

Analysis of Trading Standards Service Requests

1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024

Introduction

Brent and Harrow Trading Standards Service is responsible for the enforcement of a wide range of legislation to help promote a fair, healthy, and safe trading environment in Brent and Harrow by ensuring compliance with regulatory legislation, protecting consumers, and supporting local businesses.

The Service fulfils the local authority's statutory role of a 'weights and measures authority' and is tasked with enforcing more than 250 pieces of legislation. In setting its priorities for the year the Service has had to consider priorities set at a National, Regional, and local level.

Over the years the Service has seen a reduction of staff and resources, however, it remains committed to delivering a worthwhile service to promote and ensure a safe, fair, and legal marketplace for both its residents and businesses.

This analysis report aims 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 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.
3. Identify the top 5 most complained about industries and types of breaches to enable the Service to consider these areas for future work and or projects.

The data used for the analysis was obtained from the services complaints/service requests database between 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.

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

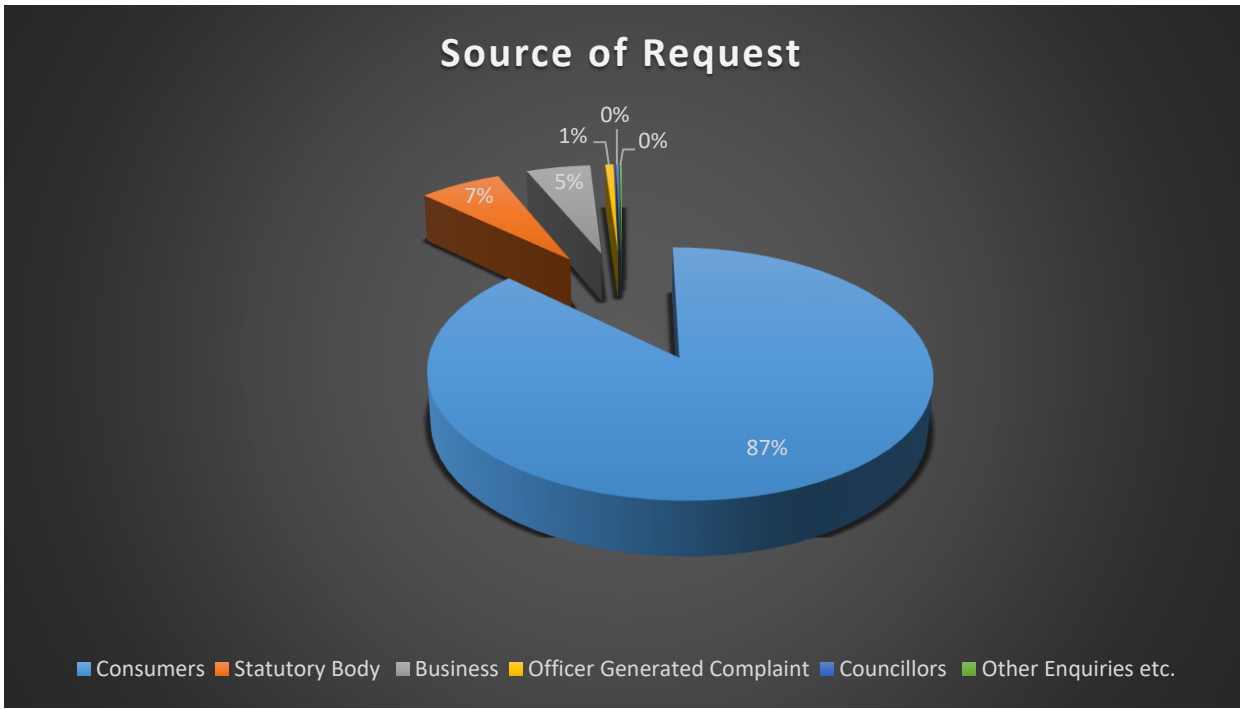
A total of **4297** service requests were received between 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. Like most other Trading Standards authorities nationally, we work with the Citizens Advice Consumer Service (CACS) and act as the public's first point of contact when they want help and advice with a consumer issue or to escalate a criminal breach to their local trading standards. **85.3% (3669)** of our service requests were received via 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 9 am to 5 pm and there is no cost to phone it. Wait times are usually a few minutes and average call times are 8 to 10 minutes.

