

# Analysis of Trading Standards Service Requests

## 1 April 2022 to 30 September 2023

### Introduction

The aim of this analysis and report is to help evaluate where the Service's demands come from, to assist in identifying any trends, to better understand why/how our customers are contacting us and to assist with identifying where the Service's resources should be deployed to achieve the biggest impact relating to the types of complaints/service requests it receives. To achieve this, the analysis looks at the following;

1. Identify the main source of service requests along with the types of products/services we have received complaints about and identify any pattern.
2. Identify the hotspot within the Boroughs where the Service can concentrate its enforcement actions to achieve the biggest impact.

The data used for the analysis was obtained from the services complaints/service requests database between 1 April 2022 to 30 September 2023.

Complaints and service requests received from various sources have been recorded in the database.

**Please Note: this report only provides an overview of the complaints and any further information needed into specific types of complaints/service requests will require further analysis.**

### Service Requests

A total of **6,911** service requests were received between 1 April 2022 to 30 September 2023. Like most other Trading Standards authorities nationally, we work with the Citizens Advice Consumer Service who act as the public's first point of contact when they want help and advice with a consumer issue or to escalate a criminal breach to their local trading standards. 6,054 of our service requests were received via Citizens Advice Consumer Service (CACS).

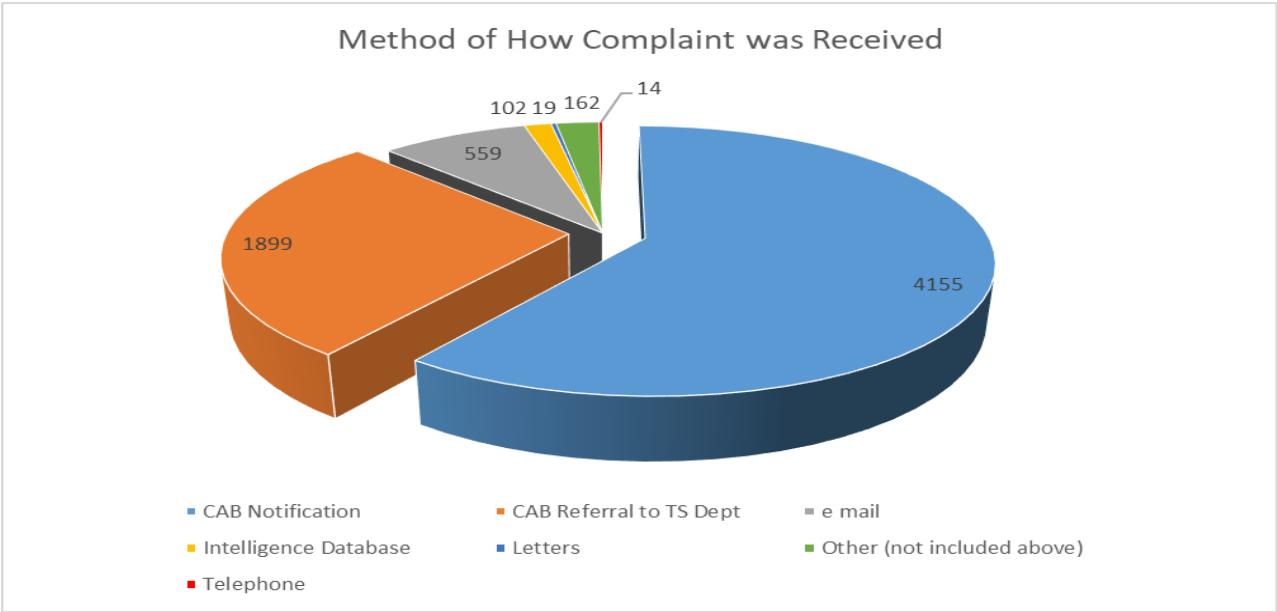
The public can contact CACS via their telephone helpline, via online chat or by completing an online form. Their website offers advice, template letters and sources of information regarding the most common areas of consumer complaint.

The telephone helpline is available Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm and there is no cost to phone it. Wait times are usually a few minutes and average call times are 8 to 10 minutes.

Service requests are split into two categories:

- **4,155 were classified as NOTIFICATIONS** (this is used to indicate the transfer of cases from CACS for information purposes only where there is no commitment for Trading Standards to contact the enquirer as the help and advice has been provided by CACS ) Some Trading Standards Service have requested that they do not wish to receive notifications from CACS but in Brent and Harrow, we have these sent to us to help with our monitoring of businesses and wider intelligence gathering purposes.
- **1,899 were classified as REFERRAL** (this is used to indicate transfer of cases for further consideration by Trading Standards). We will individually consider and risk assess all referrals received from CACS. CACS gives the service no obligation to contact the complainant in the first instant unless we need further evidence, as while the matter may concern an alleged criminal breach, the matter could be determined to be a minor issue or something which has been determined as a low priority.

The remaining requests were received directly to the service’s own email address (559), via the national Intelligence Database (102), by letter (19), telephone (14) and the remaining 162 were received via other methods such as an officer generated complaint.



Service Requests Received on a Monthly Basis Since April 2022

The table below shows the number of service requests received on a monthly basis-



Intelligence does not show any particular pattern about when complaints are received, however, the overall number received per month has reduced in 2023 with April being as low as 292.

