

Report for: Overview and Scrutiny Committee: 11th March 2024

Item number: 8

Title: Annual Feedback and Resolutions Report 2022-2023

Report

authorised by : Claire McCarthy, Assistant Director for Strategy, Communications and Collaboration

Lead Officer: Elaine Prado: Elaine.Prado@Haringey.gov.uk

Ward(s) affected: N/A

Report for Key/

Non Key Decision: N/A

1. Describe the issue under consideration

This report provides an update on how Haringey Council is seeking to learn from the feedback we receive from residents and use this to shape and improve our services. It also sets out some of the key actions we are undertaking to improve our complaints, FOI and Members Enquiry handling processes to ensure the system provides both a positive resident experience but also the strongest possible platform for us to utilise the feedback – both positive and negative – that we receive.

Appendix one provides the annual data for staff compliments, complaints, Members Enquiries, Freedom of Information requests and Ombudsman cases.

2. Cabinet Member Introduction

N/A

3. Recommendations

That the contents of the attached report be noted

4. Reasons for decision

N/A

5. Background information

In November 2022 Haringey Council launched the Haringey Deal which made a set of commitments around how we wanted to change and improve our relationship with residents and communities. This included commitments to getting the basics right, sharing power, listening and learning from our mistakes.

We are in the process of embedding the Haringey Deal in the way we work across the council. Over the last 12 months there has been a significant step change in the way in which residents and communities have been proactively

engaged and involved in shaping policy, service design and priority setting. Some recent examples include the Wood Green Voices and Tottenham Voices programmes, co-design of improvements at Down Lane Park and the transformation of the parking arrangements for disabled residents. This is part of a fundamental shift in our culture to becoming a truly resident centric organisation.

In addition to these proactive collaborations, we also recognise that a key part of this journey is learning from the vast array of reactive feedback we receive from residents and businesses every day including – though not confined to – via our formal complaints process.

Learning from feedback

The following are examples from services throughout the council where we can demonstrate learning from complaints and/or service changes that have taken place because of feedback from residents. Changes captured below range from matters flagged to us by a single resident that has led to change, through to more general learning taken from complaints and feedback and includes changes where the council has proactively sought the opinion of residents on a variety of topics.

Currently the information on how we are specifically learning from feedback is being gathered manually from services, but in future we are looking to systematise this by capturing this through a new case management system. We also intend the new system to provide more detailed management information identifying trends and emerging issues so that they can be addressed more quickly by services.

Housing services:

Housing Improvement Plan

Following significant feedback from tenants and leaseholders, the Housing Ombudsman and external evaluation of our services; the council introduced a Housing Improvement Plan. The plan was agreed in April 2023, after the council brought the management of its housing service back in house.

It sets out a number of key objectives and actions for improving services for tenants and leaseholders and increase satisfaction. In summary, these are to:

- improve tenant involvement and satisfaction to provide a resident-focused housing service.
- improve ways of working and performance.
- maximise opportunities to improve the customer experience through

information and communication technology (ICT)

- improve compliance and make resident safety our highest priority.
- improve complaint handling.
- deliver value for money.
- invest in the quality of our homes through our planned maintenance programme.
- provide more visible and locality-based teams on estates more frequently.
- upskill staff and provide better, more attractive jobs.

The Plan is overseen by a Housing Improvement Board chaired by the Chief Executive.

Improved data capture of resident vulnerabilities:

Following feedback from the Housing Ombudsman, work has taken place to improve oversight of the vulnerabilities and communication needs of our tenants. Flags to indicate vulnerability and needs were already available in the housing management system (NEC). As a result of the feedback received, further work has been carried out to implement a link between that system and the Total Mobile system to improve information provision to our operatives and contractors. The flags ensure officers are aware of the needs of residents so that they can adapt the way they deliver their services.

Staff are also able to raise safeguarding and vulnerability concerns from the Total Mobile system while delivering services to residents, which enables housing officers to process and action them accordingly.

Housing repairs – Follow on Calls:

Customer Services handle calls relating to housing repairs, however, only have access to book an initial repair job. Any subsequent work or changes of appointment must be done by Property Services, as this is a more complex activity due to the collaboration required with multiple teams.

Previously, all residents with an existing repair would call Customer Services, and an officer there would capture the request then pass it to the Property Services team. This was not very efficient and led to delays and was unsatisfactory from a resident perspective.

As a result of resident feedback showing dissatisfaction with follow on calls about housing repairs, a secondary phone line has now been initiated so that residents can discuss existing repairs with officers within Property Services who can arrange subsequent repair appointments, removing the 'hand-off' and delays from the process.

We will be monitoring this to see if residents are more satisfied as a result.