- **2420 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). This data assists us in the monitoring of businesses and wider intelligence gathering purposes.
- **1249 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 the matter could be determined to be a minor issue or something that has been determined as a low priority.

Source of Service Request

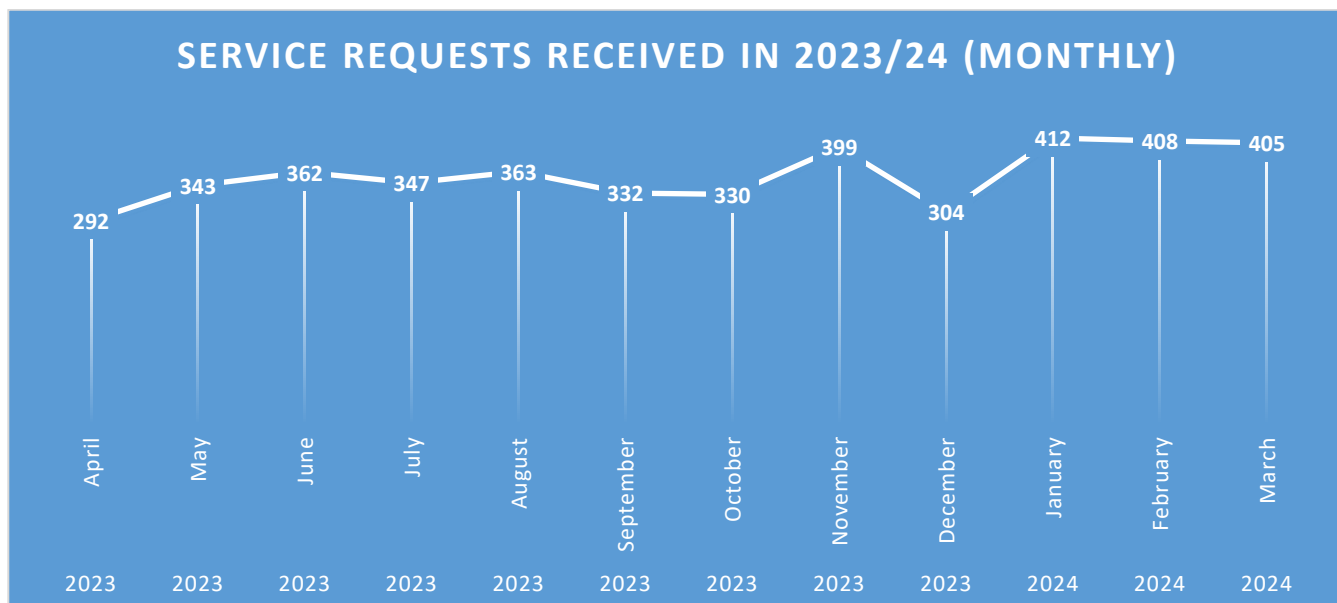


The Service received the majority of its requests at 87% from consumers. This shows how many members of the public are looking for help and advice from Trading Standards.

Source of Request	Quantity
Consumers*	3747
Statutory Body (Police, NTS, SCAMs, Ports, etc)	283
Business	221
Officer Generated Complaint	29
Councillors	10
Other Enquiries etc.	7
	4297

*(includes CACS referral and notification and other consumer enquiries received via email. Telephone etc)

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 increased in 2024 with **412** in January 2024 and April 2023 with the lowest amount at **292**.

Types of Goods and/Services

The service had received requests about 400 different types of individual products and services; however, these have been grouped to consolidate the number to 68. The table below shows the top 20 types of goods/services received and the numbers against each

Top 20 Types of Goods	QTY
Used Vehicles	610
Building & Renovation Services	482
Clothing & Footwear	205
Furniture (Upholstered & Non-Upholstered)	172
Small/Medium Home Appliances	168
Media Devices, Accessories, and Repairs	163
Toiletries, Perfumes, Beauty treatments & Hairdressing	141
Motor Vehicle Repairs & Services	136
Alcoholic Drinks	125
Food & Drinks (Excluding Alcohol)	119
Holiday & Accommodation	118
Insurance	118
Air & Travel Agents	114
Other Motoring Costs	109
Professional & Legal Services	101
Core Communication Services	86
Education, Employment and Training	84
Letting and Property Management	83
Cigarettes & Other Tobacco	81
Energy Brokers Installers & Certifiers	74

Used Vehicles have the highest number of reported complaints with **610** in total since April 2023.

