

	Council Management Team 13 August 2025
	Report from the Corporate Director of Finance and Resources
	Lead Cabinet Member - Cabinet Member for Housing and Residents Services, (Cllr. Fleur Donnelly-Jackson)
Housing Management Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Annual Report 2024/2025	
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
List of Appendices:	Appendix 1 – Housing Ombudsman’s performance report for Brent 2023/2024 Appendix 2 – Council’s Self-Assessment against the Housing Ombudsman’s Complaint Handling Code Appendix 3 – Knowledge and Information Management spotlight report Appendix 4 – Attitudes, Respect and Rights spotlight report Appendix 5 - Council’s updated Complaints Policy
Background Papers:	N/A
Contact Officer(s): <small>(Name, Title, Contact Details)</small>	Amira Nassr Deputy Director, Democratic & Corporate Governance Brent Council

1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 This annual report sets out complaints performance for the Housing Management service for the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025. The report focuses on volumes of complaints, complaint outcomes, compensation offered, nature of complaints and learning and service improvements as a result. Complaints regarding housing management fall under the Housing Ombudsman and therefore a separate report has been prepared for this purpose.
- 1.2 The report also contains the Housing Ombudsman’s performance report for Brent for 2023/2024 (Appendix 1) and the Council’s self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman’s Complaint Handling Code (Appendix 2).

2.0 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 CMT are asked to note Brent Housing Management's performance in managing and resolving complaints.
- 2.2 CMT are asked to note, and review Brent's latest self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's updated Complaint Handling Code.
- 2.3 CMT are asked to note and review the latest updates to the Council's Complaints Policy.
- 2.4 CMT are asked to approve progressing the report to Cabinet and the relevant Scrutiny Committees.

3.0 Background

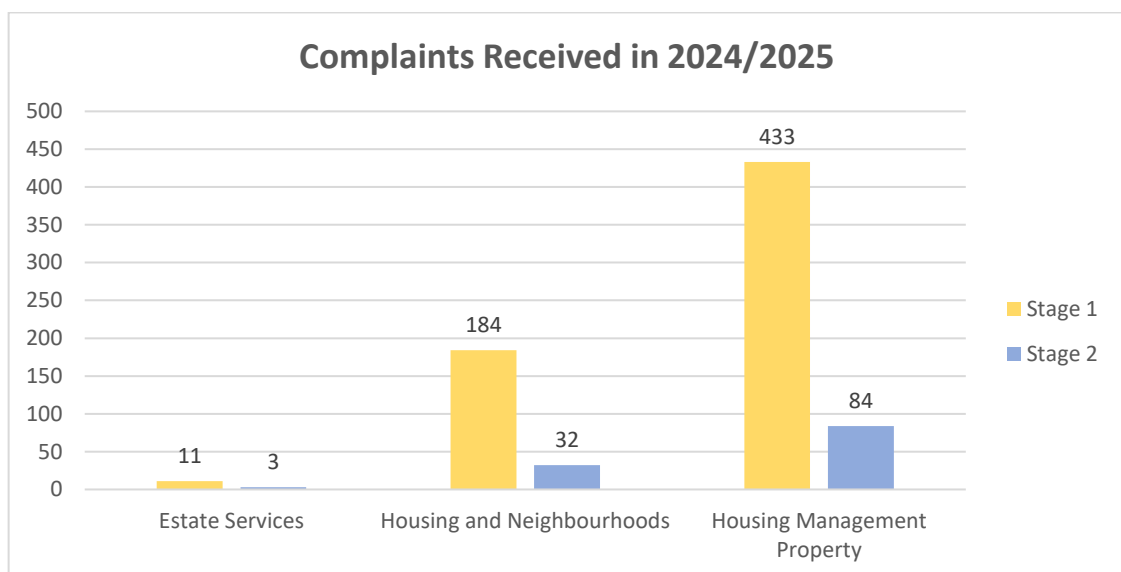
- 3.0.1 The Council's corporate complaints fall under two separate governing bodies, the Housing Ombudsman and the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO). Complaints relating to Housing Management fall under the Housing Ombudsman and complaints about any other service fall under the LGSCO.
- 3.0.2 This report focusses on complaints that fall under the Housing Ombudsman only.
- 3.0.3 The main performance headlines from Housing Management complaints are as follows:
 - 628 complaints were received at the initial stage of the complaints process in 2024/2025, an increase of 9% on 2023/2024. 119 stage 2 complaints were received in the same period, which is the same as last year.
 - The majority of issues raised related to service failure (77%, 480 complaints) and more specifically delay in a service being provided which accounted for 275 complaints.
 - Many of the complaints were escalated to stage 2, because the complainant did not agree with the decision at stage 1. This was the reason in 39% of cases that were escalated.
 - 206 complaints were upheld at stage 1 and 279 complaints partly upheld which provides a 64% uphold rate.
 - 83% of stage 2 cases were upheld or partially upheld.
 - 65 complaints were rejected at stage 1 and 1 complaint was rejected at stage 2. In 59 of the stage 1 cases, the complaint was rejected because it was a duplicate request or had already been investigated.
 - 96% of all stage 1 Housing Management complaints were responded to on time and 99% of stage 2 complaints were responded to on time.
 - A total of £109,787 was paid out in compensation at stage 1 and 2.

Housing Management Stock

3.0.4 The Housing Management service currently manage 13,482 properties which are a mixture of tenanted and leasehold properties. As a housing landlord, Brent manages 11,076 flats and maisonettes, 2210 houses and bungalows, as well as 196 New Accommodation for Independent Living (NAIL) properties. In addition, the service manages 22 rooms, and 1 gypsy and traveller site with 31 pitches.

