representations being considered by them.

2.5 The Council will accept complaints in any format, through contact with the Complaint Service Team, phone, on line complaint form, or in person.

2.6 The regulations set out three stages:

- **Stage 1: Local Resolution** – this is the most important stage of the complaint procedure. The department and external contractors provide services on behalf of the Council and are expected to resolve as many complaints as possible at this initial stage. The statutory social care complaints procedure requires complaints to be responded to within 10 working days; however, heads of service can apply to the Complaint Service Team for an extension of a further 10 working days where a complaint is considered complex or requires a number of external organisations to be consulted with.
- **Stage 2: Independent Investigation** – this stage is triggered when the complainant is unsatisfied with the findings at Stage 1. As a first step, the Complaint Service Team will consider mediation to resolve ongoing concerns at the end of the Stage 1 process, and before commencing the Stage 2 process. If a complaint does progress to Stage 2, this requires an investigation by an “Independent Officer”, a person external to the service and usually independent of the Council. In addition, the Council is also required to appoint an “Independent Person” who is independent of the Council and not related to any member or officer of the Council. The purpose of the ‘Independent Person’ is to represent the complainant in the process. The Stage 2 investigation report is then considered by the Operational Director and an adjudication letter is provided to the complainant to confirm whether they agree with the report and the steps to be taken to address any recommendations. Stage 2 complaints falling within the statutory process must be dealt with in 25 working days. Where it is not possible to complete the investigation within 25 working days it can be extended to a maximum of 65 working days.
- **Stage 3: Review Panel** – where complainants are unsatisfied with the result of a Stage 2 investigation and wish to continue with their complaint about statutory social service functions, the Council is required to establish a Complaint Review Panel. The Panel consists of three Independent Panellists who have no connection to the Council. The Chair is appointed by the Complaint Service Team and is also separate from the council. The Chair consults with the Complaint Service Team on the selection of the other two panel members. The Panel undertakes an investigation and makes recommendations through a panel report. This will then be adjudicated by the Strategic Director for CYP who makes the final decision on the complaint.

3. Headlines

3.1 The main headlines from Children’s Social Care performance are:

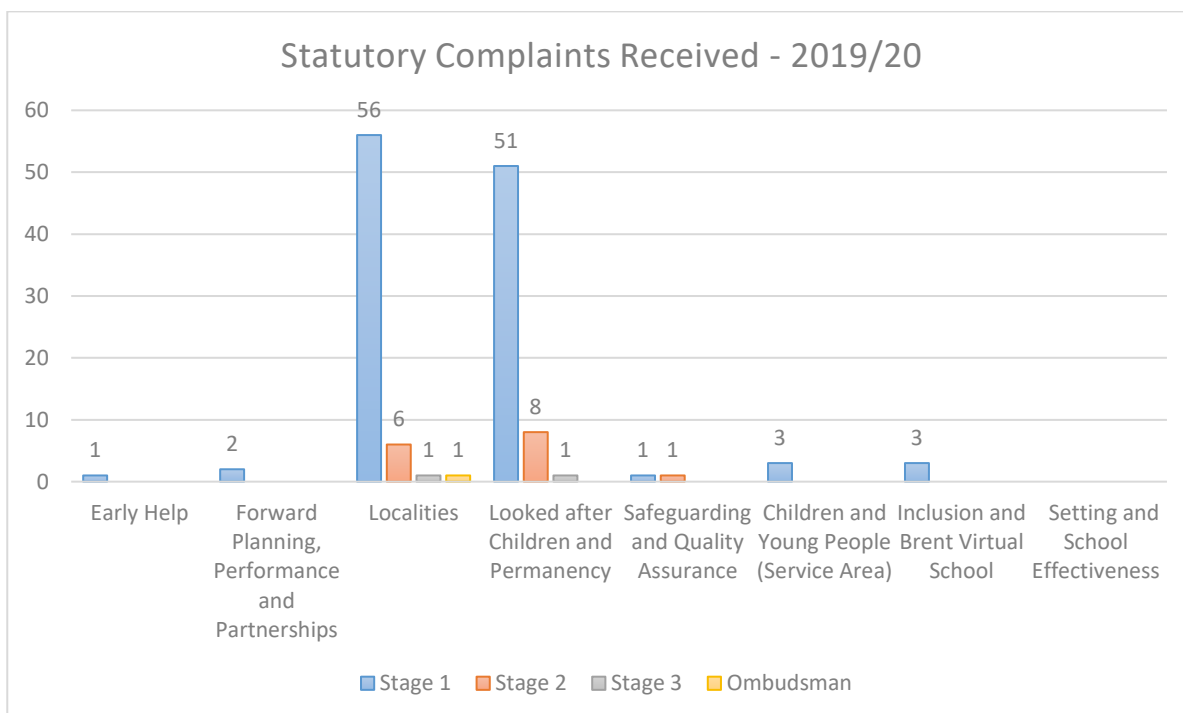
- Stage 1 statutory complaint numbers increased by 56% in 2019-20, (there is increasing awareness among young people of their eligibility and entitlement to services)
- the service received 117 statutory stage 1 complaints in 2019/20
- there is a 13% escalation rate to stage 2 for statutory complaints. This is consistent with the previous year, but slightly higher than the years before
- 77% of stage 1 statutory complaints were responded to within target in 2019/20 (compared with 87% on time in 2018/19)
- £4,170 was paid in compensation for the period 2019/20 on seven cases, down from £13,368 paid in the previous year.

4. Children’s Social Care Service Users

4.1 To put some context to the volume of complaints received in 2019/2020, Children’s Social Care received 3,993 referrals and completed 3,660 Child & Family Assessments. As of 31 March 2020, the Council had 2401 open children in need cases and 254 children were the subject of a child protection plan. There were 299 looked after children and the Council had 359 care leavers aged 17-25 in receipt of services.

5. Complaints Received

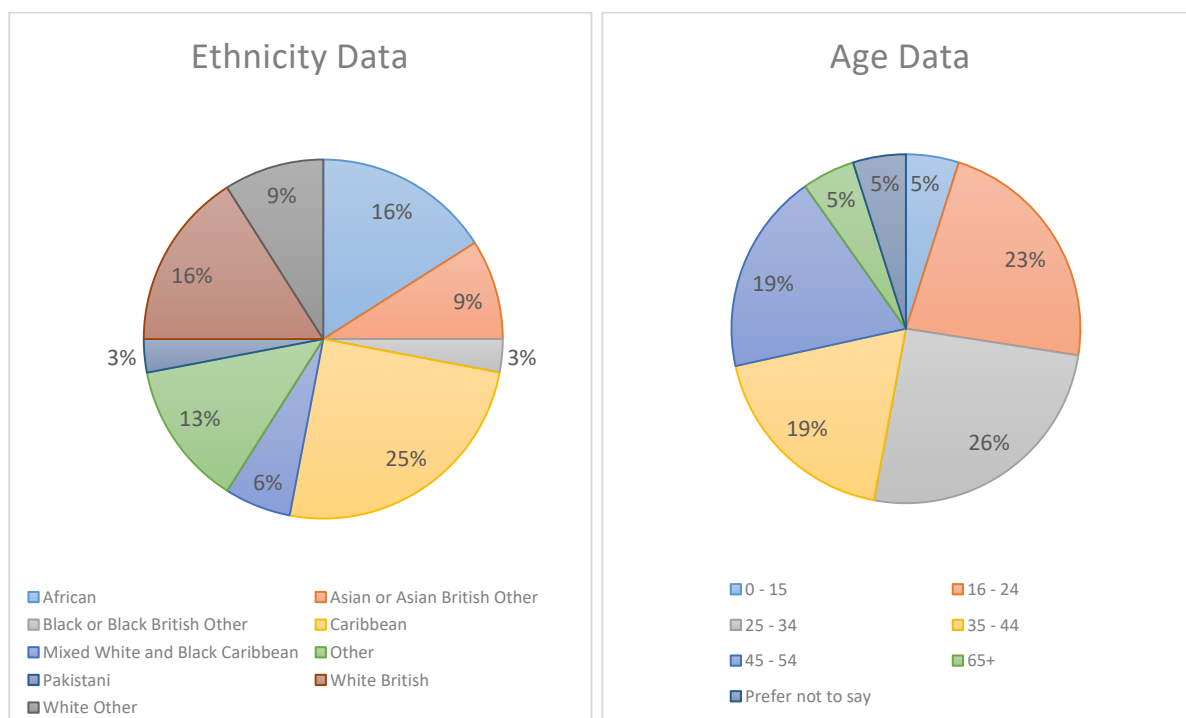
5.1 Brent Council CYP received a total of 117 stage 1 complaints in 2019/20. There were 13 stage 2 requests received and two stage 3 panels convened. There was one case where a detailed investigation was undertaken by the LGSCO.



- 5.2 Looking at the complaints received at stage 1, Looked after Children and Permanency have had an increase of 104% (19 complaints) and Localities have an increase of 51% (26 complaints). The rest of Children's services accounted for 10 complaints in total.
- 5.3 Localities accounted for 56 complaints, 48% of the total number of stage 1 complaints received. These are split between East Localities, West Localities, Disabled Children's services and Mash/Family Front door/NRPF. These complaints concerned incorrect child and family assessments, complaints about the bias of social workers, care packages for disabled children and care assessments. Complaints are split evenly between East and West localities who are involved with child protection cases and dealing with families where there is often parental conflict in private law proceedings and where one parent can be unhappy with decisions made by a social work team.
- 5.4 Looked after Children accounted for 51 complaints, 44% of the total number of stage 1 complaints received. These are split between Care Planning, Young People in Care, Fostering and Adoption and Kinship. Most of the complaints concerned children leaving care and the majority of these complaints were made by young people. In these cases the complaint service team will offer and provide an advocate to the complainant. Although there has been an increase in complaints, there is a better awareness of the complaint process and this does need to be considered in context of the work carried out by the team. There has been improved communication to care leavers about their rights and entitlements, supported by initiatives such as the introduction of a "Whatsapp" group for care leavers which has meant that there is greater discussion and sharing of information. Improved communication has led to some carers to questioning and complaining about their rights and entitlements.
- 5.5 The Council have been encouraging young people to get in contact if they are unhappy with the service they have received. It is good to see that care leavers are sharing experiences, advice and information and are willing and have the knowledge to raise concerns with the Council. This can also be seen in the age statistics below.
- 5.6 The Council received 15 Stage 2 requests in 2019/20, compared to 10 in 2018/19. This is an increase of 50% on the previous year. However, the escalation rate to stage 2 in 2019/20 is 13%, this is consistent with the amount of cases escalated when compared to the previous year and within our expectations.
- 5.7 Under the Children's statutory procedure, a complainant has a right for their complaint to be heard by an Independent Review Panel at Stage 3. In 2019/20 the Council received two requests for Stage 3 panels, one concerned the perceived lack of support from the Council given to a care leaver. The other concerned delays in taking appropriate action to a safeguarding concern and delays in reviewing evidence. For these failings, the distress and time and trouble expended the Council agreed to pay £2,000 compensation.

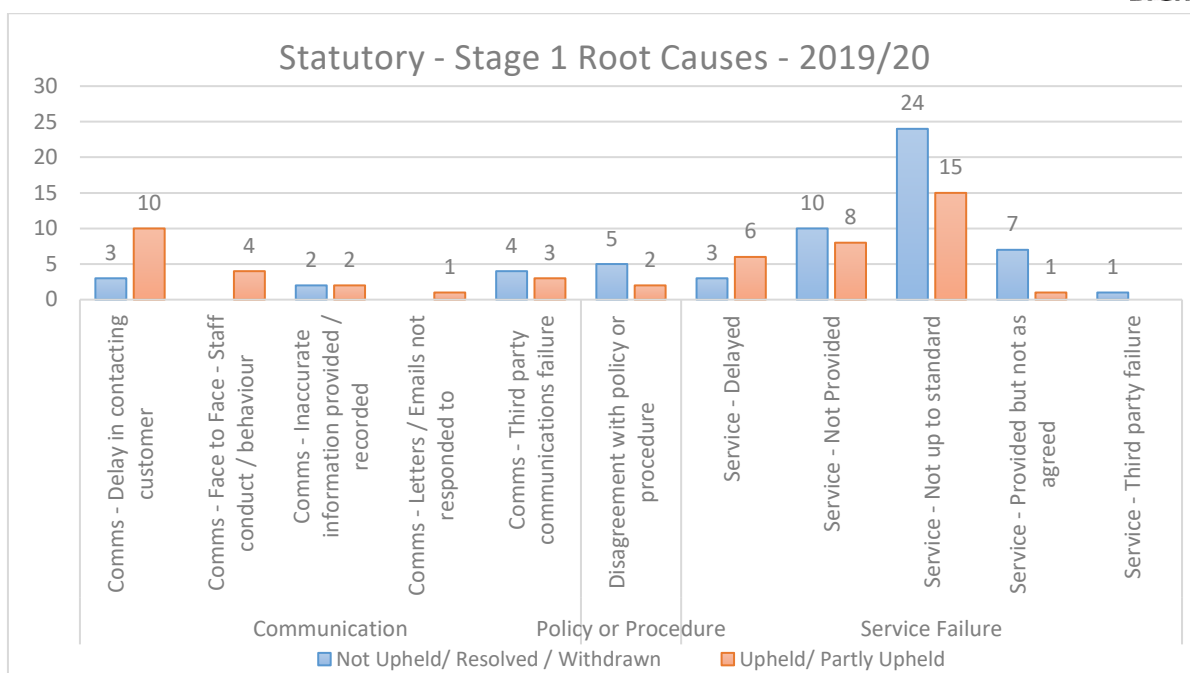
6. Profile of complainants and method of contact

- 6.1 When complaints are received they are directed to the Complaint Service team for triaging. Of the all the statutory children’s complaints received, the team received 48% by email, 42% by self- service on line, 6% in person, 2% by telephone and 1% by letter. The CYP complaint legislation is explicit that the Council must receive complaints by any means. The varied methods of contact shows that this is happening. The team have also provided a telephone number on the web site especially for children’s social care complaints.
- 6.2 The Council has limited information about the ages of complainants. Of the 117 statutory complaints received, age information is contained on 37% of cases, of which 2 complaints were received from the age range of 0-15, 10 complaints were received from the age range of 16-24, and 11 complaints received from the age range 25-34.
- 6.3 Information regarding gender was captured in 64 cases, of these 77% were female and 23% were male. In 32 cases where ethnicity was record, 25% were of Caribbean origin. The Complaint Service Team will to continue to record equalities information where available.



7. Nature / Reasons for Complaints

- 7.1 The main reasons for complaints received in 2019/20 were: a) service not up to standard; and b) failure to provide a service.



7.2 Children’s Social Care has a statutory duty to support and intervene in the best interests of the child, however families will not always agree with the action that the Council has taken. As a result, they may choose to complain, and this is often focused on individual social workers who often need to navigate a challenging path between parents in dispute. The most common reasons for complaints against staff members are therefore where parents disagree with a decision that has been made, and/or then allege general poor service.

7.3 There has been an increasing number of complaints received from a parent in a separated family relationship. Most often this has been where the partners disagree about the care the child or children are receiving by the other parent. Some feel that the Child and Family Assessment has not been completed in an impartial way and that the social worker had not communicated with them early enough.

7.4 The majority of complaints where communication has been classified as a root cause, have been upheld. This confirms that improvement needs to be made when dealing with customers to ensure they are kept updated and informed of any delays. Many of the Stage 1 complaints reflect the unhappiness of parents and carers about some of the decisions made by staff including a perceived bias in the reports in favour of their partners.

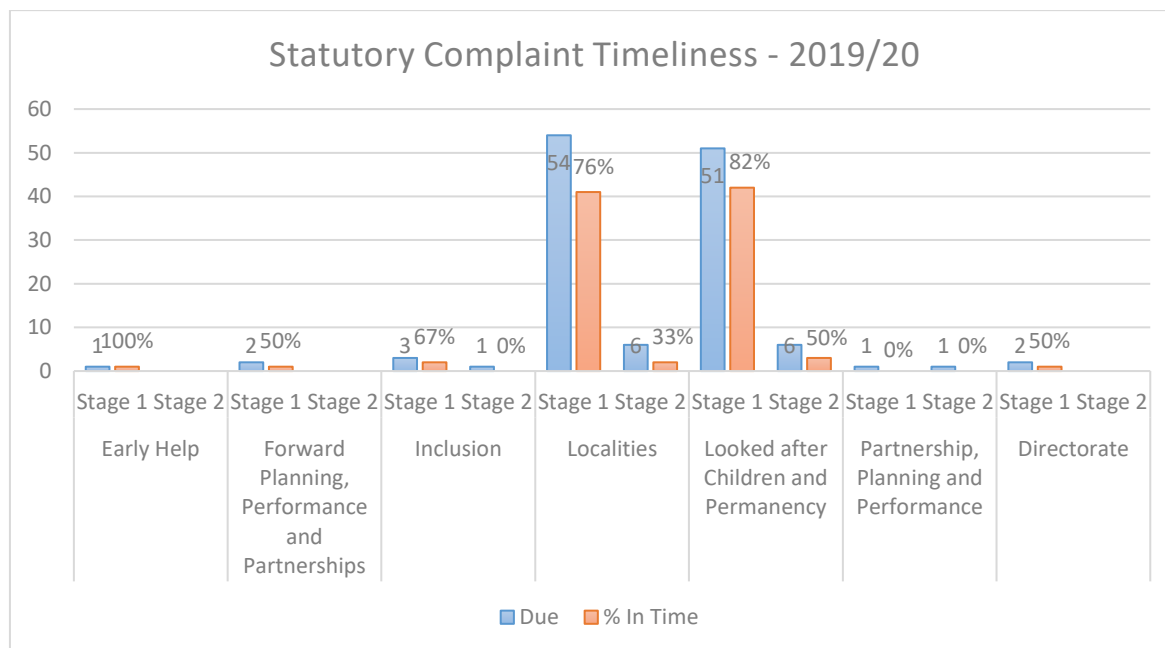
7.5 Examples of the types of root causes of complaints that arise are listed below: -

- **Alleged poor staff attitude** - much of the work of Localities staff involves them taking actions in connection with highly sensitive child protection or child in need issues, which parents or carers disagree with. This has for example led to complaints concerning the alleged partiality of assessments.
- **Poor communication** - on completion of a Child and Family Assessment, Social Care had not kept all the interested parties up to date with the completed assessment.

- **Care Leavers** - the main area of complaints related to leaving care and in particular care leavers' entitlements and the support they had requested. This suggests growing awareness of what care leavers are eligible for, and a greater willingness to challenge decisions.

8. Timeliness of Responses

8.1 The Council responded to 73% of all children's statutory complaints within the appropriate timescales. This is a fall of 11 percentage points compared to the previous year, and is below the Council's target of 100%.