399 of these were about businesses based within Brent and Harrow.

The 2nd highest reported goods is concerning Building and Renovation Services with **482**.

247 of these complaints were about businesses based within Brent and Harrow.

Type of Breach/Request	Qty
Substandard Services	796
Defective Goods	784
Breach of contract	381
Customer service	223
Safety (Goods)	210
Failure/delay in providing service	144
Failure/delay in delivery	140
Unfair Business commercial practice	117
Bogus selling	111
Underage Sales	91
Licence Application/Review	76
Unsuitable goods provided	71
Other misleading claims/omissions	61
Unclear billing/charging	55
Labelling	49
Counterfeiting	49
Return of unwanted goods	48
Breach of fiduciary duty/responsibility (e.g., breach of trust)	45
Wrong goods provided	44
Safety (Services)	41

The main type of breach reported within both boroughs with **796** is Substandard Services and 2nd is Defective Goods.

Both these are often related to used vehicles or building renovation services

Further analysis will need to be considered to look at the 83 service requests that failed to have what type of breach recorded

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

1. The Service will continue to receive complaints from general members of the public mainly via Citizens Advice Consumer Service
2. Used vehicles, building, and renovation services will continue to be the main goods and/or services that will be complained about. These are typically high-value transactions increasing the need for the public to complain if something goes wrong.
3. Defective Goods and Substandard Services will remain the top two types of breaches which is consistent with the two highest types of Service Requests.

Distribution of Complaints Received within Brent and Harrow

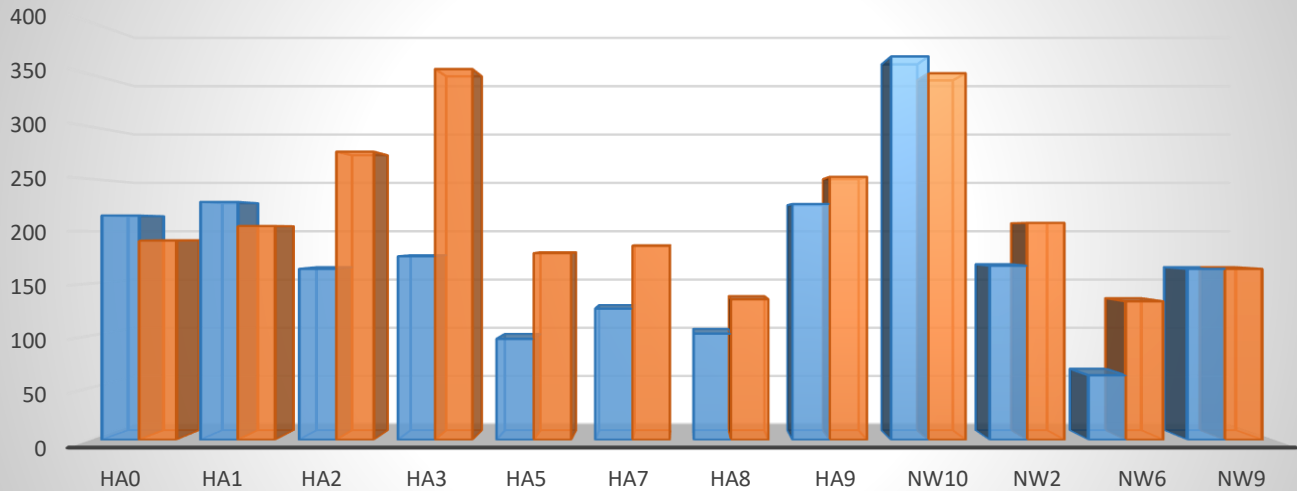
Complaints and service requests received are spread out across different areas within the boroughs. Below is a table and graph showing the distribution of complaints within Brent and Harrow.

The highest number of complaints are for businesses in the **NW10** postcode covering Willesden, Harlesden, Kensal Green, Brent Park, College Park, Stonebridge, and North Acton with **367**. This area falls within the London Borough of Brent but also borders Ealing, Hammersmith and Fulham, Kensington, and Chelsea.

HA1 with **228** has the second-highest number of complaints made against its businesses. This area is on the border of Brent and Harrow.

