

Report for: Overview and Scrutiny Committee: 25th November

Item number: 8

Title: Annual Feedback and Resolutions Report 2023-2024

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Ward(s) affected: N/A

Report for Key/Non Key Decision: N/A

1. Describe the issue under consideration

This report summarises the feedback, both positive and negative, that the council received between April 2023 and March 2024, and how we have implemented learnings from this feedback. It also sets out how feedback has initiated and contributed to service improvements.

Feedback is a pivotal part of Haringey Council's ability to listen to residents and improve the services we provide, in line with the commitments made in the Haringey Deal. Having an effective feedback process gives the council the best opportunity to respond in a timely and robust manner. Therefore, this report also outlines changes that have been made to improve the complaints and Members' Enquiry handling process and further steps that we intend to take over the next 12 months.

Appendix One provides the annual data for compliments, complaints, Members Enquiries and Ombudsman cases.

Appendix Two provides the annual data for Freedom of Information requests.

2. Cabinet Member Introduction

N/A.

3. Recommendations

That the Committee notes the contents of this report and the appendices.

4. Reasons for decision

N/A

5. Background information

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) and the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) have launched new, aligned Complaint Handling Codes, which came into effect on 1st April 2024. These codes ask (and require, in the case of the HOS) local authorities and landlords to demonstrate their compliance with the codes and their learnings from feedback over the course of the year. This is demonstrated through the production of an annual self-

assessment report of their compliance with the code. Haringey has published the housing self-assessment on our website - [Housing Ombudsman self-assessment June 2024 \(haringey.gov.uk\)](https://www.haringey.gov.uk/housing-ombudsman-self-assessment-june-2024)

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.

Feedback is an important facilitator for embedding the Haringey Deal in the way we work across the council, particularly in order to fulfil our commitments to get the basics right and learn from our mistakes. The service improvements outlined in this report demonstrate progress towards these objectives, including action to meaningfully incorporate resident perspectives into service design.

We also recognise that whilst much feedback is received and utilised through the formal complaints and suggestions process, there is a significant amount of feedback collected through other means, including proactive collaboration with residents and partners, other communications channels and everyday interactions in resident-facing services. This includes consultations and engagements conducted through The Haringey Engagement Hub. A key part of this journey is learning from the vast array of feedback we receive from residents and businesses every day, irrespective of how we receive it.

6. Learning from feedback

This section sets out some examples, from across the council, which demonstrate learning from resident feedback. This ranges from matters highlighted by individual residents through the formal complaints process, through to consultations and engagements where groups of residents and partners have provided broader feedback on a variety of issues. The examples are organised by council directorate.

Housing and Placemaking:

Improving responsive repairs and getting more repairs completed ‘right first time’.

Feedback from tenants on Broadwater Farm was highlighting that repairs issues were not being resolved as quickly as they could be. The Broadwater Farm Team worked with the Housing Repairs Service to set up a weekly repairs surgery, which enables residents to attend a face-to-face meeting with a member of the BWF Team and the Housing Repairs Service to try to resolve long standing repairs issues. As there is a large Turkish speaking community on the estate, a Turkish translator is present at one surgery per month to support tenants to raise issues. We have advertised this service to residents, and it has been well used with positive feedback.

Tackling pigeon fouling in Broadwater Farm.

Residents on Broadwater Farm raised concerns about the impact of large numbers of pigeons nesting on walkways and rooftops. Working with the Neighbourhood Manager, the Broadwater Farm team put in place a contract to remove pigeon nests and pigeon eggs from the estate on a monthly basis and arranged weekly visits from a hawk and falconer to deter pigeons from visiting. The team also asked contractors to place brushes on the railings on the open walkways, and spikes on roofs and ledges which prevents pigeons from being

able to easily land and roost. The team also arranged with Veolia to carry out regular jet washing of the areas worst affected by pigeon fouling. This has greatly helped to reduce the volume of pigeons and improve the overall cleanliness of the estate.

Improving internal communication between teams working on plumbing repairs.

Following resident complaints that plumbing repairs were taking too long, we identified one of the reasons for delays was poor communication between internal teams. Regular face to face meetings have been introduced between the teams. Since this has been implemented, collaboration has been much better, and the teams are working more closely together to find swifter resolutions for these repairs.

Children's Services:

Joining up children's social care cases with housing needs.

A complaint came to light that highlighted a resident had been assessed by Children's social care but despite housing concerns being identified within the assessment, the case was closed without this aspect being addressed. The housing issues were considered to be a matter for the housing department to address. This meant that the resident needed to escalate the case as she remained dissatisfied. As a result of the escalation, the case was reviewed and as a result housing services and children's services have implemented a process to ensure all similar cases are discussed jointly. Where Children Act assessments identify housing issues, the services work together collaboratively.

Environment and Resident Experience:

Supporting disabled residents to recycle.

Feedback from residents at an assisted living complex highlighted that wheelchair users were not able to dispose of their recycling without help because the lid of the bin was out of reach. An accessible recycling bin designed for wheelchair users has been trialled with a view to placing more of these at other similar premises. The bin has an opening at shoulder height which can be reached from a seated position. Initial feedback has been very positive.

Other recycling initiatives.

Following resident feedback, a number of initiatives have been taken to support more recycling. This has included the installation of three textile recycling banks in schools; additional 'on street' textile banks and TRAIID home collections.

Information stickers have been placed on all wheeled recycling bins across the borough during the course of the summer after residents told us they were not clear what items should be placed in the recycling bin.

Residents have been raising concerns for some time about foxes accessing food waste bins. This was dissuading some residents from using them. In response, we have recently launched new 'fox proof' caddies for residents with a kerbside food waste collection on request.

Improvements the online parking permit system.

Using feedback from residents, we have made further improvements to our permits system, including making the parking permit purchasing process more mobile-friendly and accessible; removing redundant steps and links; and giving

clearer guidance and progress notifications.

Improving Housing Benefits letters.

Residents complained that Housing Benefit letters contained confusing language, which they found intimidating. The letters also did not support residents who struggle to access digital services. As a result of this feedback, the letters have been reviewed and the language has been softened. Practical advice has also been included for residents who can't access online forms.

Culture, Strategy and Engagement:

Improving Human Resources processes.

Using feedback from staff and managers, we have continued to develop our internal request/enquiry system (Halo) by implementing improved workflows for several of our complex processes and ensuring auto-population of employee and candidate information. This has resulted in improved services, accuracy of data, management of budgets and an improved candidate experience.

Introduction of electronic estate parking permits.

Residents complained about the inconvenience of needing to visit our offices to apply for estate parking permits. To address this, we have introduced an electronic application that guides residents through the process, ensuring all relevant information is captured, and reducing errors. By enabling online applications, we have improved the resident experience and reduced administrative time.

Correctly applying compensation.

Feedback from some of our residents showed that they were experiencing delays in receiving compensation when awarded it following a complaint. We discovered that our process included unnecessary steps which led to delays. We reviewed our internal processes to ensure that compensation is applied to the correct internal cost codes at the earliest point in the process. This not only accelerates payment to residents, but also removes unnecessary work for staff at the end of the year to reallocate costs to the correct codes.