## Source of Service Request

Type of Request/Complaint	Quantity
Consumer Complaint/Notification/Referral/Enquiry	6136
Enquiry from Other LA / Statutory Body	147
Officer Generated Complaint	140
Intelligence database	97
Alcohol Premise Licence Applications/Reviews	95
Request for Advice by Primary Authority Business	65
Fireworks Licensing Applications (All Yr & 4 times)	42
Request for Advice by Local Business	31
Trader Complaint about other Business	31
Referral from Police	24
Self Verification Notification (by Trader)	20
Referral from PORTS	19
Referral from Local Authority	18
Councillors making or passing on complaints	13
Other Enquiries etc.	13
Referral from SCAMS Team	11
POCA Investigation Enquiry	4
Home Authority Referrals	1
Enq from Illegal Money Lending Team (Loan Sharks)	1
Request for Verification (by B&H)	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>6909</b>

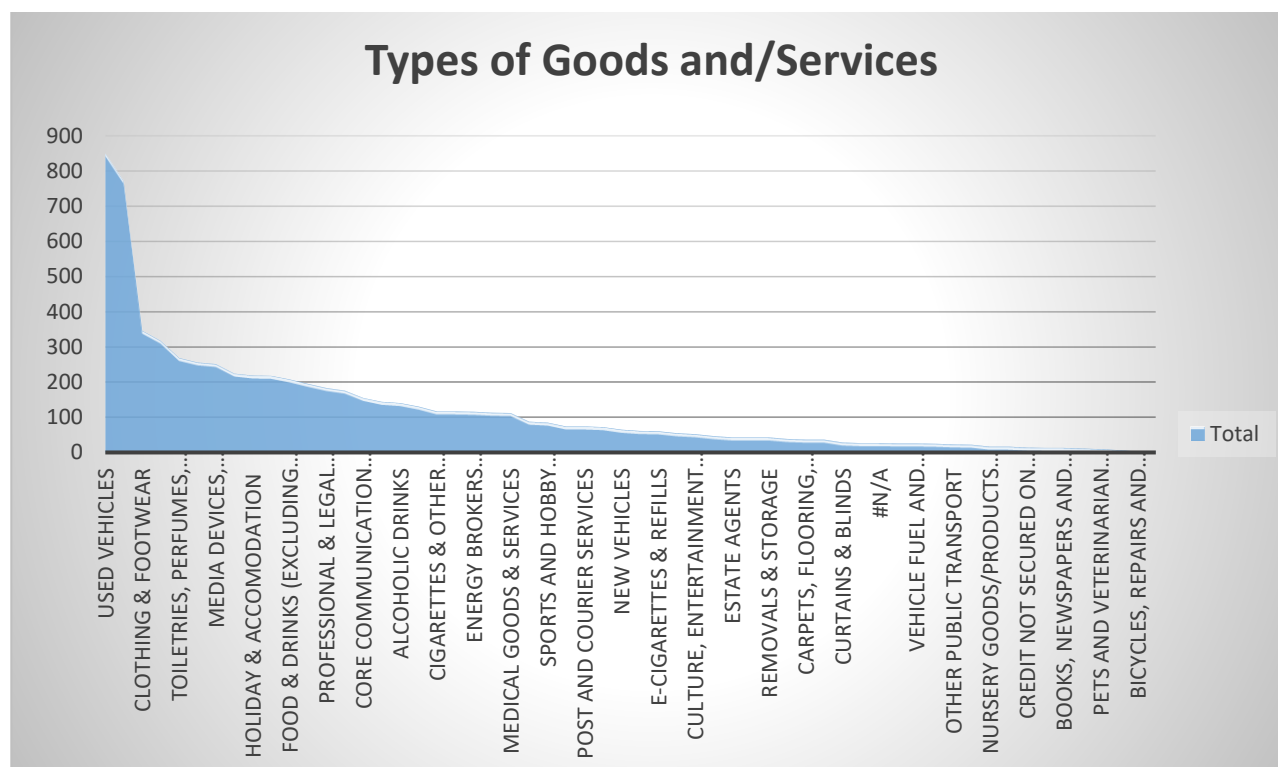
The top main source of complaints received are from consumers either directly to the Service or via the Citizens Advice Consumer Service (CACS) 6136 were received which includes 6054 notifications and referrals from CACS.

The second highest is 'Enquiry from other Local Authority / Statutory Body' with 147, closely followed by 'Officer Generated Complaint' with 140

(Officer-generated complaint is when an officer finds a breach whilst carrying out market surveillance, or inspection and creates a service request to either deal with the request personally or for another officer to deal with)

## Types of Goods and/Services

The graph and table below shows the different types of goods and /services received and the numbers against each



