



**Resources and Public Realm
Scrutiny Committee**

23 April 2025

**Report from the Corporate Director,
Finance and Resources**

**Deputy Leader and Cabinet
Member for Finance and Resources
(Cllr Milli Patel)**

Complaints Annual Report 2023/24

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Non-Key Decision
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
List of Appendices:	<p>Eight:</p> <p>Appendix A: Complaints Annual Report 2023 – 2024</p> <p>Appendix A(i): Adult Social Care Statutory Complaints Report</p> <p>Appendix A(ii): Children’s Social Care Statutory Complaints Report</p> <p>Appendix A(iii): Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) Comparison with other London Authorities</p> <p>Appendix A(iv): Housing Management Complaints Annual Report 2023-2024</p> <p>Appendix B: Compensation Breakdown for last three years</p> <p>Appendix C: Correlation between issue types and outcomes of complaints by department 2023-2024</p> <p>Appendix D: Learning and improvements arising from complaints 2023-2024</p>
Background Papers:	None
Contact Officer(s): (Name, Title, Contact Details)	<p>Martin Stollery Interim Complaints and Casework Manager (job share), Democratic and Corporate Governance Martin.Stollery@brent.gov.uk 0208 937 1029</p>

1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides a breakdown of complaints received by department and the top five issues of complaint for those respective departments. The report also provides a breakdown of the number of complaints that have been upheld, not upheld, partly upheld, rejected or withdrawn for each department.
- 1.2 Appendix C provides a correlation between the root causes and their issue types and outcomes of complaints.
- 1.3 Appendix A, the Annual Complaints report 2023 sets out complaint's performance in Brent Council for the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 and focuses on the nature of complaints and the learning they provide to inform Brent's future approach to service improvement.
- 1.4 Some complaints concerning Adult Social Care (ASC) and Children's Social Care are governed by separate statutory complaint procedures and individual summary reports have been provided for statutory complaints about these services in Appendices A(i) and A(ii) respectively as part of the Annual Complaints Report 2023-24.
- 1.5 A comparison of the Council's performance with other London boroughs provided by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman has been provided as part of the annual complaints report in Appendix A(iii).

2.0 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 Scrutiny is asked to note Brent's performance in managing and resolving complaints.

3.0 Detail

3.1 Contribution to Borough Plan Priorities and Strategic Context

- 3.1.1 Complaints provide important learning points for the Council and allow us to inform the Council's priorities in many different ways. Through these learning points, we can make changes to achieve and further our priorities and move forward together. Complaints provide an opportunity for the Council to understand issues and put things right, also ensuring that they do not reoccur.
- 3.1.2 Complaints are wide-ranging and dealt with across the Council. Owing to this, they touch upon all the priorities within the Borough Plan as detailed below:
 - *The Best Start in Life* - Being able to deal with concerns at crucial stages of people's lives allows them to get the best start in life. Assisting our looked after children and children with special educational needs with issues that they may have, and providing advocacy to bring these issues forward to the Council will ensure that they are provided with the necessary support in life.

□ *Thriving Communities* - Providing our residents with a route to complain and provide feedback not only encourages resident engagement but allows us to make improvements and inform change. In turn, by addressing their concerns and developing solutions that will benefit them, communities are given the opportunity to thrive.

□ *A Cleaner, Greener Future* - The Council receive a number of complaints regarding environmental issues, which are reviewed and help us target specific areas. This also allows the Council to evaluate services that are being provided to ensure they meet our aspirations for a cleaner, greener future.

□ *Healthier Brent* – Complaints regarding leisure services and our parks allow the Council to investigate and develop more initiatives to improve the health and wellbeing of our residents and those that visit Brent. During our complaints process we also signpost to relevant services that can assist our complainants, such as Mental Health services.

□ *Prosperity and Stability in Brent* – Analysis of complaints received about housing needs is fundamental in terms of providing the tools and initiatives to support, empower and equip residents, and ensure long term stability.

- 3.1.3 Complaints feed into some of the current strategies, priorities and plans set out for Brent, such as the Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2024–2028. The Complaints Service ensures residents and service users are provided with access to the complaints procedure in line with the Public Sector Equalities Duty (PSED). The Digital Strategy 2022-2026 also plays a pivotal role when looking at how users are accessing our services and how they are logging complaints. The Complaints Service have made it easier for users to log complaint casework, view the history of what they have logged, and access everything in one place.

3.2 Background

- 3.2.1 The Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee has asked for a cover report on the themes and issues resulting from complaints and a comparison of compensation paid over the last three financial years. This is provided in Appendix B.
- 3.2.2 The Resources and Public Realm Scrutiny Committee has also asked for a breakdown by department of the key issues and the outcomes of complaints that are investigated by the Council. This is provided in Appendix C, with headlines summarised in this section.