Children's Services:

Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs):

In the last 6 months there had been 7 x ECHPs, for which an increasing

number of letters, document packages, emails and general communication was being received. While investigating the complaints, it became evident that there were high levels of confusion about eligibility and thresholds which were heightening resident anxieties. With parents' permission, SENDIASS professionals (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information Advice and Support Service) were invited to participate in discussions about the content of EHCP reports. This demonstrated our desire for residents to feel supported and have an advocate present, if required.

With the presence of a respected and independent partner agency expert, communication with the residents involved was much smoother. The meeting allowed us to ensure there was clarity in the matters covered in the report and any unrealistic expectations were addressed, leading to the outcome of the report becoming acceptable to parents.

What the Council has learned and implemented is the proposal of a face to face or virtual 'resolution meeting' with a relevant external professional to offer support to a parent/carer. It also provided a more effective opportunity to offer empathy and progress the matter.

Adults services:

Placement Communication Policy:

Mrs X complained about a lack of communication from the social worker regarding the care arrangements for her uncle.

As a result of this complaint a clear communication policy regarding placements is being developed so communication with clients and families is clear and not confusing.

Payment issues in Liquid Logic:

Mr B contacted the Council to complain about the delay he was experiencing in receiving his carer's allowance payment. After an initial investigation, it was recognised that the recently implemented system (Liquid Logic) was failing to pay a small number of seemingly unrelated accounts.

The payment failures had been noted and were thought to predominantly affect a small number of businesses. Each payment failure was being rectified on a case-by-case basis. Mr B's complaint led to a more detailed investigation of the system failures and helped to identify and rectify the payment issue, so that all future payments could be processed without any delay.

Without the complaint, the service area would not have been aware of a wider payment issue that needed to be resolved.

Environment and Resident Experience:

Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTN) implementation:

A significant number of complaints, as well as other forms of feedback, were received by the council in relation to the implementation of three LTNs in Haringey. Some of these complaints were about the principles and objectives of LTNs. However, others raised concerns about the implementation of including specific impacts on particular groups or issues arising on individual streets. As a result of this feedback changes were made to the

implementation of the LTNs including providing LTN exemptions for all Blue Badge holders in Haringey – not just those residing in LTN areas. Other measures were taken to amend filters and parking arrangements to improve traffic flow.

Waste services:

Through the Council's waste engagement project and Recycling Ideas form, we became aware that residents would like a kerbside textile collection. Subsequently, in partnership with TRAIID we introduced a new kerbside collection of textiles borough-wide from Sept 2023. We also received feedback that residents would like a kerbside small electronics recycling collection. Subsequently, we successfully applied for grant funding from Materials Focus in 2023 and are introducing a new collection service this year.

Shaping Wood Green Voices engagement, as well as feedback through our waste and recycling engagement project have also led to the following service improvements:

- New bins on Wood Green High Rd that have facilities for recyclable and non-recyclable litter.
- New electric cleansing vehicle to remove sacks off the street improving overall cleanliness of pavements.
- New x3 electric barrows with pressure washers for street sweepers improving overall cleanliness of pavements.
- Turnpike Lane jet washing Feb 2022 and Sept 2023, to improve cleanliness of the pavement.
- Chewing Gum Task Force/street scrubbing, Sept 22-Mar 23, to improve cleanliness of pavements.

Other feedback received will be used to improve future communication to residents, for example including clear dates for Christmas tree collection and clearer graphics to emphasise that we need residents to cut up their trees.

Phone boxes:

Following concerns from residents and Elected Members in the past about phone boxes, the Council consulted with residents to establish their experiences with phone boxes across the borough that may be in poor condition. Residents assisted us to pinpoint the locations of run down phone boxes using an interactive map. We received just under 1,500 responses.

93% of people that responded said they wanted problem phone boxes removed. The main reasons people gave was that they didn't feel safe around dilapidated phone boxes, and raised issues such as dumped rubbish, fly posting, graffiti, being used as a toilet, used for drugs and being a focus for other ASB and crime.

The Council are issuing Planning Contravention Notices to the owners of the run-down phone boxes. The notices require the owners to prove that the phone boxes are being used. If they are not, the Council will start to order their removal.

Improvements to disabled parking:

Residents told the Council that they found it difficult to access disabled

parking provision. This was due to complexities in the blue badge application process, a lack of disabled parking provision, in particular dedicated spaces near their home or place of work; and displacement by those fraudulently using the available provision. Their blue badges were also being stolen, resulting in stress and inconvenience when applying for replacement badges.

Taking on board this feedback the Council has since:

- Introduced dedicated disabled parking bays, ensuring that those with entitlement have a reserved space near their home or workplace.
- Introduced a free resident blue badge holder permit. This replaces the blue badge when used to park in Haringey and avoids the need to display the blue badge and risk having it stolen.
- Introduced measures to reduce blue badge misuse. This includes a blue badge enforcement policy, new IT solution to identify stolen / misused badges and a blue badge fraud hotline to report abuse of blue badges – a reduction in the fraudulent use of badges can now be evidenced.
- Increased the length of disabled parking bays making it easier for those with wheelchairs and other mobility aids to access those bays and nearby kerb space.
- Improved the blue badge application process – allowing those with ‘hidden disabilities’ to access the scheme, introducing an appeal process for unsuccessful applications, implemented a new blue badge case management system making it easier to apply for and manage the blue badge.
- Removed administration fees for the replacement of badges that have been stolen, reducing the financial burden on disabled drivers and passengers.