Complaints Received

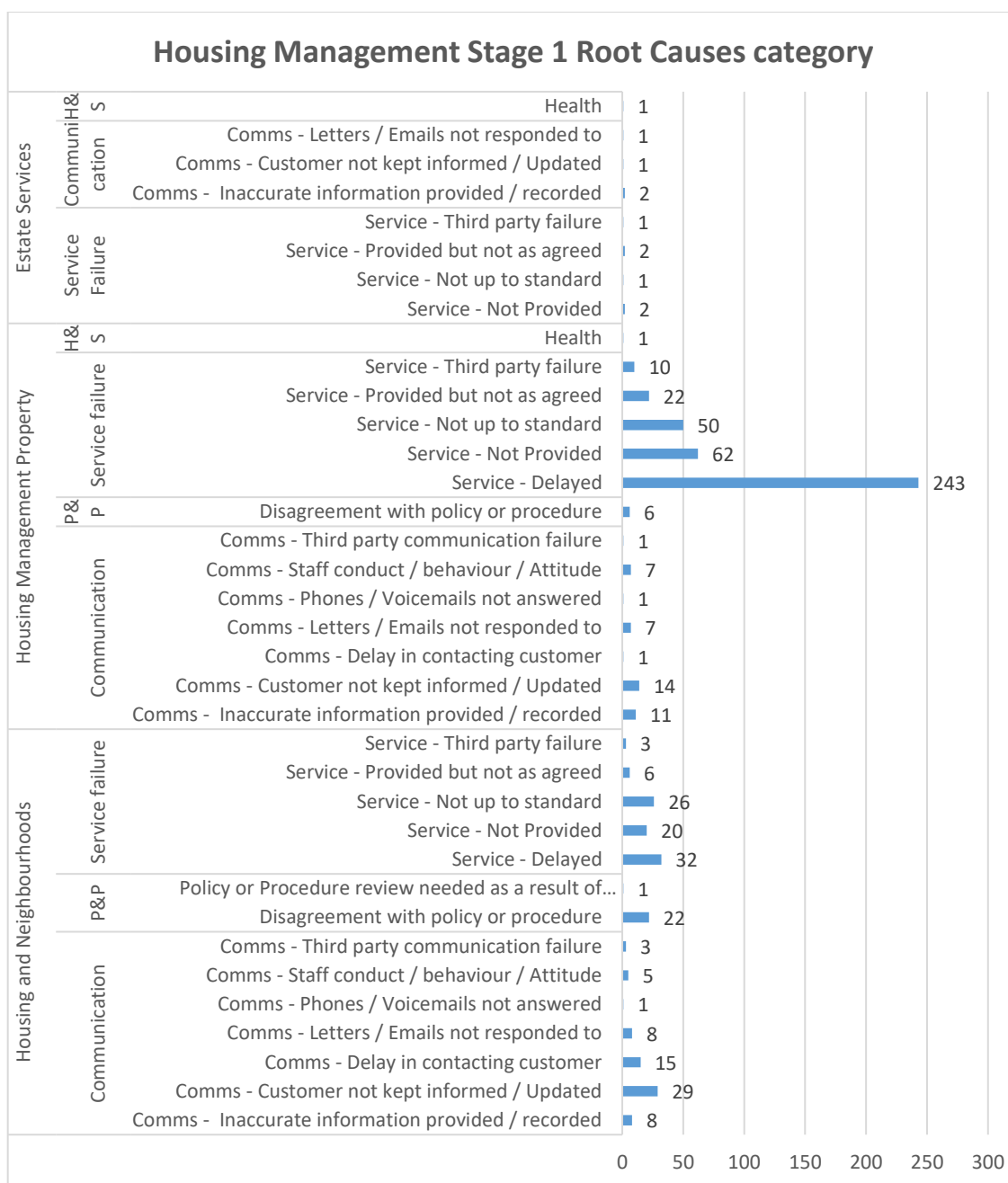
3.0.5 In 2024/2025, the Housing Management service received 628 stage 1 complaints compared to 575 the previous year, which is an increase of 9% (52 complaints).



3.0.6 Estate Services has now moved under the Public Realm directorate and therefore data on complaints for this area has been provided separately. Estate Services received 11 stage 1 complaints and 3 stage 2 complaints in 20204/2025. The escalation rate for complaints received by Estate Services is 27% with 3 out of 11 complaints escalated to stage 2. Housing and Neighbourhoods received 184 stage 1 complaints in 2024/2025 which is 54 more complaints than the previous year albeit Estate Services sat within this department the previous year. In the same period Housing and Neighbourhoods received 32 stage 2 complaints which is 8 less than the previous year. This provides an escalation rate of 17% which is 1% less than the previous year. In 2024/2025, 433 stage 1 complaints were received and 84 stage 2 complaints which is 12 less stage 1 complaints, and 11 less stage 2 complaints compared to the previous year. The escalation rate for Housing Management Property complaints was 19% which is 2% less than the previous year. In 2023/2024 a total of 119 stage 2 complaints were received which is the same number of complaints escalated as 2023/2024 and one more than 2022/2023.