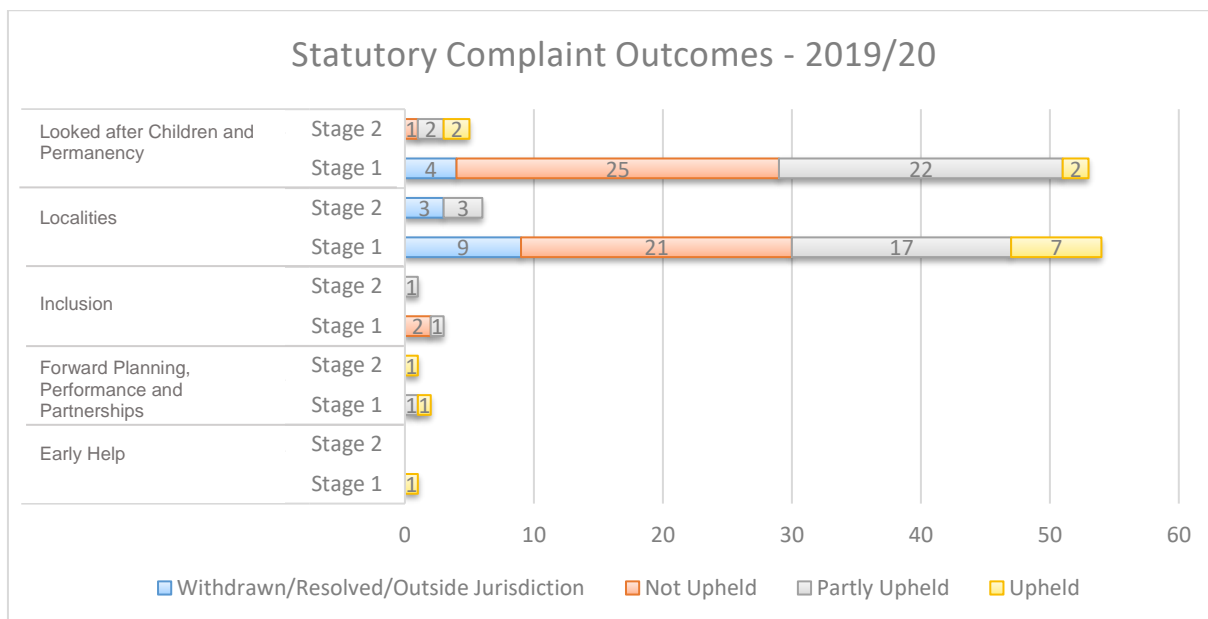
8.2 One of the reasons for this apparent fall in responsiveness was moving to a new complaints database in November 2019. This resulted in staff having difficulty in logging and recording responses.

8.3 It is important to note that the statutory children's complaint legislation allows the Complaint Service Team to extend the target deadline by 10 working days in complex cases.

8.4 There was notably strong performance in Looked after Children and Permanency where 42 out of 51 complaints were responded to on time.

9. Complaint Outcomes

9.1 There are four possible outcomes for complaints: withdrawn/resolved/Outside jurisdiction, not upheld, partly upheld and upheld. The chart below shows the outcomes of statutory complaints at Stage 1 and Stage 2 in 2019/20.



9.2 The key findings are:

- 113 cases were decided at stage 1 during the year, and in nearly half (46%) of these complaints, the Council found some merit in the complaint, a 3 percentage point decrease on the previous year's rate. Service areas continue to show a willingness to admit errors or mistakes and to remedy concerns raised.
- There were 16 cases which were either withdrawn, fell outside of the Council's jurisdiction or were resolved at the first point of contact. Service area managers and the Complaint Service Team work together to try to resolve complaints as soon as they are received.
- The Council closed 13 stage 2 statutory complaints during 2019/20. Three of the complaints were withdrawn, outside of jurisdiction or resolved at first point of contact. Of the remaining 10 statutory stage 2 complaints investigated, some fault was found in 90% of cases (up from 86% previous year) and 10% of cases were not upheld. The Complaint service is working with CYP to ensure that there are improvements in the stage 1 investigations in order to resolve complaints where the service is at fault.

Stage 2 Complaint Analysis

9.3 Detailed below are cases where fault was found at Stage 2 and the learning points / service improvements that were identified. The Council wishes to learn from its complaints and improve the service it provides.

- In a number of cases, the complaint concerned the way the Council had completed the Child & Family Assessment and the inconsistencies of the social workers when completing the assessment. These cases concluded that the child and family assessments were incomplete and that clear notes should include details of information recorded on the assessments. The investigations also concluded that there were delays in sending assessments to the families

and that communication could be clearer. Staff have been reminded of the importance of ensuring assessments are provided in a timely manner.

- A complaint concerned a financial support package for a young care leaver who had turned 18. The carer had a staying put agreement which had been stopped and the young person who had learning disabilities was not being provided with any support towards their living costs. The investigation concluded that the allowance should be reinstated and that records of decisions made at placement panels should be detailed on how decisions are reached.
- There has been a consistent comment concerning adherence to the statutory complaint process from the Independent stage 2 investigations. This has highlighted the need for further training on complaint handling especially at stage 1. The Complaint Service Team has attended a number of management team meetings to discuss complaint handling and is arranging a number of training courses which has been delayed due to the pandemic.

Stage 3 Complaint Analysis

9.4 Of the cases in which fault was identified at Stage 2, there were 2 cases decided at Stage 3:

- Complaint one: The Panel reviewed the investigating officer's report and recommended that the decision on two of the complaints, be changed from not upheld to upheld. However, the adjudicating officer considering all the facts decided to partially uphold and uphold the two complaints. It was agreed that the child and family assessment be amended and £2,000 compensation was paid.
- Complaint two: The Panel recommended that the Council should review the case closure procedure, resulting in decisions to close cases involving care leavers so that they are monitored effectively. The Panel also determined that the stage one response should have been more centred on the complainants needs. The Complaint Service team have a programme of training sessions with managers and staff and addressing stage one complaints will be part of the training provided.

10. Compensation

10.1 Children's Social Care paid out £4,170 in compensation in 2019/20 on seven cases. This is a significant decrease of £9,198 from 2018/19. This breaks down as follows:

- A total of £310 was offered at stage 1 of the statutory complaint procedure.
- There was a total of £1,860 paid out at Stage 2:
 - one payment of £1,560 to a complainant for the delay and mismanagement by the Council that had impacted upon their financial position. The compensation payment covered time and trouble, distress and any interest accrual during the period mentioned in the complaint.
 - one of £50 for the delay in dealing with the stage 2 complaint
 - another was for £250 for the lack of clarity and due to the length of time in resolving the issues identified.

- The award of £2,000 compensation at Stage 3 consisted of £500 in recognition of time and trouble and £1500 in respect of impact and distress caused.

Children's Social Care	Total	
	No of Cases	Amount
Stage 1	3	£310
Stage 2	3	£1,860
Stage 3	1	£2,000
Ombudsman	0	£0
£ per Case	£695	

11. Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)

11.1 One statutory complaint was upheld by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman in 2019/20:

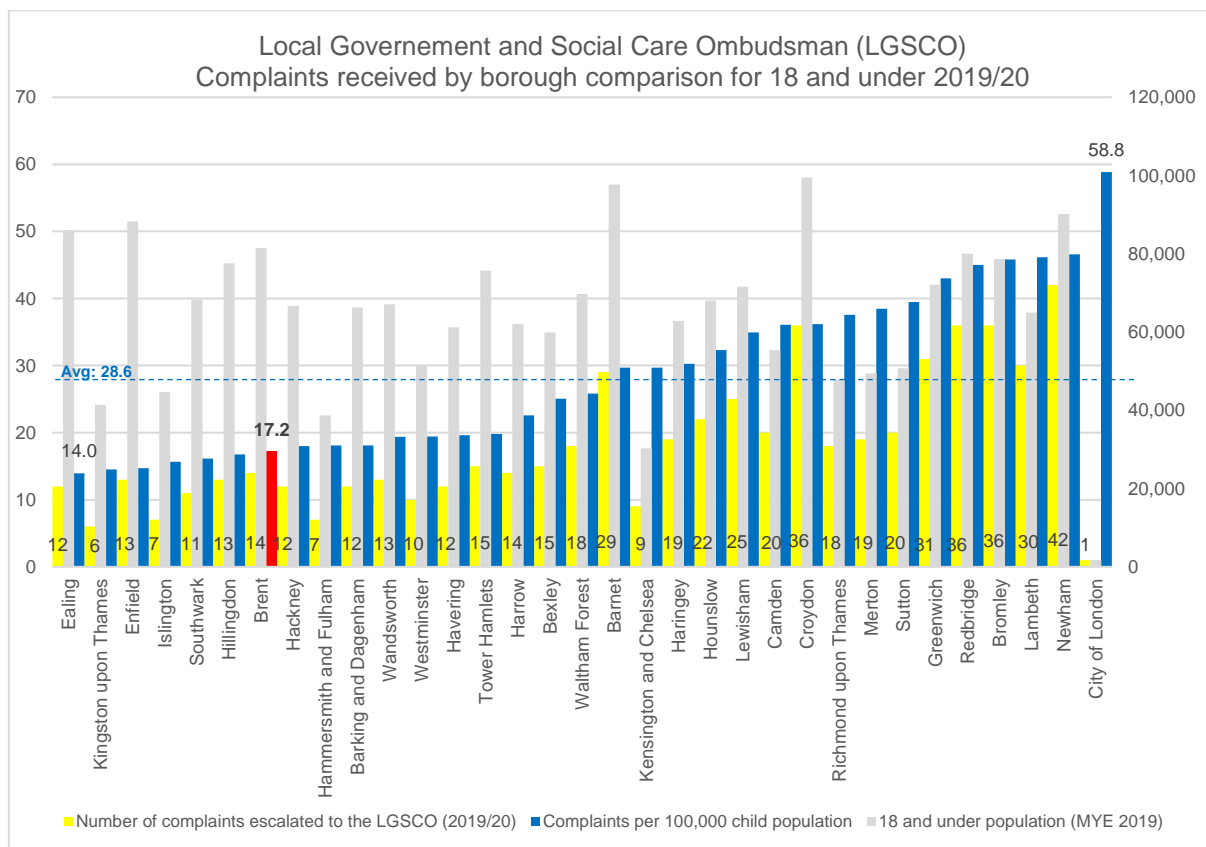
11.2 The complaint related to the handling of a safeguarding investigation. The complaint had been investigated through the statutory three stage process and the Council followed the findings and recommendations outlined by the process. The Ombudsman did not reinvestigate the issues the complainant complained about and was satisfied that there was no fault in how the investigation was undertaken, and the remedies identified through the process were judged to be sufficient. The Council took some learning points from the complaint listed below:

- The Council should investigate the possibility of a reciprocal arrangement with another Council around Stage 1 investigations where staff members are involved.
- Staff training and guidance will arranged around identifying and recording family strengths in reports to give a more rounded view.

12. Benchmarking

12.1 Brent Council belongs to the North West London Social Care Complaint managers group. As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, it has been difficult to gather benchmarking data. Instead data has been gathered from a number of different sources including the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and the Office of National Statistics. The graph below illustrates the number of complaints received against size of population of children within each borough. The average for all London Councils is 28.6 per 100,000 population whereas Brent is at 17.2.

12.2 This means that Brent Council is 7th lowest for complaints received by the LGSCO when compared to its projected population in 2019 of children 18 and under. There were 14 complaints escalated to the LGSCO in relation to Education and Children's Services. The estimated population for children 18 and under within Brent for mid-year 2019 was 81,500. When factoring complaints received per 100,000 children population this is relatively good and lower than other boroughs.



13. Compliments

13.1 The service learns from both complaints and positive feedback. Children’s Social Care logged 11 compliments on the Council’s complaints and compliments database. Managers are encouraged to log any compliments they receive. Below are examples of some of the compliments received in 2019/20.

- **Localities (Children with disabilities)**

*“I would like to thank you both for your all your help, responsiveness and hard work done on behalf of xxxx.
Hopefully his progress will be onward and upwards from here on in and in due course we will see him attending his health appointments and in education.”*

- **Localities (Children with disabilities)**

“I would like to compliment how xxxx has worked with us and taken the time to listen to our needs. We want the very best for our son in life and would like him to access community life as much as he can.

xxxx has answered all our queries and has come back to us quickly with any questions we have.

We do hope we can continue to work collaboratively to ensure the best for our son.”

- **Safeguarding and Quality Assurance (Child Protection)**

“I want to thank you for all the work that you've done. I've worked with 3 different social workers including yourself, in two different boroughs and I can truly say I felt really supported whilst dealing with you.....You've always made xxxx feel comfortable, and have always interacted well with him. To the point where he gets excited every time we go to the office. I also want to thank xxx, she has also been very supportive, always been straight up with me and has given me good advice. Last but not least, a big thanks to xxxx who has been there from the start. She's seen how xxxx has grown from a baby to the boy that he's is now and it has been a pleasure working with her.”

- **Localities (Children with disabilities)**

“I should like to thank you for all your support in ensuring a smooth and successful transition for xxxx.

As you very much aware this was highly complex and challenging and we felt very frustrated with the lack of progress until your intervention when everything was dealt with promptly and professionally.

I am confident that xxxx is in a placement that will help him to develop as a young man and can only express my sincere gratitude for your full cooperation and support.”

14. Learning from Complaints

14.1 Lessons learnt from complaints can help shape and improve services and the customer experience. There is a commitment in CYP for managers and staff to use this learning to improve outcomes for service users.

14.2 Examples of how the learning points from complaints helped to improve services are provided below:

Learning From Complaints	Service Improvements
The Council should review the case closure procedure, resulting in decisions to close cases involving care leavers so that they are monitored effectively.	The Head of Service was asked to review the current procedures and changes were implemented.
Responses should acknowledge the difficulties and show an understanding of how complainants are affected by the issues and that with any young person the Council should be looking at how we can resolve the complaint.	Complaint Service team have a programme of training sessions with managers and staff and addressing stage one complaints will be part of the training provided.

Learning From Complaints	Service Improvements
<p>The Council to ensure young people are correctly supported to find suitable accommodation which meet their presenting needs and takes account of known risk factors in regard to location.</p>	<p>The Local Authority has recently updated its 'Sufficiency Strategy', a document that sets out how appropriate accommodation for children in care and care leavers is sourced and quality assured to ensure that, wherever possible, accommodation and placements meet all of the needs of the young person. A recent initiative with Barnardo's has established a quality assurance project that will work with semi-independent placement providers to help them improve the quality of their work with young people.</p>
<p>The Council to ensure it has a clear published policy as to how young people in Staying Put Arrangements will contribute to their accommodation and living costs within their foster home.</p>	<p>An updated policy that sets out more clearly the expectations of care leavers and former foster carers will be published on the Brent website by the end of 2020 and produced jointly with Care Leavers in Action, the organisation run for and by care leavers to promote their rights and views to the Council.</p>
<p>Managers to ensure they respond to Stage 1 complaints within the required timescale and actions stated they will undertake are delivered.</p>	<p>The Operational Director receives a weekly update from the Complaints' Service regarding open cases and works directly with the relevant Head of Service to ensure that timescales are met. The Head of Service now also reviews the actions that his managers commit to in their responses to ensure there is effective follow up.</p>
<p>Problems with identifying placements for children</p>	<p>The placement team are using the WLA DPV to search for residential placements. Commissioning officers are building relationships with a small number of providers so that they will support the LA when emergency placements are required.</p>

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Appendix C – 2019/20 Complaints Root Cause Summary & Improvement Actions by Department

Data caveat – The summary below is based on cause of complaints as recorded on iCasework and CRM for corporate and statutory cases closed in 19/20 with the root cause identified on the system. Each case can have multiple root causes (instances). The table below captures instances by Service.

Community Wellbeing Department - Housing Directorate (780 instances)

Root Cause	Actions
<p>Repairs – 200 instances; 139 upheld/partly upheld</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service Delayed – 71 Service no up to standard/ as agreed – 51 Service not provided – 42 Poor communication - 27 Policy or procedure – 6 Other – 2 Third party failure - 1 <p>Customer Care– 106 instances; 61 upheld/partly upheld</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service failure – 45 Poor communication – 28 Delay in repair/inspection – 14 Other- 6 Policy or Procedure – 8 Attitude - 2 Appointment policy- 2 Quality of work- 1 <p>Tenancy – 62 instances; 35 upheld/partly upheld</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service failure – 29 Poor Communication– 18 Policy or procedure – 15 	<p>Housing Management Services</p> <p>The Housing Management Service is split over two core functions, Housing Management Customer Service and Housing Management Property Service. Both service areas manage high volumes of operational activities generated by customers and as part of the Council general landlord function. The Council is dependent on a number of contractors to fulfil its landlord obligations and has established partnership arrangements in place to ensure core service standards are delivered. There are a number of improvement initiatives underway as part of the large-scale improvement programme across the service.</p> <p>HMS – Property Services</p> <p>HMS - Property Services carries out over 30,000 repairs a year.</p> <p>The service have used a number of complaints to review their processes and systems so that they can track and effectively manage repairs. They now have a number of case trackers which are reviewed on a weekly basis to ensure cases are progressed efficiently and residents updated in advance where delays are identified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complex case tracker Working at heights tracker Disrepair <p>The team have worked closely with IT to build in tracking / referral flags where support is required from colleagues in other teams to progress repairs. For example decants, asbestos and tenancy issues.</p>

Root Cause	Actions
<p>Accommodation Services – 62 instances; 12 upheld/partly upheld</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Failure - 40 • Communication - 12 • Policy or procedure – 10 <p>Public Realm – 51 instances; 27 upheld/partly upheld</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service not provided/provided but not as agreed- 16 • Service Delayed- 14 • Service not up to standard- 9 • Policy or Procedure- 5 • Poor Communication- 5 • Third party failure- 2 <p>Property Services – 35 instances; 20 upheld/partly upheld</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delay in Repair –20 • Communication- 9 • Delay in inspection- 2 • Attitude- 2 • Appointment Policy- 1 • Service Failure- 1 <p>Planned Maintenance – 34 instances; 12 upheld/partly upheld</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service failure - 26 • Poor Communication- 7 • Policy or Procedure – 1 <p>Housing Options – 32 instances; 3 upheld/partly upheld</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy and Procedure- 16 • Poor Communication- 8 • Service not provided – 3 • Service not up to standard- 3 • Service delayed – 2 	<p>The service also hold complaint reviews which include their main contractor Wates, as part of a lessons learnt process and to enable them to identify where the blockages are. For example, the service were receiving a large number of complaints which related to leaks and the inability to gain access to undertake the necessary repair, so they have worked with Wates and the Customer Experience Team to develop a no access procedure to address this issue, as a result complaints of this nature have reduced.</p> <p>The aim is, particularly with complex cases, to track these at a much earlier stage so as to reduce the number that fall into disrepair. This combined with proactive monitoring of the forced entry leaks process, means they now follow up with inspections on all these job types and so, over time, will also reduce the number of complaints around follow up works that so plagued the service previously.</p> <p>The service has also introduced the following measures to help improve service delivery:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Integrated Assessment Management Contact Improvement plan focused on rectifying service issues identified in customer satisfaction surveys; - No-access policy covering access to council and leaseholder properties to fix leaks and other repairs; - Scaffolding protocol for all scaffolding contracts and weekly management of scaffolding arrangements - Focus on complex and lengthy repairs and maintaining communications with residents during these works - New IT installed on CRM and Wates systems - Making 400 appointments for routine repairs a week - 100% of routine repairs attended to within four days of a call - 80% of routine repairs fixed first time - Repairs satisfaction has increased to 90%

Root Cause	Actions
<p>Leasehold Services – 29 instances; 8 upheld/partly upheld</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service failure- 19 • Policy or Procedure- 5 • Section 20 notice – 3 • Poor Communication- 2 <p>Single Homelessness Team – 28 instances; 14 upheld/ partly upheld</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Failure – 14 • Communication- 10 • Policy or procedure – 4 <p>Rent Income – 24 instances; 4 upheld/partly upheld</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service failure – 11 • Policy or procedure - 8 • Poor communication- 5 <p>Mechanical & Electrical – 21 instances; 12 upheld/partly upheld</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Failure –15 • Poor communication- 6 <p>Anti-Social Behaviour – 20 instances; 5 upheld/ partly upheld</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service failure- 13 • Poor Communication- 5 • Policy or Procedure- 2 <p>Home Ownership – 14 instances; 7 upheld/partly upheld</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Failure –10 • Communication- 3 • Policy or Procedure- 1 	<p>HMS - Customer Service (Housing and Neighbourhoods)</p> <p>HMS – is responsible for managing 12,000 tenants and leaseholders.</p> <p><i>Service improvements include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Transfer of the estate caretaking in-house meaning we are able to address concerns about fly tipping and waste collection as well as cleaning standards in a more timely and efficient way. - Introduction of a secondary monitoring system for estate services and contracts. - Reverted to a patch-based system for housing officers to address complaints of ‘no single and clear point of contact’ and ‘lack of ownership’. - An agreed programme with Performance, Insight and Improvement team to formalise all processes within the service so they are visible and accessible to officers in addition to CRM. - New role to be included in the structure to monitor the quality of responses to stage one complaints in line with the new housing ombudsman requirements. This role will also support regular audits and address live issues / breakdown in communication between Property Services and Housing and Neighbourhoods.