Improvements to carers parking:

Residents and Care Providers told us that carers found it difficult to find parking when caring for those in their own homes. The Council has since introduced a free care at home parking permit to ease this burden.

Parking permits:

Residents told us that they wanted easier access to parking permits.

The Council introduced a new online parking permit system that allowed instant access to electronic parking permits. Some residents found this system difficult to use, so the service worked with the IT supplier to develop and implement improvements that residents had asked for. This resulted in an updated permit module being implemented in November 2023, which addressed the majority of issues identified by residents.

Parking enforcement:

Residents complained about antisocial / illegal parking and the associated noise and general disturbance that it caused. The Council extended its parking enforcement until 1am in response to this. Positive resident feedback

has been received.

Culture, Strategy and Engagement:

Improved complaint handling process

Mr S complained about issues to do with his windows. When works to remedy the issue were not completed in a timely manner Mr S complained again. Due to administrative errors this subsequent contact was registered as new case creating confusion both internally and for Mr S.

Following a stage 2 investigation significant learning was identified and a new procedure was put in place to ensure a thorough search of records for open cases before the logging of a new case. This will ensure that new cases are not opened inappropriately for complaints which are on-going.

Feedback Improvement Plan

We recognise that an efficient and effective Feedback system is critical. Such a system must support us to meet our statutory duties for instance around responding to FOI requests. It must also provide a positive resident experience and be the strongest possible platform for us to utilise the feedback – both positive and negative – that we receive.

Over the last year significant actions have been taken to improve our Feedback performance including the timeliness and quality of responses to provided to elected Members and residents. To date these actions have not delivered the improvements in key metrics that we would have wanted to see. Therefore, we have refreshed our Feedback improvement plans with the aim of improving performance including a reduction in complaints upheld at Stage 2 and Ombudsman; compliance with statutory requirements for responding to FOIs in a timely fashion and an improved experience for elected Members.

Some of the key activities identified for action over the next few months are:

Service priority outcome	Key activities	Target delivery date
Reduce the number of contacts to Corporate Feedback & Resolutions Team (>emails per case)	Improve webpages to reduce the number of service requests that are logged as complaints. Improve intranet pages to provide better support for responding officers including good practise. Review FOI webpage and search function.	By April 2024
Improve timeliness of responses (meeting response times)	Reduce single points of failure through shared mailboxes.	August 2024 By December 2024

	<p>Address system/process failures through new casework system.</p> <p>Actively manage overdue cases.</p> <p>Stronger focus on senior level accountability.</p>	<p>Following recruitment of additional officer – May 2024</p> <p>On-going</p>
<p>Improve quality of responses (reduce escalations)</p>	<p>Build on learning from Senior-Sign-Off pilot</p> <p>Use staff forum as a community of practise.</p> <p>Staff training.</p> <p>Move from a culture of response to resolve.</p>	<p>On-going</p> <p>On-going</p> <p>On-going</p> <p>On-going</p>
<p>Improve Members Enquiries experience</p>	<p>ME feedback form to recognise quality responses and best practise.</p> <p>Support administration through retaining email chains.</p> <p>Reducing need for MEs through improved information flow.</p> <p>Actively manage overdue cases.</p> <p>Improved communication when delays occur.</p> <p>Review of Urgent ME process to refine/improve.</p> <p>Replace case management system (at end of contract) to include portal for managing casework.</p>	<p>February 2024</p> <p>February 2024</p> <p>On-going</p> <p>Following recruitment of additional officer – May 2024</p> <p>On-going</p> <p>April 2024</p> <p>System delivery by end of November 2024</p>

<p>Maximise value of Corporate Feedback & Resolutions Team</p>	<p>Actively manage overdue cases.</p> <p>Replace case management system (at end of contract)</p> <p>Additional resource to support learning, chasing, co-ordinating.</p> <p>Continued training and development.</p>	<p>Following recruitment of additional officer – May 2024</p> <p>System delivery by end of November 2024</p> <p>Following recruitment of additional officer – May 2024</p> <p>On-going</p>
<p>Implement new Complaint Handling Codes from Housing Ombudsman and Local Government Ombudsman</p>	<p>New codes were published in February 2024.</p> <p>Requirements being reviewed and implementation plan developed.</p>	<p>Ombudsman guidance comes into force on 1st April 2024.</p>

In line with the Haringey Deal improving our Feedback processes and outcomes are a key part of becoming truly resident centric as an organisation. In addition to these actions, we recognise that this requires not just changes in policy or procedure but a change in culture. This is being developed through our work on embedding the Deal and our new corporate values.