Nature / Reasons for Complaints

- 3.0.7 We record root causes of complaints at stage 1 once a complaint has been closed, therefore we look at the complaints that were closed in 2024/2025 rather than received. This is why the total number of complaints that we have recorded root causes for is 626 which is slightly less than the 628 complaints received at stage 1.
- 3.0.8 The Council classifies root causes of complaints into three main areas: Communication, Policy/Procedures, and Service Failure.
- 3.0.9 The data below shows that for Housing and Neighbourhoods, 49% of complaints (87 out of 179) were due to service failures and that this was primarily related to services being delayed (32 complaints) or service being perceived as not up to standard (26 complaints). Communication issues constituted 39% of the complaints (69 out of 179) which is the same percentage as last year, with the predominant issue being that customers were not kept informed or updated. Policy/procedure was the root cause for 13% of complaints for Housing and Neighbourhoods. All but one complaint in this category disagreed with the policy or procedure that was in place.
- 3.0.10 In comparison, for Housing Management Property, 89% of complaints (387 out of 436) were due to service failures which is similar to the percentage last year, with delays in service provision continuing to be the main issue (243 complaints, 63% in this category). The second highest root cause for Housing Management Property was communication. Communication issues made up 10% of the complaints (42 complaints) and this mainly related to the resident not being kept informed or updated (14 complaints, 33% in this category), and inaccurate information provided or recorded (11 complaints, 26% in this category). Issues with policy/procedure were less prevalent at 1% with 6 complaints disagreeing with the policy or procedure in place which is the same as last year.
- 3.0.11 In 2024/2025, 11 Estate Services complaints were closed, 6 complaints related to service failure, 4 complaints related to communication and one complaint related to Health. There were no complaints received which related to policy or procedure.
- 3.0.12 Overall, across Housing Management, service failure was the most common root cause for complaints. Service failure accounted for 77% of all complaints received at stage 1 (480 out of 626). Service being delayed was the most common cause of complaints within this category with 275 complaints. Service Failure being the main reason for complaints remains consistent with other local authorities.
- 3.0.13 Communication issues accounted for 18% of the overall complaints (115 complaints), policy/procedure issues accounted for 5% (29 complaints) and Health accounted for less than 1% with only two complaints received, however this is a new category that has been introduced so there will likely be more complaints categorised in this category next year.



3.0.14 A list of the specific issue types that complaints were categorised under has been provided below to provide more context and further analysis.

Root cause and issue type	Number of complaints
Service Failure	480
Repairs To My Property (Including Inspections)	123
Outstanding Repairs - Other	100
Communal Repair	59
Damp and/or mould	43
Housing Customer - Other	27
Anti - Social Behaviour	20
Complaints about Wates	16
Leasehold Enquiries	13

Gas Safety	8
Asbestos Safety	6
Electrical Safety	6
Estate Services	6
Planned Maintenance Of My Property	6
Service Failure	6
Communal Cleaning	4
Complaints about PS Staff	4
Poor Customer Service	4
Right To Buy	4
Complaints about Oakray	3
Grounds Maintenance	3
Water Safety	3
Billing	2
Lettable standard	2
Arrears	1
Banding	1
Bedroom Entitlement	1
Cleaning schedule	1
Estate Parking	1
Lettings process	1
Lift Safety	1
My New Home	1
My Personal & Household Details	1
Overcrowding	1
Rent Refund	1
Tree Maintenance	1
Communication	115
Housing Customer - Other	25
Anti - Social Behaviour	15
Outstanding Repairs - Other	11
Repairs To My Property (Including Inspections)	10
Communal Repair	8
Grounds Maintenance	7
Water Safety	5
Estate Services	4
Poor Customer Service	4
Complaints about PS Staff	3
Sound Insulation	3
Communal Cleaning	2
Complaints about Wates	2
Leasehold Enquiries	2
Noise Nuisance	2
Parking	2
Arrears	1
Asbestos Safety	1
Banding	1
Electrical Safety	1

Estate Parking	1
Overcrowding	1
Payment / Arrears	1
Rent Refund	1
Right To Buy	1
Service Failure	1
Policy / Procedures	29
Arrears	5
Repairs To My Property (Including Inspections)	5
Anti - Social Behaviour	4
Payment / Arrears	4
Housing Customer - Other	2
Parking	2
Rent Refund	2
Billing	1
My Personal & Household Details	1
Outstanding Repairs - Other	1
Poor Customer Service	1
Right To Buy	1
Health	2
Communal Cleaning	1
Repairs To My Property (Including Inspections)	1
Grand Total	626

Reasons for escalation

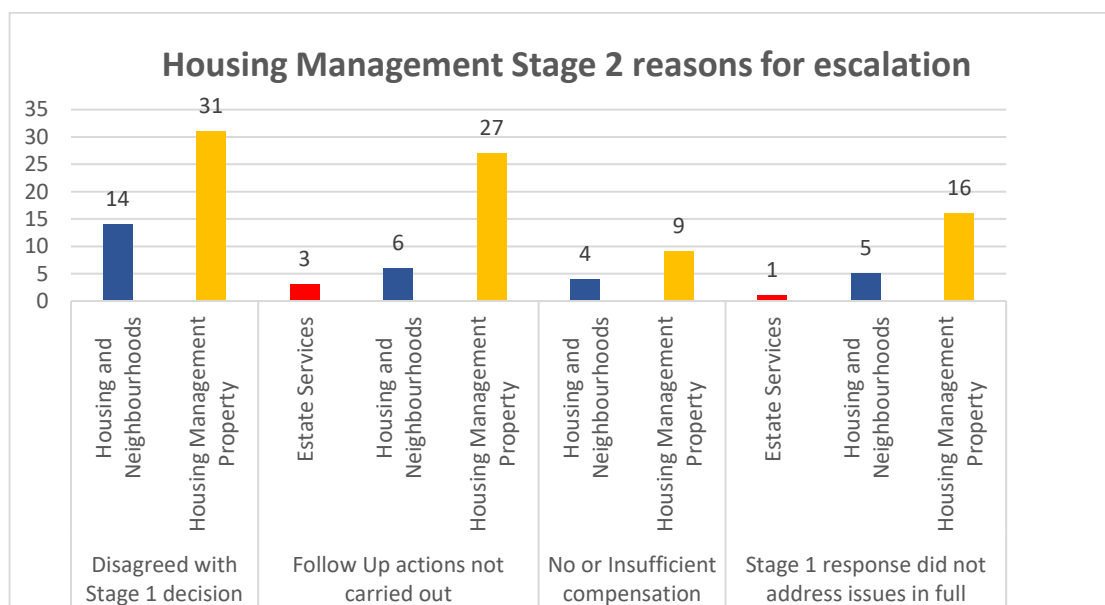
3.0.15 In 2024/2025, 29 escalated complaints were closed for Housing and Neighbourhoods. The most frequent reason for escalation was disagreement with the stage 1 decision, accounting for 48% of complaints. Other reasons included follow-up actions not being carried out (6 complaints, 21%), the stage 1 response did not address issues in full (5 complaints, 17%), and that no or insufficient compensation (4 complaints, 14%) was offered.