Root Cause	Actions
<p>Private Housing and PHS Grants– 14 instances; 4 upheld/partly upheld</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PHS Grants – 10 • Poor Communication- 2 • Service Failure- 2 <p>Housing needs – 13 instances; 6 upheld/partly upheld</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication –9 • Service Failure- 3 • Attitude- 1 <p>Enforcement – 11 instances; 6 upheld/partly upheld</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service failure – 5 • Policy or procedure - 4 • Communication – 2 <p>Housing Partnerships – 9 instances; 6 upheld/partly upheld</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Failure – 7 • Communication- 2 <p>Lettings – 7 instances; 2 upheld/ partly upheld</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third Party Failure – 2 • Service not provided/up to standard- 2 • Service delayed- 1 • Policy or Procedure- 1 • Poor communication- 1 <p>Compliance and Risk- 5 instances; 4 upheld/partly upheld</p> <p>Landlord License- 1 instance; 0 upheld</p> <p>Resident Involvement- 1 instance; 1 upheld</p> <p>Support and Improvement- 1 instance; 1 upheld</p>	<p>Housing Needs</p> <p>The Housing Needs Service is responsible for the prevention and relief of homelessness, as well as the allocation of suitable accommodation, both in the private rented sector and social housing. Since the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act, there has been an increase in demand from single homeless people.</p> <p><i>Service improvements include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Following the implementation of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, a customer satisfaction survey has been produced, which will be used to measure customer service, and identify areas for improvement. - The specialist Domestic Abuse Team in Housing Options has achieved accreditation status from the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance's (DAHA) for the positive work carried out with households affected by domestic abuse. <p>Private Housing Services (PHS)</p> <p>PHS predominantly has two key functions, one being regulating and enforcing standards within the private rented sector (PRS) and the other assisting disabled and vulnerable residents by facilitating and providing aids, adaptations and repairs in their homes. In the past year, PHS has received in the region of 4,500 PRS property licence applications, over 800 request for service from PRS tenants who believe they need repairs to their homes and in the region of 1,000 referrals or requests for service for aids, adaptations and/or repairs. In many cases, and in particular with regards to aids and adaptations, the issues that customers have are of a very complex nature and these are very often borne out in their complaints.</p> <p><i>Service improvements include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Feedback from customer satisfaction surveys is used to improve service delivery. - The service has ISO 9001:2015 quality system accreditation and complaints are discussed regularly with individuals and at team meetings.

Community Wellbeing Department – Adult Social Care Directorate (60 instances)

Root Cause	Actions
<p>Commissioning, Contracting and Market Management – 13 instances; 10 upheld/ partly upheld</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service failure – 9 • Policy/Procedure – 2 • Poor communication – 2 <p>Adult Services - Complex Care – 15 instances; 5 upheld/ partly upheld</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correspondence issue - 8 • Service failure – 4 • Other- 2 • Policy or Procedure – 1 <p>Adult Services - Urgent Care – 11 instances; 2 upheld/ partly upheld</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correspondence issues – 5 • Service failure- 4 • Other- 2 <p>Partnerships & Integration – 4 instances; 3 upheld/ partly upheld</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correspondence Issue – 2 • Service not provided - 1 • Other- 1 <p>Central North West London (CNWL) – 8 instances; 2 upheld/ partly upheld</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correspondence issues – 6 • Service failure- 2 <p>Safeguarding- 1 instance; 0 upheld/partly upheld</p> <p>Hospital discharge team- 3 instances; 2 upheld/partly upheld</p>	<p>Adult Social Care</p> <p>ASC received 2702 adult contacts, which were passed from BCS to the Duty team. ASC assessed 1145 new homecare and 168 new residential and nursing services. There were 3213 service users who received section 5 hospital discharge assessments.</p> <p>Service improvements include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Feedback/learning from complaints is discussed with individual staff members, at team meetings and management meetings to help improve service delivery. Identify and act on underlying performance issues. - Engagement by Heads of Service and Team Managers to achieve early resolution by identifying and responding to potential areas of complaints. Example : Early contact achieved in some cases to resolve immediate issues ahead of formal complaint response - ASC Transformation Process to positively impact and support customers journey 2021. This will be achieved by increased responsiveness, reduction in care hand offs between teams. - Responding to key findings in complaints linked to reported communication issues: Service improvements achieved/reduction of locum roles and further being sought both with increase in permanent staff and investment in retaining workforce. - Carers Board consultation to identify ‘gaps’ in service response and closer links to Gateway to assist resolution for Brent residents. - Use of Virtual Meetings (Zoom, Teams, Facetime) to assist with carrying out assessments rather than solely phone contact or email. - Recognition that work is required with other departments of the council to ensure complaints with multiple service strands receive cohesive response. - Reviewing cases waiting in OT- responding to change in need as key task in Management of waiting list

<p>Prevention and community team- 4 instances; 2 upheld Residential team- 1 instance; 0 upheld</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The introduction of the ASC Skills Academy in April 2020, which provides consistent training for all staff across the department. This includes five new development pathways with the aim to broaden the skills across the department - All staff have completed, or are in the process of completing, strengths based practice training with SCIE to support good practice throughout the customer journey - A practice framework and recording guidance has been developed with staff and implemented to support our overall practice goal of promoting residents' wellbeing
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Community Wellbeing Department - Culture Directorate (36 instances)

Root Cause	Actions
<p>Libraries – 32 instances; 12 upheld/partly upheld</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Failure – 17 • Face to face staff communication - 9 • Policy or Procedure – 6 <p>Public Health adults- 3 instances; 2 upheld/partly upheld</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff conduct- 3 <p>Sports facilities – 1 instance; 1 upheld/partly upheld</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service provided but not as agreed - 1 	<p>Libraries</p> <p>The library service had over 35,500 active borrowers and over 2,500,000 visits.</p> <p>Service improvements include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regular discussion of complaint issues with individual staff, teams and management teams - Policy reviews and clarifications in relation to customer access - Changes and improvements to the library management system <p>Sports Facilities</p> <p>Service improvements include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Regular team meetings and 1-1's for staff at Bridge Park - Staff inductions, training and performance management - Improved communications to staff at Bridge Park, enabling employees to have more opportunity to input into decisions on activity at the centre - Service improvements resulting from complaints are discussed with managers and raised at team meetings - Discuss complaint with contractor and agree on course of action – usually staff training, maintenance or amendment to service provision

Root Cause	Actions
<p>Parking & Lighting– 162 instances; 58 upheld/partly upheld</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking Enforcement- 75 • Parking Permits - 25 • Parking and Lighting Other – 22 • Parking Bays – 6 • Enforcement action– 3 • Bay Suspension- 2 • Projects- 2 • Car Parks – 1 <p><i>Trees and Lighting - 26 instances</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trees – 14 • Lighting – 12 <p>Neighbourhood Management– 85 instances; 25 upheld/partly upheld</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member/General Enquiry- 24 • Public Realm Contract- 19 • Bin Collections- 15 • Refuse and Waste- 12 • Con- Veolia- 8 • Littering and Fly Tipping- 2 • Damage to property- 2 • Housing management- 1 • Cemeteries- 1 • Other- 1 	<p>Parking & Lighting</p> <p>During the year the Parking & Lighting Service issued approximately 200,000 Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs), processed 40,000 parking permits and administered 240,000 visitor parking bookings</p> <p><i>Service area improvements include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There were 70 fewer complaints about Parking services than in 2018/19 - The service regularly review the Parking Enforcement plan and target enforcement activity to address hotspots; - parking contractor is given a clear timetable of parking suspensions and signage required; - permit complaints addressed by system changes and/or customer advice; - tree maintenance requests are considered against the planned schedule of tree maintenance across the borough and budget considerations <p>Neighbourhood Management and Public Realm</p> <p>Neighbourhood Management including the Neighbourhood Managers and Environmental Enforcement is the lead service for responding to customer contact and response for concerns over missed collections, street cleaning or waste crime such as dumping or littering. This includes the Public Realm contract with Veolia providing street cleansing and refuse and recycling collections for 120,000 households in the borough.</p> <p><i>Service area improvements include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improving the alignment of Public Realm contract complaints with the Neighbourhood Managers to give a local focus to the council response. This has helped to identify underlying issues and improved links with internal and external teams to resolve the logged issue and associated problems.

Root Cause	Actions
<p>Environmental Improvement and Public Realm – 55 instances; 28 upheld/partly upheld</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Realm Contract – 28 • Member/General Enquiry – 10 • Parks and Open Spaces – 6 • Service Failure- 4 • Waste- 3 • Staffing- 2 • Allotments – 2 <p>Highways and Infrastructure – 52 instances; 20 upheld/partly upheld</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highways- 33 • Kerbs and pavements- 4 • Projects- 4 • Cycling/Cycle parking – 2 • Traffic Management- 2 • Other- 2 • Pavement defects- 1 • Blocked drains, leaks and floods - 1 • Member/General inquiry- 1 • Service- 1 • Signage and Information-1 <p>Customer Care – 39 instances; 14 upheld/partly upheld</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Failure – 20 • Policy or Procedure – 14 • Communication- 5 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Having dedicated Veolia managers for problem areas. For example, a single environmental manager is now responsible for garden waste collections across the borough which has created a renewed focus and reduced complaints. - Introducing and managing a new HRRC booking service in house through customer services. This has eliminated post-lockdown queues at the site, while providing a high level of assistance to residents who struggle to book online slots. <p>Environmental Improvement</p> <p>The Environmental Improvement service responsibilities include Council parks, open spaces and cemeteries; and management of refuse and recycling services for approximately 120,000 households in the borough.</p> <p>Service area improvements include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parks Services reviewing their processes for information relating to changes in services - Parks Services reviewing the allotments service processes <p>Highways and Infrastructure</p> <p>The Highways & Infrastructure service is responsible for roads and pavements in Brent.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Complaints related to highways defects is always contentious as not all reported defects are programmed for repair. This is dependent on intervention levels and priority. - Expectation for addressing illegal vehicle crossings has increased with the establishment of an Environmental Enforcement team. - Further work is required to improve performance on efficient processing and programming of vehicle crossings. A restructure of the service will address this issue. - The use of asphalt for planned footway maintenance has generated a lot of complaints from some areas who would prefer paving slabs.

Root Cause	Actions
<p>Planning, Transport and Licensing– 30 instances; 3 upheld/partly upheld</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service not up to Standard - 8 • Service Delayed – 6 • Service not provided – 5 • Communication – 5 • Policy or procedure - 4 • Planning Application- 1 • Quality of work - 1 <p>Community Safety, Protection and ASB– 19 instances; 1 upheld/partly upheld</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nuisance- 13 • ASB- 4 • Community Safety- 1 • Member/General Enquiry- 1 <p>Employment, Skills and Enterprise – 5 instances; 4 upheld/partly upheld</p> <p>Commercial Services and Property- 9 instances; 2 upheld/partly upheld</p> <p>Building Control – 5 instances; 0 upheld</p> <p>Cemeteries- 5 instances; 3 upheld/partly upheld</p> <p>Facilities Management- 6 instances; 2 upheld/partly upheld</p> <p>Directorate- 2 instances; 1 upheld/partly upheld</p>	<p>Planning, Transport and Licensing</p> <p>The Planning service processed over 4,300 planning applications during 2019/20.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The main causes of complaints were planning applications, decisions, or enforcement. - It is recognised that planning decisions can be unpopular or controversial at times and complaints about planning decisions are managed through a separate appeals process. Service errors in the administration of planning applications are discussed at an individual and team level to help improve service delivery standards. - The service need to ensure that documents in relation to applications remain viewable online and can be accessed.

Root Cause	Actions
<p>Council tax/recovery - 120 instances; 48 upheld/partly upheld</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Failure – 70 • Communication – 33 • Policy or Procedure – 17 <p>Customer Care – 71 instances; 18 upheld/partly upheld</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Failure – 32 • Policy or Procedure – 18 • Communication – 16 • Attitude- 2 • Other – 2 • Quality of work- 1 <p>Benefits– 47 instances; 24 upheld/partly upheld</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Failure – 37 • Communication – 8 • Policy or Procedure – 1 • Other – 1 <p>Revenue and Debt- 28 instances; 7 upheld/partly upheld</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Tax Payments and Enforcement- 12 • Service Failure – 6 • Communication – 6 • Attitude- 2 • Delay in payment- 1 • Policy or Procedures- 1 <p>Overpayment Recovery– 11 instances; 8 partly upheld</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Failure – 5 • Policy or Procedure- 3 • Communication- 3 	<p>Brent Customer Service (BCS)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BCS includes the Customer Contact Centre, Customer Service Centre, Revenues & Benefits service, Registration & Nationality service, Client Affairs Team, Debt Recovery and Concessionary Travel teams. The scale of BCS operations during 2019/20 included: 158,000 Contact Centre calls answered; 48,000 responses to Contact Centre emails/web chat/tweets; over 121,000 live council tax accounts; over 25,000 live Council Tax Support claims and over 6,000 new Housing Benefit claims with more than 110,000 changes in circumstances in the year; 3,200 social care financial assessments; over 5,400 Blue Badge/Taxi Cards/Freedom pass applications. <p>Benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - As per previous years, the root cause for a sizable proportion of Housing Benefit complaints is benefit calculations and appeals that are investigated by an independent statutory process. - In order to remedy this situation, the service are working in conjunction with the Policy Team putting an emphasis on frequent, targeted quality checks and training for all HB Assessors. They are also aiming to utilise the new ICMS system, to gather precise analysis of complaints so that improvements in work quality and service delivery can be introduced. They are focusing intensely on Corrective and Preventative Actions Plans established through their analysis of Complaints data. - The service still receive a small amount of complaints received regarding Universal Credit. Although the Council are not directly responsible for UC claims. <p>Registration and Nationality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It is very rare for the Registration Service to receive complaints. The complaints received in 2019/20 related to documentation required for civil marriage and id checks for the EU settlement scheme. The service will continue to ensure information is clearly and accurately advertised.

Root Cause	Actions
<p>Concessionary Travel – 5 instances; 3 upheld/partly upheld</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blue badge service – 5 <p>Client Affairs – 5 instances; 4 upheld/partly upheld</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service Delayed- 4 Communication- 1 <p>Registration and Nationality – 4 instances; 3 upheld/ partly upheld</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication – 2 Policy or Procedure – 1 Service Failure- 1 <p>Local Welfare Assistance- 3 instances; 1 upheld/partly upheld</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy or Procedure- 2 Service Failure – 1 <p>DPA- 6 instances; 0 upheld</p> <p>Procurement- 1 instance; 0 upheld</p> <p>Transformation – 1 instance; 1 upheld</p>	<p>Blue Badges, Taxi card, Freedom Passes Discretionary Housing Payment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Since the introduction of Hidden Disabilities in August 2019 falling within the assessment of Blue Badges, the service have seen a significant increase in complaints around this area. Unfortunately, the way the media advertised this criteria to be included as being able to apply for a Blue Badge, most customers believed they would automatically be entitled to receive a Blue Badge if they fell within this group. We require medical documentation from a medical Practitioner who would explain and justify the Blue Badge is required to access goods and services. The service also received a complaint regarding Local Welfare Assistance where a payment card was sent to the service user’s address but they were unaware. The service have since changed and updated notification letters to state customers are required to contact the service within 5 working days of receiving the card and purchase goods within one month. There has been an increase in complaints about decisions in regards to Discretionary Housing Payments where an award has been declined. Most of the time this is due to payments requested not relating to rent liabilities or customers not providing all the required documentation to support their application. Letters have recently been updated to state customers are able to request a revision of the decision and provide the required supporting documentary evidence. <p>Council Tax/Business rates/Care debt/Hb overpayments/sundry debt</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customers who take the time to raise an issue and complain to the Council’s debt services are in fact offering up gifts. These provide the service with opportunities to learn from these complaints about how future service provision can be improved. To some extent, it is not unexpected that complaints about debt collection services generate complaints as they often relate to the work done to collect historic debts that may include tracking customers who have previously absconded or assumed a debt had been forgotten. However, the fact that 40% (63/159) were upheld or partly upheld is a concern and something from which the service will learn. Moving into 2020/21 the service has put more emphasis on ethical and empathetic collection combined with accuracy to improve the customer experience while still seeking to maintain collection.