6. Contribution to the Corporate Delivery Plan 2022-2024 High level Strategic outcomes

Theme 1 – Resident experience, participation and collaboration.

High level outcome 1 - All residents, businesses and other stakeholders can easily access services which are designed and operated in a resident-centric way. Co-production puts resident voice and experience at the heart of everything we do. Positive interactions with the council will support better relationships with the community, increasing mutual trust and confidence.

7. Carbon and Climate Change

N/A

8. Statutory Officers comments (Director of Finance (procurement), Head of Legal and Governance, Equalities)

Finance

N/A

Procurement

N/A

Head of Legal & Governance [Name and title of Officer completing these comments]

N/A

Equality

N/A

9. **Use of Appendices**

Appendix 1 - Feedback and Resolutions data 2022-2023

10. **Background papers**

N/A

Appendix 1: Feedback and Resolutions data 2022-2023

1. Introduction

This is the analysis of Complaints, Ombudsman Cases, Member Enquiries, Freedom of Information Requests and Compliments data for the period 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023.

As a council we recognise the value of all the feedback we receive on a daily basis from our residents, businesses, elected Members and partners. This feedback comes in many forms and via a growing number of channels. Drawing on the feedback we receive from complaints and Members Enquiries is a really important part of improving our residents' experience – as detailed in the main report.

As part of the Haringey Deal we have made commitments to be a learning organisation, and this is particularly important when we get things wrong. We also want to learn from what we do well and so we are doing more collate and reflect on the positive feedback we receive about the work our staff do day in and day out.

It would be easy to focus only on the volumes in this report – particularly when it comes to Stage 1 complaints. However, the overall number of initial complaints we receive as an organisation reflects a number of factors – not least how easy we make it for residents to find out how to complain.

“High volumes of complaints must not be seen as a negative, as they can be indicative of a well-publicised and accessible complaints process. Low complaint volumes are potentially a sign that residents are unable to complain” - Housing Ombudsman, Complaint Handling Code 2024

In addition, we recognise that not all complaints are about service failures. Some, very legitimately, are complaints about policy decisions taken by the Council with which some residents may disagree for instance the implementation of Low Traffic Neighbourhoods. Therefore, it is important not just to focus on the number of Stage 1 complaints but on the number of those complaints are that are upheld and in particular the number that are upheld where those are escalated to Stage 2 or to the Ombudsman. It is these numbers that tend to highlight not only where a service failure has taken place but also that we did not take the opportunity to rectify the problem at the earliest available opportunity.

It is also important to see complaints in the context of other data and validation processes which together provide us with a rounded picture of our performance. This includes performance data and inspections regimes such as Ofsted.

2. Context

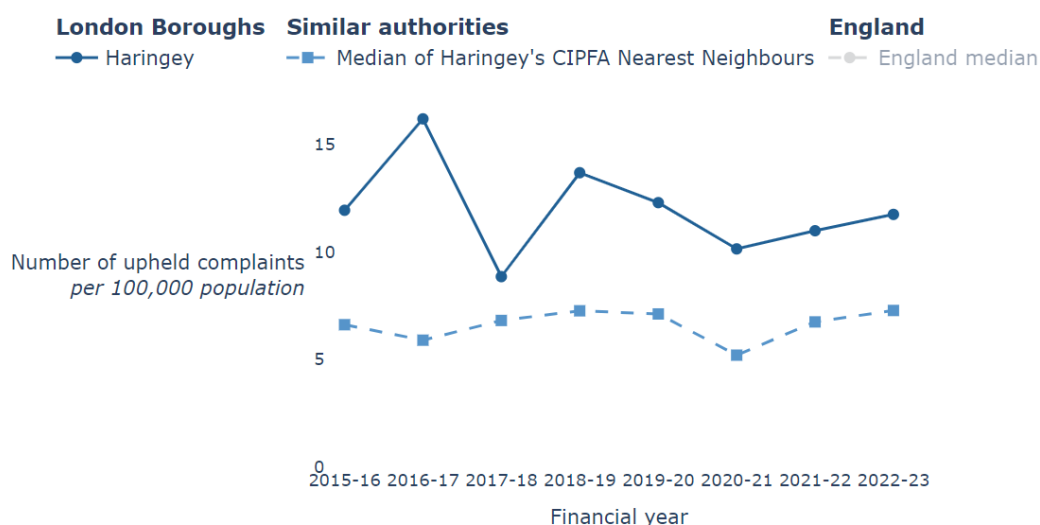
To provide some context to the volumes set out in this report, it is estimated that we now receive in excess of 1 million interactions with, or enquiries from, residents and businesses in any given year.