Improving the efficiency of Children's statutory complaint investigations.

Residents wanting to escalate their statutory Children's Services complaints were unhappy with the delay in the council managing the process. The delays were caused due to a low number of independent investigators in our pool of registered staff, following retirement of some investigators. We have now been able to increase the number of specialist investigators available, which allows us to more readily deal with complaint escalations and reduce avoidable delays.

Adults, Health and Communities:

Joint Working to Support Vulnerable People Protocol.

In response to an Ombudsman case, a new protocol was rolled out across all relevant teams in September 2023 which set out an approach to collaborative working between Adult Social Care and Housing Demand teams on joint cases. The protocol recognises that the Council has a multi-faceted relationship with vulnerable residents, to whom it is likely to have several statutory responsibilities, giving rise to the need for robust joint working practices.

Refresher training for Housing Needs staff on Prevention and Advice.

All Housing Needs Officers received training from Shelter in Casework Skills for Prevention and Advice Services during February and March 2024 as a result of learning from an Ombudsman report. This developed staff skills in managing cases in an efficient and preventative manner.

Lack of communication from Adult Social Care suppliers.

A resident complained about the lack of communication regarding a ladder and replacement hoist batteries. As a result, we are working with suppliers to put a process in place to ensure people are not disadvantaged by supplier failure or delay. Staff will now check 'pending trays' at least once per week; call the company to schedule all standard orders that are over the target date; make a note of the date the order has been scheduled for and update the resident. If an item is out of stock, staff and supplier will consider providing an alternative; make a note and update the resident, as well as record all contacts with the supplier in the resident's case notes. Weekly updates are sent to the resident.

7. 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. 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.

Whilst recognising that capacity is increasingly stretched across the Council, the Feedback and Resolutions team continues to champion the importance of responding to feedback and resolving issues as quickly and effectively as possible. This has included sessions at the council's Leadership Network as well as regular briefings to the Feedback Forum (an internal staff network for those officers who respond to complaints and other types of feedback) and this will continue into 2024/25.

An update on the key activities included in the Feedback Improvement Plan can be found below.

Item	Action	Due	Update
1.Reduce the number of contacts to Corporate Feedback & Resolutions Team (>emails per case)			
1.1	Improve webpages to reduce the number of service requests that are logged as complaints.	By April 2024	Work has been undertaken to improve and amalgamate the feedback pages on the internet. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Policies updated - Duplication removed - Flow of information has been improved to help residents follow our pages
2. Improve timeliness of responses (meeting response times)			
2.1	Reduce single points of failure through shared mailboxes.	By August 2024	Several services have moved to create a shared mailbox for Feedback to be sent to. It is anticipated that more will follow. A new system to notify the Feedback Team when a relevant officer leaves the council has also been put in place.
2.2	Actively manage overdue cases.	Following recruitment	We have significantly improved the Open & Overdue report, which has brought

		of additional officer – May 2024	visual data to the forefront of organisational focus & allow us to readily identify where problem areas lie. Additional staff capacity will support this ambition.
2.3	Stronger focus on senior level accountability.	On-going	Quarterly performance discussions are held with CLT and feedback is discussed at directorate DMTs.
3. Improve quality of responses (reduce escalations)			
3.1	Build on learning from Senior-Sign-Off pilot	Ongoing	We reinstated the response approvals process so that Heads of Service approve S1 responses, Assistant Directors; S2 and Directors; Ombudsman.
3.2	Use staff forum as a community of practise.	Ongoing	Feedback Forum is held quarterly and is now in its 2nd year. It is well attended, lively discussion, good opportunity to ask questions / receive guidance.
3.3	Staff training	Ongoing	Organisation wide training is in development with HR. Ad-hoc training has been delivered to teams on request. Feedback and Resolution Team has a strong focus on training and development and makes use of training and resources including from the Ombudsman.
4. Improve Members Enquiries experience			
4.1	ME feedback form to recognise quality responses and best practise	February 2024	This is now in place.
4.2	Support administration through retaining email chains.	February 2024	This has been actioned and is monitored.
4.3	Reducing need for MEs through improved information flow.	Ongoing	Work continues in this space. The Members weekly briefing has been refreshed. The September Feedback Forum focused on awareness of ME and its purpose.
4.4	Actively manage overdue cases.	Following recruitment of additional officer	The information is refreshed daily via the Open and Overdue cases report. Overdue cases have reduced, however more work needs to be done.
5. Maximise value of Corporate Feedback & Resolutions Team			
5.1	Actively manage overdue cases.	Following recruitment of additional officer	In addition to the significant improvements to the Open & Overdue further work has now begun to actively manage overdue cases
5.2	Additional resource to support learning, chasing, co-ordinating.	Following recruitment of additional officer – May 2024	In addition to the significant improvements to the Open & Overdue further work has now begun to actively manage overdue cases

5.3	Continued training and development.	Ongoing	Training hour held each week for Feedback Team. Housing Ombudsman Centre for Learning (industry training) is well utilised.
6. Implement new Complaint Handling Codes from Housing Ombudsman and Local Government Ombudsman			
6.1	New codes were published in February 2024.	Ombudsman guidance from 1st April 2024.	Submitted Housing Ombudsman self-assessment in June 2024
6.2	Requirements being reviewed and implementation plan developed.	Ombudsman guidance from 1st April 2024.	Implemented the code in April 2024

Any organisational change such as this requires not only process change, but cultural change, and our work embedding the values of the Haringey Deal asks staff to place resident experience and their perspective at the very centre of their work. A key part of this is refining the way that feedback is handled and processed, to ensure that officers can respond to issues, but also rectify the problems and improve service delivery.

8. Contribution to the Corporate Delivery Plan 2024-2026 High Level Strategic Outcomes

Theme 1 – Resident experience and enabling success

We will ensure residents have an excellent experience when accessing our services and we will develop inclusive public participation, where residents have genuine opportunities to have a say in decisions that affect them. This theme also captures significant enabling work happening behind the scenes to ensure all Council officers have the support, tools and infrastructure they need to work effectively and provide residents with a high-quality service.

9. Carbon and Climate Change

N/A

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

Finance

There are no financial implications arising from the contents of this report.

Procurement

Strategic Procurement notes the contents of this report and confirms there are no procurement related matters to be aware of in relation to this report.

Assistant Director of Legal & Governance

There are no specific legal implications arising from this report.

Equality

The council has a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under the Equality Act (2010) to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share protected

characteristics and people who do not

c. Foster good relations between people who share those characteristics and people who do not.

The three parts of the duty apply to the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion/faith, sex and sexual orientation. Marriage and civil partnership status applies to the first part of the duty.

Although it is not enforced in legislation as a protected characteristic, Haringey Council treats socioeconomic status as a local protected characteristic.

The decision asks for the Committee to note the contents of the annual Feedback and Resolutions report. It is not anticipated that the decision will have any impact on any protected characteristics.

The council will continue to monitor the equalities impacts of any complaints.