Root Cause	Actions
	<p>Contact Centre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- The majority of complaints related to service failure, policy and procedure and communications. The following actions have been taken to address these causes:<li>- Formalised SLA's with service areas clearly defining our remit and support arrangements<li>- -4-6 weekly service area liaison meetings with service areas to facilitate strong joint working and communication<li>- Regular team huddles and briefings to keep our team up to date on service changes and provide regular refresher sessions<li>- More robust quality auditing and improved reporting <p>Client Affairs Team</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- The content and purpose of the Financial Assessment correspondence sent to residents has been reviewed to make this clearer and easier to understand. Quality auditing will be transferring to the same platform as the Contact Centre to identify generic metrics along with more specific indicators relating to the Client Affairs Team. This will improve the quality auditing process and reporting. Regular liaison meetings with key stakeholders is taking place to ensure effective joined up working and problem resolution.

Root Cause	Actions
<p>Localities – 34 instances; 13 upheld/ partly upheld</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Failure – 17 • Social Workers- 6 • Communication – 6 • Policy or Procedure – 2 • Other- 2 • Attitude- 1 <p>LAC and Permanency – 22 instances; 11 upheld/partly upheld</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Failure – 11 • Communication – 10 • Data Protection- 1 <p>Planning, Performance and Partnerships – 19 instances; 9 upheld/ partly upheld</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service failure – 10 • Policy or procedure – 4 • Communication – 3 • School Admissions- 2 <p>Inclusion – 15 instances; 6 upheld/partly upheld</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Failure – 8 • Policy or Procedure – 5 • Communication- 2 <p>Early Help – 6 instances; 1 upheld/partly upheld</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children’s Centres- 2 • Communication- 2 • Policy and Procedures- 2 <p>Safeguarding and Quality Assurance- 4 instances; 4 upheld/partly upheld</p>	<p>CYP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To put some context to the volume of complaints received in 2019/2020, Children Social Care received 3993 referrals and completed 3660 Child & Family Assessments. As of 31 March 2020, the Council had 2401 open children in need cases and 254 children were the subject of a child protection plan. There were 299 looked after children and the Council had 359 care leavers aged 17-25 in receipt of services. <p><i>Service improvements include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Learning points from complaints are discussed with individual staff and in team meetings and there is ongoing work with managers to improve service delivery.

Root Cause	Actions
<p>HR and Legal – 10 instances; 5 upheld/partly upheld</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication – 5 • Service Failure- 2 • Policy or Procedure- 2 • Attitude- 1 <p>Electoral Services – 9 instances; 3 upheld/partly upheld</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Failure - 5 • Communication – 3 • Policy or Procedure- 1 <p>Finance – 8 instances; 4 upheld/ partly upheld</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Failure – 5 • Communication – 2 • Policy or Procedure- 1 <p>Insurance - 6 instances; 3 upheld/ partly upheld</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication – 4 • Policy or Procedure- 2 <p>Executive and Member Services – 5 instances; 0 upheld/partly upheld</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication – 3 • Planned Works – 1 • Other- 1 <p>Audit and Investigations – 1 instance; 0 upheld Democratic Services- 1 instance; 1 partly upheld Chief Executive Support- 1 instance; 0 upheld</p>	<p>Chief Executive’s Service</p> <p><i>Service improvements include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service improvements resulting from complaints are discussed with managers and raised at team meetings. Complaints are seen as an important part of learning and help to improve the quality of service that is provided. • Complaints that are received directly in the Chief Executive’s Office are captured and reported monthly along with telephone performance statistics for departments within the Council. Emerging trends are monitored and raised with Directors / Service Heads.

**The Housing
Ombudsman's
Complaint Handling Code**

Published July 2020

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Part A

1. Introduction

Complaint handling performs an important strategic role for an organisation, providing vital intelligence on its health, performance and reputation. Data on complaint handling should be considered alongside other management information to provide assurance and assess risks.

The Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code promotes the progressive use of complaints, providing a high-level framework to support effective handling and prevention alongside learning and development. The Code ensures complaint handling data is being used consistently across landlord members, promotes engagement at different levels within a landlord and sets out expectations for boards or equivalent governance, senior executives and frontline staff.

For boards or equivalent governance, the Code supports culture setting and intelligence for assurance exercises, using complaint data alongside other management information on stock, services and customer feedback to provide insight into their organisation. It is important for governance to understand the complaints their organisations are receiving and the impact of their complaint handling on residents.

For chief executives and senior managers, the Code supports learning from complaints and promotes the open and transparent use of information to assess performance and risks.

For operational staff, the Code supports excellent complaint handling and engagement with the Ombudsman. If the requirements of the Code cannot be delivered this should prompt discussion about what needs to change.

Information on complaints can provide essential insight for governance and should include, although not necessarily be limited to:

- Regular updates on the volume, category and outcome of complaints, alongside complaint handling performance including timely compliance with the Ombudsman's orders
- Review, at least once a year, of issues and trends arising from complaint handling, including discussion of the Ombudsman's yearly landlord performance report and the inclusion of any organisational learning in the landlord's Annual Report
- Consideration of individual complaint outcomes where necessary, including findings of severe maladministration of the Ombudsman or any referrals by it to regulatory bodies, including scrutiny of any subsequent procedural or organisational changes
- Confirmation that the Complaint Handling Code is being applied.

Compliance with the Code forms part of the membership obligations set out in the Housing Ombudsman Scheme. Landlords should comply with the requirements of the Code. The Code should be read in conjunction with the Scheme.

Landlords are encouraged to promote the Code and to share the outcome of their self-assessment with residents.

2. Purpose

The purpose of the Code is to enable landlords to resolve complaints raised by their residents quickly and to use the learning from complaints to drive service improvements. It will also help to create a positive complaint handling culture amongst staff and residents.

Some landlords see complaints as a form of negative feedback. In fact, there are many benefits to be gained from having an effective, efficient complaints process:

- Complaints allow an issue to be resolved before it becomes worse. Those not resolved quickly can take significant resource and time to remedy
- Involvement in complaint resolution develops staff decision-making and engagement
- Complaints provide senior staff with a window into day-to-day operations allowing them to assess effectiveness
- Good complaint handling promotes a positive landlord and resident relationship.

The Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code sets out requirements for member landlords that will allow them to respond to complaints effectively and fairly.

While member landlords must comply with some elements of the Code, the Ombudsman recognises that each landlord will need to adapt its complaints policy and processes to meet the needs of its residents. Consequently, there are some areas where a landlord can use its discretion. The Code seeks to be prescriptive only where the Ombudsman believes clear and consistent practice by all landlords is essential. Landlords will be asked to self-assess against the Code on a comply and explain basis. Non-compliance could result in the Ombudsman issuing complaint handling failure orders. Separate guidance on these orders has been published by the Ombudsman.

The Code will act as a guide for residents setting out what they can and should expect from their landlord when they complain. The requirements in the Code also provide residents with information about how to make a complaint and how to progress it through the landlord's internal complaints procedure.

The Code supports the regulatory approach to complaints ensuring that a landlord's approach to complaints is clear simple and accessible and ensures that complaints are resolved promptly, politely and fairly.

Part B

The Code

1. Definition of a complaint
2. Accessibility and awareness
3. Complaint team, procedure, timeliness and responsiveness
4. Fairness in complaint handling
5. Putting things right
6. Continuous learning and improvement

1. Definition of a complaint

- 1.1. Effective complaint handling should be a resident friendly process that enables residents to be heard and understood. The starting point for this is a mutual understanding of what constitutes a complaint.
- 1.2. A complaint shall be defined as *an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents.*
- 1.3. The resident does not have to use the word complaint in order for it to be treated as such. Landlords should recognise the difference between a service request (pre-complaint), survey feedback and a formal complaint and take appropriate steps to resolve the issue for residents as early as possible.

Exclusions

- 1.4. A landlord shall accept a complaint unless there is a valid reason not to do so.
- 1.5. A complaints policy shall clearly set out the circumstances in which a matter will not be considered and these circumstances should be fair and reasonable to residents. For example:
 - The issue giving rise to the complaint occurred over six months ago. Where the problem is a recurring issue, the landlord should consider any older reports as part of the background to the complaint if this will help to resolve the issue for the resident. (N.B. it may not be appropriate to rely on this exclusion where complaints concern safeguarding or health and safety issues.)
 - Legal proceedings have been started. Landlords should take steps to ensure that residents are not left without a response for lengthy periods of time, for example, where a letter before action has been received or issued but no court proceedings are started or settlement agreement reached.

- Matters that have already been considered under the complaints policy.
- 1.6. If a landlord decides not to accept a complaint a detailed explanation should be provided to the resident setting out the reasons why the matter is not suitable for the complaints process.
 - 1.7. A resident has the right to challenge this decision by bringing their complaint to the Ombudsman. Where appropriate the Ombudsman will instruct the landlord to take on the complaint.

2. Accessibility and awareness

- 2.1. Landlords shall make it easy for residents to complain, by providing different channels through which residents can make a complaint.
- 2.2. Where a landlord has set up channels to communicate with its residents via social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, then it should expect to receive complaints via those channels. Policies should contain details of the steps that will be taken when a complaint is received via social media and how confidentiality and privacy will be maintained.
- 2.3. Landlords shall make their complaint policy available in a clear and accessible format for residents. This will detail the number of stages involved, what will happen at each stage and the timeframes for responding.
- 2.4. Landlords shall comply with the Equality Act 2010 and may need to adapt normal policies, procedures, or processes to accommodate an individual's needs. Landlords shall have a reasonable adjustments policy in place to address this.
- 2.5. Landlord websites shall include information on how to raise a complaint. The complaints policy and process shall be easily found and downloadable.
- 2.6. The complaints policy and process should be publicised in leaflets newsletters, online and as part of regular correspondence with residents. A copy should be provided when requested.
- 2.7. Landlords shall provide residents with contact information for the Ombudsman as part of its regular correspondence with residents.
- 2.8. Landlords shall provide early advice to residents regarding their right to access the Housing Ombudsman Service, not only at the point they have exhausted the landlord's complaints process. The Housing Ombudsman Service can assist residents throughout the life of a complaint. This affords the resident the opportunity to engage with the Ombudsman's dispute support advisors.

3. Complaint team, procedure, timeliness and responsiveness

Complaint team

- 3.1 Landlords should have a person or team assigned to take responsibility for complaint handling. This Code will refer to that person or team as the “complaints officer”. For some organisations, particularly smaller landlords, we recognise that this role may not be dedicated to complaint handling.
- 3.2 Complaints officers are one of the most important factors in ensuring that the complaints handling works well. Complaints officers should:
- be able to act sensitively and fairly
 - be trained to receive complaints and deal with distressed and upset residents
 - have access to staff at all levels to facilitate quick resolution of complaints
 - have the authority and autonomy to act to resolve disputes quickly and fairly.

Residents are more likely to be satisfied with complaint handling if the person dealing with their complaint is competent, empathetic and efficient.

Complaints procedure

- 3.3 When a complaint is made to the landlord it shall be acknowledged and logged at stage one of the complaints procedure.
- 3.4 Landlords should confirm their understanding of the complaint and the outcomes being sought with the resident. Clarification should be sought if the complaint is not clear.
- 3.5 If the complaint is not resolved to the resident’s satisfaction it shall be progressed to the next stage in accordance with the landlord’s procedure and the timescales set out in this Code.
- 3.6 A landlord’s complaints procedure shall comprise of two stages. This ensures that a resident has the opportunity to challenge any decision by correcting errors or sharing concerns via an appeal process.
- 3.7 The Ombudsman welcomes involvement by residents or senior executives outside the complaints team as part of the review process.
- 3.8 The Ombudsman does not believe a third stage is necessary as part of a complaints process but if a landlord believes strongly it requires one, it should set out its reasons as part of the self-assessment. A process with more than three stages is not acceptable under any circumstances in the Ombudsman’s view.

- 3.9 In the final decision the landlord's policy shall include the right to refer the complaint to the Housing Ombudsman Service. This should be through a designated person within eight weeks of the final decision or directly by the resident after eight weeks.
- 3.10 A full record shall be kept of the complaint, any review and the outcomes at each stage. This should include the original complaint and the date received; all correspondence with the resident, correspondence with other parties and any reports or surveys prepared.

Timeframe for responses

- 3.11 A landlord's complaints procedure shall include the following maximum timescales for response:
- Logging and acknowledgement of complaint – five working days
 - Stage one decision – 10 working days from receipt of complaint – if this is not possible, an explanation and a date by when the stage one response should be received. This should not exceed a further 10 days without good reason
 - Stage two response – 20 working days from request to escalate – if this is not possible an explanation and a date when the stage two response will be received. This should not exceed a further 10 working days without good reason
 - Stage three response – where a landlord believes this stage is absolutely necessary a response should be sent within 20 working days from request to escalate. Any additional time will only be justified if related to convening a panel. An explanation and a date when the stage three response will be achieved should be provided to the resident.
- 3.12 A landlord may choose to set shorter response times for each stage of the complaints procedure but response times must not exceed those set out above.

Communication with residents

- 3.13 When communicating with residents, landlords shall use plain language that is appropriate to the resident.
- 3.14 Landlords shall address all points raised in the complaint and provide clear reasons for any decisions, referencing the relevant policy, law and good practice where appropriate.
- 3.15 At the completion of each stage of the complaints process the landlord should write to the resident advising them of the following:

- the complaint stage
- the outcome of the complaint
- the reasons for any decisions made
- the details of any remedy offered to put things right
- details of any outstanding actions
- details of how to escalate the matter if dissatisfied.

3.16 As part of the complaint policy the resident shall be given a fair opportunity to:

- set out their position
- comment on any adverse findings before a final decision is made.

3.17 Communication with the resident should not generally identify individual members of staff or contractors as their actions are undertaken on behalf of the landlord.

3.18 Landlords should adhere to any arrangements agreed with residents in terms of frequency and method of communication.

3.19 Landlords should keep residents regularly updated and informed even where there is no new information to provide.

Duty to cooperate with the Ombudsman

3.20 When the resident remains dissatisfied at the end of the landlord's complaints process, they may bring their complaint to the Ombudsman. Landlords shall cooperate with the Ombudsman's requests for evidence and provide this within 15 working days. If a response cannot be provided within this timeframe, the landlord shall provide the Ombudsman with an explanation for the delay. If the explanation is reasonable, the Ombudsman will agree a revised date with the landlord.

3.21 Failure to provide evidence to the Ombudsman in a timely manner may result in the Ombudsman issuing a complaint handling failure order.

4. Fairness in complaint handling

4.1. Landlords shall operate a resident-focused complaints process ensuring they are given the opportunity to explain their point of view and the outcome they are seeking before a decision is reached.

4.2. Landlords should manage residents' expectations from the outset, being clear where a desired outcome is unreasonable or unrealistic.

4.3. Landlords should give residents the opportunity to have a representative deal with their complaint on their behalf, and to be represented and/or accompanied at any meeting with the landlord where this has been requested or offered and where this is reasonable.

- 4.4. Where a key issue of a complaint relates to the parties' legal obligations the landlord should clearly set out its understanding of the obligations of both parties and seek clarification before doing so where this is not initially clear.
- 4.5. A complaint investigation shall be conducted in an impartial manner, seeking sufficient reliable information from both parties so that fair and appropriate findings and recommendations can be made.
- 4.6. Any complaint investigation shall be fair. To ensure fairness, processes and procedures shall require the complaints officer to:
- deal with complaints on their merits
 - act independently and have an open mind
 - take measures to address any actual or perceived conflict of interest
 - consider all information and evidence carefully
 - keep the complaint confidential as far as possible, with information only disclosed if necessary to properly investigate the matter.
- 4.7. The landlord's assessment of the issue should include:
- what the complaint is about
 - what evidence is needed to fully consider the issues
 - what risks the complaint raises for the landlord
 - what outcome would resolve the matter for the resident
 - any urgent action that it needs to take.
- 4.8. A complaint should be resolved at the earliest possible opportunity.
- 4.9. The resident, and if applicable any staff member who is the subject of the complaint, must also be given a fair chance to:
- set out their position
 - comment on any adverse findings before a final decision is made.
- 4.10. Complaint policies and processes should set out the circumstances in which a landlord can exercise discretion in how to respond to a complaint and who has the power to exercise that discretion. Landlords should exercise discretion appropriately and provide clear explanations to residents when doing so.
- 4.11. Landlords should not unreasonably refuse to escalate a complaint through all stages of the complaints procedure and must have clear and valid reasons for taking that course of action.

- 4.12. When a resident seeks to escalate a complaint the landlord should consider:
- what the escalation review will be about i.e. why the resident remains dissatisfied, and whether any part of the complaint been resolved
 - who will undertake the review
 - who needs to be kept informed
 - what evidence needs to be gathered i.e. comments from those involved, relevant policies and contemporaneous records, inspections etc
 - how long the review will take and when it will be completed.
- 4.13. Where a landlord decides not to escalate a complaint it should provide an explanation to the resident. It should make clear that its previous response was its final response to the complaint and provide information on referral to the Housing Ombudsman.
- 4.14. Landlords should have policies and procedures in place for managing unacceptable behaviour from residents and/or their representatives when pursuing a complaint.
- 4.15. Any restrictions placed on a resident's contact due to unacceptable behaviour should be appropriate to their needs and should demonstrate regard for the provisions of the Equality Act 2010.

5. Putting things right

- 5.1. Effective dispute resolution requires a process designed to resolve complaints. Where something has gone wrong a landlord should acknowledge this and set out the actions it has already taken, or intends to take, to put things right. Examples of where action to put things right may be required are:
- there was an unreasonable delay
 - inaccurate or inadequate advice, explanation or information was provided to the resident
 - the landlord's policy or procedure was not followed correctly without good reason
 - there was a factual or legal error that impacted on the outcome for the resident
 - there was unprofessional behaviour by staff.
- 5.2. Landlords should acknowledge and apologise for any failure identified, give an explanation and, where possible, inform the resident of the changes made or actions taken to prevent the issue from happening again.
- 5.3. Landlords should recognise that putting things right is the first step to repairing and rebuilding the landlord and resident relationship.

- 5.4. When considering what action will put things right landlords should carefully manage the expectations of residents. Landlords should not promise anything that cannot be delivered or would cause unfairness to other residents.