Breakdown of complaints received by department and issue type

- 3.2.3 A breakdown is provided below of the top five issues where available for each department. The Councils commissioned services' complaint issues have been incorporated in the overall data. On the issue of commissioned services, Appendix A(i), the Adult Social Care Statutory Complaints Report, includes details relating to complaints received by ASC's Commissioning Contracting and Market

Management. Appendix C provides further details for Housing Management Property Services and services provided by parking contractors.

3.2.4 Breakdown

Adult Social Care received 157 stage one complaints. The top five issues were:

- ☐ Social Worker – 32
- ☐ Hospital discharge – 22
- ☐ ASC Mental Health – 13
- ☐ Access and Information – 12
- ☐ Care Package Review – 8

CYP received 169 stage one complaints. The top five issues were:

- ☐ Input from Service – 32
- ☐ BFFD/MASH/NRPF - Quality of Service – 24
- ☐ Social Workers – 20
- ☐ SEND Specialist Services – 17
- ☐ School Admissions – 10

Customer Access received 437 stage one complaints. The top five issues were:

- ☐ Council Tax - Other – 115
- ☐ Council Tax - Enforcement – 91
- ☐ Benefits Assessment – 40
- ☐ Council Tax - Payments, Refunds and Direct Debits – 26
- ☐ Benefits – Delay in Payment – 19

Housing Needs received 205 stage one complaints. The top five issues were:

- ☐ Homeless Application - Family – 72
- ☐ Homelessness Application - Single Person – 60
- ☐ Application for Social Housing Waiting List – 25
- ☐ Offers of Accommodation – 16
- ☐ Temporary Accommodation or Bed and Breakfast – 14

Housing Management Property received 445 stage one complaints. The top five issues were:

- ☐ Repairs To My Property (Including Inspections) - 218
- ☐ Communal Repair – 71
- ☐ Outstanding Repairs - Other – 66
- ☐ Complaints about Wates – 26
- ☐ Damp and/or Mould – 11

Housing and Neighbourhoods received 130 stage one complaints. The top five issues were:

- ☐ Anti-Social Behaviour - 31
- ☐ Housing Customer - Other – 31

- ☐ Estates Services – 12
- ☐ Leasehold enquiries – 9
- ☐ Poor Customer Service – 7

PHS received 53 stage one complaints. The top five specific issues were:

- ☐ Landlord Licence - Other - 7
- ☐ Application – 7
- ☐ Contractor – 6
- ☐ Housing Enforcement – 5
- ☐ Grants and Adaptations – 4

Environment and Leisure received 128 stage one complaints. The top five issues were:

- ☐ Anti-Social Behaviour - 17
- ☐ Parking Enforcement – 13
- ☐ Permits – 13
- ☐ Parking - Other – 12
- ☐ Highways Defects – 8

Property and Assets received 14 stage one complaints. The top issues were:

- ☐ Commercial Property - 7
- ☐ Facilities – 4

Finance received 9 stage one complaints. The top issues were:

- ☐ Insurance - 4
- ☐ Payments – 4

Service improvements

- 3.2.5 Service areas use the information gathered from complaints to make service improvements. Once a complaint has been investigated any corrective actions that arise from the complaint are recorded on the Council's case management system to be tracked and monitored to completion. Officers are asked to upload any evidence so that it is readily available and can be retrieved when requested.
- 3.2.6 Appendix D provides more details on learning and improvements arising from complaints during 2023-2024.

Outcomes

- 3.2.7 Breakdown of Stage 1 complaint outcomes by Department

There are several outcomes to a complaint. A definition has been provided below for each outcome:

Upheld

If substantive evidence is found to support the complaint, then the complaint should be recorded as upheld.

Not upheld

If there is no evidence to support any aspects of a complaint made, the complaint should be recorded as not upheld.

Partly upheld

If a complaint is made about several issues and one or more, but not all, are upheld then the complaint should be recorded as partially upheld.

Withdrawn

Sometimes people choose not to pursue their complaint. This may be because the issues have since been resolved, for personal reasons or because of a change in circumstances.

Rejected

Complaints may be rejected if the issues are currently being dealt with through court proceedings, a safeguarding investigation is ongoing or if it has been more than twelve months since the issue occurred.

Department	Not Upheld	Partly Upheld	Upheld	Complaint Withdrawn / Not Pursued	Rejected	Grand Total
ASC	38	74	35	4	6	157
CYP	75	46	32	8	7	169
Customer Access	242	76	86	10	23	437
Housing Needs	85	56	17	32	15	205
Housing Management Property	103	46	252	3	41	445
Housing and Neighbourhoods	48	46	21	8	7	130
Private Housing Services	44	4	2	2	1	53
Environment and Leisure	53	37	25	11	2	128
Planning and Development	14	5	1			20
Property and Assets	6	7	1			14
Finance	3	2	3	1		9

3.2.8 The table above shows the breakdown of Stage one complaint outcomes by department type.

3.2.9 A breakdown of the departments which received the highest amount of Stage one complaints and their uphold rate is provided below:

□ The Housing Management Service (combining the figures for Housing Management Property and Housing and Neighbourhoods) received 575 Stage one complaints. Of these 575 complaints, 365 cases were upheld or partly upheld which means that in 63% of cases some fault was found.