NW10 with **367** also sees the highest number of residents within this postcode raising complaints. With **355**, **HA3** which covers Harrow Weald, Weald, Kenton, Wealdstone, Queensbury, Belmont (west and south) is the second highest.

Post Codes in Brent and Harrow For Businesses vs Consumers



	HA0	HA1	HA2	HA3	HA5	HA7	HA8	HA9	NW10	NW2	NW6	NW9
Business	215	228	164	176	97	126	102	226	367	167	62	164
Consumer	191	205	276	355	179	186	135	252	351	208	133	164

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	Cricklewood, Dollis Hill, Childs Hill, Golders Green (part), Brent Cross (part), Willesden (north), Neasden (north)	Barnet, Brent, Camden
NW6	Kilburn, Brondesbury, West Hampstead, Queen's Park, Kensal Green (part), South Hampstead (south), Swiss Cottage (west)	Brent, Camden, Westminster
NW9	The Hyde, Colindale, Kingsbury, West Hendon, Wembley Park (part), Queensbury (part)	Barnet, Brent, Harrow
NW10	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

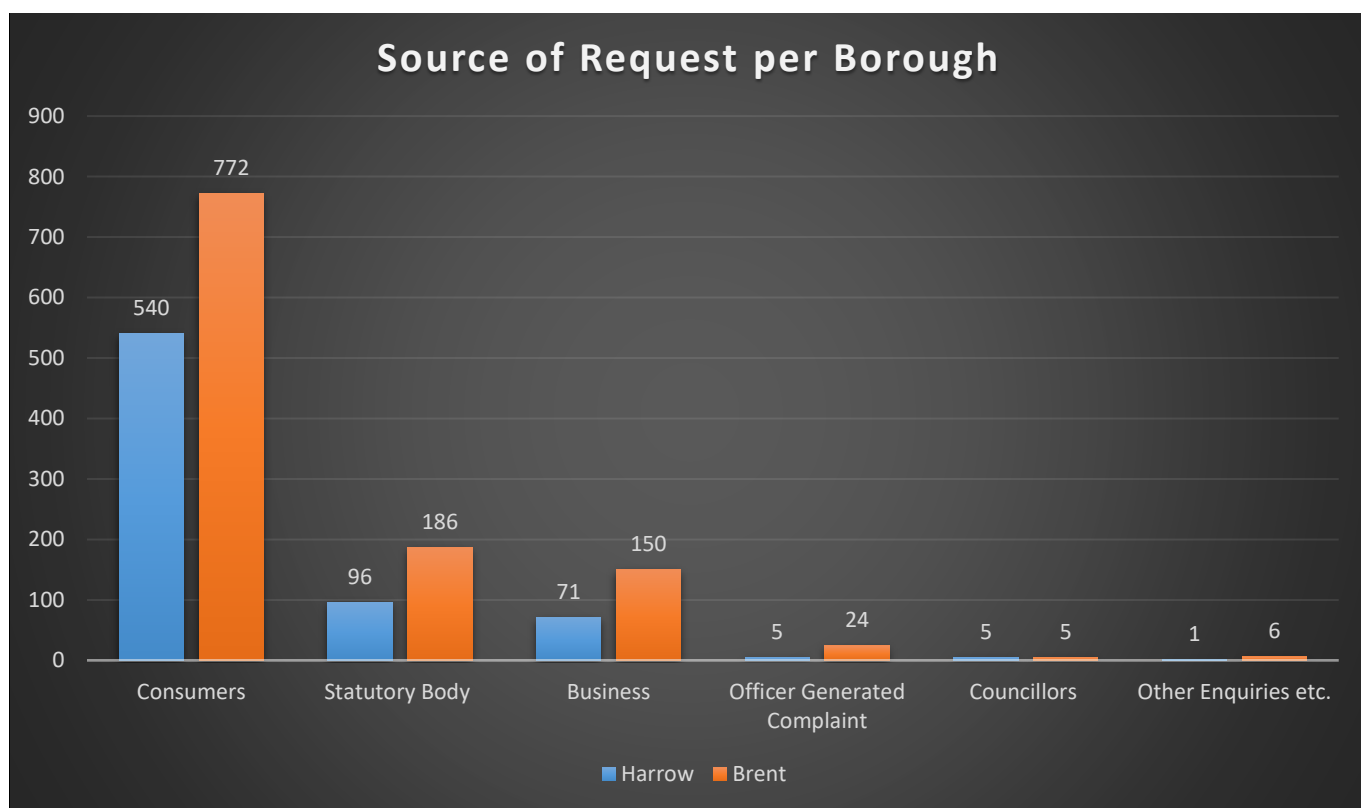
Looking at the distribution of complaints by each postcode area the following assessment has been reached.