Types of Good/ Services	Total
Used Vehicles	849
Building & Renovation Services	771
Clothing & Footwear	346
Furniture (Upholstered & Non Upholstered)	318
Toiletries, Perfumes, Beauty treatments & Hairdressing	269
Air & Travel Agents	256
Media Devices, Accessories and Repairs	251
Insurance	224
Holiday & Accommodation	219
Motor Vehicle Repairs & Services	218
Food & Drinks (Excluding Alcohol)	208
Small/Medium Home Appliances	195
Professional & Legal Services	183
Other Motoring Costs	176
Core Communication Services	155
Letting and Property Management	144
Alcoholic Drinks	140
Other Personal Goods and Services	130
Cigarettes & Other Tobacco	117
Other household goods and services	117
Energy Brokers Installers & Certifiers	116
Education, Employment and Training	113
Medical Goods & Services	112
Catering & Accommodation (Takeaways etc)	88
Sports and Hobby Equipment and Services	85
Gardening Products & Services	74
Post and Courier Services	74
Retail Banking	72
New Vehicles	65
Clock/Watches/Jewellery repairs	61
E-Cigarettes & Refills	60
Digital Media/ Content	55
Culture, Entertainment & Ticket Resale	52
Lasers & Psychoactive Substances	47
Estate Agents	43
Locksmith & HandyPersons	43
Removals & Storage	43
Photography & Videos	38
Carpets, Flooring, Bathroom Fittings	37
Industrial/commercial Goods and Service	37
Curtains & Blinds	28
Betting, Competitions, Prize Draws	27
#N/A	27
Property Construction	26
Vehicle Fuel and Charging Stations	26
Disability Aids	25
Other Public Transport	23
Toys and Games	22
Nursery Goods/Products & Services	17
Website, Hosting, Domain & Social Media	17
Credit Not Secured on Property	14
Ancillary Credit Business	13
Books, Newspapers and Magazines	13
Hand & Power tools, Wall Covering	11
Pets and Veterinarian Products/Services	9
Freight & Shipping	7
Bicycles, Repairs and Accessories	3
Boats Caravans & Trailers	2
	6911

The service had received complaints about **400** different types of individual products. However, these have been grouped together to consolidate the number to **58** as detailed in the table.

**Used Vehicles** have the highest number of reported complaints with **849** in total since April 2022.

**546** of these were about businesses based within Brent and Harrow or neighbouring boroughs.

**316** came via CACS as a Notification because the business was based within Brent & Harrow.

The second highest reported complaints is with regard to **Building and Renovation Services** with **771**.

**340** of these complaints were about businesses based within Brent and Harrow or neighbouring boroughs.

Top 20 Type of Breach	Total
01A Defective Goods	1213
02A Substandard Services	1150
01D Breach of contract	786
02D Customer service	342
(blank)	325
01C Safety	319
02F Failure/delay in providing service	300
05A Failure/delay in delivery	236
07G Bogus selling	174
12A Unfair Businesscommercial practice	163
10C Breach of fiduciary duty/responsibility (e.g. breach of trust)	156
01E Unsuitable goods provided	104
08Z Other misleading claims/omissions	93
01G Return of unwanted goods	86
01F Wrong goods provided	76
13A Underage Sales	75
08C Labelling	74
08G Counterfeiting	72
08B Advertising	70
08A Verbal misrepresentation/misdescription	69

The main type of breach reported within both boroughs was **Defective Goods** and **Substandard Services** which is often related to Used Vehicles or Building and Renovation Services.

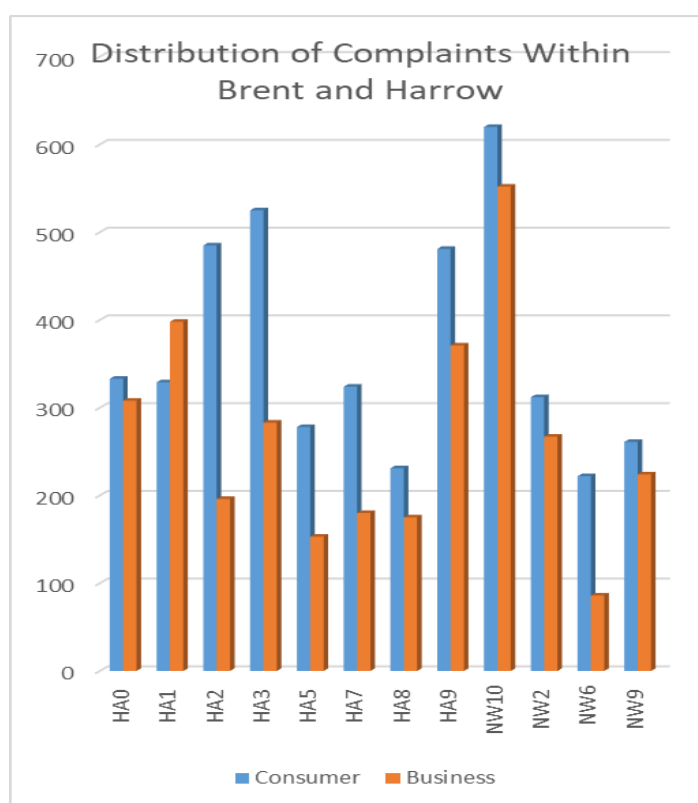
From the analysis of the report the following assessment has been reached

1. It is **almost certain** that the Service will continue to receive complaints from general members of the public mainly via Citizens Advice Consumer Service
2. It is **highly likely** that used vehicles, building and renovation services will continue to be the main goods and/or services that will be complaints about. This also fits in with these typically being high value transactions increasing the need for the public to complain if something goes wrong.
3. It is **highly likely** that Defective Goods and Substandard Services will remain the top two types of breaches which is consistent with the two highest types of complaints

#### Distribution of Complaints Received within Brent and Harrow

Complaints and service requests received are spread out across different areas within the boroughs. Below is a table and graph showing the distribution of complaints within Brent and Harrow.