Below is a breakdown of the volume of some of the resident contacts received by services, where our residents interacted with us the most in 2022/23:

Service area	Volume of contacts	Volume of complaints	% of complaints vs contacts
Revenues & Benefits	501,825	189	0.04%
Customer Services	637,572	126	>0.01%
Environment & Neighbourhoods – Direct Services	220,543	1306	0.6%
Adults Social Care	17,354	61	0.4%

These numbers demonstrate that, as a proportion of all the interactions residents have with the Council over a year, those resulting in formal complaints are very low (less than 1% overall).

We recognise the value of benchmarking. The new Office for Local Government (Oflog) have begun publishing data on number of complaints which are upheld partially or wholly by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman per 100,000 of the population. Oflog data shows that on this measure Haringey tends to trend above other London Boroughs (see diagram below). This is something that we are looking to address through our Feedback improvement plan which is set out in this report.



More positively, our work with our contracted Waste partners (Veolia) to improve their service delivery have been recognised with Haringey Waste Services receiving the second lowest number of complaints nationally and

had the least complaints across London. [Source: [Waste Collection - Which Councils are the Least Rubbish? | Direct365 Blog](#)].

3. Staff Compliments

We record staff compliments from residents by email, letter, online or directly via a manager. In 2022-23 we received 466 staff compliments. This is a 309% increase on the previous year (114 received in 2021-22).

The majority of the compliments received were for Corporate and Customer Services (203 compliments). This was the most complimented service as in previous years and is perhaps reflective of the volume of contacts those services have with residents.

Similarly positive increases were also seen in Environment & Neighbourhoods Direct Services with 99 compliments (+ 312% on last year) and Adults Social Services with 85 compliments (+ 215% on last year).

We recognise that not all staff compliments are registered via the formal process and that is something that we are addressing with services to ensure the great work of their staff, and the appreciation shown by residents, is captured and acknowledged. The volume of compliments received by Service area are shown in **Table A**.

Below are just a few examples of the compliments received in 2022-23:

Childrens Services

'He is very impressed by the current efficiency of your team. We are both very happy that something has drastically changed over the past few weeks!'

'It's really useful having the [MASH] advice line, I have found it really helpful. I have to also say that compared to another 2 local boroughs I am currently dealing with; I have found Haringey to be extremely efficient and professional every time I have liaised with them in the last couple of years.'

Corporate & Customer

'I got the pleasure of having this officer to help me with my council tax queries. M was patient, kind, warm and very understanding. What he helped with today I have been trying for years for the council to explain to me. He helped me understand my council tax properly and he help me to be able to do all my council tax and housing benefits problems online so I don't need to ring the council every month I can check and see everything online without stress and headache. I just wanted to say this man save me so much stress for a lifetime I'm so happy with is service I have never got such good service from any officer before M is one in a million thank you M.'

'I wanted to say big thank you to I, P and O. They have helped me so much with my housing benefit and council tax reductions and other services. These people need to be recognised for the professionalism and hard work they give, highly empathetic and warm people, so friendly I look forward coming to Haringey council just to see those friendly faces. Many thanks for making me

feel comfortable to ask for help. This is a place where you get help with filling in forms, interpreting and being comfortable not knowing what to do, you get high level of customer services, I hope the above people recognise the services that customers are getting in Marcus Garvey customers' services centre.'

'Just to let you know I ordered my new laminated Blue Badge last week. From date of order to receiving my badge took 3 days!! I would say that's an excellent service. Please pass on my thanks to all those involved for a first-class service.'

Libraries

'Thank you for your customer service. It was a good experience and I really appreciate your help. You showed me how to use 'self-scan' as a supervisor of a hotel, what you did today, we call 'Going the extra mile for great customer service.'

Adult Social Services

'A big thank you to re Haringey reablement team who helped my mother after a fall at home and short hospital stay. They were kind and helpful – and helped rebuild her confidence at home. They communicated with us all well through this time. Thank you for your care – I am sure she may need you again one day.'

Environment and Resident Experience

'I have been so impressed by the various environmental improvements made in my area. Some time ago, I noticed the intriguing work on diverting rainfall, and the lovely variety of plants being used in the scheme. More recently, on my walk from Wood Green tube to my home in Arcadian Gardens, I was delighted to see the wonderful variety of trees planted along the main High Road. It was great to be able to read the labels to identify those I didn't know and confirm or correct those I'd guessed. Thanks to all concerned!'

'Thank you so much for making the lighting so much better on the way home from turnpike lane to lordship lane. It's so noticeable different and as a single woman walking home late at night is really appreciated.'

'I would just like to thank the council for all your hard work you do for the borough. I often use the love clean streets and the response is swift! So, thank you to the whole council team for all that you do. It's most appreciated.'

Planning, Building & Safety Standards

I would like to compliment the Land Charges department for their professional, concise, and swift response in handling my search requests. They turned round the results the quickest I have ever experienced over the 15 years of being in the industry! I hope over time, other councils look to adopt and implement their proactive approach to search responses.'