1. The areas that have a large concentration of shops and footfall will generate the most complaints.
2. 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 a Service Request for Further Investigation

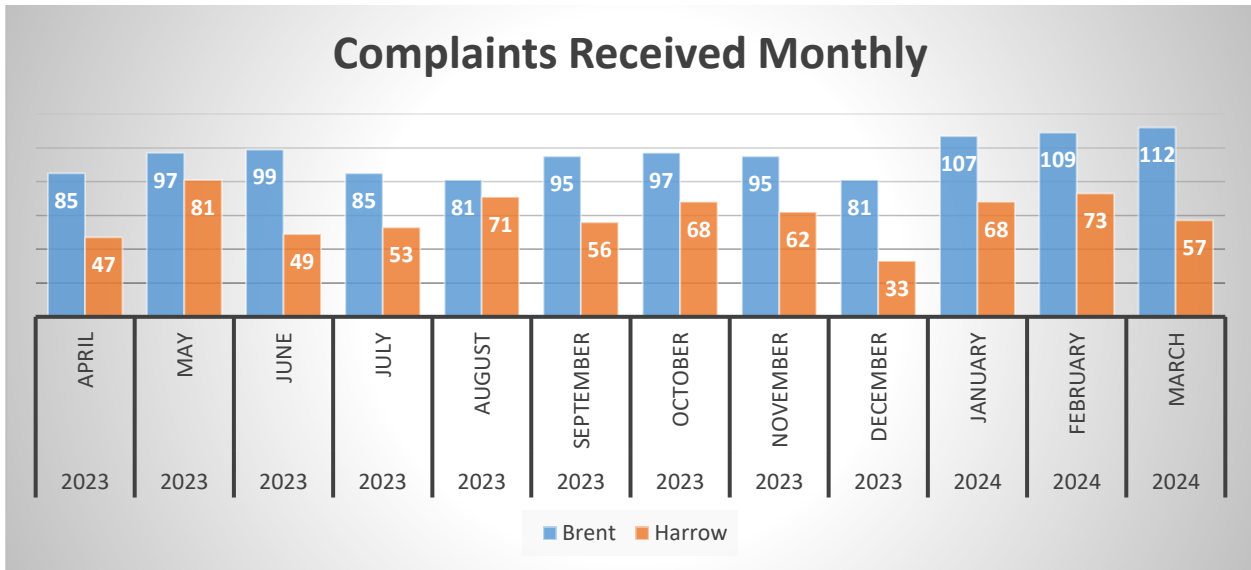
This section of the report only relates to complaints that were allocated to each borough for further consideration.

- Over the reported period there has been a total of **1143** complaints/service requests attributed to Brent and **718** to Harrow for further investigation.
- **75%** of Harrow’s requests came directly from members of the public whilst Brent’s was **67.5%**.



Source of Request	Harrow	Brent
Consumers	540	772
Statutory Body	96	186
Business	71	150
Officer Generated Complaint	5	24
Councillors	5	5
Other Enquiries etc.	1	6
	718	1143

Service Requests Received Monthly



March 2024 saw the highest number of requests attributed to Brent with **112** complaints with August 2023 and December 2023 with the fewest number of requests having received **81** requests.

February 2024 saw the highest amount for Harrow with **73** and December 2023 with **33** as the lowest for Harrow.

Types of Goods/Services Reported

	Brent's Top 20 Types of Goods/Service	Qty
1	Used Vehicles	160
2	Building & Renovation Services	127
3	Alcoholic Drinks	75
4	Clothing & Footwear	72
5	Cigarettes & Other Tobacco	53
6	Media Devices, Accessories, and Repairs	51
7	Toiletries, Perfumes, Beauty treatments & Hairdressing	49
8	Small/Medium Home Appliances	41
9	Letting and Property Management	38
10	Food & Drinks (Excluding Alcohol)	35
11	Education, Employment and Training	27
12	Furniture (Upholstered & Non-Upholstered)	27
13	E-Cigarettes & Refills	26
14	Professional & Legal Services	25
15	Core Communication Services	21
16	Motor Vehicle Repairs & Services	21
17	Holiday & Accommodation	20
18	Other household goods and services	20
19	Vehicle Fuel and Charging Stations	18
20	Insurance	17

Brent

Used Vehicles have the highest number of reported complaints with **160** in total since April 2023.