11. Use of Appendices

Appendix 1 - Feedback and Resolutions data 2023-2024

Appendix 2 - Freedom of Information Data and Insights 2023-2024

12. Background papers

N/A

Appendix 1: Feedback and Resolutions data 2023-2024

1. Introduction

This is the analysis of Complaints, Ombudsman Cases, Member Enquiries and Compliments data for the period 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024.

As a council we recognise the value of all the feedback we receive daily 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 an important part of improving our residents' experience.

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

Whilst the data in this report tells us about volumes, it is important to recognise that volumes alone are not necessarily indicative of performance, particularly with Stage 1 complaints. As well as our performance as an organisation, we also want complaints to reflect how easy residents find it to get in touch with us. As the Housing Ombudsman states in the Complaint Handling Code:

“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.”

In light of this, this report aims to include figures in their relevant context. This includes representing volumes as percentages, showing change over time and breaking data down by service area. It aims to build a holistic picture of performance, including successes and areas for improvement.

As well as information on volumes of contacts, this report also includes information on response times, and the proportion of complaints upheld at Stage 1 and Stage 2 of our process. It is these numbers that tend to highlight not only where a service failure has taken place but also that we did not rectify the problem at the earliest available opportunity.

It is important to see complaints in the context of other data and validation processes which together provide us with a rounded picture of our performance.

2. Context

To provide some context to the volumes set out in this report, we estimate that we now receive well in excess of 1 million interactions with, or enquiries from, residents and businesses every 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 2023/24:

Service area	Volume of contacts	Volume of complaints	% of complaints vs contacts
Revenues & Benefits	450,548	307	0.07%
Customer Services	606,069	130	>0.02%
Environment & Neighbourhoods – Direct Services	41,785	775	1.9%
Adults Social Care	25,625	254	0.9%

3. Staff Compliments

We are keen to recognise and capture the fantastic work we know happens across the organisation every year to drive the best outcomes for residents, and the appreciation that residents show for this. There is a formal process for logging compliments, which can be used directly by residents, or by managers to log compliments received via another channel. In 2023-24 we received 214 staff compliments via the official recording process (up from 210 the previous year, and 164 in 2021-22).

We are conscious that not all staff compliments are logged via the formal process. What this means is that there is likely to be a significant number of compliments not captured in this report. We continue to encourage managers to log their compliments via the formal process, as this allows us to both recognise staff that are providing excellent services, and to identify what is working well, to inform improvement work.

In 2023-24, the majority of the compliments received were for Corporate and Customer Services (109 compliments). This reflects examples of excellent customer service, as well as the nature of the service's role, and the volume of contact that Customer Services has with our residents.

The volume of compliments recorded via Respond received by Service area are shown in **Table A**.

Below are just a few examples of the compliments received in 2023-24:

Children's Services

'She had a brilliant time. I'm so glad she did it. Year 13 is such a slog academically and HYM gives her so much creativity and freedom. Thanks to all of you for your amazing efforts, as always!'

Corporate & Customer Services

'We received an excellent service. I (the client) was not getting frustrated (I normally do as English is not my first language).

She was very professional and patient with me. She was kind throughout and so helpful whilst keeping her smile. I went above and beyond by taking the time to signpost us to the right service and to explain to us how the UK services and government works. She has amazing communications and people skills which makes going to the council a lot more accessible/approachable.

I look forward coming/asking for help at the helpdesk in the future, knowing I will be received by T.'

'Your team member A is wonderful! Truly a great asset to Haringey... Great customer service and went the extra mile to help me. Thought important to mention how great she was to you.'

'I'd like to thank A...for her outstanding level of service and representation of Haringey Council's departments. [S]he... sensitively, considerately and patiently assisted me in demonstrating how I can go ahead and use this method of communication to update information from now on. I had been rather anxious about an email that I'd received because it didn't make sense but the clear and concise information given will now sort things out. I found her extremely receptive to my enquiry and her support this morning was thoroughly appreciated.'

Legal and Governance

'I'd really like to give my praise and compliments to S. He consistently goes above and beyond form [our service], and below is just another example of this. My team are really in awe of his working style and approach, they feel at ease talking about cases with him and he was very clear in the meetings/training held previously. Not sure how staff receive their compliments in your team but please accept this on behalf of all of [our team].'

'Can I just say how grateful and appreciative I am for the way that you commissioned and got us this advice so quickly. You and the entire legal team are absolute stars!

The advice is very helpful – [x] was looking for decisive legal advice and you provided this with an efficiency which is extremely impressive.'

Environment and Resident Experience

'Thank you to everyone who has worked on the installation of the lights in Finsbury Park. My cycle through this evening now not only felt safe but a genuine pleasure. A brilliant change.'

'I just wanted to say what a blinding job J and L did of helping to ease and direct traffic flow following the incident...yesterday... To see council manager out in ppe getting involved and helping people who were unsure how to get home was fantastic and just goes to show their dedication to the residents of Haringey. They are a credit to the council...!'

'My admiration & thanks go to the dedicated hard-working 6-strong team of men who last week & again today swept & cleared the fallen leaves from my road & pavements... They had an excellent super-efficient system & did an excellent job. Gold stars to our wonderful Road-sweepers. Such an essential service, especially when fallen leaves can be so treacherous underfoot. Please thank them!'

'By ensuring Enforcement Officers are able to be proactive in fighting the fraudulent use of a Blue Badge, T has not only taken on board the views of disabled people, but he has demonstrated a desire to lead his team members and to go the extra mile to fight Blue Badge misuse.'

'We received the blue badge today and I can't put into words what it means to us. It really is like giving mum her legs back. She was out and about Christmas Day and yesterday and she's planning to go up to See one of her friends in Finchley tomorrow!!!

I really can't thank you enough for your intervention. Sending you good energy and best wishes for your kindness'

Planning, Building Standards & Sustainability

'We were fortunate to have contact with Mr L from the 'Building Control' dept, who could not have been more supportive and caring about our difficulties. At every stage, he provided guidance, advice, understanding and support when we needed it most...honestly do not think I would have achieved this outcome without Mr L's fantastic help & support - it really made all the difference knowing he was there and I could talk to him about things I didn't know how to progress.

Mr L's support made all the difference between our success and failure during what has been an extremely traumatic time for us, so HUGE THANKS to him for everything he did to help us when we needed it most!'

'What set this experience apart was the exceptionally smooth planning process we encountered working with Haringey Planning Department.

In essence, the journey was marked by a series of positive interactions and efficient procedures. We were privy to comprehensive and insightful pre-application feedback, which was instrumental in shaping our planning application. This constructive dialogue allowed us to refine our proposal, ensuring it was both robust and in line with local planning policies.

Furthermore, the planning application was processed within a commendable 12-week timeframe. Throughout this period, we were kept abreast of the progress at regular intervals, which greatly facilitated our project management and scheduling. This level of transparency and communication was greatly appreciated and contributed to a smooth and efficient planning process.

We would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to the Haringey planning department. Their professionalism, efficiency, and dedication to positive engagement have made this planning process a truly positive experience. We commend their good work and encourage them to maintain these high standards in their future applications.'

Property Services

'A very big thank you for the quick turnaround with getting a plumber out and fixing the leak... You have been such a great help to us and on behalf of my entire family we just wanted to say thank you for assisting my mother with the bathroom and kitchen. We are extremely grateful.'