Post code	Consumer	Business
HA0	333	308
HA1	329	<b>398</b>
HA2	<b>485</b>	196
HA3	<b>525</b>	283
HA5	278	153
HA7	324	180
HA8	231	175
HA9	<b>481</b>	371
NW10	<b>620</b>	<b>552</b>
NW2	312	267
NW6	222	86
NW9	261	224
	<b>4401</b>	<b>3193</b>



The highest number of complaints are from consumers within the **NW10** postcode with **620** this also has the highest number of complaints made against its businesses. The area falls within the London Borough of Brent but also borders Ealing, Hammersmith and Fulham, Kensington, and Chelsea.

**HA3** has the second highest number of consumer complaints received with **525**. This area falls within the London Borough of Harrow, however, **HA1** with **398** has the second highest number of complaints made against its businesses. This area is on the border of Brent and Harrow.

Intelligence suggests that areas that have a large concentration of shops and footfall generate the most complaints.

The table below shows which area the postcode covers and its local authority

Postcode	Area(s) Covered	Local authority area(s)
HA0	Wembley Central (west), North Wembley, Alperton, Sudbury (south)	Brent, Ealing, Harrow
HA1	Harrow, Harrow on the Hill, North Harrow, Northwick Park, Sudbury (north), Sudbury Hill	Brent, Harrow
HA2	North Harrow, South Harrow, West Harrow, Headstone, Rayners Lane (south)	Harrow
HA3	Harrow Weald, Kenton, Wealdstone, Queensbury, Belmont (west and south)	Brent, Harrow
HA5	Pinner, Eastcote (north and east), Hatch End, Rayners Lane (north), Carpenders Park (part)	Harrow, Hillingdon, Three Rivers
HA7	Stanmore, Queensbury, Belmont (north and east)	Brent, Harrow
HA8	Edgware, Burnt Oak, Canons Park, Queensbury	Barnet, Brent, Harrow
HA9	Wembley Central (east), Wembley Park, Preston, Tokyngton	Brent
NW2	<i>Cricklewood district:</i> Cricklewood, Dollis Hill, Childs Hill, Golders Green (part), Brent Cross (part), Willesden (north), Neasden (north)	Barnet, Brent, Camden
NW6	<i>Kilburn district:</i> Kilburn, Brondesbury, West Hampstead, Queen's Park, Kensal Green (part), South Hampstead (south), Swiss Cottage (west)	Brent, Camden, Westminster
NW9	<i>The Hyde district:</i> The Hyde, Colindale, Kingsbury, West Hendon, Wembley Park (part), Queensbury (part)	Barnet, Brent, Harrow
NW10	<i>Willesden district:</i> Willesden, Harlesden, Kensal Green, Brent Park, College Park, Stonebridge, North Acton (part), West Twyford, Neasden (south), Old Oak Common, Park Royal (north)	Brent, Ealing, Hammersmith and Fulham, Kensington and Chelsea

Looking at the distribution of complaints by each postcode area the following assessment has been reached

1. It is ***almost certain*** that areas that have a large concentration of shops and footfall will generate the most complaints
2. It is ***highly likely*** that residents of both Brent and Harrow will continue to shop or enter into contracts with businesses that are not based within the two boroughs as it is highly likely that businesses within both Brent and Harrow will have consumers that are not residents of the boroughs

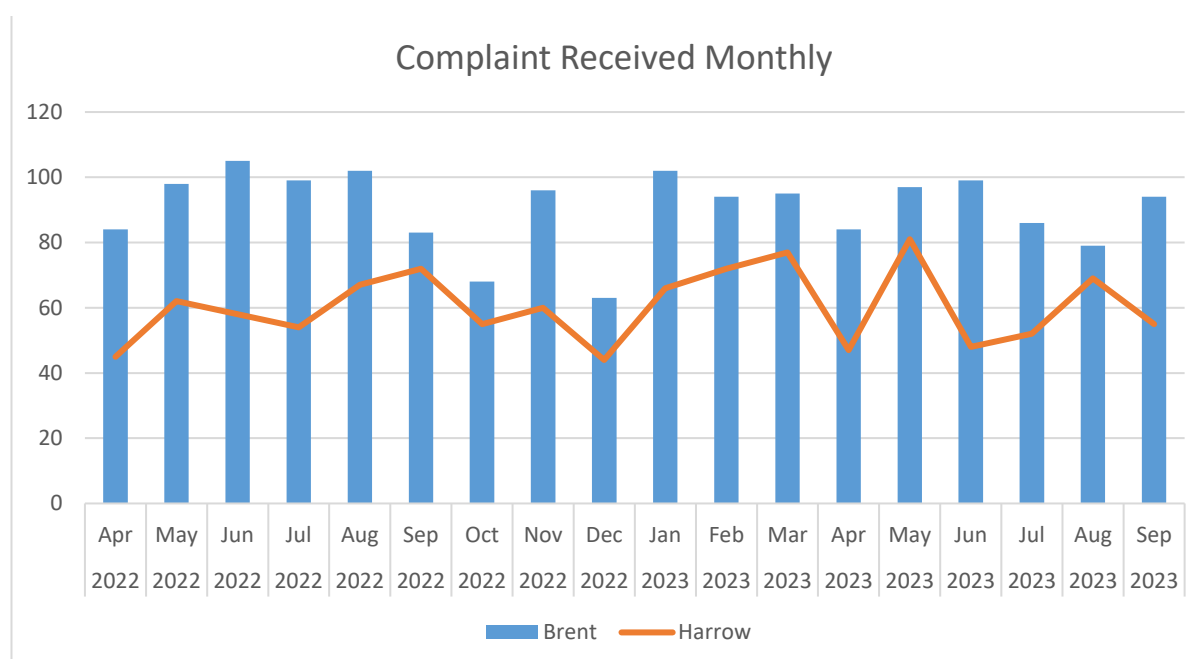
#### Brent and Harrow Allocated Service Requests for Further Investigation