□ Customer Access received 437 Stage one complaints. Of these 437 complaints, 162 were upheld or partly upheld which means that in 37% of cases some fault was found.

□ Housing Needs received 205 Stage one complaints. Of these 205 complaints, 73 were upheld or partly upheld which means that in 35% of cases some fault was found.

□ CYP received 169 Stage one complaints. Of these 169 complaints, 78 were upheld or partly upheld which means that in 46% of cases some fault was found.

□ ASC received 157 Stage one complaints. Of these 157 complaints, 109 were upheld or partly upheld which means that in 69% of cases some fault was found.

□ Environment and Leisure received 128 Stage one complaints. Of these 128 complaints, 62 were upheld or partly upheld which means that in 48% of cases some fault was found.

Department	Not Upheld	Partly Upheld	Upheld	Complaint Withdrawn / Not Pursued	Rejected	Grand Total
ASC	1	1				2
CYP	23	7	4			34
Customer Access	26	5	3			32
Housing Needs	20	18	4			42
Housing Management Property	13	37	45			95
Housing and Neighbourhoods	13	5	4	1	1	24
Private Housing Services	13	1	1			15
Environment and Leisure	19	11	4			34
Planning and Development	6					6
Property and Assets	3	2				5

3.2.10 The table above shows the breakdown of Stage two complaint outcomes by department type.

3.2.11 A breakdown of the departments which received the highest amount of stage two complaints and their uphold rate is provided below:

□ The Housing Management Service (combining the figures for Housing Management Property and Housing and Neighbourhoods) received 119 Stage two complaints. Of these 119 stage two complaints, 89 cases were upheld or partly upheld which means that in 75% of cases some fault was found.

□ Housing Needs received 42 Stage two complaints. Of these 42 Stage two complaints, 22 were upheld or partly upheld which means that in 52% of cases some fault was found.

□ Environment and Leisure received 34 Stage two complaints. Of these 34 Stage two complaints, 15 were upheld or partly upheld which means that in 44% of cases some fault was found.

□ CYP received 34 Stage two complaints. Of these 34 Stage two complaints, 11 were upheld or partly upheld which means that in 32% of cases some fault was found.

□ Customer Access received 32 Stage two complaints. Of these 32 Stage two complaints, 8 were upheld or partly upheld which means that in 25% of cases some fault was found.

□ PHS received 15 Stage two complaints. Of these 15 Stage two complaints, 2 were upheld or partly upheld which means that in 14% of cases some fault was found.

4.0 Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement

4.1 The Annual Complaints report was discussed at Cabinet and is on the agenda for scrutiny committee.

5.0 Financial Considerations

5.1 The details provided in the Annual Complaints Report 2023-24 (Appendix A) on compensation payments and in Appendix B – Compensation Breakdown for last three years reflect 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 total amount of compensation awarded in 2023-2024 has increased by just over 7% compared to 2022-2023.

5.3 The total compensation awarded/offered in 2022/23 was £177,754.

6.0 Legal Considerations

- 6.1 Complaints concerning Adult Social Care and Children's Social Care fall under separate statutory complaint procedures. It is a legal requirement to produce annual reports for these areas and these are included as part of the complaints annual report in appendices B and C with reference to the statutory frameworks for the management of these statutory complaints.
- 6.2 The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) or the Housing Ombudsman provide the final stage in the complaints process, where an individual has complained to the Council and remains dissatisfied with the outcome.
- 6.3 The LGSCO can investigate allegations of maladministration in connection with the exercise of a local authority's administrative function, allegations regarding a failure in a service which it is the local authority's function to provide, an allegation or an apparent failure to provide such a service pursuant to the Local Government Act 1974 as amended.
- 6.4 The Housing Ombudsman investigates complaints and resolves disputes involving the tenants and leaseholders of social landlords (housing associations and local authorities), as well as for voluntary members (private landlords and letting agents).
- 6.5 The Social Housing Regulation Act gave the Housing Ombudsman considerable new powers. The Housing Ombudsman is now able to order a landlord to evaluate a particular policy or practice to prevent service failure being repeated. Previously, these types of orders would have only been recommendations, which the landlord was not legally required to act upon (although it has always been the Council's policy to do so). The expanded powers enable the Ombudsman to require landlords to go beyond the scope of individual complaints and seek to address any wider issues.

7.0 Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations

- 7.1 Under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the Council has a duty when exercising its 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 is 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 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations

8.1 Not applicable

9.0 Human Resources/Property Considerations (if appropriate)

9.1 Not applicable

10.0 Communication Considerations

10.1 The Housing Ombudsman as well as the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman issue spotlight reports to address thematic issues. The Complaints Service ensure that these reports and any other significant communications from the Ombudsmen are highlighted to the relevant services.

10.2 The Council continues to advertise its complaints procedure and policy on its website and in correspondence with residents.

Report sign off:

Minesh Patel

Corporate Director, Finance and Resources