3.0.16 There were 83 escalated complaints closed for Housing Management Property. Similar to Housing and Neighbourhoods, the leading reason for escalation was disagreement with the stage 1 decision, which had 31 complaints and accounted for 37% of the escalated complaints. The second reason was follow-up actions were not carried out which was closely behind with 27 complaints, which accounted for 33% escalations. Additional reasons were the stage 1 response did not address the issues in full (16 complaints, 19%), and that no or insufficient compensation was awarded at stage 1 (9 complaints, 11%).

3.0.17 Four escalated complaints were closed in 2024/2025 for Estate Services with the reasons for escalation being follow up actions not carried out (3 complaints, 75%) and the Stage 1 response did not address issues in full (1 complaint, 25%)

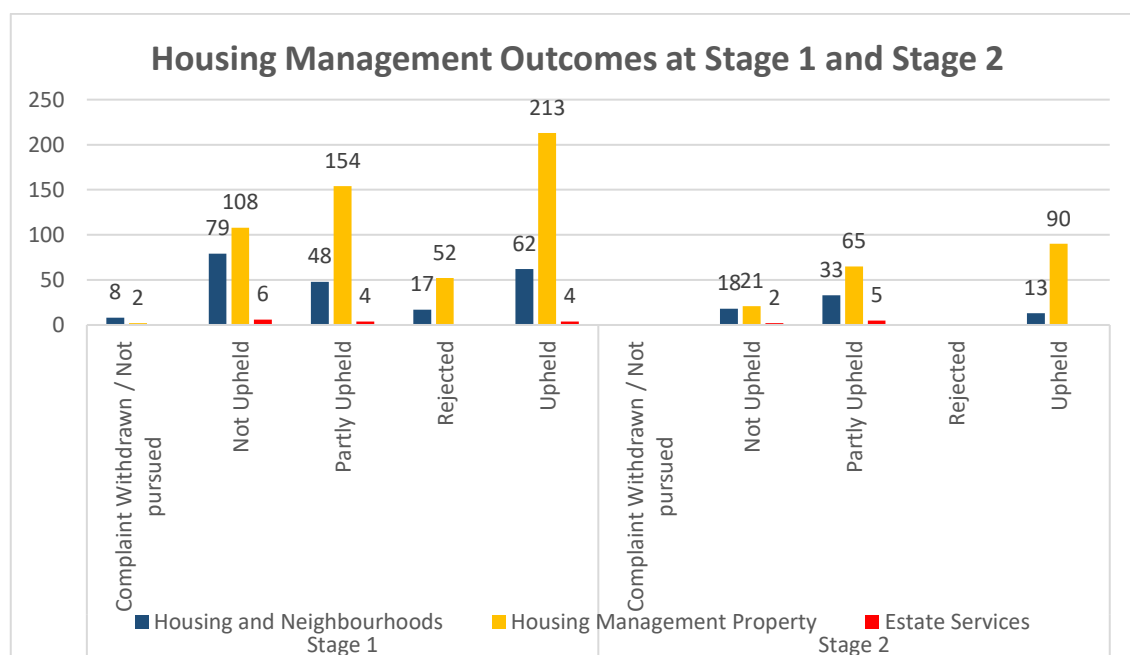
3.0.18 Overall, 116 complaints that were escalated to stage 2 were closed in 2024/2025. The most common reason for escalation was disagreement with

the stage 1 decision, with 45 complaints (39% of all complaints), followed by follow up actions not being carried out, 36 complaints (31% of all complaints), Stage 1 response did not address issues in full, with 22 complaints (19% of all complaints) and no or Insufficient compensation, with 13 complaints (11% of all complaints).