Building Renovation Services with **127** is second.

	Harrow's Top 20 Types of Goods/Service	Qty
1	Building & Renovation Services	91
2	Used Vehicles	62
3	Alcoholic Drinks	43
4	Small/Medium Home Appliances	29
5	Toiletries, Perfumes, Beauty treatments & Hairdressing	28
6	Lasers & Psychoactive Substances	27
7	Media Devices, Accessories and Repairs	26
8	Professional & Legal Services	26
9	Cigarettes & Other Tobacco	23
10	Clothing & Footwear	23
11	Food & Drinks (Excluding Alcohol)	23
12	Letting and Property Management	21
13	Furniture (Upholstered & Non-Upholstered)	20
14	Betting, Competitions, Prize Draws	19
15	Air & Travel Agents	18
16	Core Communication Services	16
17	Motor Vehicle Repairs & Services	15
18	Other Motoring Costs	14
19	Energy Brokers Installers & Certifiers	13
20	Locksmith & Handypersons	13

Harrow

Building & Renovation Services have the highest number of reported complaints in Harrow with **91** in total since April 2023.

The 2nd highest reported breach is concerning used vehicles with **62**.

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

	Brent's Top 20 Types of Breach	Qty
1	Substandard Services	134
2	Defective Goods	127
3	Safety (Goods)	127
4	Underage Sales	70
5	Bogus selling	60
6	Breach of contract	46
7	Unfair Business commercial practice	42
8	Labelling	37
9	Other misleading claims/omissions	31
10	Counterfeiting	29
11	Unsuitable goods provided	26
12	Failure/delay in delivery	24
13	Other problems with business practices	22
14	Failure/delay in providing service	22
15	(blank)	22
16	Customer service	21
17	Licence Application/Review	20
18	Verbal misrepresentation/misdescription	18
19	Self-Verification Notification	18
20	Other selling practices	15

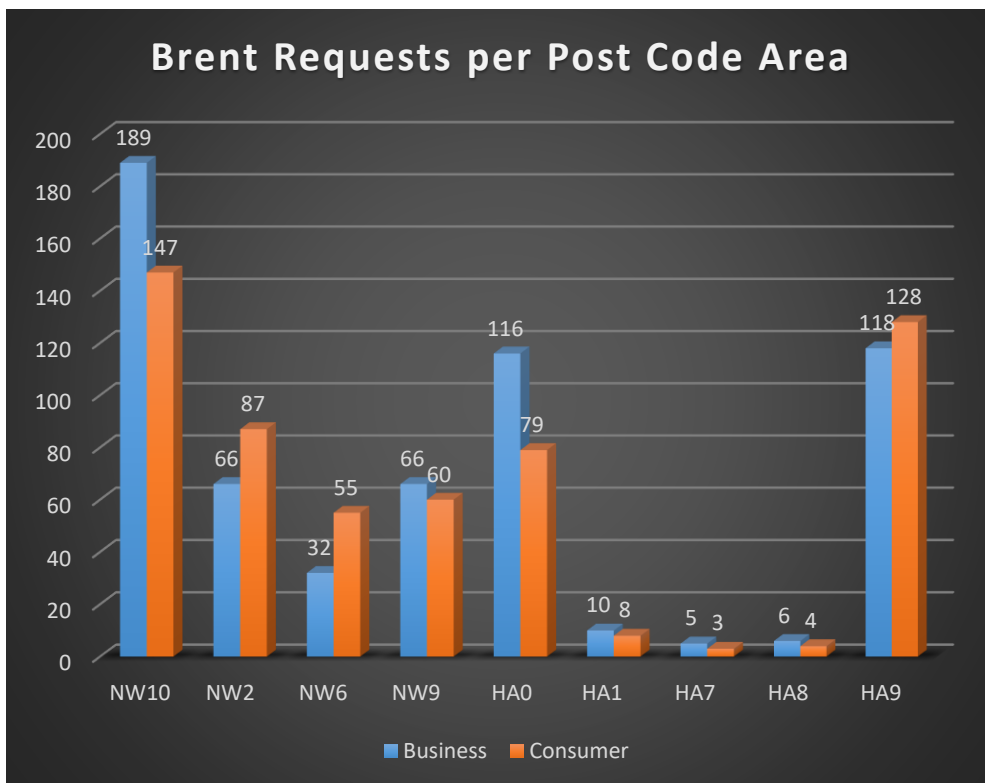
In Brent, reports of Substandard Services with **134** is the most reported breach, with Defective Goods and safety of goods in joint second with **127** reports each