This section of the report only relates to complaints that were allocated to each Borough for Further Consideration

- Over the reported period there has been a total of **1,628** complaints/service requests attributed to Brent and **1,084** to Harrow for further investigation.
- Brent had **130 Officer Generated** complaints as its second source of complaints and this was due to the eBay takedowns from 2022/23, Harrow's second highest is a notification of **alcohol premises licence application or review** with **59**.

Type of Request/Complaint Source	Brent	Harrow	Total
CCP Consumer Complaint	49	40	89
CDN CAB Notification	8	9	17
CDR CAB Referral	1032	793	1825
CEQ Consumer Enquiry	1	6	7
CLR Councillors making or passing on complaints	7	6	13
ELA Enquiry from Other LA / Statutory Body	95	52	147
HAR Home Authority Referrals	1	0	1
IDB Intelligence database	73	24	97
OGC Officer Generated Complaint	130	9	139
OL1 Alcohol Premise Licence Applications/Reviews	36	59	95
OL3 Fireworks Licensing Applications (All Yr & 4 times)	1	41	42
OTH Other Enquiries etc.	10	3	13
RIM Enq from Illegal Money Lending Team (Loan Shark)	1	0	1
RLA Referral from Local Authority	13	5	18
RPO Referral from Police	18	6	24
RPT Referral from PORTS	16	3	19
RST Referral from SCAMS Team	11	0	11
TEA Request for Advice by Local Business	25	6	31
TEP Request for Advice by Primary Authority Business	63	2	65
TEQ Trader Complaint about other Business	19	12	31
VER Request for Verification (by B&H)	1	5	6
VES Self Verification Notification (by Trader)	15	0	15
(blank)	3	3	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>1628</b>	<b>1084</b>	<b>2712</b>

## Service Requests Received Monthly





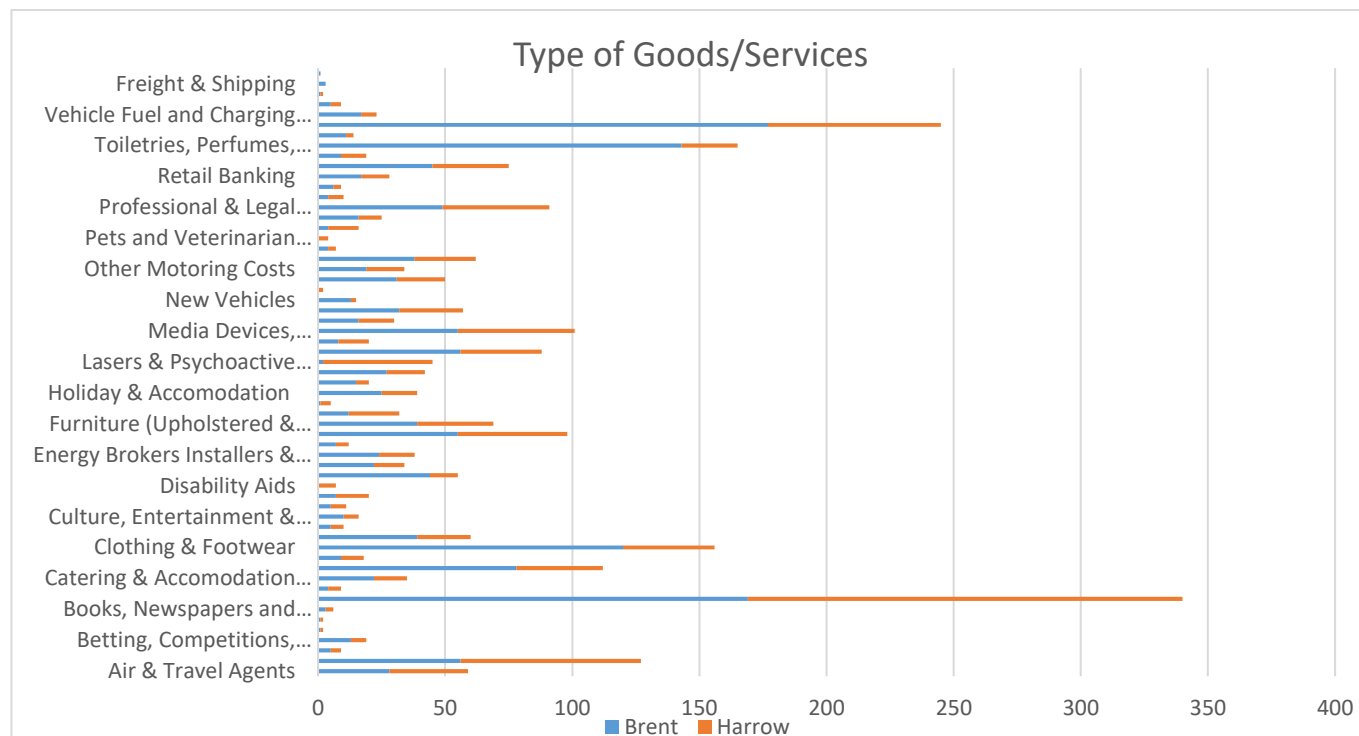
Year	Month	Brent	Harrow
2022	Apr	84	45
2022	May	98	62
2022	Jun	105	58
2022	Jul	99	54
2022	Aug	102	67
2022	Sep	83	72
2022	Oct	68	55
2022	Nov	96	60
2022	Dec	63	44
2023	Jan	102	66
2023	Feb	94	72
2023	Mar	95	77
2023	Apr	84	47
2023	May	97	81
2023	Jun	99	48
2023	Jul	86	52
2023	Aug	79	69
2023	Sep	94	55
		1628	1084