Appropriate remedy

- 5.5. Complaints can be resolved in a number of ways. A landlord's policy shall require that any remedy offered reflects the extent of any and all service failures, and the level of detriment caused to the resident as a result. These shall include:
- acknowledging where things have gone wrong
 - providing an explanation, assistance or reasons
 - apologising
 - taking action if there has been a delay
 - reconsidering or changing a decision
 - amending a record
 - providing a financial remedy
 - changing policies, procedures or practices.
- 5.6. Any remedy offered must reflect the extent of any service failures and the level of detriment caused to the resident as a result.
- 5.7. Factors to consider in formulating a remedy can include, but are not limited to the:
- length of time that a situation has been ongoing
 - frequency with which something has occurred
 - severity of any service failure or omission
 - number of different failures
 - cumulative impact on the resident
 - a resident's particular circumstances or vulnerabilities.
- 5.8. When offering a remedy, landlords should clearly set out what will happen and by when, in agreement with the resident where appropriate. Any remedy proposed must be followed through to completion.
- 5.9. In awarding compensation, landlords shall consider whether any statutory payments are due, if any quantifiable losses have been incurred as well as the time and trouble a resident has been put to as well as any distress and inconvenience caused.

Concerns about legal liability

- 5.10. In some cases a resident may have a legal entitlement to redress. There may be concerns about legal liability in this situation. If so, the landlord should still offer a resolution where possible, as that may remove the need for the resident to pursue legal remedies.

- 5.11. Landlords have a duty to rectify problems for which they are responsible. However, where necessary a resolution can be offered with an explicit statement that there is no admission of liability. In such a case, legal advice as to how any offer of resolution should be worded should be obtained.

For further information on remedies please see <https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/about-us/corporate-information/policies/dispute-resolution/policy-on-remedies/>

6. Continuous learning and improvement

- 6.1. A positive complaint handling culture is integral to the effectiveness with which landlords resolve disputes, the quality of the service provided, the ability to learn and improve, and the relationship with their residents.
- 6.2. Accountability and transparency should be embedded in a positive complaint handling culture, with landlords providing feedback to residents on failures in complaint handling and the actions taken to learn and improve from this.
- 6.3. Creating and embedding a culture that values complaints and gives them the appropriate level of priority requires strong leadership and management.
- 6.4. A good culture should also recognise the importance of resident involvement, through the formation of resident panels, consulting with residents on the formulation of complaints policies and procedures and through including them in panel hearings as part of the dispute resolution process, where appropriate.
- 6.5. Landlords should look beyond the circumstances of the individual complaint and consider whether anything needs to be 'put right' in terms of process or systems to the benefit of all residents.
- 6.6. An effective complaints process enables a landlord to learn from the issues that arise for residents and to take steps to improve the services it provides and its internal processes. Landlords should have a system in place to look at the complaints received, their outcome and proposed changes as part of its reporting and planning process.
- 6.7. Any themes or trends should be assessed by senior management to identify any systemic issues, serious risks or areas for improvement for appropriate action.
- 6.8. Landlords should proactively use learning from complaints to revise policies and procedures, to train staff and contractors and to improve communication and record-keeping.

- 6.9. Landlord's should recognise the impact that being complained about can have on future service delivery. Landlords should ensure that staff are supported and engaged in the complaints process including the learning that can be gained.
- 6.10. Landlords shall report back on wider learning and improvements from complaints to their residents, managers and staff. Feedback shall be regularly provided to relevant scrutiny panels, committees and boards and be discussed, alongside scrutiny of the Ombudsman's annual landlord performance report.
- 6.11. Learning and improvement from complaints should be included in the landlord's Annual Report.

Part C

1. Compliance

- 1.1. Under the Housing Ombudsman Scheme a member landlord must:
 - agree to be bound by the terms of the Scheme
 - establish and maintain a complaints procedure in accordance with any good practice recommended by the Ombudsman
 - as part of that procedure, inform residents of their right to bring complaints to the Ombudsman under the Scheme
 - publish its complaints procedure and make information about this easily accessible to those entitled to complain on its website and in correspondence with residents
 - manage complaints from residents in accordance with its published procedure or, where this is not possible, within a reasonable timescale.
 - respond promptly to information requests made by the Housing Ombudsman Service as part of the ongoing investigation into complaints from residents.
- 1.2. Failure to comply with the conditions of membership may result in an Ombudsman's determination of complaint handling failure and an order to rectify within a given timescale (paragraphs 13 and 73 of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme).
- 1.3. Failures under the Scheme and Code which would result in a complaint handling failure order include, but are not limited to:
 - non-compliance with the Complaint Handling Code

- failure to accept a formal complaint in a timely manner or to exclude a complaint from the complaints process without good reason
 - inaccessible complaints process and procedure or unreasonable restrictions as to how a complaint can be made
 - not managing complaints from residents in accordance with the complaints policy
 - failure to progress a complaint through the complaints procedure
 - failure to respond to a complaint within the set timescales without good reason
 - failure to keep the resident informed and updated
 - failure to notify the resident of the right to refer the complaint to the Ombudsman
 - failure to provide evidence to support investigation by the Ombudsman.
- 1.4. Where a complaint is still within a landlord's complaints procedure or the Ombudsman has requested evidence for investigation the landlord will be informed of any complaint handling failure. Details of the failure will be provided along with any action required to rectify it. Where no action is taken the Ombudsman will issue a complaint handling failure order.
- 1.5. Each quarter the Ombudsman will publish the total number of complaint handling failure orders issued, the names of the landlords and reasons for the orders and will share this information with the Regulator of Social Housing. The number of complaint handling failure orders issued against a landlord will form part of the Ombudsman's annual landlord performance reports and will be available on the Ombudsman's website.
- 1.6. In addition, from time to time the Ombudsman may wish to publish a report detailing the specifics of a complaint handling failure case where this would help highlight the impact of the failure on the resolution of the dispute and delays and/or distress caused to residents.
- 1.7. When carrying out an investigation the Ombudsman will consider whether the landlord dealt with the complaint fairly and will assess this against the requirements of the Code. Any failure identified could result in a finding of service failure or maladministration.
- 1.8. The Ombudsman will specifically refer to the Code in its findings. Orders and recommendations will be made to put matters right and ensure compliance with the Code.
- 1.9. The Ombudsman may request evidence of a landlord's self-assessment in order to confirm satisfactory compliance with the Code. Where there have been failures to comply with the Code or in operating an effective complaints procedure, the Ombudsman may issue a complaint handling failure order and ask the landlord to complete the self-assessment as part of the rectification action and to report back to the Ombudsman on its outcome.

- 1.10. Where there are significant concerns regarding a landlord's compliance with the Code the Ombudsman may escalate these to the landlord's board or equivalent, and may refer the matter to the appropriate regulatory body including the Regulator of Social Housing.

2. Self-assessment

- 2.1 The Ombudsman expects landlords to carry out regular self-assessment against the Code and take appropriate action to ensure their complaint handling is in line with the Code. This assessment should be completed by 31 December 2020.
- 2.2. The Ombudsman expects landlords to report the outcome of their self-assessment to their board members. In the case of local authorities, self-assessment outcomes should be reported to elected members.
- 2.3. The Ombudsman expects landlords to publish the outcome of their assessments. The Ombudsman may request sight of the assessment and evidence in support. The Ombudsman may require landlords to periodically repeat the self-assessment, for example following any amendments to the Code or significant change to the landlord organisational structure.

Self-assessment form

Compliance with the Complaint Handling Code				
1	Definition of a complaint	Yes	No	Comments
	<p>Does the complaints process use the following definition of a complaint?</p> <p><i>An expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual resident or group of residents.</i></p>		X	<p>Brent's Complaints Policy does not currently use the definition of a complaint provided by the Housing Ombudsman. However, it will adopt the definition with a minor change to the reference of residents to "individual or a group of individuals" as the definition only refers to residents, however the Council's Complaints Policy relates to all customers that use Council services not just residents. The current definition is below:</p> <p>"a complaint is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction, not resolved immediately to the customer's satisfaction, about the level, quality or nature of a service which the customer feels should have been provided. This includes services provided by people or organisations acting on the council's behalf."</p>
Page 195	Does the policy have exclusions where a complaint will not be considered?		X	<p>The Policy contains exclusions which include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Complaints made on behalf of individuals without their explicit consent ○ Complaints where the customer or the council has started legal proceedings or court action (but not where a customer has only threatened to do so). ○ Matters that have their own appeals or statutory procedure ○ Complaints where the complainant has delayed raising the complaint with the Council by more than 12 months.
	Are these exclusions reasonable and fair to residents? Evidence relied upon	X		Exclusions are reasonable and in line with the exclusions outlined by both the Housing Ombudsman and the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

2	Accessibility			
	Are multiple accessibility routes available for residents to make a complaint?	X		Complaints can be raised via email, in person, by telephone or using the online form or portal. They can also be submitted via a Councillor or directly to officers if the resident asks for an issue to be processed through the complaints process. We accept all forms including verbal, written or online.
	Is the complaints policy and procedure available online?	X		The Complaints Policy is available on the Council's website.
	Do we have a reasonable adjustments policy?	X		Brent Council has an Equality Policy that covers reasonable adjustments and fits with our Customer Promise. The Council will explore having one overarching policy.
	Do we regularly advise residents about our complaints process?	X		Yes, if a resident expresses any form of dissatisfaction the service advocates the use of the complaints process and signposts them to how this process can be activated.
3	Complaints team and process			
Page 196	Is there a complaint officer or equivalent in post?	X		<p>The Housing Support team triage all stage one complaints and there is a dedicated complaints officer for all repairs complaints. All stage one complaints are investigated by service managers.</p> <p>The service plans to introduce a new structure for January 2021 which appoints a team leader on behalf of the service to be responsible for complaints overall.</p> <p>The Complaints Service investigate all complaints independently of the service at stage 2 of the complaints process.</p>
	Does the complaint officer have autonomy to resolve complaints?	X		Service Managers have the autonomy of resolving complaints at stage 1 of the process. The Complaints Officers within the Corporate Complaints team also have some autonomy of resolving complaints but only with the assistance of senior management.
	Does the complaint officer have authority to compel engagement from other departments to resolve disputes?	X		Complaints officers will often liaise with other teams to ensure a holistic response is agreed. The repairs team have worked closely with the IT service to build in tracking / referral flags where support is required from colleagues in other teams to progress repairs, for example decants, asbestos and tenancy issues.

	If there is a third stage to the complaints procedure are residents involved in the decision making?		X	There is no third stage in the Council's complaint process. The Housing Management Service is reviewing its resident engagement framework and this will include a role for residents in the complaints review process.
	Is any third stage optional for residents?		X	N/A
	Does the final stage response set out residents' right to refer the matter to the Housing Ombudsman Service?		X	If a resident is unhappy with the response at stage 2 they are given rights within their response to escalate to the Housing Ombudsman Service.
	Do we keep a record of complaint correspondence including correspondence from the resident?		X	All complaint correspondence is uploaded to the Complaints Management System, this includes correspondence from residents.
	At what stage are most complaints resolved?			There were 454 (HMS only) complaints received in 2019/20, and 97 (HMS only) complaints received at Stage 2 for the same period. This shows that the majority of complaints are resolved at stage 1, with 21% escalated to stage 2.
4	Communication			
Page 197	Are residents kept informed and updated during the complaints process?		X	For the majority of complaints residents are contacted on receipt of a complaint to establish and agree a resolution. On some occasions, there is already an ongoing conversation about issues and the officer has suggested it be handled through the complaints process. Officers update customers where remedies are being provided during the investigation. There are however examples where this has not been consistently practiced. More work needs to be done to ensure all residents are kept updated throughout the complaint process and after if works are still to be completed.
	Are residents informed of the landlord's position and given a chance to respond and challenge any area of dispute before the final decision?		X	Where residents are engaged throughout the process then they are able to shape the outcome and the solution as officers will make contact following the receipt of the complaint and state what they can do to resolve the issue. This however is not consistently applied by service officers. The Corporate Complaints Officers are in contact with residents during the final stage of the corporate complaints process and are able to negotiate a mutual resolution with residents.
	Are all complaints acknowledged and logged within five days?		X	The majority of complaints are acknowledged and logged within five working days. However, we have identified this is an area for improvement.
	Are residents advised of how to escalate at the end of each stage?		X	Residents are advised on how to escalate at the end of each stage of the complaints process.

	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage one?			79% of complaints are resolved at stage 1, with 21% of stage 1 complaints escalated to stage 2 last year 2019/20.
	What proportion of complaints are resolved at stage two?			Of all the stage 2 complaints received in 2019/20 (97 complaints), there were 9 complaints that were escalated and detailed investigations undertaken by the Housing Ombudsman. This is a 9% escalation rate, meaning that the majority of complaints are resolved at Stage 2.
	What proportion of complaint responses are sent within Code timescales? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stage one Stage one (with extension) • Stage two Stage two (with extension) 			The Council currently has a different timescale to the one proposed by the Housing Ombudsman. The majority of complaints were responded to within 20 working days for Stage 1 and 30 working days for Stage 2. In 2019/20, there were 88% of Stage 1 complaints (532 out of 605 HMS complaints) closed on time (according to our 20 working days timescale) and 91% of Stage 2 complaints (81 out of 89 HMS complaints) closed on time (according to our 30 working days timescale).
	Where timescales have been extended did we have good reason?			N/A
Page 198	Where timescales have been extended did we keep the resident informed?			N/A
	What proportion of complaints do we resolve to residents' satisfaction			In terms of complaints resolved to the satisfaction of the resident, escalations to the Ombudsman has been used to measure this. There were 23 escalations to the Ombudsman, nine of which detailed investigations were undertaken. For repairs that are borne from a complaint, the service carry out post inspections to ensure all issues in the complaint have been resolved.
5	Cooperation with Housing Ombudsman Service			
	Were all requests for evidence responded to within 15 days?		X	The service does seek to comply with the 15 day target but there are incidences where this date has not been met due to other competing priorities. The service through its new structure is placing resource into monitoring and coordinating the handling of complaints, corrective actions and evidence gathering to improve the overall experience.
	Where the timescale was extended did we keep the Ombudsman informed?	X		The Ombudsman is kept up to date when there is a delay.
6	Fairness in complaint handling			
	Are residents able to complain via a representative throughout?	X		All residents are able to complain via a representative throughout the process as long as the necessary consent has been provided from the resident.

	If advice was given, was this accurate and easy to understand?	X		The Council tries to provide clear and precise information to residents and signpost where necessary. Officers are encouraged to write using plain English and through the new structure there will be an officer proactively checking the quality and style of responses going out.
	How many cases did we refuse to escalate? What was the reason for the refusal?			There were 7 escalations that were refused, the majority of which were due to the complaint being raised/escalated after a 12 month period. There was also one complaint that was refused because it was outside the Council's remit.
	Did we explain our decision to the resident?	X		The decision was explained to the resident and in the case which fell outside the Council's remit, the resident was signposted to an alternative route for resolving their concerns.
7	Outcomes and remedies			
Page 199	Where something has gone wrong are we taking appropriate steps to put things right?	X		Yes the service always seeks to take the appropriate steps to put things right and monitors implementation of these actions through a system which records corrective actions from all complaints. Timescales are set against each action and a dedicated officer is currently monitoring those to ensure they are acted upon. More work needs to be done at stage 1 to ensure actions are tracked and to avoid escalations.

8	Continuous learning and improvement			
Page 200	What improvements have we made as a result of learning from complaints?			<p>There have been several improvements as a result of learning from complaints. Some of these include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated Assessment Management Contact Improvement plan focused on rectifying service issues identified in customer satisfaction surveys; • Access policy covering access to council and leaseholder properties to fix leaks and other repairs; • Scaffolding protocol for all scaffolding contracts and weekly management of scaffolding arrangements (Wates ceased using two scaffolding sub-contractors because of poor performance); • Review of operational interface between Brent Housing Management and the Community Protection Team (CPT) completed. This has improved the responsiveness of ASB cases referred to the CPT together with improving collaboration and communication between both teams; • Introduction of case huddles which are being used to manage complex cases across the housing department. This has enabled rapid resolution to complex and cross-departmental work; • Customer friendly writing course rolled out across the Housing Department. This has equipped staff to provide more accessible written communication to residents; • Clear customer service performance standards incorporated in annual appraisals, including a range of quantitative outputs and a set of behavioural standards. • Post inspections of all repairs complaints, conducted over the telephone or via a site visit. • Weekly Repairs, Gas and Voids meeting where feedback is reviewed and contractors are challenged. Satisfaction and performance rates are also discussed during the meetings. • An upgraded CRM repairs management system, which now gives flags at key stages where there are multiple teams involved. Referrals are sent from the system and highlighted to officers which can be tracked through reporting to determine how many have been received and actioned.

	<p>How do we share these lessons with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) residents? b) the board/governing body? c) In the Annual Report? 			<p>The service has a Customer Experience Panel where high level performance figures are presented but through the new resident engagement framework intends to involve residents more in defining the lessons that need to be learnt within the service.</p> <p>A quarterly report is produced to CMT and the Chief Executive. Lessons learnt are also included in the Annual Report which is published on the Council's website.</p> <p>Corrective actions and recommendations resulting from a complaint are used as learning for service areas. Complaint action plans and reports are reviewed on a weekly basis as part of continuous learning and also highlighted to contractors as part of the standard weekly agenda.</p>
	<p>Has the Code made a difference to how we respond to complaints?</p>			<p>N/A</p>
	<p>What changes have we made?</p>			<p>N/A</p>

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LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS

for the period 1 February 2021 onwards



The Forward Plan is a list of forthcoming decisions and provides at least **28 days'** notice of the following:

- all decisions to be taken by the Cabinet and Cabinet Committees; and
- key decisions taken by Council Officers and the West London Economic Prosperity Board.

A key decision is defined by regulations as a decision which relates to an executive function and which is likely:

- a. to result in the local authority incurring expenditure / making of savings of £500,000 or more.
- b. to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards or electoral divisions in the area of the local authority.

All decisions taken by the Cabinet and Cabinet Committees and key decisions taken by Council Officers can be called-in by Councillors before they are implemented. If a decision is called-in, a Scrutiny Committee made up of non-Cabinet Members will meet to consider the decision within 15 working days of the decision being made. The original decision-maker will then take into account the recommendations of this Scrutiny Committee before choosing to either implement or change the decision. The exact date when the recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee are to be re-considered by the Cabinet, Cabinet Committee or Officer (as the case may be) can be obtained from Governance Services.

Members of the public are entitled to see the reports that will be relied on when a decision is taken unless they contain confidential or exempt information under the Local Government Act 1972. Reports will be published on the Council's website at least five clear working days before the date the decision is due to be taken. Paper copies can also be obtained from Governance Services, Brent Civic Centre, Engineers Way, Wembley, Middlesex, HA9 0FJ, telephone 020 8937 2063/1355 or via e-mail to committee@brent.gov.uk.