Complaint Outcomes

3.0.19 The chart below shows the outcome of complaints at stage 1 and final review stage:

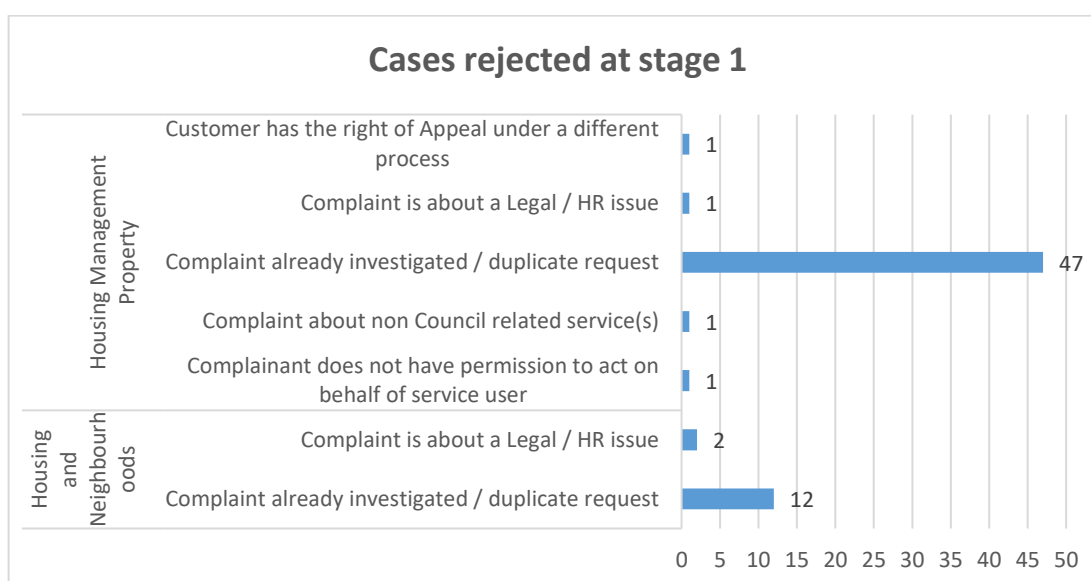


- 3.0.20 The Council has the following outcomes that can be selected on the Council's complaints system: Upheld, Partly Upheld, Not Upheld, Rejected and Complaint Withdrawn/Not pursued. Where a complaint is partly upheld, this means that there may have been an aspect of the complaint that was upheld but the main substance of the complaint was not upheld. This allows for better analysis to be carried out as to why complaints are upheld. However all complaints that are upheld or partly upheld are deemed upheld as there has still been some fault on the part of the Council.
- 3.0.21 At stage 1 of the complaints process, for Housing and Neighbourhoods, 48 complaints were partly upheld (22%) and 62 were upheld (29%), resulting in 51% of complaints being either upheld or partly upheld overall. Although this is similar to last year percentage wise, there were 110 complaints upheld or partly upheld compared to 66 in 2023/2024.
- 3.0.22 For Housing Management Property at stage 1, 154 complaints were partly upheld (29%) compared to 46 the previous year which equated to 10%. There were 213 upheld complaints (40%) compared to 270 complaints last year with an overall rate of 58%. Overall, 329 complaints were upheld or partly upheld in 2024/2025 resulting in a 69% uphold rate.
- 3.0.23 Estate Services closed 14 complaints in 2024/2025, partly upholding and upholding an equal number of complaints (4 complaints) providing an uphold rate of 57%.
- 3.0.24 Overall, 485 complaints were upheld out of 757 complaints closed in 2024/2025. This results in a 64% uphold rate which is an increase of 5% compared to 2023/2024.
- 3.0.25 At stage 2, for Housing and Neighbourhoods, 33 complaints were partly upheld (52%) and 13 were upheld (20%), meaning 72% of complaints were upheld or partly upheld.
- 3.0.26 For Housing Management Property, 65 complaints were partly upheld (37%) and 90 were upheld (51%). This means 88% of complaints were upheld or partly upheld which is the same as the previous year.
- 3.0.27 For Estate Services, 5 complaints were partly upheld and 2 complaints were not upheld at stage 2. This provides an uphold rate of 71%.
- 3.0.28 Overall, 83% of stage 2 complaints were upheld or partly upheld. This is a 5% increase from the previous year.
- 3.0.29 This again shows that there is a 19% increase in the complaints being upheld or partly upheld from stage 1 to stage 2 (same as last year). When looking at the stage 2 cases closed in 2024/2025 and comparing the stage 1 outcome with the stage 2 outcome, 21 complaints that were decided as not upheld were subsequently partly upheld or upheld at stage 2. This was broken down into 1 Estate Services complaint, 7 Housing and Neighbourhood complaints and 13 Housing Management Property complaints. This indicates that Housing

Management need to review the complaints more openly and accept where things have gone wrong and work to remedy the complaint to avoid escalation to stage 2.

- 3.0.30 The Complaints Service circulates all stage 2 responses to officers that were involved in the complaint investigation and the officer that responded at stage 1 so that stage 1 responses can be improved and lessons learnt.
- 3.0.31 Some service improvements identified at the final review stage have been included in point 14 - Learning from Complaints.

Complaints Rejected



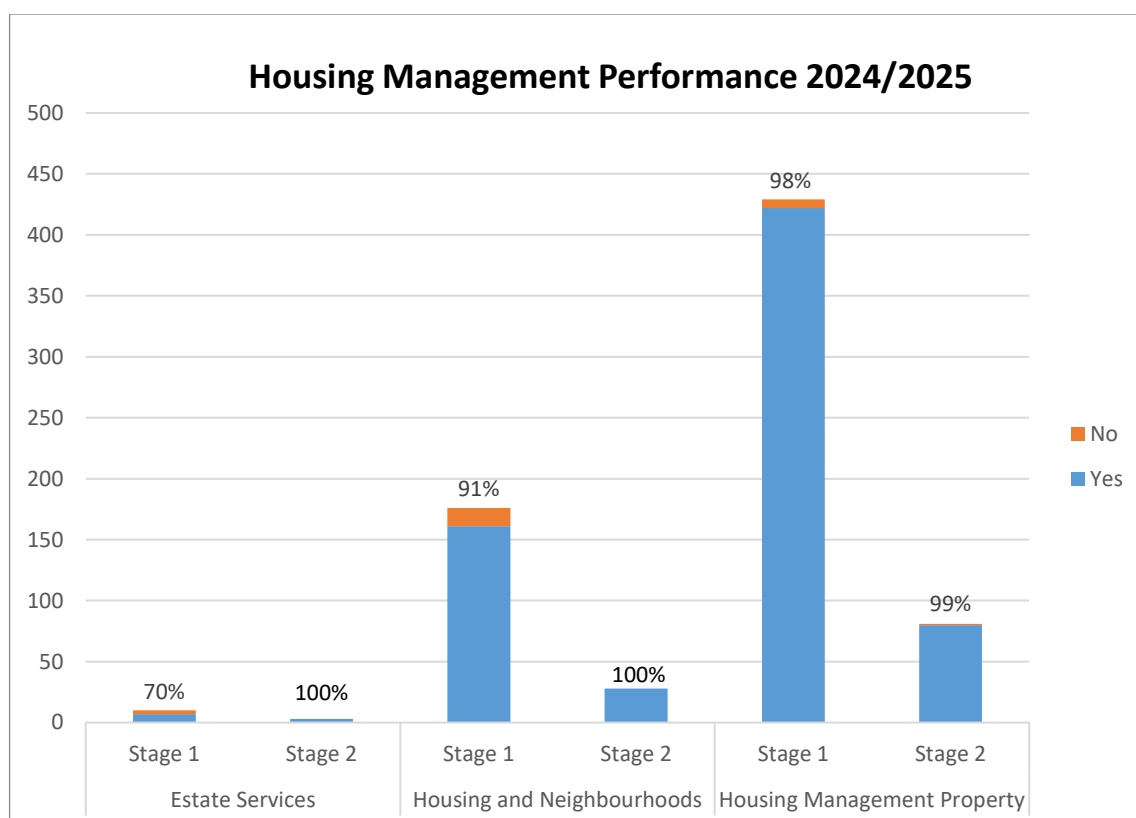
- 3.0.32 At stage 1, 65 complaints were rejected which is more than the 47 that were rejected last year. As seen in the chart above, the main reason for this was that the complaint had already been investigated or there was a duplicate complaint request. Residents are required to email the Complaints Service to escalate their complaints to stage 2 of the Council's complaint procedure however some residents raise the same complaint on the complaints database. We therefore need to reject the complaint on the database and escalate the original complaint to avoid duplication. Some residents will also try to raise the same complaint again although their complaint has already been through the complaints procedure. In this scenario, they would need to escalate their complaint further by approaching the Housing Ombudsman to make a final decision on the complaint. This was the reason for 91% of complaints rejected and for 59 complaint rejections overall across the Housing Management Services.
- 3.0.33 In addition, three complaints were rejected due to being about Legal or HR issues and therefore were investigated through different routes. Where the matter is already in Court, the Council is unable to investigate the complaint. Other reasons that cases were rejected included one complaint relating to non-Council related services, one complaint where the complainant did not have