4. Other Feedback data for 2022-23

The data used to inform this report was collected from reports generated in the Feedback case management system (Respond) for the financial year 2022-23.

Source of Complaints

The majority of complaints received continues to be by electronic methods (62% email and 36% online form) as in previous years.

A data table showing the percentage split of communication by channel is shown in **Table B**.

Stage 1 complaints

In 2022-23, the total number of Stage 1 complaints received by Haringey Council was 4,127, as compared to 1,980 in 2021-22. It should be recognised that the data now includes all Housing related Stage 1 complaints, which were previously recorded against Homes for Haringey (1,949 cases in 2021-22).

The services that received the most complaints in 2022-23 were Housing Services & Building Safety, and Environment & Neighbourhoods Direct Services. Within those Highways and Parking received 29% (1,180) of the council's complaints, followed by Housing Services with 26% (1,067).

Of the 4,127 complaints received, 79% were replied to within the target of 10 working days. This compares to 78% of complaints responded to on time in 2021-22.

As well as capturing the timeliness of responses, we also measure the percentage of complaints that are upheld at Stage 1 of the process. We have seen an increase in the number of complaints being upheld at Stage 1, with 50% of complaints upheld in 2022-23 compared to 31% of complaints in 2021-22.

In 2022-23, 58% of the Housing & Building Safety complaints were upheld at Stage 1 of the process and was the service with the highest level of upheld cases across the year. This was followed by Environment & Neighbourhoods Direct Services with 16% of upheld cases at Stage 1, as shown in **Table C**.

We received 25 Statutory Children's Social Care complaints in 2022-23, which is the same amount as in 2021-22, however in 2022-2 28% of cases were responded to in 10 working days compared to 16% in the year before. This falls short of our target of 95% responded to in time but shows an overall improvement in timeliness.

There was an increase in Statutory Adults Social Care complaints in 2022-23 (85 cases) compared to the previous year (60 cases) and performance within that area decreased with only 29% of cases being responded to in 10 working days. This is versus 58% responded to in target in 2021-22.

Data showing year on year comparisons of Stage 1, Statutory Children's Social Care and Statutory Adult Social Care complaints and volumes with the percentage of those that were responded to within target are shown in **Table D**.

Types of Stage 1 Complaints

The highest number of complaints were made in relation to a Poor Standard of Service (47%), followed by Dissatisfaction with Policy or Decision (22%) and Failure to Provide a Service (21%).

It should be noted that in previous years, Employee Behaviour was consistently amongst the highest reasons for residents making a complaint, however this has reduced significantly and is now approximately 2% of all issues raised in complaint cases.

The table showing the top five reasons for making a complaint are shown in **Table E**.

Stage 2 complaints

All first stage responses give the complainant details on how to escalate their complaint if they remain dissatisfied.

A total of 19% of Stage 1 complainants took their complaints to the next stage in 2022-23, compared to 17% in the previous year.

Of the 374 escalated cases that were investigated, a total of 45% were upheld or partially upheld. In 2021/22, 230 cases were escalated to stage 2 with 5% upheld. This is an increase of 40% on the previous year and is an indication that an insufficient number of Stage 1 complaint responses are effectively resolving complaints.

The increase in Stage 2 complaints cannot be attributed to the insourcing of Homes for Haringey because their escalation process was to a Council-led second stage investigation and all escalated complaints have historically been included in this report.

However, the highest volume of Stage 2 complaints was received for Housing Services and Building Safety 55% (272 cases) and of those, 74% of the complaints were upheld or partly upheld.

Since this reporting period, a Housing Improvement Plan has been developed. The Plan has put significant focus on and investment into improving the Housing service including the repairs service and complaint handling. We would expect to see this reflected in the figures in future annual reports.

A breakdown of the services that received Stage 2 complaints is shown in **Table F**, with the volume of cases and the percentage of those that were upheld or partly upheld.

5. Ombudsman cases

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) website contains the following statement in relation to comparing statistics:

“In 2022-23 we changed our investigation processes, contributing towards an increase in the average uphold rate across all complaints. Consider comparing individual council uphold rates against the average rate rather than against previous years.

In 2020-21 we received and decided fewer complaints than normal because we stopped accepting new complaints for three months due to Covid-19.”

In 2022-23, 79% of the complaints about Haringey Council received by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) were upheld (31 of 39 investigations). This was slightly above the average of 77% of complaints received about similar authorities.

In 96% of cases the LGSCO were satisfied that Haringey had successfully implemented their recommendations (compared to an average of 99% in similar authorities)

In 10% of upheld cases, the Ombudsman found the Council had provided a satisfactory remedy in the previous complaint stages before the complaint had reached the Ombudsman (compared to an average of 15% in similar authorities).