Should you wish to make representations regarding any matter listed or want to request that an exempt report should be considered in public, please email Governance Services at committee@brent.gov.uk or telephone 020 8937 2063/1355 at least one week before the decision is to be taken. Your representations and the Council's response will be published on the Council's website at least 5 working days before the Cabinet/ Cabinet Committee meeting or date of the scheduled Officer decision.

The current membership of the Cabinet is as follows:

[Cllr Butt](#) (Leader)

[Cllr McLennan](#) (Deputy Leader, Resources)

[Cllr Nerva](#) (Public Health, Culture & Leisure)

[Cllr Farah](#) (Adult Social Care)

[Cllr Southwood](#) (Housing and Welfare Reform)

[Cllr Tatler](#) (Regeneration, Property & Planning)

[Cllr M Patel](#) (Children's Safeguarding, Early Help and Social Care)

[Cllr Krupa Sheth](#) (Environment)

[Cllr Stephens](#) (Schools, Employment & Skills)

[Cllr Knight](#) (Community Safety & Engagement)

Publication Date: 15 January 2021

email: committee@brent.gov.uk
Tel: 020 8937 2063/1355

Details of the decision to be taken	Decision to be taken by	Relevant report from	Lead Member	Expected date of decision	Any representations must be made to the following officer at least 1 week before the decision is to be made
December 2020					
<p>Award of LD services at 127 &129 Harrowdene Rd The Council have been out to tender to provide a Learning Disability service across 10 units at 127 & 129 Harrowdene Road. The tender process has now been completed and we wish to award the tender to the successful provider</p> <p>KEY Report: Part exempt</p>	Strategic Director - Community Well-being	Strategic Director - Community Well-being	Lead Member for Adult Social Care (Councillor Harbi Farah)	23 Dec 2020	Interim Commissioning Manager Tel: 020 8937 4162 Lorraine.Regan@brent.gov.uk
<p>Daily Visitor Parking Charges and Permit Refunds To proceed to publication and notification on the amendment of the relevant Traffic Management Orders to formally link and align daily visitor permit prices to bus fares and increase the maximum refund value for all parking permits.</p> <p>KEY Report: Open</p>	Strategic Director - Regeneration and Environment	Strategic Director - Regeneration and Environment	Lead Member for Environment (Councillor Krupa Sheth)	20 Dec 2020	Parking Policy Manager Tel: 020 8937 5105 anthony.vartanian@brent.gov.uk

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Details of the decision to be taken	Decision to be taken by	Relevant report from	Lead Member	Expected date of decision	Any representations must be made to the following officer at least 1 week before the decision is to be made
January 2021					
<p>Treasury Management Mid-Year Report 2020-21 To note the 2020/21 mid-year Treasury report, which has been reviewed by the Audit and Standards Advisory Committee, and recommend the report to be forwarded to Full Council.</p> <p>Non-Key Decision Report: Open</p>	Cabinet	Director of Finance	Deputy Leader (Councillor Margaret McLennan)	12 Jan 2021	Senior Finance Analyst Tel: 020 8937 5912 Amanda.Healy@brent.gov.uk
<p>Quarter 3 Financial Report 2020/21 This report sets out the current forecast of income and expenditure against the revenue budget for 2020/21 and other key financial data.</p> <p>KEY Report: Open</p>	Cabinet	Director of Finance	Deputy Leader (Councillor Margaret McLennan)	12 Jan 2021	Director of Finance Tel: 020 8937 4043 minesh.patel@brent.gov.uk
<p>Annual Complaint Report 2019/20 To note Brent's performance in managing and resolving complaints.</p> <p>Non-Key Decision Report: Open</p>	Cabinet	Assistant Chief Executive	Deputy Leader (Councillor Margaret McLennan)	12 Jan 2021	Complaints and FOI Manager mariza.barros@brent.gov.uk

Details of the decision to be taken	Decision to be taken by	Relevant report from	Lead Member	Expected date of decision	Any representations must be made to the following officer at least 1 week before the decision is to be made
<p>Authority to Tender for the Design & Build Contract at 1 Morland Gardens, Stonebridge</p> <p>1. Subject to the satisfactory completion of the Judicial Review of the planning permission decision process for Morland Gardens, to seek Cabinet approval to invite tenders via a mini-competition under the Notting Hill Genesis Contractor Framework agreement for a contractor on the basis of the pre-tender considerations.</p> <p>2. Subject to the satisfactory completion of the Judicial Review of the planning permission decision process for Morland Gardens, to seek Cabinet approval to delegate authority to award the contract for the Morland Gardens Redevelopment Design and Build Contract following the successful outcome of the tender exercise to the Strategic Director, Regeneration and Environment, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Property and Planning.</p> <p>KEY</p> <p>Report: Part exempt</p>	Cabinet	Strategic Director - Regeneration and Environment	Lead Member for Regeneration, Property & Planning (Councillor Shama Tatler)	12 Jan 2021	Schools Capital Programme Team Tel: 020 8937 4203 neil.martin@brent.gov.uk

Details of the decision to be taken	Decision to be taken by	Relevant report from	Lead Member	Expected date of decision	Any representations must be made to the following officer at least 1 week before the decision is to be made
<p>Brent Council's School Admission Arrangements for Community Primary Schools 2022/23 Brent Council's School Admission Arrangements for Community Primary Schools 2022/23</p> <p>KEY</p> <p>Report: Open</p>	Cabinet	Strategic Director - Children and Young People	Lead Member for Schools, Employment & Skills (Councillor Thomas Stephens)	12 Jan 2021	Operational Director, Safeguarding, Partnerships & Strategy Tel: 0208 937 4173 Brian.Grady@brent.gov.uk
<p>Establishing an Onside Youth Zone in Brent Establishing an Onside Youth Zone in Brent</p> <p>KEY</p> <p>Report: Open</p>	Cabinet	Strategic Director - Children and Young People	Lead Member for Children's Safeguarding, Early Help and Social Care (Councillor Mili Patel)	12 Jan 2021	Operational Director Integration & Improved Outcomes Tel: 020 8937 4456 nigel.chapman@brent.gov.uk
<p>Northwick Park, One Public Estate – CIL Allocation Cabinet to delegate authority to the Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment to allocate CIL to cashflow the road construction that will be funded by the HIF grant.</p> <p>KEY</p> <p>Report: Part exempt</p>	Cabinet	Strategic Director - Regeneration and Environment	Lead Member for Environment (Councillor Krupa Sheth), Lead Member for Regeneration, Property & Planning (Councillor Shama Tatler)	12 Jan 2021	Director of Property & Assets Tel: 020 8937 5025 nick.ljustina@brent.gov.uk

Details of the decision to be taken	Decision to be taken by	Relevant report from	Lead Member	Expected date of decision	Any representations must be made to the following officer at least 1 week before the decision is to be made
<p>Emergency Accommodation for Homeless Households Approval to tender for a service to provide 200 units of emergency accommodation in Brent.</p> <p>KEY</p> <p>Report: Open</p>	Cabinet	Strategic Director - Community Well-being	Lead Member for Housing and Welfare Reform (Councillor Eleanor Southwood)	12 Jan 2021	Head of Housing Needs Tel: 020 8937 2788 laurence.coaker@brent.gov.uk
<p>New Council Homes Programme Approve and note progress in respect of the NHCP and wider delivery of affordable housing in the borough.</p> <p>KEY</p> <p>Report: Part exempt</p>	Cabinet	Strategic Director - Community Well-being	Councillor Eleanor Southwood	12 Jan 2021	Head of Housing Partnerships Tel: 020 8937 3272 John.Magness@brent.gov.uk
<p>Variation to the Microsoft Agreement for the London Borough of Southwark To vary the contract between the London Borough of Brent and Trustmarque Solutions Ltd for the London Borough of Southwark's Microsoft licences.</p> <p>KEY</p> <p>Report: Part exempt</p>	Deputy Leader	Strategic Director - Customer and Digital Services	Deputy Leader (Councillor Margaret McLennan)	Not before 4 Jan 2021	Senior Category Manager, Procurement Tel: 0208 937 1733 philippa.brewin@brent.gov.uk

Details of the decision to be taken	Decision to be taken by	Relevant report from	Lead Member	Expected date of decision	Any representations must be made to the following officer at least 1 week before the decision is to be made
<p>Kensal Corridor Improvements To award a contract for the delivery of highway works – Kensal Corridor Improvements</p> <p>KEY</p> <p>Report: Part exempt</p>	Strategic Director - Regeneration and Environment	Strategic Director - Regeneration and Environment	Lead Member for Environment (Councillor Krupa Sheth)	Not before 1 Jan 2021	Projects Development Manager, Highways and Infrastructure Tel: 020 8937 5113 sandor.fazekas@brent.gov.uk
<p>Authority to Agree a Waiver of Contract Standing Orders for a Medium Value Contract for Rough Sleepers Services, funded through the Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) Grant To agree a waiver of Contract Standing Order No. 604.</p> <p>KEY</p> <p>Report: Open</p>	Lead Member for Housing and Welfare Reform	Strategic Director - Community Well-being	Lead Member for Housing and Welfare Reform (Councillor Eleanor Southwood)	Not before 4 Jan 2021	Head of Housing Needs Tel: 020 8937 2788 laurence.coaker@brent.gov.uk

Details of the decision to be taken	Decision to be taken by	Relevant report from	Lead Member	Expected date of decision	Any representations must be made to the following officer at least 1 week before the decision is to be made
<p>Authority to Vary and Extend the Contract for the Provision of Speech and Language Therapy for Children and Young People In Schools, Family Well-being Centres and Linked Early Years Settings</p> <p>To request approval for a Variation and Extension to the current Contract with London North West Health Trust for the Provision of Speech and Language Therapy for Children and Young People In Schools, Family Well-being Centres and Linked Early Years Settings.</p> <p>KEY</p> <p>Report: Part exempt</p>	Strategic Director - Children and Young People	Operational Director - Integration and Improved Service	Lead Member for Children's Safeguarding, Early Help and Social Care (Councillor Mili Patel)	Not before 4 Jan 2021	Head of Inclusion and the Virtual School Sharon.Buckby@brent.gov.uk
<p>Award of a contract for Single Homelessness Prevention Services</p> <p>The Recommendation is to appoint a contractor to perform Single Homelessness Prevention Services</p> <p>KEY</p> <p>Report: Part exempt</p>	Strategic Director - Community Well-being	Strategic Director - Community Well-being	Lead Member for Housing and Welfare Reform (Councillor Eleanor Southwood)	18 Jan 2021	Housing Needs Service Tel: 020 8937 2076 saleema.nuraney@brent.gov.uk

Details of the decision to be taken	Decision to be taken by	Relevant report from	Lead Member	Expected date of decision	Any representations must be made to the following officer at least 1 week before the decision is to be made
<p>Award of a contract for a backup solution for the IT Shared Service The award of a contract for a backup solution for the IT Shared Service comprising the London Boroughs of Brent, Lewisham and Southwark.</p> <p>KEY</p> <p>Report: Part exempt</p>	Strategic Director - Customer and Digital Services	Director of Customer Access	Deputy Leader (Councillor Margaret McLennan)	11 Jan 2021	Senior Category Manager, Procurement Tel: 0208 937 1733 philippa.brewin@brent.gov.uk
<p>Award of 6 Supported Living Services The Council have tendered for the following 6 Supported Living services across the borough</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1x Learning Disability 1x PMLD 1x Mental Health 1x Dual Diagnostic <p>As the tender process will have been completed the Council wish to Award the contracts to the successful providers.</p> <p>KEY</p> <p>Report: Part exempt</p>	Strategic Director - Community Well-being	Strategic Director - Community Well-being	Lead Member for Adult Social Care (Councillor Harbi Farah)	30 Jan 2021	Interim Commissioning Manager Tel: 020 8937 4162 Lorraine.Regan@brent.gov.uk

Details of the decision to be taken	Decision to be taken by	Relevant report from	Lead Member	Expected date of decision	Any representations must be made to the following officer at least 1 week before the decision is to be made
<p>Authority to tender for services delivered under the Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) grant Approval to tender for interventions to help tackle rough sleeping in Brent. This will be funded by the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government under the Rough Sleeping Initiative Grant.</p> <p>KEY Report: Open</p>	Strategic Director - Community Well-being	Strategic Director - Community Well-being	Lead Member for Housing and Welfare Reform (Councillor Eleanor Southwood)	11 Jan 2021	Housing Needs Service Tel: 020 8937 2076 saleema.nuraney@brent.gov.uk
<p>New Council Homes Programme – Appoint Contractor for Infill Sites (Aneurin Bevan Court and Sycamore Grove) Authority to appoint a contractor for building 10 new homes across the following sites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aneurin Bevan Court • Sycamore Grove <p>KEY Report: Part exempt</p>	Strategic Director - Regeneration and Environment	Strategic Director - Regeneration and Environment	Lead Member for Regeneration, Property & Planning (Councillor Shama Tatler)	1 Jan 2021	Project Manager, Property Tel: 020 8937 1722 tanveer.ghani@brent.gov.uk

Details of the decision to be taken	Decision to be taken by	Relevant report from	Lead Member	Expected date of decision	Any representations must be made to the following officer at least 1 week before the decision is to be made
<p>New Council Homes Programme – Appoint Contractor for Infill Sites (Pharamond and Longley Avenue) Authority to appoint a contractor for building 11 new homes across the following sites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Longley Avenue • Pharamond <p>KEY Report: Part exempt</p>	<p>Strategic Director - Regeneration and Environment</p>	<p>Strategic Director - Regeneration and Environment</p>	<p>Lead Member for Regeneration, Property & Planning (Councillor Shama Tatler)</p>	<p>Not before 1 Jan 2021</p>	<p>Project Manager, Property Tel: 020 8937 1722 tanveer.ghani@brent.gov.uk</p>
<p>Recommissioning the Advice, Infrastructure, Healthwatch and NHS independent Advocacy Contracts To request approval for various voluntary and community sector contracts.</p> <p>KEY Report: Part exempt</p>	<p>Assistant Chief Executive</p>	<p>Assistant Chief Executive</p>	<p>Lead Member for Community Safety & Engagement (Councillor Promise Knight)</p>	<p>Before 1 Jan 2021</p>	<p>Head of Strategy and Partnerships Tel: 020 8937 1045 pascoe.sawyers@brent.gov.uk Partnership and Engagement Manager, Strategy and Partnerships Tel: 020 8937 1133 Julia.Mlambo@brent.gov.uk</p>

Details of the decision to be taken	Decision to be taken by	Relevant report from	Lead Member	Expected date of decision	Any representations must be made to the following officer at least 1 week before the decision is to be made
<p>Authority to appoint a Design Lead Multi-Disciplinary Team for the New Council Homes Programme (NCHP) Approval to appoint a Design Lead Multi-Disciplinary Team to progress planning application submissions for up to 18 development sites within the New Council Homes Programme.</p> <p>KEY Report: Part exempt</p>	Strategic Director - Regeneration and Environment	Strategic Director - Regeneration and Environment	Lead Member for Regeneration, Property & Planning (Councillor Shama Tatler)	12 Jan 2021	Project Manager, Property Tel: 020 8937 1722 tanveer.ghani@brent.gov.uk
<p>Authority to Tender for the Design & Build Contract for the new dining hall build at Oliver Goldsmith Primary School To request authority to tender for a contract for the design and build of the new dining hall at Oliver Goldsmith Primary School as per Contract Standing Orders 88 and 89.</p> <p>KEY Report: Open</p>	Strategic Director - Regeneration and Environment	Strategic Director - Regeneration and Environment	Lead Member for Schools, Employment & Skills (Councillor Thomas Stephens)	12 Jan 2021	Schools Capital Programme Team Tel: 020 8937 4203 neil.martin@brent.gov.uk

Details of the decision to be taken	Decision to be taken by	Relevant report from	Lead Member	Expected date of decision	Any representations must be made to the following officer at least 1 week before the decision is to be made
<p>Authority to award and commence architecturally-led multidisciplinary design team work for the Masefield House, Wordsworth House and Dickens House sites (South Kilburn) Awarding the contract and approving the commencement of design team work for Masefield house, Wordsworth house and Dickens house sites (South Kilburn)</p> <p>KEY Report: Part exempt</p>	Strategic Director - Regeneration and Environment	Strategic Director - Regeneration and Environment	Lead Member for Regeneration, Property & Planning (Councillor Shama Tatler)	22 Jan 2021	Senior Project Manager, Estate Regeneration Tel: 020 8937 1650 emma.sweeney@brent.gov.uk
February 2021					
<p>Meanwhile Use Strategy & Action Plan To note the Meanwhile Use Strategy & Action Plan</p> <p>To approve the Meanwhile Use Strategy & Action Plan, prior to publication on the Council's website, dissemination the same to key partners and stakeholders, and implementation.</p> <p>KEY Report: Open</p>	Cabinet	Strategic Director - Regeneration and Environment	Lead Member for Regeneration, Property & Planning (Councillor Shama Tatler)	8 Feb 2021	Major Projects Team Tel: 020 8937 2348 jonathan.kay@brent.gov.uk

Details of the decision to be taken	Decision to be taken by	Relevant report from	Lead Member	Expected date of decision	Any representations must be made to the following officer at least 1 week before the decision is to be made
<p>FWH Business Plan 2021-22 The report presents the First Wave Housing Ltd (FWH) Business Plan 2021/22 to Cabinet for Shareholder approval.</p> <p>KEY</p> <p>Report: Part exempt</p>	Cabinet	Strategic Director - Customer and Digital Services	Deputy Leader (Councillor Margaret McLennan)	8 Feb 2021	Head of Transformation Tel: 020 8937 1507 sadie.east@brent.gov.uk
<p>i4B Business Plan 2021-22 The report presents the i4B Holdings Ltd (i4B) Business Plan 2020/21 to Cabinet for Shareholder approval.</p> <p>KEY</p> <p>Report: Part exempt</p>	Cabinet	Strategic Director - Customer and Digital Services	Deputy Leader (Councillor Margaret McLennan)	8 Feb 2021	Head of Transformation Tel: 020 8937 1507 sadie.east@brent.gov.uk
<p>Budget and Council Tax 2021/22 To set out the Council's budget proposals for 2021/22 and beyond.</p> <p>KEY</p> <p>Report: Open</p>	Cabinet	Director of Finance	Deputy Leader (Councillor Margaret McLennan)	8 Feb 2021	Head of Finance Tel: 0208 937 1487 ravinder.jassar@brent.gov.uk