consent to raise the complaint on behalf of the resident, and another complaint where there was a more appropriate avenue through an appeals process.

3.0.34 There was one escalation that was rejected as a response had already been provided under a separate complaint and therefore was a duplicate request.

Timeliness of Responses

3.0.35 The chart below shows complaint response times across the Housing Management Service in 2024/2025:



3.0.36 In 2024/2025, at stage 1, 98% of complaints from Housing Management Property were responded to on time, while 91% of Housing and Neighbourhoods complaints were responded to on time and 70% of Estate Services complaints were responded to within the expected timeframe. At stage 2, 99% of Housing Management Property complaints were responded to on time which is an increase of 3% compared with last year, and 100% of Housing and Neighbourhoods complaints and Estate Services complaints were responded to on time.

3.0.37 At stage 1, out of the 615 complaints due across the Housing Management Service, 590 were responded to on time. Of the 25 cases that were responded to outside of the relevant timescales, 10 were closed within two days of the deadline and 7 were closed within 1 day of the deadline. At stage 2, 99% of complaints were responded to on time, with this being the case for 111 of the 112 complaints due overall, so only one went outside of the required timescales. This was a complex case which eventually was escalated to the

Housing Ombudsman. The Ombudsman decided that the Council had satisfactorily resolved the resident's complaint and no further action was required.

Compensation

	Estate Services		Housing and Neighbourhoods		Housing Management Property	
	Total number of cases	Amount	Total number of cases	Amount	Total number of cases	Amount
Stage 1	0	£0	39	£7,489	221	£53,408
Stage 2	1	£50	16	£7,355	76	£41,485
Total	1	£50	55	£14,844	297	£94,893

3.0.38 One case involving Estate Services resulted in a £50 compensation payment at stage 2. The Housing and Neighbourhoods service issued similar compensation amounts at both stage 1 and stage 2; however, more than twice as many cases received compensation at stage 1 compared to stage 2. The Housing Management Property service paid out the highest total compensation, with £53,408 across 221 cases at stage 1 and £41,485 across 76 cases at stage 2.

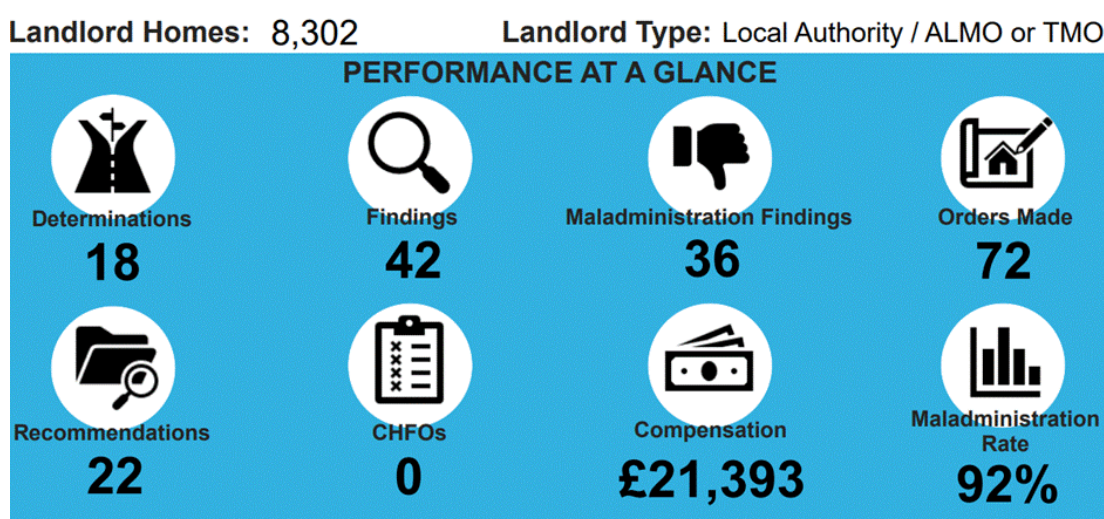
3.0.39 The Council paid a total of £109,787, in compensation in the year 2024/2025, comprising a total of 353 cases. At stage 1, compensation was awarded in 260 cases with a total of £60,897 compensation given overall. Stage 2 involved 93 cases, where £48,890 was awarded in compensation. The amount of compensation and cases that have been awarded compensation has increased compared to 2023/2024 which shows that we are willing to compensate and remedy complaints at an early stage and thus preventing further compensation at stage 2. In 2023/2024, £41,865 was paid at stage 1 which is an increase of almost £20k compared to this year. However, the amount of compensation at stage 2 has decreased by approximately £5k compared to this year.