These are in line with reports received concerning Building Renovations Services and used vehicles.

	Harrow's Top 20 Types of Breach	Qty
1	Substandard Services	97
2	Defective Goods	78
3	Licence Application/Review	59
4	Breach of contract	46
5	Safety (Goods)	38
6	Unfair Business commercial practice	33
7	Failure/delay in providing service	32
8	Bogus selling	29
9	Other misleading claims/omissions	22
10	Underage Sales	20
11	Failure/delay in delivery	19
12	Direct marketing to vulnerable groups	19
13	Counterfeiting	15
14	Customer service	15
15	Safety	14
16	Incorrect/misleading pre-shopping advice	14
17	(blank)	12
18	Labelling	12
19	Failure to provide cancellation rights	11
20	Breach of fiduciary duty/responsibility (e.g., breach of trust)	9

In Harrow, the reports of Substandard Services with **97** and Defective Goods with **78** are amongst the top types of breaches reported.

These are in line with reports received concerning Building Renovations Services and used vehicles



52.32%(598)Requests of the 1143 for Brent were against a business based in Brent and **49.96% (571)** were from a Brent resident.

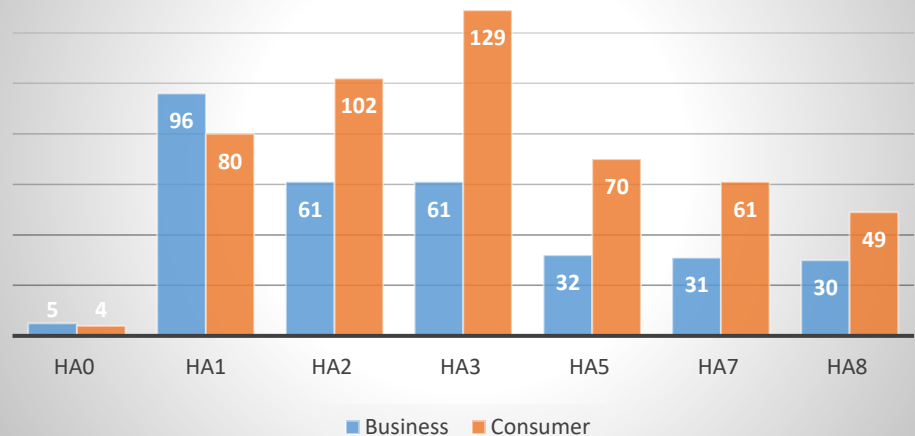
NW10 with **189** has the highest number of complaints made against a business based within this postcode area. It also has the highest number of residents making a complaint with **147**.

HA1, HA7, and HA8 these are areas that share a border with Harrow.

44.01% (316) service requests of the 718 Harrow figure were against businesses in Harrow and **68.94% (495)** of the 718 were made by a Harrow resident.

HA1 with **96** has the highest number of complaint made against a business within this area. recorded against this postcode whilst residents from **HA3** with **129** is the highest number of complaints made by residents within this area.

Harrow Requests per Post Code Area



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

1. The service will continue to receive service requests from general members of the public.
2. As with previous years, used vehicles, building and renovation services will continue to be among the main goods/services that will be complained about.
3. The 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 and HA3

Recommendations

1. Enforcement actions to be focused on the hotspot areas and most complaints about businesses to educate and encourage businesses to be responsible and fair.
 - **Pros:** Target areas identified as having issues based on complaints, will hopefully reduce the number of complaints and raise compliance within the sector allowing the Service to be more focused on emerging trends
 - **Cons:** other areas within the boroughs may suffer from a lack of enforcement/education
2. Raise awareness amongst members of the public concerning 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 decisions 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
3. 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