Details of the decision to be taken	Decision to be taken by	Relevant report from	Lead Member	Expected date of decision	Any representations must be made to the following officer at least 1 week before the decision is to be made
<p>Borough Plan 2021-2022 To approve the Borough Plan 2021-2022</p> <p>KEY</p> <p>Report: Open</p>	Cabinet	Assistant Chief Executive	Deputy Leader (Councillor Margaret McLennan)	8 Feb 2021	Senior Policy and Scrutiny Officer Tel: 02089371958 Jacqueline.Barry-Purssell@brent.gov.uk, Assistant Chief Executive Shazia.Hussain@brent.gov.uk
<p>Recommissioning of HRS To seek approval to retender Housing Related support services</p> <p>KEY</p> <p>Report: Part exempt</p>	Cabinet	Strategic Director - Community Well-being	Lead Member for Adult Social Care (Councillor Harbi Farah)	8 Feb 2021	Interim Commissioning Manager Tel: 020 8937 4162 Lorraine.Regan@brent.gov.uk
<p>Recommendations from Scrutiny Committees To receive any recommendations made by individual Scrutiny Committees in relation to reviews undertaken.</p> <p>Non-Key Decision</p> <p>Report: Open</p>	Cabinet	Assistant Chief Executive	Lead Member for Community Safety & Engagement (Councillor Promise Knight)	8 Feb 2021	Assistant Chief Executive Shazia.Hussain@brent.gov.uk

Details of the decision to be taken	Decision to be taken by	Relevant report from	Lead Member	Expected date of decision	Any representations must be made to the following officer at least 1 week before the decision is to be made
<p>Housing repairs and maintenance authority to go out to tender To request authority for Housing to go out to tender for housing maintenance services.</p> <p>KEY</p> <p>Report: Part exempt</p>	Operational Director - Housing	Strategic Director - Customer and Digital Services	Lead Member for Housing and Welfare Reform (Councillor Eleanor Southwood)	8 Feb 2021	Category Manager, Procurement Tel: 020 8937 2678 Andrew.Stirland1@brent.gov.uk
<p>Authority to Tender for the Contract for Boiler replacement projects at Northview Primary School and Salusbury Primary School To request authority to tender for a contract for the boiler replacement projects at Northview Primary School and Salusbury Primary School as per Contract Standing Orders 88 and 89.</p> <p>KEY</p> <p>Report: Open</p> <p>N.B. This decision was added to the Forward Plan on 15 January 2021</p>	Strategic Director - Regeneration and Environment	Strategic Director - Regeneration and Environment	Lead Member for Schools, Employment & Skills (Councillor Thomas Stephens)	15 Feb 2021	Programme Manager, Special Projects – Schools Neil.martin@brent.gov.uk

Details of the decision to be taken	Decision to be taken by	Relevant report from	Lead Member	Expected date of decision	Any representations must be made to the following officer at least 1 week before the decision is to be made
<p>Authority to award contract for the provision of hard (planned, statutory and reactive maintenance) facilities management services for Brent Council operational buildings</p> <p>This report concerns the future provision of a contract for the delivery of Hard Facilities Management (FM) services for Brent Council's operational buildings. This report requests authority to award the contract for the delivery of Hard FM services in accordance with the cabinet decision of 10th February 2020 delegating authority to approve the same to the Strategic Director for Regeneration & Environment for a period of 5 + 2 years.</p> <p>Report: Part exempt</p>	<p>Strategic Director - Regeneration and Environment</p>	<p>Strategic Director - Regeneration and Environment</p>	<p>Lead Member for Regeneration, Property & Planning (Councillor Shama Tatler)</p>	<p>Before 26 Feb 2021</p>	<p>Facilities Portfolio Manager Tel: 020 8937 1771 Russell.Burnaby@brent.gov.uk</p>

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Details of the decision to be taken	Decision to be taken by	Relevant report from	Lead Member	Expected date of decision	Any representations must be made to the following officer at least 1 week before the decision is to be made
March 2021					
<p>Approval of procurement for the remaining phases of the South Kilburn Regeneration Programme and to seek approval for a 'Find A Tender' process to procure a delivery partner for the comprehensive redevelopment of the NWCC Site (1-8 Neville House, 1-64 Winterleys, 113-128 Carlton House, and Carlton Hall)</p> <p>To seek approval for an OJEU process to procure a delivery partner for comprehensive redevelopment of 1-8 Neville House, 1-64 Winterleys, 113-128 Carlton House, and Carlton Hall (together defined as NWCC Site)</p> <p>KEY</p> <p>Report: Part exempt</p>	Cabinet	Strategic Director - Regeneration and Environment	Lead Member for Regeneration, Property & Planning (Councillor Shama Tatler)	8 Mar 2021	Senior Project Manager, Estate Regeneration Tel: 020 8937 1621 Marie.Frederick@brent.gov.uk

Details of the decision to be taken	Decision to be taken by	Relevant report from	Lead Member	Expected date of decision	Any representations must be made to the following officer at least 1 week before the decision is to be made
<p>Authority to Commission Community Equipment Provider to</p> <p>i) Agree to continue with the 'Framework Contract for Community Equipment Service' with LB Barnet</p> <p>ii) Agree to the retender of the Community Equipment Service for a period of 3 years +1 yr + 1yr</p> <p>iii) Agree to award the contract to the new provider</p> <p>Page 22 KEY</p> <p>Report: Part exempt</p>	Cabinet	Operational Director - Adult Social Care	Lead Member for Adult Social Care (Councillor Harbi Farah)	8 March 2021	Head of Adults Services - Urgent Care, Community Wellbeing Tel: 020 8937 1323 Sunny.Mehmi@brent.gov.uk

Details of the decision to be taken	Decision to be taken by	Relevant report from	Lead Member	Expected date of decision	Any representations must be made to the following officer at least 1 week before the decision is to be made
<p>Resident Support Fund Resident Support Fund to replace Local Welfare Assistance with wider eligibility, support and advice to residents including financial inclusion, employment support and development and digital inclusion.</p> <p>The view being supporting residents with early intervention and prevention with financial stability and sustainability.</p> <p>KEY Report: Open</p>	Cabinet	Strategic Director - Customer and Digital Services	Lead Member for Housing and Welfare Reform (Councillor Eleanor Southwood)	8 March 2021	Head of Customer Access, Management (Customer Services) Tel: 020 8937 2705 asha.vyas@brent.gov.uk
<p>Tackling social housing tenancy fraud in Brent To approve the draft action plan for tackling social housing tenancy fraud in Brent.</p> <p>KEY Report: Open</p> <p>N.B. This decision was added to the Forward Plan on 15 January 2021</p>	Cabinet	Operational Director - Housing	Lead Member for Housing and Welfare Reform (Councillor Eleanor Southwood)	8 Mar 2021	Housing Partnerships Manager Tel: 020 8937 1131 Emily-Rae.Maxwell@brent.gov.uk

Details of the decision to be taken	Decision to be taken by	Relevant report from	Lead Member	Expected date of decision	Any representations must be made to the following officer at least 1 week before the decision is to be made
<p>Consideration of application for designation of Harlesden Neighbourhood Forum and Neighbourhood Area Consideration of responses to consultation.</p> <p>Confirmation of the Harlesden Neighbourhood Forum and Neighbourhood Area.</p> <p>KEY</p> <p>Report: Open</p>	Strategic Director - Regeneration and Environment	Strategic Director - Regeneration and Environment	Lead Member for Regeneration, Property & Planning (Councillor Shama Tatler)	26 Mar 2021	Planning Policy Officer, Planning and Development Service, Tel: 020 8937 3819 Jordan.Henderson@brent.gov.uk
<p>Page 22 April 2021</p>					
<p>Fair Debt Recovery Policy To consider updated fair debt policy.</p> <p>KEY</p> <p>Report: Part exempt</p>	Cabinet	Director of Customer Access	Deputy Leader (Councillor Margaret McLennan)	6 Apr 2021	Head of Revenues and Debt Tel: 020 8937 2307 Peter.Cosgrove@brent.gov.uk

Details of the decision to be taken	Decision to be taken by	Relevant report from	Lead Member	Expected date of decision	Any representations must be made to the following officer at least 1 week before the decision is to be made
<p>Authority to Award - Voluntary and Community Sector Infrastructure Support contract To award the tender to the successful provider after a competitive tender process</p> <p>KEY</p> <p>Report: Part exempt</p>	Assistant Chief Executive	Assistant Chief Executive	Lead Member for Community Safety & Engagement (Councillor Promise Knight)	Before 30 Apr 2021	Interim Partnership and Engagement Manager, julia.mlambo@brent.gov.uk
<p>Authority to Award – Independent Health Complaints Advocacy Service To award the tender to the successful provider after a competitive tender process</p> <p>KEY</p> <p>Report: Part exempt</p>	Assistant Chief Executive	Assistant Chief Executive	Lead Member for Community Safety & Engagement (Councillor Promise Knight)	Before 30 Apr 2021	Interim Partnership and Engagement Manager, julia.mlambo@brent.gov.uk

 Brent	Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee 27 January 2021
	Report from the Assistant Chief Executive
Scrutiny Recommendation Tracker	

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Non Key Decision
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small>	Open
No. of Appendices:	Appendix 1 - Scrutiny Recommendation Tracker January 2021
Background Papers:	None
Contact Officer(s): <small>(Name, Title, Contact Details)</small>	Michael Carr - Senior Policy and Scrutiny Officer michael.carr@brent.gov.uk

1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to present the Scrutiny Recommendation Tracker table, which tracks the progress of recommendations made by the committee.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

2.1 That the progress of the previous recommendations of the committee be noted.

3.0 Detail

3.1 In accordance with Part 4 of the Brent Council Constitution (Standing Orders of Committees) Brent Council scrutiny committees may make recommendations to the Full Council or the Cabinet with respect to any functions which are the responsibility of the executive or of any functions which are not the responsibility of the executive, or on matters which affect the borough or its inhabitants. The Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee may also make recommendations to the relevant NHS bodies or relevant health service providers or Full Council.

3.2 Scrutiny committees may not make executive decisions and scrutiny recommendations therefore require consideration and decision by the

appropriate decision maker; usually the Cabinet, but also full Council for policy and budgetary decisions and the NHS where it is the decision maker.

- 3.3 The Scrutiny Recommendation Tracker table attached at Appendix 1 provides a summary of scrutiny recommendations made during the municipal year, so that the scrutiny committee can track the progress of the recommendations made.
- 3.4 Scrutiny recommendations include through Scrutiny Task Groups and scrutiny reports agreed by the committee, as well as other scrutiny recommendations agreed in committee.
- 3.5 The Scrutiny Recommendation Tracker table includes each scrutiny recommendation made and the date it was made, (which will be as recorded in the committee minutes), identification of the decision maker (e.g. Cabinet), the Executive Response (the actual Cabinet decision), which may be different from the scrutiny recommendation and which will be minuted in the Cabinet minutes, the date the Executive Response/decision was made and an implementation review date.
- 3.6 The Scrutiny Recommendation Tracker enables the scrutiny committee to track whether their recommendations have been agreed, what actually was agreed (if different) and ask about any outcomes arising from the scrutiny recommendations, for example, service improvements, value for money savings and outcomes for residents.
- 3.7 If the relevant respective executive decisions and actions have been implemented, they will not be referred over to the scrutiny recommendation tracker report for the next municipal year, but that any that have not been implemented may be referred to the scrutiny recommendation tracker for the next committee cycle.

4.0 Procedure for Recommendations from Scrutiny Committees

- 4.1 Where scrutiny committees make reports or recommendations to the Cabinet, as soon as this has been confirmed, these will be referred to the Cabinet requesting an Executive Response and the issue will be published on the Council's Forward Plan. This will instigate the preparation of a report to Cabinet and the necessary consideration of the response, the technical feasibility, financial implications, legal implications and equalities implications etc.
- 4.2 Where scrutiny committees make reports or recommendations to full Council (e.g. in the case of policy and budgetary decisions), the same process will be followed, with a report to Cabinet to agree its Executive Response, and thereafter, a report will be prepared for Council for consideration of the scrutiny report and recommendations along with the Cabinet's Response.
- 4.3 Where scrutiny committees have powers under their terms of reference to make reports or recommendations external decision makers (e.g. NHS bodies), where they do this, the relevant external decision maker shall be notified in writing, providing them with a copy of the committee's report and recommendations, and requesting a response.

4.4 Once the Executive Response has been agreed, the scrutiny committee shall receive a report to receive the response and the committee may review implementation of the executive's decisions after such a period as these may reasonably be implemented (review date).

5.0 Financial Implications

5.1 There are no financial implications for the purposes of this report.

6.0 Legal Implications

6.1 Section 9F, Part 2 of the Local Government Act 2000, *overview and scrutiny committees: functions*, requires that Executive Arrangements by a local authority must ensure that its overview and scrutiny committees have the power to make reports or recommendations to the authority or the executive with respect to the discharge of any functions which are or are not the responsibility of the executive, or on matters which affect the authority's area or the inhabitants of that area.

6.2 Section 9Fe, *duty of authority or executive to respond to overview and scrutiny committee*, requires that the authority or executive;-
(a) consider the report or recommendations,
(b) respond to the overview and scrutiny committee indicating what (if any) action the authority, or the executive, proposes to take,
(c) if the overview and scrutiny committee has published the report or recommendations, publish the response, within two months beginning with the date on which the authority or executive received the report or recommendations.

7.0 Equality Implications

7.1 There are no equality implications for the purposes of this report.

8.0 Consultation with Ward Members and Stakeholders

8.1 None for the purposes of this report.

Report sign off:


**Shazia Hussain –
Assistant Chief Executive**

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
Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee Scrutiny Recommendation Tracker 2019-2020

(A key and explanatory note for this tracker table is provided at the end of this report).

12 September 2019

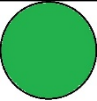
Subject	Scrutiny Recommendation	Decision Maker & Executive Response	Department, Cabinet Member and lead officer	Implementation Status	Review Date status
Knife Crime Scrutiny Task Group Report and recommendations	<p>Knife Crime Scrutiny Task Group Report and recommendations</p> <p>RESOLVED: The Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee: agreed the report and recommendations of the Knife Crime Scrutiny Task Group and that the report now be referred to the Cabinet for consideration.</p>	<p>Cabinet 14 October 2019</p> <p>Cabinet Decision/Response:</p> <p>Decision: RESOLVED: that the recommendations set out in the report of the Knife Crime Task Group be agreed. (Cabinet 14 October 2019)</p>	<p>Regeneration and Environment</p> <p>The Safer Brent Partnership</p> <p><i>Cabinet Member:</i> Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Engagement</p> <p><i>Strategic Director:</i> The Strategic Director Regeneration and Environment</p>	A report on the progress of the implementation of the agreed scrutiny recommendations was anticipated for the RPRSC meeting on 21 April 2020. (12 March 2020). This is now included in the scrutiny committee work programme for consideration on Monday 10 May 2021.	 10 May 2021

4 December 2019

Subject	Scrutiny Recommendation	Decision Maker & Executive Response	Department, Cabinet Member and lead officer	Implementation Status	Review Date status
Air Quality Scrutiny Report	<p>RESOLVED:</p> <p>1. That the Air Quality Scrutiny Report and recommendations be</p>	<p>Cabinet 14 January 2020</p> <p>Cabinet Decision/Response:</p>	<p>Regeneration and Environment</p> <p><i>Cabinet Member:</i></p>	The intention is to bring back progress on implementing the recommendations on Wednesday 14 April 2021.	 14 April

	<p>adopted and referred to the Cabinet for consideration.</p> <p>2. That the implementation of the report's recommendations agreed by the Cabinet be brought back to the Committee for review in 2020-2021.</p>	<p>RESOLVED that Cabinet note the Air Quality Scrutiny Report and recommendations. (Cabinet 14 January 2020)</p> <p>Cabinet 20 April 2020</p> <p>Cabinet Decision/Response:</p> <p>Cabinet RESOLVED to approve the draft Executive Response to the Air Quality Scrutiny Report and recommendations of the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee.</p>	<p>Cabinet Member for Environment</p> <p><i>Strategic Director</i> The Strategic Director Regeneration and Environment</p>		2021
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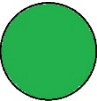
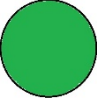
29 January 2020

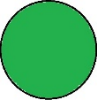
Subject	Scrutiny Recommendation	Decision Maker & Executive Response	Department, Cabinet Member and lead officer	Implementation Status	Review Date status
Budget Scrutiny Task Group Report	RESOLVED that the Budget Scrutiny Report and recommendations be adopted and referred to the Cabinet for consideration.	<p>Cabinet 10 February 2020</p> <p>Budget & Council Tax 2020/21-2022/23 (Appendix D)</p> <p>Council 19 February 2020</p> <p>Cabinet Decision/Response:</p> <p>RESOLVED that Cabinet: To note the report from the</p>	<p>Finance</p> <p><i>Cabinet Member:</i> Resources and Deputy Leader of the Council</p> <p><i>Strategic Director:</i> The Strategic Director of Finance</p>	It is anticipated that progress report on the implementation of the agreed Executive Response and decisions will be brought to the scrutiny committee on 1 October 2020.	 1 Oct 2020

		<p><i>Budget Scrutiny Panel in Appendix D of the report. In addition, Cabinet agreed at the meeting to recommend to Council that any overall underspend across the General Fund accrued at the end of March 2020 be ringfenced and brought forward as proposals for spending on the climate change emergency. (Cabinet 10 February 2020)</i></p> <p>Cabinet 20 April 2020</p> <p>Cabinet Decision/Response:</p> <p><i>Cabinet RESOLVED to approve the draft Executive Response to the Budget Task Group Scrutiny Report and recommendations of the Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee. (Cabinet 20 April 2020)</i></p> <p>Council Decision: <i>AGREED (6) To note the report from the Budget Scrutiny Panel in Appendix D of the report and approve the recommendation from Cabinet that any overall underspend across the General Fund at the end of March 2020 is ring fenced and that proposals are brought forward for spending</i></p>			
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
		on the climate change emergency. (Council 19 February 2020)			
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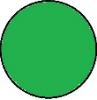
12 March 2020

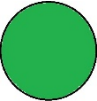
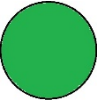
Subject	Scrutiny Recommendation	Decision Maker & Executive Response	Department, Cabinet Member and lead officer	Implementation Status	Review Date status
Brent Parks Strategy	That a new Brent Parks Strategy encompass the green and open spaces as a whole and include measurable targets, including bespoke targets for Brent, to facilitate the use of parks and open spaces by a diversity of different people in the community and to encourage sporting activities.	<p>Cabinet 17 August 2020</p> <p>Cabinet Decision/Response:</p> <p><i>Cabinet RESOLVED to approve the Executive Response to the recommendations made by the Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee on 12 March 2020 relating to the Council's Parks Strategy.</i></p> <p>Decision: AGREED.</p>	<p>Regeneration and Environment</p> <p><i>Cabinet Member:</i> Cabinet Member for Environment</p> <p><i>Strategic Director</i> The Strategic Director Regeneration and Environment</p>	This should be included in the strategy review.	 March 2021.
Brent Parks Strategy	To improve the data on people using the park, which could be used to inform the strategy.	<p>Cabinet 17 August 2020</p> <p>Cabinet Decision/Response:</p> <p>Decision: AGREED.</p>	<p>Regeneration and Environment</p> <p><i>Cabinet Member:</i> Cabinet Member for Environment</p> <p><i>Strategic Director</i> The Strategic Director Regeneration and Environment</p>	This should be included in the strategy review.	 March 2021.