Housing Demand

'Am writing with appreciation and thanks for your help and support during my difficult hours. You really really there for me. You, your manager and your teammates in Haringey Council. I really appreciate what you guys done to me and my family. And am saying thanks to all of you.'

4. Other Feedback data for 2023-24

The data used to inform this report was collected from reports generated in the Feedback case management system (Respond) for the financial year 2023-24.

Source of Complaints

The majority of complaints received continues to be by electronic methods (73% email and 27% online form) as in previous years. Whilst use of email continues to rise in line with previous years, we are now seeing a downward trend developing in terms of the volume of residents using the online form to complain.

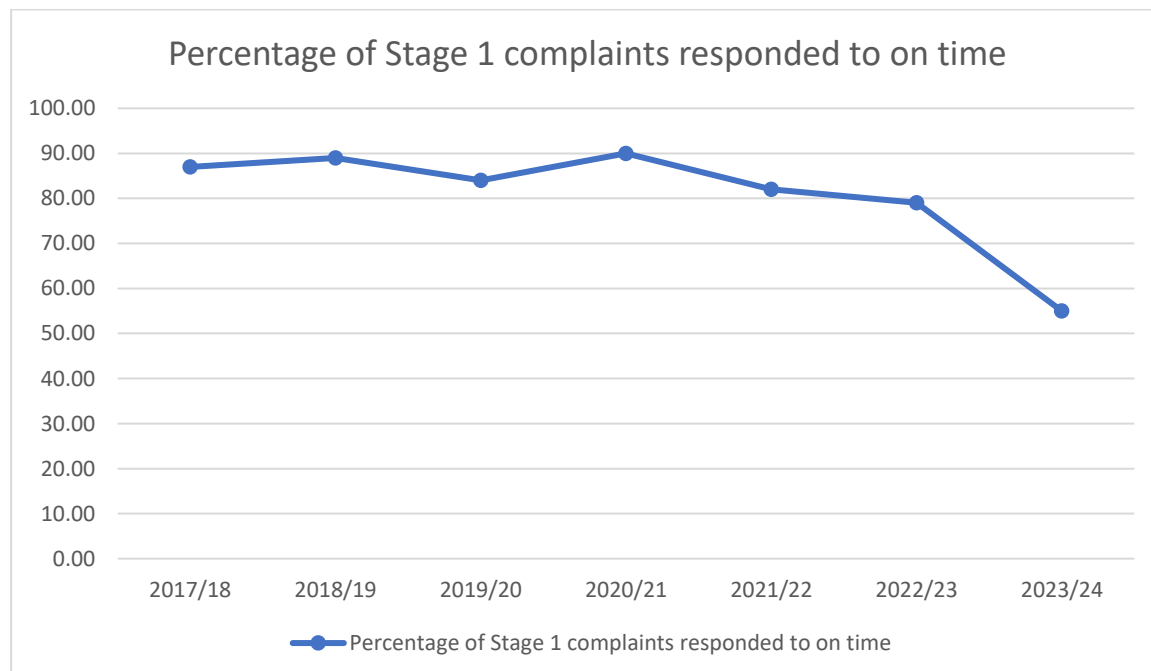
A data table showing the percentage split of communication by channel is shown in **Table B**.

Stage 1 complaints

In 2023-24, the total number of Stage 1 complaints received by Haringey Council was 3,957, as compared to 4,127 in 2022-23.

The services that received the most complaints in 2023-24 were Housing Services & Building Safety, and E&RE Direct Services. This is consistent with the data from 2022-23. Within those, Highways and Parking received 15% (584) of the council's complaints, down significantly on the 29% (1,180) in 2022-23, and Property Services received 32% (1284), up on 26% (1,067) the previous year.

55% of all complaints were responded to within the target of 10 working days, down from 79% in 2022-23. This continues a downwards trend in the number of complaints responded to on time, with a significant decrease this year.



It should be noted that the Feedback Team received a further 1,155 contacts that were refused as they did not meet the criteria for a complaint, set out in the Feedback Policy, and these were captured as non-complaint contacts. These contacts were signposted to the correct organisation or appeals process whenever possible. The volumes, assigned to the closest applicable service are shown in **Table J**.

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 63% of Stage 1 complaints being upheld in 2023-24, compared to 50% of complaints upheld in 2022-23, and 31% 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 has continued into 2023-24, with 74% of complaints upheld at Stage 1. This is followed by Environment & Neighbourhoods Direct Services with 47% of upheld cases at Stage 1 (as show in in **Table C**), significantly increased from 16% in 2022-23.

We received 28 Statutory Children's Social Care complaints in 2023-24, compared to 25 in 2021-22, however in 2023-24, 7% of cases were responded to in 10 working days compared to 28% in the year before. Our target for timely responses is 95%, representing a very significant shortfall, and a large decrease in timely responses on the year before.

There was an increase in Statutory Adults Social Care complaints, to 140 in 2023-24, compared to 85 in 2022-23 and 60 in 2021-22. Response times have remained stable, with 28.5% of cases responded to in 10 working days, a 0.5% decrease on last year. However, this shows an emerging downward trend from 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 (50%, up 3% from the previous year), followed by Dissatisfaction with Policy or Decision (7%, down from 22%) and Failure to Provide a Service (35%, up from 21%). Complaints relating to Employee Behaviour are down to just 3%.

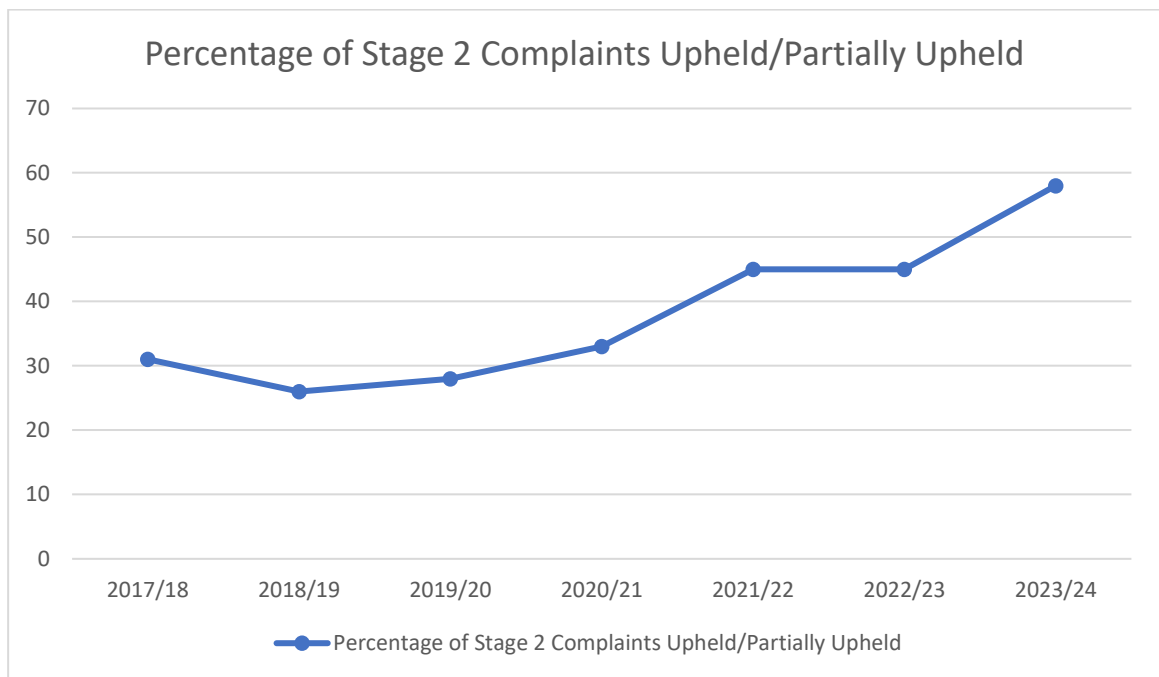
The table showing the top five reasons for making a complaint are shown in **Table E**.