The majority of the upheld cases (11) were for Housing Demand; predominantly in relation to temporary accommodation, followed by Children’s Services Early Help & Prevention (7) that had a high number of ECHP cases upheld.

We have been working closely with the LGSCO, to better manage cases and outcomes for our residents, and seeing through our commitments which has led to an improved overall position for the Council. We are committed to continue with this work.

Positively, there were no public interest reports published about Haringey Council for 2022-23.

Information about the complaints upheld by the LGSCO, Haringey’s compliance with Ombudsman recommendations and the satisfactory remedies provided by the Council, can be seen on the [LGSCO website](#).

Housing Ombudsman

In 2022-23, 98 Orders were made against Haringey (41 Orders in 2021-22) with an 81.4% maladministration rate (54% in 2021-22) and was therefore a significant drop in performance. This is compared to 55% national

maladministration rate, and a 62% average for Local Authorities/ALMOs

Property Condition was cited as the category with the highest volume of findings (29) followed by Complaint Handling (15)

The Housing Ombudsman Landlord Performance Report 2022/23 can be seen on the [Housing Ombudsman website](#).

At the point of insourcing Homes for Haringey in 2022, Senior Officers from the Council met with the Housing Ombudsman to discuss our improvement plan for complaint handling and discuss the Ombudsman's notice of their investigation into damp and mould issues.

In December 2022, the Council also commissioned a Property Compliance Health Check to assess the approach to managing six compliance areas, which found a number of areas of non-compliance. Following the findings of the external health check, the Council made a self-referral to the Regulator of Social Housing ('the Regulator') in January 2023.

At around the same time, the Council implemented wider plans to improve the complaints handling process and introduced a Housing Improvement Plan; one objective of which was to improve complaint handling.

As with the LGSCO, we have been working closely with the HO, to better manage cases and outcomes for our residents. Additional officers were added to the team to assist with responding to the Housing Ombudsman (HO) and oversee the completion of commitments made to the residents as a result of their case. The officers also contribute to ensuring that the HO responses are fully considered and sent on time.

With the additional resources, we would expect to see a reduction in the number of Complaint Handling Failure Orders that are issued to the Council, and an increased percentage of compliance with HO orders.

Officers from both Housing and Feedback have completed training sessions held by the HO to improve their understanding and treatment of responses, which was well received by our staff. Our willingness to commit time of staff to attend has been publicly acknowledged by the HO.

Monthly meetings with the HO have been held to collaboratively work through the improvement action plan, the last items of which were signed off in February 2024.

6. Member Enquiries

In 2022-23, 5,920 Member Enquiries were processed. This is broken down as 4,690 raised by Councillors (79%) and 1,226 raised by MPs (21%). As with Stage 1 complaints, these figures now include all cases relating to housing matters that were previously reported separately by Homes for Haringey.

The 5,920 case figure is higher however than the overall number of ME cases logged for the year, which was 4,679 cases in total. This is the result of multiple contacts from both Councillors and Members of Parliament on the

same matter.

Of the 4,679 cases, 83% were replied to within the target time scale of 10 working days. The case volume and percentage response data are shown in **Table G**.

In a similar vein to the Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints, Housing Services & Building Safety and Environment & Neighbourhoods Direct Services received the highest number of Member Enquiries, with 1,453 and 1,150 respectively, which therefore represents 56% of all MEs received in 2022-23.

A breakdown of the Directorates that received Member Enquiries with the percentage of cases is shown in **Table H**.

Of the 4,679 ME cases raised, 49% were service requests submitted on behalf of a resident, and 40% were information requests. The enquiry types are listed in **Table I**.

7. Freedom of Information Enquiries

The Freedom of Information (FOI) Act was introduced in 2005 with its purpose being to make authorities and public bodies more open and transparent with the information they hold. The FOI Act and the Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) are very similar and are dealt with through the same process. The figures given below are for both FOI and EIR requests.

Public Authorities should respond to FOI / EIR requests within 20 working days from the date the request was received.

All requests must be received in writing and Haringey has a dedicated online form and email address for this. In line with best practice, Haringey has been proactively publishing more data and information online and has a disclosure log, which shows all requests received and responses issued. In addition, a full performance report is published online.

Between April 2022 and March 2023 Haringey responded to a total of 1,553 requests, a 218 (16%) increase on the previous year. 78% of responses were sent within 20 days. A table showing the performance across the past 5 years is at **Table J**.

There is provision under the FOI Act, for not providing information in instances where either the information is not held, or we are unable to gather the information due to the cost associated. In 2022-23, 203 requests were not provided for these reasons. The breakdown of volumes and percentages relating to these requests is shown in **Table K**.

In addition to these requests there were a further 116 cases (7% of the total received) where an exemption was applied. Both the FOI and EIR Acts contain exemptions that allow Public Authorities to withhold information where there are specific circumstances, and are detailed in **Table L**. The most frequently applied exemption (46%) was under Section 40 of the Act and relates to protecting personal information.