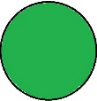
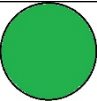
Brent Parks Strategy	That provision be made within the strategy and management of parks to allow for barbeques in designated areas, perhaps with the requirement of a permit and perhaps after a trial period to test out how this might work.	<p>Cabinet 17 August 2020</p> <p>Cabinet Decision/Response:</p> <p>Decision: AGREED.</p> <p>Cabinet noted that consideration of the provision to allow use of BBQs in designated areas would require further review, in terms of the options available to manage any change as part of the ongoing development of the strategy, on which the Scrutiny Committee would continue to be kept updated.</p>	<p>Regeneration and Environment</p> <p><i>Cabinet Member:</i> Cabinet Member for Environment</p> <p><i>Strategic Director</i> The Strategic Director Regeneration and Environment</p>	<p>This should be included in the strategy review, noting that consideration of the provision to allow use of BBQs in designated areas would require further review and the Scrutiny Committee will be kept updated.</p> <p>The department will be developing a policy paper that sets the direction for parks over the coming months.</p> <p>The department will need to identify the funding that may be needed to develop BBQ sites and then take that forward in advance of the peak parks season next summer.</p>	 March 2021.
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


14 July 2020

Subject	Scrutiny Recommendation	Decision Maker & Executive Response	Department, Cabinet Member and lead officer	Implementation Status	Review Date status
The Public Realm	That the new parking strategy ensure that it is always cheaper to park a bike than park a car in Brent, and ensure that the cheapest resident parking permit is more expensive than using a bike hangar.	<p>Cabinet 12 October 2020</p> <p>Cabinet Decision/Response: Cabinet RESOLVED to approve the Executive Response.</p> <p>Decision:</p>	<p>Regeneration and Environment</p> <p><i>Cabinet Member:</i> Cabinet Member for Environment and Cabinet Member</p>	The department will look to raise the lowest parking permit price to the equivalent of the starting price for using a cycle hanger, i.e. from the current £25 to £36.	 March 2021.

		<p>AGREED.</p> <p>Cabinet Decision: That consideration be given to raising the lowest parking permit price to the equivalent of the starting price for using a cycle hanger.</p>	<p>for Regeneration, Property & Planning</p> <p><i>Strategic Director:</i> The Strategic Director Regeneration and Environment</p>		
The Public Realm	That 20mph be adopted as the default speed on Brent roads, subject to an environmental audit, and that a timetable be drawn up for the introduction of a 20mph speed limit across the borough.	<p>Cabinet 12 October 2020</p> <p>Cabinet Decision: That consideration be given to introducing 20mph as the default speed on Brent roads to an extent that reasonably accounts for the feasibility, the cost, the value, the actual impact on traffic and speeding at any given location, and the capacity of the department to deliver this policy at this time.</p>	<p>Regeneration and Environment</p> <p><i>Cabinet Member:</i> Cabinet Member for Environment and Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Property & Planning</p> <p><i>Strategic Director:</i> The Strategic Director Regeneration and Environment</p>	This is being considered and a policy paper is being developed. The main consideration is that the borough is already largely considered a 20mph zone, and that any extension will depend on the cost of making that extension, the value and impact that might actually have in real terms on traffic and speeding, and the capacity of the Highways teams to be able to deliver given other competing pressures at this time.	 March 2021.
The Public Realm	That unspent balances in the capital budget be reinvested in active travel.	<p>Cabinet 12 October 2020</p> <p>Cabinet Decision/Response: <i>This recommendation was rejected.</i></p> <p>Reason: <i>it is not envisaged that there will be any unspent capital budgets available.</i></p> <p>Response:</p>	<p>Regeneration and Environment</p> <p><i>Cabinet Member:</i> Cabinet Member for Environment and Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Property & Planning</p>	The department will account for this when reviewing and updating the Long Term Transport Strategy or drafting any new strategies.	N/A

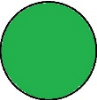
		<i>It is not clear what capital budgets are being referred to. Local Implementation Plan funding has been frozen. Brent funded capital is for maintenance only and Section 106 funding is usually scheme specific although we can seek to prioritise.</i>	<i>Strategic Director:</i> The Strategic Director Regeneration and Environment		
The Public Realm	That any future transport strategies and plans include clear measurements and modelling for active transport and the impact on air quality.	Cabinet 12 October 2020 <i>Cabinet Decision:</i> <i>That consideration be given, when reviewing and updating the Long Term Transport Strategy or drafting any new strategies for future transport strategies and plans, to include clear measurements and modelling for active transport and the impact on air quality.</i>	Regeneration and Environment <i>Cabinet Member:</i> Cabinet Member for Environment and Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Property & Planning <i>Strategic Director:</i> The Strategic Director Regeneration and Environment	<i>The department will account for this when reviewing and updating the Long Term Transport Strategy or drafting any new strategies.</i>	 March 2021.
The Public Realm	That low traffic streets be rebranded in a way that is clearer for the public, for example 'Healthy Streets' or 'Peaceful Streets'.	Cabinet 12 October 2020 <i>Cabinet Decision:</i> <i>That the Council's low traffic streets policy be branded 'Healthy Neighbourhoods'.</i>	Regeneration and Environment <i>Cabinet Member:</i> Cabinet Member for Environment and for Regeneration, Property &	This has been branded 'Healthy Neighbourhoods'.	 March 2021.

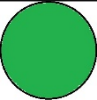
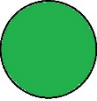
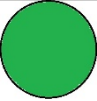
			<p>Planning</p> <p><i>Strategic Director:</i> The Strategic Director Regeneration and Environment</p>	
The Brent Economy	That the Cabinet Member for Regeneration work with the West London Prosperity Board to set up a jobs summit with large local employers (regardless of sector) to look at ways the public and private sectors can work together to support local employment.	<p>Cabinet</p> <p>Cabinet Decision/Response: Cabinet RESOLVED to approve the Executive Response.</p> <p>Decision: AGREED.</p>	<p>Regeneration and Environment</p> <p><i>Cabinet Member:</i> Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Property & Planning</p> <p><i>Strategic Director:</i> The Strategic Director Regeneration and Environment</p>	 <p>March 2021.</p>
Social Welfare in Brent	That the COVID-19 Interest Free Loans Eligibility Criteria to include debt as part of the criteria.	<p>Cabinet 20 July 2020</p> <p>Cabinet Decision/Response:</p> <p>Cabinet RESOLVED:</p> <p>To support and approve the following recommendations made by the Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee being taken forward as part of the development and implementation of the new support funds:</p> <p>(a) That the Covid-19</p>	<p>Regeneration and Environment</p> <p><i>Cabinet Member:</i> Cabinet Member for Housing and Welfare Reform</p> <p><i>Strategic Director:</i> Strategic Director Customer and Digital Services</p>	 <p>July 2021</p>




		Interest Free Loans eligibility criteria be extended to include debt;			
Social Welfare in Brent	That the department organise a member development session to brief elected members of the Council on the new support funds and when it may be appropriate to refer people to them.	Cabinet 20 July 2020 Cabinet Decision/Response: Cabinet RESOLVED: (b) A member development session be arranged on the new support funds and their referral process;	Regeneration and Environment <i>Cabinet Member:</i> Cllr Eleanor Southwood - Cabinet Member for Housing and Welfare Reform <i>Strategic Director:</i> Strategic Director Customer and Digital Services	A member development session is being arranged on the new support funds and their referral process.	 July 2021
Social Welfare in Brent	That the department use the information it has available on vulnerable local people to proactively contact them to advise of the support on offer, and accompany this with a media campaign through social media and traditional media.	Cabinet 20 July 2020 Cabinet Decision/Response: Cabinet RESOLVED: (c) The Strategic Director, Customer & Digital Services be requested to consider how best to proactively use data already available to offer advice and support for vulnerable local people;	Regeneration and Environment <i>Cabinet Member:</i> Cllr Eleanor Southwood - Cabinet Member for Housing and Welfare Reform <i>Strategic Director:</i> Strategic Director Customer and Digital Services	This is being implemented.	 July 2021
Social Welfare in Brent	That the department conduct a review of its debt collection processes in the light of the COVID-19 crisis, to ensure that the circumstances of vulnerable	Cabinet 20 July 2020 Cabinet Decision/Response:	Regeneration and Environment <i>Cabinet Member:</i> Cllr Eleanor	This is being implemented.	 July





	people adversely affected by the epidemic will be taken into account.	Cabinet RESOLVED: (d) The Strategic Director, Customer & Digital Services be requested to undertake a review of debt collection processes in light of Covid-19 to ensure that the circumstances of vulnerable people adversely affected by the pandemic were fully taken into account.	Southwood - Cabinet Member for Housing and Welfare Reform <i>Strategic Director:</i> Strategic Director Customer and Digital Services		2021
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


1 October 2020

Subject	Scrutiny Recommendation	Decision Maker & Executive Response	Department, Cabinet Member and lead officer	Implementation Status	Review Date status
Brent Council Procurement Strategy	That the Council policy on Modern Slavery be published on the Council website.	Cabinet 12 October 2020 Cabinet Decision/Response: Having noted the intention to incorporate the recommendations made by the Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee when considering the strategy at their meeting on 1 October 2020, Cabinet RESOLVED to approve the Procurement Strategy 2020-2023 as set out in Appendix A of the report to Cabinet 12 October 2020.	Regeneration and Environment <i>Cabinet Member:</i> Cllr Margaret McLennan The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources <i>Strategic Director:</i> The Strategic Director of Customer and Digital Services	The Strategy and Partnerships Team are leading this work and will publish on the website when completed.	 April 2021.
Brent Council Procurement Strategy	That the Brent Council Procurement Strategy include how fair trade is to be delivered.	Cabinet 12 October 2020 Cabinet Decision/Response:	Regeneration and Environment <i>Cabinet Member:</i>	The Procurement Strategy under the Sustainability Pillar can add the additional KPIs to support the recommendation.	

		Having noted the intention to incorporate the recommendations made by the Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee when considering the strategy at their meeting on 1 October 2020, Cabinet RESOLVED to approve the Procurement Strategy 2020-2023 as set out in Appendix A of the report to Cabinet 12 October 2020.	Cllr Margaret McLennan The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources <i>Strategic Director:</i> The Strategic Director of Customer and Digital Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Report on the number of suppliers who have signed up to the Fairtrade Mark.</i> • <i>Work with the whole supplier base to encourage an increase in the understanding Fairtrade principles and encourage sign up to the Fairtrade</i> 	 April 2021.
Brent Council Procurement Strategy	To consider how Council contracts may be made available to smaller company providers.	Cabinet 12 October 2020 Cabinet Decision/Response: Having noted the intention to incorporate the recommendations made by the Resources & Public Realm Scrutiny Committee when considering the strategy at their meeting on 1 October 2020, Cabinet RESOLVED to approve the Procurement Strategy 2020-2023 as set out in Appendix A of the report to Cabinet 12 October 2020.	Regeneration and Environment <i>Cabinet Member:</i> Cllr Margaret McLennan The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources <i>Strategic Director:</i> The Strategic Director of Customer and Digital Services	The Active Procurement and Community Wealth building pillars of the strategy, in particular, are relevant to this recommendation. For example there is a requirement on Service Areas, in the Active Procurement pillar, to review each major contract at least 18 months before it is due to expire. This includes, amongst other things, consideration of whether having smaller more local suppliers would be a viable option. The Community Wealth building pillar is all about keeping the Brent pound in the Brent economy.	 April 2021.
Violence Against Women Scrutiny report	That the Violence Against Women Scrutiny report and recommendations be adopted and referred to Cabinet for consideration.	Cabinet 7 December 2020 Cabinet RESOLVED to approve the Executive Response to the recommendations made by	Regeneration and Environment The Safer Brent Partnership <i>Cabinet Member:</i>	The scrutiny report and the Cabinet's Executive Response is to be considered at the next meeting of the Safer Brent Partnership on the 26 th January 2021.	 December 2021.

		<p>the Violence against Women and Girls Scrutiny Task Group, as detailed within Appendix 1 of the report.</p> <p>http://democracy.brent.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=455&MId=6090&Ver=4</p>	<p>Cabinet Member for Community Safety and Engagement</p> <p><i>Strategic Director:</i> The Strategic Director Regeneration and Environment</p>		
Violence Against Women Scrutiny report	<p><i>Recommendation 1</i> That the approach taken by the Council and its officers should align with our contextual safeguarding work and encourage the whole community to play a part – initiatives to raise awareness should not only to be directed at perpetrators or victims.</p>	Decision: Agreed		“	 Decem ber 2021.
Violence Against Women Scrutiny report	<p><i>Recommendation 2</i> That a comprehensive engagement and communications strategy be devised and materials developed to use with a diverse range of different community stakeholders, developed by considering feedback from those with lived experience of domestic abuse and violence against women. The Safer Brent Partnership to share this with elected members.</p>	Decision: Agreed		“	 Decem ber 2021.
Violence Against Women Scrutiny report	<p><i>Recommendation 3</i> That a training and development plan is put in place to improve staff knowledge and skills across staff teams and departments.</p>	Decision: Amended as; That a training and development plan is put in place to improve staff knowledge and skills across staff teams and		“	 Decem

	That an audit be carried out what training specialist staff have had and how up to date their knowledge of best practice is, identifying any critical gaps in training and rectify and training insufficiencies within six to nine months.	departments. That an audit be carried out to identify when and what training specialist staff have had and offering a range of courses and learning opportunities to rectify any training insufficiencies within six to nine months.			ber 2021.
Violence Against Women Scrutiny report	<i>Recommendation 4</i> That a plan be developed for how the Council supports the training needs of its partners in the community and voluntary sector.	Decision: Agreed		“	 Decem ber 2021.
Violence Against Women Scrutiny report	<i>Recommendation 5</i> That the Council gain Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) accreditation and embed best practice.	Decision: Agreed		“	 Decem ber 2021.
Violence Against Women Scrutiny report	<i>Recommendation 6</i> That a strategic alliance with at least one other borough be sought, either outside of London or through the Pan London scheme, to facilitate housing for those who need to move for their safety.	Decision: Agreed		“	 Decem ber 2021.
Violence Against Women Scrutiny report	<i>Recommendation 7</i> That the Council consider building its own women's refuge that can take older teenaged male children who are dependants of a victim, who may not be accepted in a refuge	Decision: Agreed		“	 Decem ber 2021.

	currently - through our council house building programme.				
Violence Against Women Scrutiny report	<i>Recommendation 8</i> Ensure that our commissioned services collect feedback from victims and survivors to use to improve services; and demographic data on ethnicity, languages spoken –to inform Joint Strategic Needs Assessments, and so that we can more accurately assess needs and prioritise resources.	Decision: Agreed		“	 December 2021.
Violence Against Women Scrutiny report	<i>Recommendation 9</i> That safety audits be carried out to identify risks for premises where women need to access support for Violence Against Women and Girls.	Decision: Amended as That safety audits be carried out to identify risks for council premises where women need to access support for Violence Against Women and Girls.		“	 December 2021.
Violence Against Women Scrutiny report	<i>Recommendation 10</i> That it be ensured that all facilities and services are accessible to disabled women) and that the communications material and websites provide different accessible formats of information for women and girls from all sections of the community and with hearing or visual impairments to contact support services.	Decision: Agreed		“	 December 2021.

Notes

This is a table to track the progress of scrutiny recommendations made by one of the formal scrutiny committees at Brent Council. It is a standing item on the Committee's agendas, so that the Committee can keep track of the recommendations it has made, the decisions made, implementation status and provoke consideration of outcomes that have for residents, the Council and its statutory partners.

The tracker lists the recommendations made by the committee throughout a municipal year and any recommendations still not fully implemented from previous years since June 2019.

The tracker documents the scrutiny recommendations made, the dates when they were made, the decision maker who can make each decision in respect of the recommendations, the date the decision was made and the actual decision taken. The executive decision taken may be the same as the scrutiny recommendation (e.g. the recommendation was "agreed") or it may be a different decision, which should be clarified here. The tracker also asks if the respective executive decisions have been implemented and this should be updated accordingly throughout the year.

Scrutiny Task Group report recommendations should be included here but referenced collectively (e.g. the name of the scrutiny inquiry and date of the agreement of the scrutiny report and recommendations by the scrutiny committee, along with the respective dates when the decision maker(s) considered and responded to the report and recommendations. The Committee should generally review the implementation of scrutiny task group report recommendations separately with stand-alone agenda items at relevant junctures – e.g. the Executive Response to a scrutiny report and after six months or a year, or upon expected implementation of the agreed recommendation of report. The "Expected Implementation Date" should provide an indication of a suitable time for review.

Key:

date of scrutiny committee meeting - For each table, the date of scrutiny committee meeting when the recommendation was made is provided in the subtitle header.

Subject – this is the item title on the committee's agenda; the subject being considered.

Scrutiny Recommendation – This is the text of the scrutiny recommendation as it appears on the minutes – **in bold**.

Decision Maker – the decision maker for the recommendation, (**in bold**), eg the Cabinet (for Council executive decisions), full Council (for Council policy and budgetary decisions), or an NHS executive body for recommendations to the NHS. In brackets, (date), the date on which the Executive Response was made.

Executive Response – The response of the decision maker (eg Cabinet decision) for the recommendation. This should be the executive decision as recorded in the minutes. The Executive Response should provide details of what, if anything, the executive

will do in response to the scrutiny recommendation. Ideally, the Executive Response will include a decision to either agree/reject/or amend the scrutiny recommendation and where the scrutiny recommendation is rejected, provide an explanation of why. In brackets, provide the date of Cabinet/executive meeting that considered the scrutiny recommendation and made the decision.

Department – the Council directorate (and/or external agencies) that are responsible for implementation of the agreed executive decision/response. Also provided, for reference only, the relevant Cabinet Member and strategic director.

Implementation Status – This is the progress of any implementation of the agreed Executive Response against key milestones. This may cross reference to any specific actions and deadlines that may be provided in the Executive Response. This should be as specific and quantifiable as possible. This should also provide, as far as possible, any evidenced outcomes or improvements resulting from implementation.

Review Date and status - This is the expected date when the agreed Executive Response should be fully implemented and when the scrutiny committee may usefully review the implementation and any evidenced outcomes (eg service improvements). (Note: this is the implementation of the agreed Executive Response, which may not be the same as the scrutiny recommendation).