Stage 2 complaints

When a Stage 1 complaint is made, complainants are provided with details on how to escalate their complaint if they are not satisfied with the response or resolution provided. The escalates the Stage 1 complaint into Stage 2.

A total of 12% of Stage 1 complainants took their complaints to the next stage in 2023-24, compared to 19% in the previous year, and 17% in 2021-22. This decrease is positive, as it suggests that a higher proportion of complainants were satisfied with the response or resolution provided at Stage 1.

Of the 479 cases escalated to Stage 2, a total of 58% were upheld or partially upheld, This is an increase compared to 2021/22, when 230 cases were escalated to Stage 2 and 45% of those were upheld. This continued increase is an indication that an insufficient number of responses at Stage 1 are effectively resolving complaints.



As with Stage 1 complaints, the highest volume of Stage 2 complaints was received for Housing Services and Building Safety, accounting for 59% of all Stage 2 complaints. Of these, 77% were upheld or partially upheld. In the previous year, Housing Services and Building Safety accounted for 55% (272 cases) of Stage 2 complaints and of those, 74% of the complaints were upheld or partly upheld.

The Housing Service has been on a journey of improvement since Homes for Haringey was brought inhouse in June 2022. Since then, they have made significant strides in:

- Increasing senior management and leadership capacity
- Making substantial improvements to health and safety compliance arrangements
- Driving forward the delivery of digital improvements to both resident and officer experience, increasing efficiency and productivity
- Transforming their approach to resident engagement
- Developing a vision for the service: 'a culture of excellence'.

This has resulted in improvements such as:

- A new, ongoing programme of Estate Surgeries with Tenancy Management and other services in attendance.
- 12% increase in satisfaction with 'landlord's approach to handling ASB' between 2022/23 and 23/24 (STAR survey).
- Significant improvements in resident satisfaction, including an 18% improvement in 'Satisfaction that landlord keeps tenants informed about things that matter' (from 48% in 22/23 to 66% in 23/24), 7% increase in 'Satisfaction that the landlord listens to tenant views and acts upon them' (from 37% in 22/23 to 44% in 23/24), and a 14% improvement in 'agreement that the landlord treats tenants fairly and with respect' – STAR survey 2023
- Reporting performance information to the Resident Voice Board and publishing it online, as well as publicising it in the Annual Report to

Residents, to support tenant scrutiny of performance in delivering landlord services.

- Reviewing and updating the Housing Service complaints, compensation and unreasonable behaviour policies in 23/24 to ensure they were in line with Housing Ombudsman guidance in these areas.

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

Both the LGSCO and the HOS provide annual feedback to Haringey regarding performance related to complaints. Key feedback that Haringey received for 2023-24 included the need to reduce the number of complaints for which there are delays in Haringey's response, and reducing the proportion of housing-related complaints that find maladministration on behalf of the council. It is important that we incorporate this feedback meaningfully into our practice, highlighting the importance of a robust and comprehensive feedback and learning process.

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 2023-24, 108 cases were referred to the LGSCO. However, not all of these cases went on to be investigated, for various reasons related to the LGSCO regulations, where complaints are deemed to be outside of their remit, or where the customer has another, independent means of appeal.

88% of the complaints investigated by the LGSCO (36 of 40) from Haringey were upheld, compared to an average of 85% in similar authorities. In 2022-23, only 79% of the complaints about Haringey Council received by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) were upheld. This was slightly above the average of 77% of complaints received about similar authorities.

In 100% of cases the LGSCO were satisfied that Haringey had successfully implemented their recommendations (compared to an average of 99% in similar authorities). This is a positive improvement on 98% in 2022-23 placing us above the average.

In 17% 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). This is also an increase on the 10% of cases that fell into this category the previous year.

The majority of the upheld cases (7) related to Adult Social Services, followed by E&RE Direct Services and Housing Demand (both with 6).

There were no public interest reports published about Haringey Council for 2023-24, for the second consecutive year.

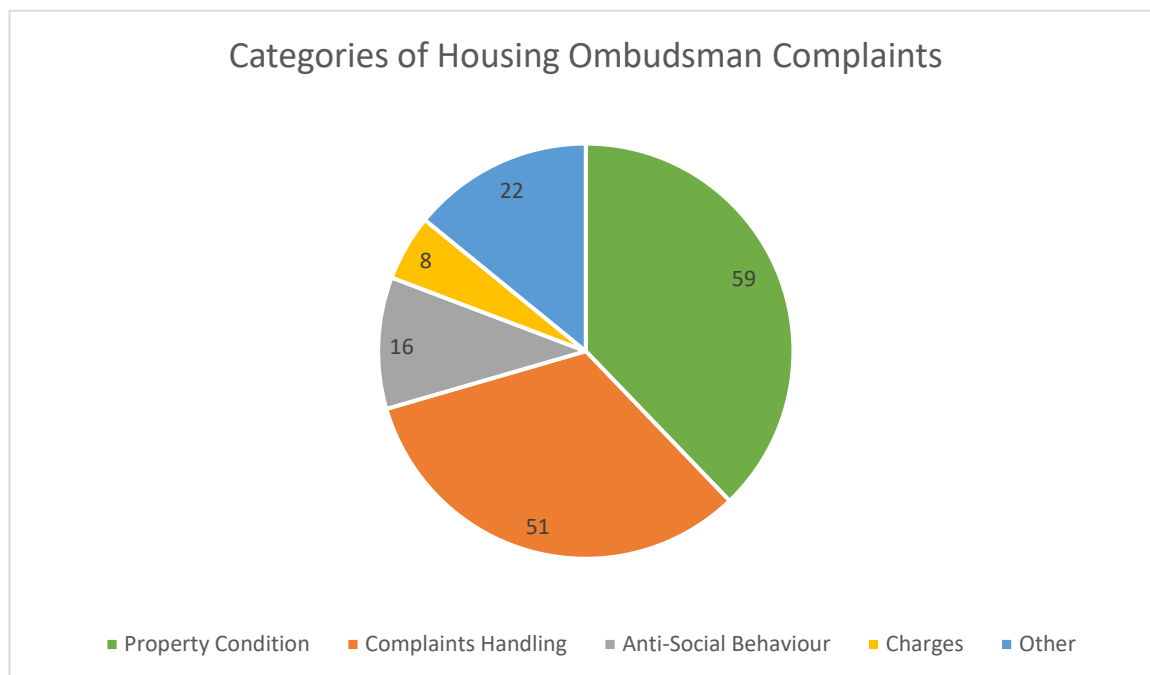
Information about the complaints upheld by the LGSCO, Haringey's compliance with Ombudsman recommendations and the satisfactory remedies provided by the Council, can be seen on the [LGSCO website](#).