Service Requests received per month from 1 April 2022 to 30 September 2023, January 2023 saw the highest number of complaints attributed to Brent with **102** complaints in **January 2023**.

**May 2023** has the highest amount with **81** for Harrow.

### Types of Goods/Services Reported

The Graph shows the comparisons between both boroughs according to types of goods/services





The tables below shows the top 20 types of complaints received per borough

Types of Goods/Services	Brent
Used Vehicles	177
Building & Renovation Services	169
Toiletries, Perfumes, Beauty treatments & Hairdressing	143
Clothing & Footwear	120
Cigarettes & Other Tobacco	78
Alcoholic Drinks	56
Letting and Property Management	56
Food & Drinks (Excluding Alcohol)	55
Media Devices, Accessories and Repairs	55
Professional & Legal Services	49
Small/Medium Home Appliances	45
E-Cigarettes & Refills	44
Core Communication Services	39
Furniture (Upholstered & Non Upholstered)	39
Other Personal Goods and Services	38
Motor Vehicle Repairs & Services	32
Other household goods and services	31
Air & Travel Agents	28
Insurance	27
Holiday & Accommodation	25

**Used Vehicles** and **Building Renovation Services** are the top two types of Goods/Services in Brent with **Toiletries, Perfumes, Beauty Treatments, and Hairdressing** are surprisingly third in Brent, this has been attributed to the eBay work carried out by Brent Officers

Types of Goods/Services	Harrow
Building & Renovation Services	171
Alcoholic Drinks	71
Used Vehicles	68
Media Devices, Accessories and Repairs	46
Food & Drinks (Excluding Alcohol)	43
Lasers & Psychoactive Substances	43
Professional & Legal Services	42
Clothing & Footwear	36
Cigarettes & Other Tobacco	34
Letting and Property Management	32
Air & Travel Agents	31
Furniture (Upholstered & Non Upholstered)	30
Small/Medium Home Appliances	30
Motor Vehicle Repairs & Services	25
Other Personal Goods and Services	24
Toiletries, Perfumes, Beauty treatments & Hairdressing	22
Core Communication Services	21
Gardening Products & Services	20
Other household goods and services	19
Insurance	15

**Building & Renovation Services** with **171** complaints is the highest goods/services report received in Harrow

**Alcoholic drinks** with **71** is second, followed closely by **Used Vehicles** with **68** complaints

**59** of the Alcoholic drinks complaints are in relation to Alcohol Licence Applications

The tables below show the top 20 types of breach reported in each of the boroughs

Type of Breach	Brent
01C Safety (Goods)	215
02A Substandard Services	174
01A Defective Goods	167
(blank)	105
01D Breach of contract	80
07G Bogus selling	73
12A Unfair Businesscommercial practice	69
08C Labelling	61
13A Underage Sales	50
02F Failure/delay in providing service	44
08G Counterfeiting	44
08Z Other misleading claims/omissions	42
05A Failure/delay in delivery	30
01E Unsuitable goods provided	29
08A Verbal misrepresentation/misdescription	28
08B Advertising	26
02D Customer service	25
10C Breach of fiduciary duty/responsibility (e.g. breach of trust)	24
12Z Other problems with business practices	24
02C Safety (Services)	22

In Brent, the **Safety of Goods** with **215** is the highest recorded type of breach with **Substandard Services** (174) and **Defective Goods** (167) in second and third