3.0.40 The main reason recorded for awarding compensation, was due to delay or failure to provide service. This accounted for 217 cases at stage 1 and 81 cases at stage 2. This is 84% of the cases where compensation was awarded across stage 1 and stage 2. The other three main reasons for compensation being paid were for time and trouble which was the reason compensation was given in 23 cases across stage 1 and 2, distress was the reason given for awarding compensation in 16 cases and costs that were incurred by customer was the reason compensation was paid in 11 cases. Another reason for awarding compensation included incorrect actions. When awarding compensation, we credit a resident's rent account if they are in arrears, make direct payments to their bank or, if the amount awarded is under £500, compensation is awarded as a postal voucher to be claimed at any post office.

3.0.41 Compensation awarded by the Council is benchmarked against the Housing Ombudsman's remedies guidance.

Housing Ombudsman Decisions in 2023/2024

3.0.42 The Housing Ombudsman has not yet provided its annual report for 2024/2025 and therefore we are unable to report on cases that have been referred to it for this financial year. The Housing Ombudsman has however asked that the comments from their 2023/2024 report are included in the Council's annual report for 2024/2025. The table below has therefore been extracted from the Housing Ombudsman's 2023/2024 report on the Housing Management Service's performance. A copy of the Housing Ombudsman's performance report for Brent has been provided in Appendix 1.



3.0.43 The Housing Ombudsman decided eighteen Housing Management Service complaints in 2023/2024, with forty-two findings and thirty-six maladministration findings arising from these decisions. These resulted in seventy-two orders and twenty-two recommendations. There were no complaint handling failure orders (CHFOs) and no severe maladministration findings issued, both of which are positive outcomes.

3.0.44 A total of £21,393 compensation was recorded as having been ordered by the Housing Ombudsman during 2023/2024. Only £13,503 of this was additional compensation awarded by the Housing Ombudsman further to their investigations and decisions. £7,890 of the total compensation included in the total Housing Ombudsman figure of £21,393 had already been offered to complainants within the Council's complaints procedure.

3.0.45 The maladministration findings and orders are much higher than the previous year 2022/2023. This is mainly due to the number of determinations made compared to the previous year. In 2022/2023, the Housing Ombudsman made 8 determinations but in 2023/2024 there were more than double determinations made with 18 cases determined. In terms of the recommendations and orders, many of these had already been agreed during the Council's own complaints

process and the Ombudsman had asked the Council to complete these if we hadn't done so already.

3.0.46 The maladministration rate has however increased by 19% compared to the previous year and therefore more work needs to be done to improve this. This seems to be an issue across local authorities as Brent performed similarly when compared to similar landlords by size and type.

3.0.47 The table below provides a breakdown of the findings by category for 2023/2024.

Complaint Decision	Severe Maladministration	Maladministration	Service failure	Mediation	Redress	No Maladministration	Outside Jurisdiction	Withdrawn	Total
Property Condition	0	15	2	0	1	0	2	0	20
Complaints Handling	0	5	5	0	0	0	0	0	10
Anti-social behaviour	0	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	4
Estate Management	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Reimbursement and Payments	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
Health and Safety (inc. building safety)	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Moving to a Property	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Occupancy Rights	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
TOTAL	0	26	10	0	2	1	1	0	42

3.0.48 The Council complied with all 68 of the Housing Ombudsman's orders due to be closed in 2023/2024, achieving a 100% compliance rate.

3.0.49 The Council use the learning from complaints to inform decisions on areas of improvement within the Housing Management Service. The Council also carry out an annual self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code to ensure compliance with the Code. A copy of the self-assessment has been provided in Appendix 2.

3.0.50 The Housing Ombudsman has released a series of reports in which they have put the spotlight on issues identified through complaints that they have investigated and resolved. These have consisted of the following:

- Damp and Mould spotlight report – this report contained a number of recommendations for landlords. The Council therefore self-assessed against these recommendations and provided a copy of the results in the annual report for 2022/2023.
- Knowledge and Information Management spotlight report - the Council have also undertaken a self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman spotlight report on Knowledge and Information Management, and this assessment has been included in Appendix 3.
- Attitudes, Respect and Rights spotlight report – the Council self-assessed against this report last year and the results have been included in Appendix 4.

Benchmarking Data

3.0.51 Due to the short timescale set by the Housing Ombudsman for submitting the annual report, it was not possible to benchmark Brent's performance against other councils' annual reports. However, the Housing Ombudsman's 2023/2024 Annual Complaints Review provides comparative data for similar landlords.

3.0.52 According to the report, the average maladministration rate for London councils was 77%, while Brent's rate stood at 92%, indicating a need for improvement. However, when compared with landlords of similar size and type, Brent's performance was broadly in line, suggesting that many landlords are facing similar challenges in reducing maladministration findings.

3.0.53 Notably, Brent recorded no severe maladministration findings in 2023/2024, compared to a London average of 9% for local authorities. In addition, the Council did not receive any Complaint Handling Failure Orders (CHFOs) during the same period. These outcomes are positive indicators that, despite the higher maladministration rate, there were no serious failings that warranted severe findings or formal intervention.

Customer Feedback and Engagement

3.0.54 The Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard set out by the Regulator of Social Housing requires all registered providers of social housing to collect and report annually on their performance using Tenant Satisfaction Measures. These are a set of defined measures that provide residents with more transparency regarding their landlord's performance. Through this, we can engage with tenants and glean further information around their housing concerns and satisfaction levels. To note, leaseholders are not part of the sample for these measures.