Housing Ombudsman

In 2023-24, 107 cases were referred to the Housing Ombudsman. Again, not all of these cases went on to be investigated, for various reasons related to the HO regulations, where complaints are deemed to be outside of their remit, or where the customer has another means of appeal.

In 2023-24, 241 Orders were made against Haringey (98 Orders in 2022-23, and 41 Orders in 2021-22) with an 84% maladministration rate (81.4% in 2022-23, 54% in 2021-22). This is compared to 73% national maladministration rate, and a 78% average for Local Authorities/ALMOs. Over the last year, both the national and Local Authority maladministration rate has risen sharply, whilst Haringey's maladministration figure remains steady. However, Haringey still remains above the national average rate for maladministration.

Property Condition was again cited as the category with the highest volume of findings (59, up from 29 the previous year), with many cases relating to Damp & Mould, followed again by Complaints Handling (51, up from 15 the previous year).



The Housing Ombudsman Landlord Performance Report 2023/24 can be seen on the [Housing Ombudsman website](#).

Haringey took the decision to self-refer to the Regulator of Social Housing in

January 2023, having commissioned a Property Compliance Health Check of the 'big six' areas of compliance. This found a number of areas of non-compliance, particularly around overdue fire risk actions and electrical safety. We were also aware that around 30% of our housing stock did not meet the Decent Homes standard. The Regulator subsequently confirmed that we had breached two parts of the 'Home Standard'.

In response, as part of our plans to transform our services, a comprehensive Housing Improvement Plan was agreed by Cabinet in April 2023. This included £4.7m for service improvements. The programme is scheduled to run to March 2025, and consists of a total of 217 actions (inclusive of the 24 Housing Ombudsman P49 recommendations). As of September 2024, we have completed 140 of the 217 actions in the Housing Improvement Plan.

We entered into a Voluntary Undertaking with the Regulator from June 2023. As of March 2024, 8 out of the 10 short-term actions were completed. The Regulator has stated:

'From the outset we've had a good working relationship ... we've met every month since May and have had many positive and open discussions. It is clear to us that your team have a clear understanding of issues – and we've noted a significant improvement in performance. All the work you've done will also contribute positively to your preparedness for the new regulatory model, which we will be introducing in April'.

The Housing Ombudsman announced a Paragraph 49 investigation into Haringey in January 2023. The Ombudsman's special report into Haringey was published in July 2023 and included 24 improvement recommendations; including developing a vulnerability policy; unacceptable behaviour policy; actions around leaseholder complaints; disrepair and mould; compensation and culture.

The Ombudsman has confirmed the monitoring of our service has concluded, with all 24 recommendations on ways of working deemed to have been implemented. The Ombudsman initially found a 'culture of apathy' at Haringey. However, at the time of the closure, the Ombudsman stated:

'Haringey's openness, willingness to work together and make positive changes has made a big difference. We have seen clear indications of a shift away from a 'culture of apathy' with staff actively engaging and showing a sense of pride in getting things right'.

6. Member Enquiries

In 2023-24, 4,737 Member Enquiries were processed. This includes 3,594 raised by Councillors (76%) and 1,143 raised by MPs (24%).

The 4,737 case volume is higher than the overall number of ME cases logged for the previous year, which was 4,060 cases in total. This is the result of multiple contacts from both Councillors and Members of Parliament on the same issue.

Of the 4,060 cases, 63% were replied to within the target time scale of 10 working days. The case volume and percentage response data are shown in

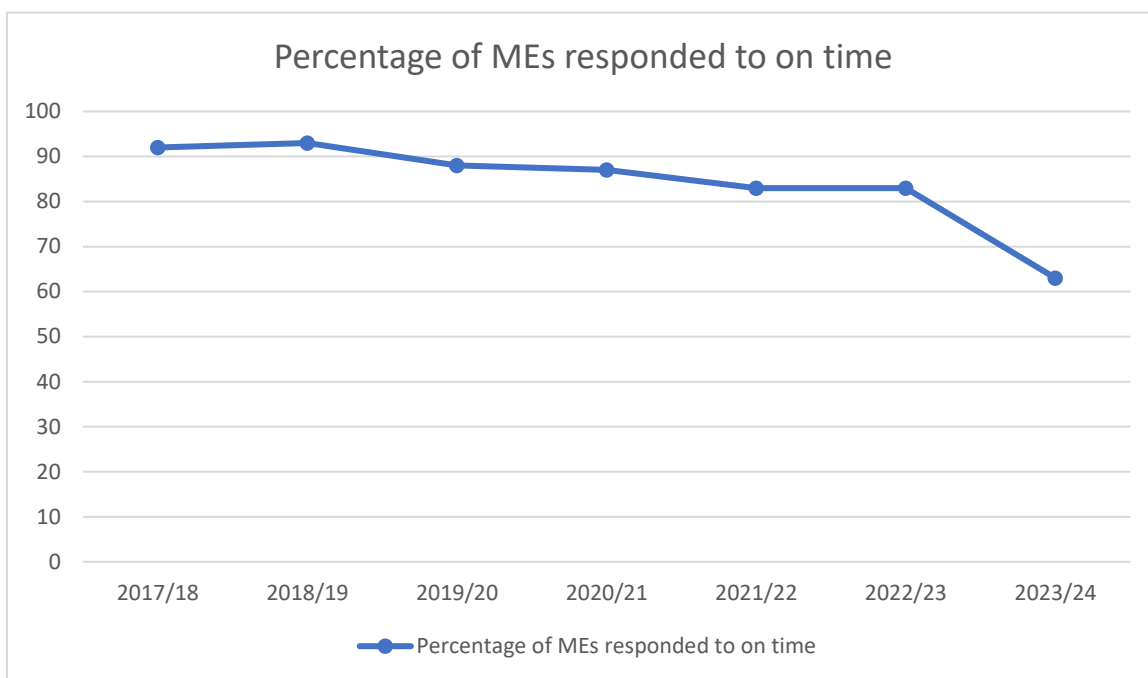
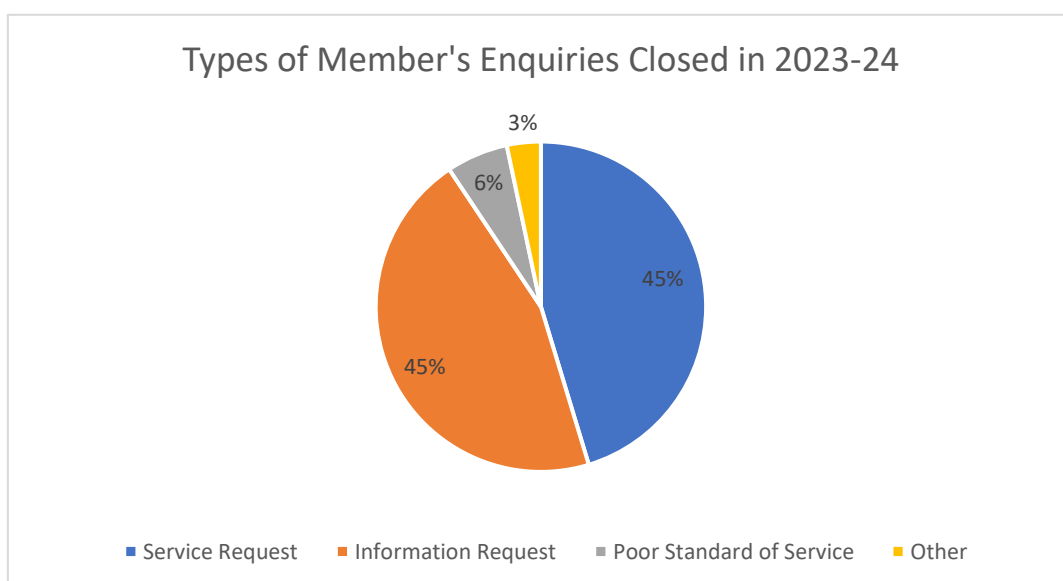