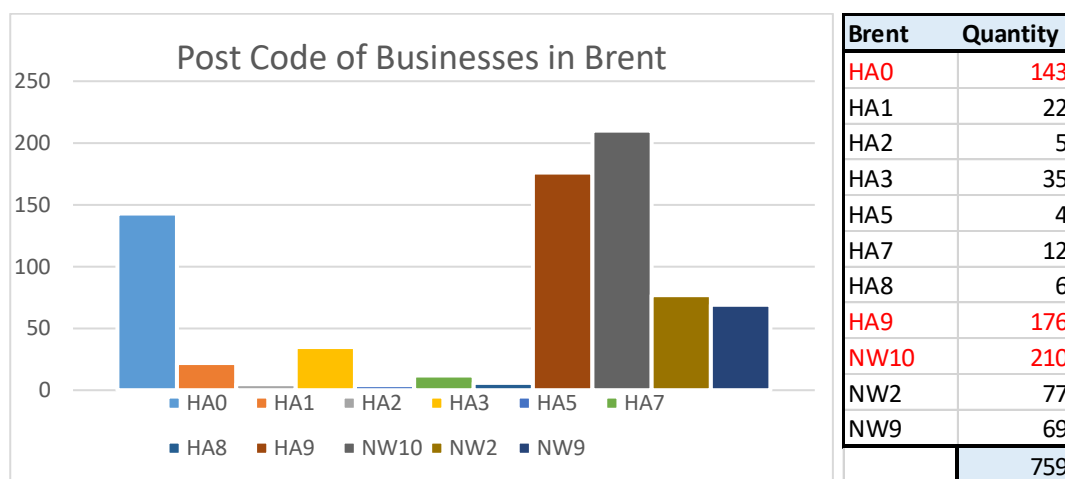
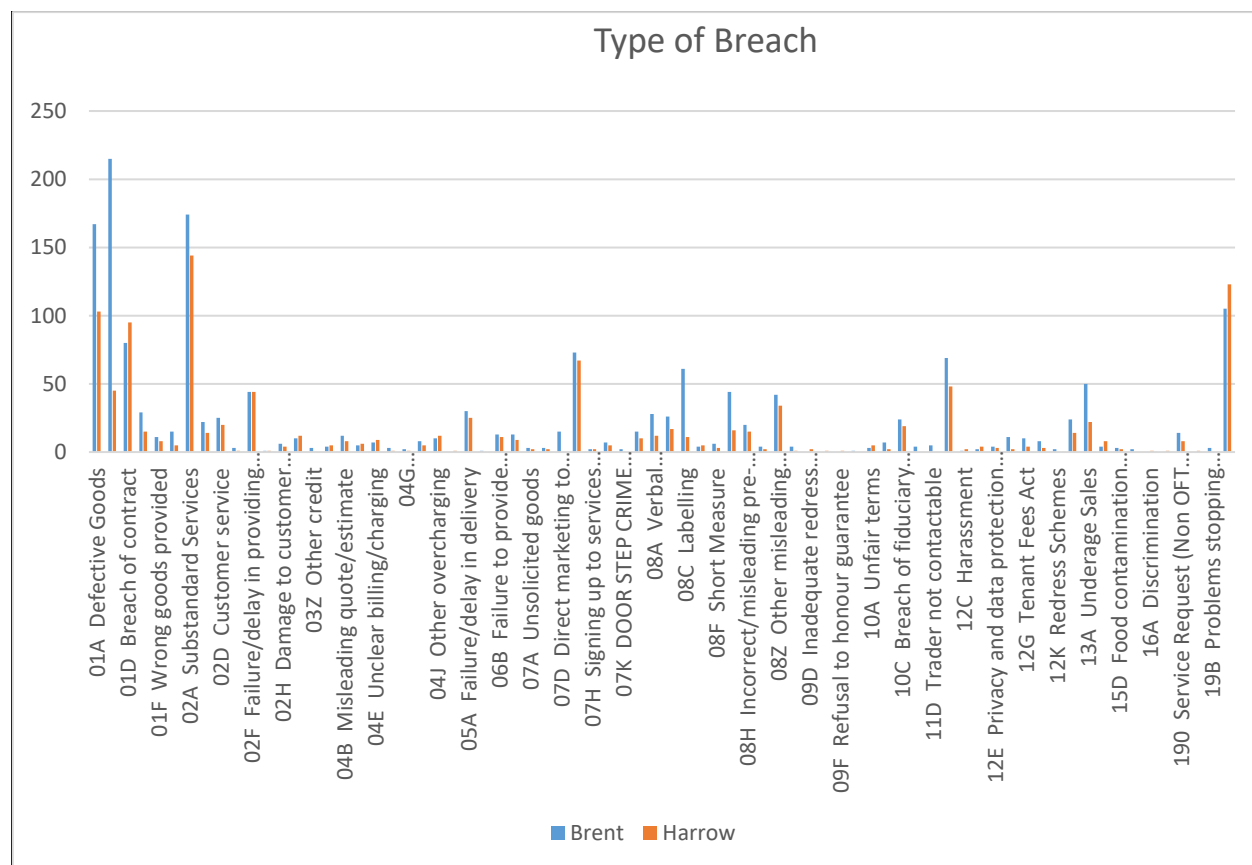
Further analysis will need to be considered to look at the 105 service requests that failed to have what type of breach recorded

Type of Breach	Harrow
02A Substandard Services	144
(blank)	123
01A Defective Goods	103
01D Breach of contract	95
07G Bogus selling	67
12A Unfair Businesscommercial practice	48
01C Safety (Goods)	45
02F Failure/delay in providing service	44
08Z Other misleading claims/omissions	34
05A Failure/delay in delivery	25
13A Underage Sales	22
02D Customer service	20
10C Breach of fiduciary duty/responsibility (e.g. breach of trust)	19
08B Advertising	17
08G Counterfeiting	16
01E Unsuitable goods provided	15
08H Incorrect/misleading pre-shopping advice	15
02C Safety (Services)	14
12Z Other problems with business practices	14
03G Failure to provide pre-contractual information	12

In Harrow, reports of **Substandard Services** with **144** and **Defective Goods** with **103** are amongst the top types of breaches reported. These are in line with complaints received about Building Renovations Services

Further analysis will need to be considered to look at the 123 service requests that failed to have what type of breach recorded.