Of the 1,553 FOI requests that were submitted to the council in 2022-23, E&N – Direct Services received the majority for a single service area with 203

requests (13% of all FOIs). The requests were predominantly related to the implementation of Low Traffic Neighbourhoods, and the subsequent enforcement/fines collected.

All other council services received comparatively lower volumes across the year. The highest volume received by each service area is show in **Table M**.

9. Appendices:

1. Data Tables.

Appendix 1 - Data tables

Table A - Staff compliments

Service	No. of Compliments
Corporate and Customer Services	203
E&N Direct Services	99
Adult Social Services	85
E&N Stronger & Safer Communities	15
Children's Services Safeguarding and Social Care	14
Children's Services Early Help and Prevention	12
Other services	38
Total	466

Table B - Communication by channel

Method	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23
Email	58%	40%	39%	62%
Online form	38%	58%	59%	36%
Letter	3%	1%	1%	1%
Phone Call	1%	1%	1%	<1%

Table C – highest volume of Stage 1 complaints by Service area

Service	No. of Complaints	% of St 1 Complaints Received	% of all Complaints Upheld
Housing Services & Building Safety	1,672	41%	58%
E&N - Direct Services	1,306	32%	15%
Corporate and Customer Services	374	9%	8%
E&N – Stronger & Safer Communities	278	7%	6%
Housing Demand	154	4%	4%

Table D – Cases responded to within target

	No. of Complaints	% of Complaints Received	% of all Complaints Upheld	% responded within target
Stage 1 Complaints	4,127	97%	50%	79%
Children's Social Care Complaints	25	1%	36%	28%
Adults Social Care Complaints	85	2%	52%	29%

Table E - Top reasons for making a complaint (S1)

Complaint Reason	%
Poor standard of service	47%
Dissatisfaction with Policy or Decision	22%
Failure to Provide a Service	21%
Inadequate or Inaccurate Communication	7%
Employee Behaviour	2%

Table F - Volume of Stage 2 cases and the percentage upheld/partly upheld

Service	S2 complaints received	No. upheld or partly upheld	% upheld / partly upheld for each service
Housing Services and Building Safety	281	168	60%
E&N - Direct Services	60	15	25%
Corporate & Customer Services	52	17	33%
E&N - Stronger & Safer Communities	25	10	40%
Planning, Building Standards & Sustainability	13	0	0%

Table G – Volume of Member Enquiry cases logged and % responded to on time

Year	Number of MEs	% Replied to on-time
2022/ 23	4,679	83%
2021/22	2,535	83%
2020/21	2,532	87%
2019/20	2,460	88%

Table H – Member Enquiries top service areas

Service	No. of MEs	% of MEs
Housing Services & Building Safety	1,453	31%
E & N – Direct Services	1,150	25%
E&N - Stronger & Safer Communities	712	15%
Corporate & Customer services	289	6%
Housing Demand	274	6%
<i>All Other Services</i>	762	17%

Table I – Member Enquiries by issue type

Nature of Enquiry	% of total
Service Request	49%
Information Request	40%
Poor Standard of Service	6%
Dissatisfaction with Policy / decision	2%
Failure to Provide a Service	2%
Inadequate or Inaccurate Communications	1%

Table J – FOI/EIR annual performance

Year	No. of requests	% on time
2022 - 2023	1,553	78%
2021-2022	1,335	83%
2020-2021	1,094	82%
2019-2020	1,384	86%
2018-2019	1,434	82%

Table K – FOI information not provided

Information not Provided	Total	% of Total requests
Information not held	179	12%
Information not given due to cost	24	2%

Table L – FOI/EIR exemptions applied

FOI - Exemption Applied	Total	% of Total Exemptions
Section 40 – Personal Information	53	46%
Section 31 – Law Enforcement	21	18%
Section 43 – Commercial Interests	15	13%
Section 21 - Info accessible by some other means	6	5%
Section 22 - Intended for future publication	5	4%

Section 24 – Safeguarding of National Security	3	3%
Section 41 – Confidential Information	3	3%
Section 42 – Legal professional Privilege	2	2%
Section 36 - Effective Conduct of Public Affairs	1	1%
Section 38 - safety of any individual	1	1%
EIR - Exemption Applied	Total	% of Total Exemptions
Regulation 12 5 (f)	2	2%
Regulation 12 (4) b) – Manifestly Unreasonable	2	2%
Regulation 12 (4) (a) – Information not held	2	2%

Table M – Top 5 FOI requests received by Service

Service	No. of FOI	% of total
E&N - Direct Services	299	19%
E&N - Stronger & Safer Communities	211	14%
Planning, Building Standards & Sustainability	173	11%
Corporate & Customer Services	137	9%
Housing Services and Building Safety	101	7%