Table G.

In a similar vein to the Stage 1 complaints, Housing Services & Building Safety and Direct Services received the highest number of Member Enquiries, with 944 and 950 respectively, which therefore represents 47% of all MEs received in 2023-24.



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

Of the 4,060 ME cases raised, 45% were service requests submitted on behalf of a resident, and 45% were information requests. The enquiry types are listed in **Table I**.

9. Appendices:

1. Data Tables.

Appendix A - Data tables

Table A - Staff compliments

Service	No. of Compliments
Corporate and Customer Services	109
Housing Services and Building Safety	18
Housing Demand	16
Direct Services	13
Adult Social Services	11
Other services	47
Total	214

Table B – Communication by channel (all cases)

Method	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24
Email	58%	40%	39%	62%	73%
Online form	38%	58%	59%	36%	27%
Letter	3%	1%	1%	1%	<1%
Phone Call	1%	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 Complaints Upheld/Partly Upheld
Housing Services & Building Safety	1,724	44%	74%
E&RE - Direct Services	731	18%	47%
Corporate and Customer Services	471	12%	58%
Housing Demand	343	9%	60%
E&RE – Stronger & Safer Communities	272	7%	51%

Table D – Cases responded to within target

	No. of Complaints	% of Complaints Received	% of all Complaints Upheld/Partly Upheld	% responded within target
Stage 1 Complaints	3,957	96%	63%	55%
Children's Social Care Complaints	28	0.7%	50%	7%
Adults Social Care Complaints	140	3%	69%	28.5%

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

Complaint Reason	%
Poor standard of service	50%
Dissatisfaction with Policy or Decision	7%
Failure to Provide a Service	35%
Inadequate or Inaccurate Communication	4%
Employee Behaviour	3%

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	282	216	77%
Housing Demand	45	15	33%
E&RE Direct Services	44	8	18%
Corporate and Customer Services	28	6	21%
E&RE – Stronger and Safer Communities	20	8	40%
Other	60	27	45%
Total	479	280	58%

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

Year	Number of MEs	% Replied to on-time
2023/24	4060	63%
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 (MEs raised in financial year 2023-24)

Service	No. of MEs	% of MEs
Housing Services & Building Safety	1,162	25%
E&RE – Direct Services	1,091	23%
E&RE - Stronger & Safer Communities	754	16%
Housing Demand	683	14%
Corporate & Customer services	248	5%
<i>All Other Services</i>	<i>799</i>	<i>17%</i>

Table I – Member Enquiries by issue type (MEs closed during financial year 2023-24)

Nature of Enquiry	Number of MEs	% of total
Service Request	1878	45%
Information Request	1892	45%
Poor Standard of Service	258	6%
Dissatisfaction with Policy / decision	47	1%
Failure to Provide a Service	93	2%
Inadequate or Inaccurate Communications	14	0.3%
Total	4184	100%

Table J - Non-complaint contacts

Service	Number of NCCs
Adults Social Services	55
Capital Projects and Property	5
Children's Commissioning & Programmes	4
Children's Services - Early Help & Prevention	8
Children's Services - Safeguarding & Social Care	24
Children's Services - Schools & Learning	4
Corporate & Customer Services	154
Digital Services	9
Environment	135
Finance	9
Housing Strategy & Commissioning	3
Housing Demand	85
HSBS	263
HR & OD	4
Legal and Governance	11
Libraries, Arts & Culture	12
Partnerships & Communities	10
Planning, Building Standards & Sustainability	24
Public Health	5
Regeneration & Economic Development	4
Resident Experience	296
Strategy, Communications & Collaboration	31

Appendix 2 - Freedom of Information Data and Insights 2023-2024

Introduction

This report sets out the Council's performance in Freedom of Information (FOI) and Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) requests between April 2023 and March 2024. In previous years this data has been included within a single annual report for Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC). However, following the introduction of the new Ombudsman codes of practice, a standalone annual report covering complaints, Members Enquiries and compliments was produced and presented to Cabinet and subsequently to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. We are therefore presenting OSC with this report as an additional appendix, to provide the committee with a comprehensive view of our performance across all of these areas.

Background

All FOI/EIR requests must be received in writing and Haringey has a dedicated online form and email address for this. In line with best practice, Haringey publishes 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](#).

Haringey Council currently processes FOI/EIR enquiries through its Feedback and Resolutions function, processing enquiries through a case management system (Respond). This system collects and processes certain types of data which allow the organisation to monitor its performance in relation to FOI/EIR requests.