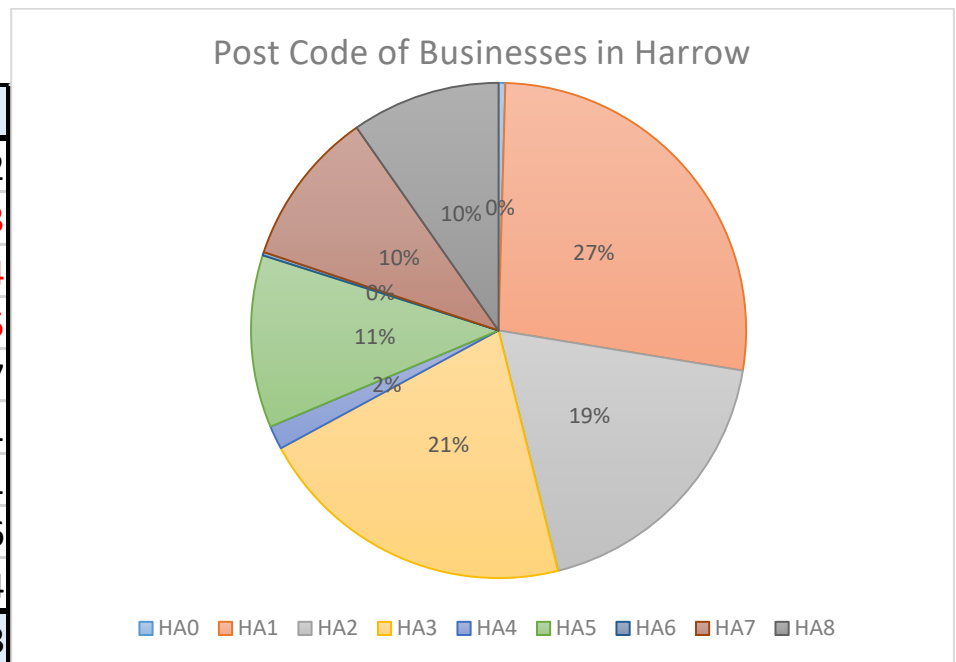
The below following graph shows all the various breaches recorded on the system, 58 different types



- 759 Service Requests of the 1628 Brent complaints/service requests were against a business in Brent.
- **NW10** being the highest post code area has **210** complaints recorded against this post code, **HA9** is second with **176** and **HA0** with **143** being third.

- Intelligence suggests that these areas have a large concentration of shops and footfall and therefore will generate the most complaints.
- 414** Service Requests did not have a full address and therefore could not determine where the business is based. The remaining 455 request were against businesses outside of Brent.

Harrow	Quantity
HA0	2
HA1	123
HA2	84
HA3	95
HA4	7
HA5	51
HA6	1
HA7	46
HA8	44
	<b>453</b>



- 453** service requests of the **1089** Harrow figure were against businesses in Harrow
- HA1** being the highest with **123** recorded against this postcode, **HA3** is second with **95** and **HA2** with **84** being third
- Intelligence suggests that these areas have a large concentration of shops and footfall and therefore will generate the most service requests,
- 254** did not have a full address and therefore it accurate postcode or location could not be determined.
- 282** complaints were against businesses outside of Harrow.

#### Assessments (Based on each allocated service request )

Based on the analysis of the complaints/ service requests per each borough the following assessment has been reached

- It is **almost certain** that the service will continue to receive service requests from general members of the public
- It is **highly likely** that used vehicles, building and renovation services will continue to be among the main goods/services that will be complained about
- It is **highly likely** that complaints relating to alcohol, cigarettes & other tobacco will continue to feature amongst the top 20 types of goods/services

4. It is **almost certain** that areas with a large concentration of shops and footfall will generate the most complaints in this case in Brent- NW10, HA9 and HA0, in Harrow this is HA1, HA3 and HA4
5. It is **almost certain** that the Service will continue to receive complaints about businesses outside of Brent and Harrow

## Recommendations

1. Enforcement actions to be focused within the hotspot areas and most complaints about businesses to educate and encourage businesses to be responsible, fair
  - **Pros:** targets areas identified as having issues based on complaints, will hopefully reduce the amount of complaints and raise compliance within the sector allowing the Service to be more focused emerging trends
  - **Cons:** other areas within the boroughs may suffer from a lack of enforcement/education
2. Liaise/engage more with other partners that have an interest in such matters such Police, Licensing
  - **Pros:** A bigger pool of officers and professionals to help tackle these issues
  - **Cons:** More people to co-ordinate with and no control over what work they do as their priorities may differ from that of Trading Standards
3. Raise awareness amongst members of the public with regards to their rights when buying goods, specifically when dealing with building and renovation businesses
  - **Pros:** educating members of the public with regards to the law may empower them to make more informed decision and this could reduce complaints around this sector
  - **Cons:** reliant on members of the public to attend and will have additional cost and officer's time
4. Compare the Hotspot Areas of Activity based on complaints received against other reports such as anti-social/ theft within the borough to identify if there might be a bigger/wider issue
  - **Pros:** better insight as to perhaps one of the likelihoods of antisocial behaviour and tackling other crimes this may also reduce antisocial behaviour, the chance of partnership working across the Council
  - **Cons:** Other mapping is not readily available to Trading Standards and will take time to compile and liaise with another department within the councils and Police