3.0.55 Complaints are all about listening to and acting on feedback. The proportion of tenant respondents who reported making a complaint in the last 12 months and who are recorded as satisfied with their landlord's approach to complaints handling is 22.2%. This is a slight increase on the previous year, which was at 17.4% and continues to illustrate that this is an area needing significant, evidence-led improvement. Another useful measure is the proportion of tenant respondents who are satisfied that their landlord listens to views and acts upon them. This year we achieved 39.2% satisfaction, compared to last year at 35.2%, another very slight increase. We will continue to engage with the wider resident base to understand what drives their perceptions of our service and what we can do to improve.

3.0.56 One way we are doing that is by creating a resident complaints group, to co-design the improvements highlighted by our complaints handling review. The review was driven by resident insight including Tenant Satisfaction Measure data, wider performance data, a complaint handling survey, benchmarking data, and a scrutiny exercise on the quality of responses. We are confident that by bringing residents together consistently to drive change and hold us to account that we will make effective, sustainable changes to how we deliver complaints.

3.0.57 Tenants were also asked how satisfied or dissatisfied they were with the overall repairs service from the landlord over the last 12 months and the proportion of tenants who reported that they were satisfied with the repairs service was 51.3%. This is a decrease of 3.8% from last year and continues to demonstrate how important it is that we use complaint insights to make targeted service improvements to better the resident experience.

Learning from Complaints and Service Improvements

3.0.58 Feedback from residents offers important insights into what we do well and what can be improved.

3.0.59 Learning from the lived experiences of residents can help identify where services, policies and procedures can be improved, and this helps to ensure that senior managers are informed of issues that matter to residents. This also helps to improve communication and strengthen relationships.

3.0.60 As a result of complaints received by Brent Council, many service improvements have been implemented. Some of the service improvements that have been implemented by the Housing Management Service as a result of complaints include:

- a) Property Services and Pest Control putting in place a more robust communication process to facilitate a coordinated approach in tackling issues of infestation, not least those of a historic nature.
- b) Plain English training has been made mandatory to improve accessibility of our communications with residents across our processes

- c) We have provided training for housing officers to better manage noise nuisance reports
- d) We have updated our adaptations process to improve resident experience.
- e) We have updated the CRM database with PFI properties (Hyde properties where we are the landlords) so that customer services could better triage calls and cases as previously tenants would be advised to go to Hyde even if we were their landlord.
- f) To develop a more robust written procedure for dealing with decants as well as for cases where tenants have declined the initial offer or offers of decant accommodation made to them.
- g) The Housing Management Service to carry out a review and implement a written policy on the use of dehumidifiers
- h) Review process for highlighting health and safety issues identified by surveyors to senior management
- i) Review of the training provided to surveyors
- j) Housing and Neighbourhoods service to review the wording of future anti-social behaviour letters to ensure they are proportionate to the circumstances.

3.0.61 We have implemented a new case review tool to help identify and monitor learning from complaints. Once this is embedded across the service, we will confidently be able to report on the progress of service improvements which are being led by the relevant service areas.

3.0.62 In October 2024, we launched a full review into our complaints handling. The review aims to create a holistic housing management complaints service which advocates for residents, puts things right, helps to rebuild trust, and that learns from its failings and improves to prevent failings happening again. The actions for improvement span from system improvements, internal guidance, training and campaigns, governance and performance monitoring – and makes crucial changes to the way the service is delivered to remove points of failure. This review is not about finding quick fixes or seeking an unjustified reduction in complaints, we want to set up an accessible and effective complaints process and a positive complaint culture embed across our services. Once we have full assurance that our complaint handling is robust, we can then focus on delivering measurable service improvements taken from our complaints learning.

3.0.63 Findings from the review, and learning from this years' complaint data, will be compiled in a Housing Management Complaint Handling Review report, which

will be taken through the governance structures following the Corporate Complaints Annual Report.

3.0.64 Following the Council's annual Complaint Handling Code compliance submission on 28 June 2024, the Housing Ombudsman has reviewed the Council's complaints policy. Their review focussed on ensuring landlords have met the requirements of the Code based on what residents can reasonably expect to be included in a policy document.

3.0.65 Their review identified twelve recommendations for the Council to consider. The Council has accepted all 12 recommendations and has updated its complaints policy to reflect the changes. A copy of the updated policy can be found in Appendix 5.

4.0 Stakeholder and ward member consultation and engagement

4.1 This report will be discussed at Cabinet and the relevant scrutiny committees.

5.0 Financial Considerations

5.1 The details provided on compensation payments in sections 3.0.38 - 3.0.40 and throughout this report 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 compensation offered for Housing Management complaints during the Council's own complaint procedures in 2024/2025 was £109,787 (353 cases), which is an increase of 14% compared to the previous year. The costs implications and budgetary impacts to the Council are being continuously monitored.

6.0 Legal Considerations

6.1 Complaints concerning Housing Management fall under the Housing Ombudsman. The Ombudsman is the final stage in the complaints process, where an individual has complained to the Council and remains dissatisfied with the outcome.

6.2 The Complaint Handling Code became statutory on 1 April 2024, meaning that the Council is obliged by law to follow the requirements set out in the Code. The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 places a duty on the Housing Ombudsman to monitor compliance with the statutory Complaint Handling Code. The Council's Complaints Policy was updated to take account of these changes.

7.0 Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations

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 is improving the way in which equalities data is captured and analysed so it 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 issues spotlight reports to address thematic issues and publishes a monthly report on cases of severe maladministration by landlords. Although the Council has not been featured in any of these reports, it is imperative that we learn from these reports to avoid severe maladministration decisions in the future.

10.2 The Council continues to advertise its complaints policy on the Council’s website and in correspondence with residents. A copy of the Council’s self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman’s complaint handling Code is also available on the Council’s website along with a copy of this report once it has been through the relevant governance procedures. Comments from Cabinet in relation to the report will be included.

Report sign off:

Minesh Patel

Corporate Director of Finance and Resources