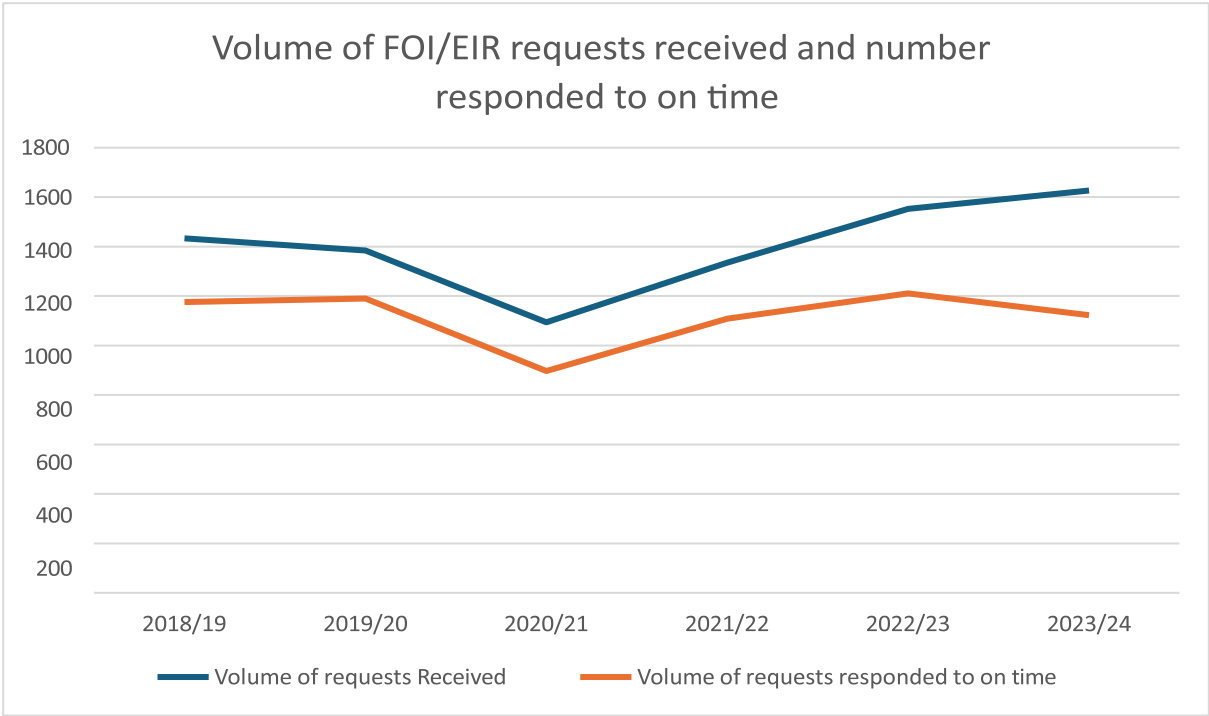
We are required by the Information Commissioners Office (ICO) to publish performance data for FOI/EIR requests on an annual basis. This data is shown in **Tables A to E** in the appendix. The past several years has seen a decline in our performance when it comes to responding to FOI/EIR requests and this is evidenced in Table A.

We have a genuine commitment at the highest levels of the council to improve this performance. Performance data is reviewed at our Council Leadership Team (Chaired by our CEO) every quarter and a session of our Leadership Team (all Heads of Service, Assistant Directors and Directors) in July was dedicated to FOI, including our responsibilities and performance.

In order to improve and maintain our performance regarding FOI and EIR requests, the organisation has agreed to take a number of actions which have been developed into an action plan shown in **Table F** relating to the processing of FOI requests. The implementation of these actions has already started and will continue over the coming months.

Performance

Between April 2023 and March 2024, Haringey responded to 1,627 requests, an increase of 74 (16%) on the previous year. 69% of responses were sent within 20 days, which represents a significant decrease in performance, whereas in previous years this rate had been very stable (relative to the volume of requests received), as shown in the graph below. The performance across the past six years is at **Table A** in the appendix.



The above graph shows the volume of FOI and EIR requests received over the last six financial years, and the proportion of those

that were responded to within the statutory timeframe. The dip in performance in 2023/24 is represented by the divergence in these figures in the 2023/24 period. However, the graph also shows a decrease in requests in 2020/21, which was most likely to be a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The subsequent increase in requests post-pandemic will have contributed to decreased performance in the 2023/24 period.

There are a number of factors which contributed to increased volumes in recent years including the introduction of Low Traffic Neighbourhoods, which drove a surge in FOI and EIR requests, and challenges within our landlord function which was insourced back to the council from our ALMO. In both cases the capacity of the relevant teams to respond to FOIs (along with complaints and other types of feedback) was significantly stretched. Intensive work is now taking place to support Haringey's housing services to respond to FOI requests more quickly as part of their wider improvement journey.

Within the council we also recognise that there are other service areas that affect the overall compliance rate. We have begun to provide targeted support to these services to drive down backlogs. This is an approach which we will adopt more broadly across the organisation.

There is provision under the FOI Act for not providing information in instances where the information is not held, or we are unable to gather the information due to the cost associated. In 2023-24, 223 data requests were not provided for these reasons, which is an increase of 20 on the previous year. The breakdown of volumes and percentages relating to these requests is shown in **Table B**.

In addition to those requests, there were a further 130 cases (8% of the total received) where an exemption was applied. Both the FOI and EIR Acts contain exemptions that allow Public Authorities to withhold information under specific circumstances, and are detailed in **Table C**. The most frequently applied exemption (49% of all exemptions) was under Section 40 of the Act and relates to *protecting personal information*.

Of the 1,627 FOI requests that were submitted to the council in 2023-24, Direct Services in our Environment and Resident Experience directorate [this includes parking and highways] received the majority for a single service area with 360 FOI requests (22% of all FOIs). This represents an increase on the previous year (203 requests, or 13% of all FOIs).

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

Internal Reviews

If residents are not satisfied with the response to their Freedom of Information requests, they can request an internal review. This review is undertaken by a senior officer who was not involved in the preparation of the original response. The review seeks to assess the quality of the handling of the request, and the information that has been provided in the response.

In 2023-24, out of 1,627 FOI requests, only 44 (3%) were referred to the Internal Review stage. Of these 44, only 10 cases (23%) were upheld or partly upheld, meaning that insufficient information had been provided in the first instance, or information had been denied erroneously.

In 2022-23, we received the same number of Internal Review requests, but 14 (32%) were upheld or partially upheld. However, this does represent a significant decrease on 2021/22, where 63 cases were escalated to Internal Review, and 32 (51%) were upheld.

A breakdown of Internal Reviews by service is shown in **Table E**.

Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)

In 2023/24, two FOI cases were referred to the ICO. Of these, one decision was in the council's favour, and one decision was made against the council, determining that the requested data should be shared.

Appendix: Data Tables

Table A – FOI/EIR annual performance

Year	No. of requests	% on time
2023-2024	1,627	69%
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 B – FOI information not provided

Information not Provided	Total	% of Total requests
Information not held	189	12%
Information not given due to cost	34	2%

Table C – FOI/EIR exemptions applied

FOI - Exemption Applied	Total	% of Total Exemptions
Section 40 – Personal Information	64	49%
Section 31 – Law Enforcement	24	18%
Section 43 – Commercial Interests	15	11%

Section 21 - Info accessible by some other means	6	5%
Section 22 - Intended for future publication	5	4%
Section 24 – Safeguarding of National Security	1	0.8%
Section 41 – Confidential Information	5	4%
Section 42 – Legal professional Privilege	0	0%
Section 36 - Effective Conduct of Public Affairs	1	0.8%
Section 38 - safety of any individual	0	0%
EIR - Exemption Applied	Total	% of Total Exemptions
Regulation 12 5 (b)	1	0.8%
Regulation 12 (4) b) – Manifestly Unreasonable	2	2%
Regulation 12 (4) (a) – Information not held	6	5%

Table D – Top 5 FOI requests received by Service

Service	No. of FOI	% of total
E&RE - Direct Services	360	22%
E&RE – Stronger and Safer Communities	191	12%
Corporate and Customer Services	127	8%
Planning, Building Standards &	125	8%

Sustainability		
Housing Demand	89	5%

Table E – Internal Reviews by Service

Service	No. of IRs	% Upheld/Partly Upheld
E&RE - Direct Services	11	18%
Strategy, Communications and Collaboration	4	25%
Corporate and Customer Services	6	16%
Housing Services and Building Safety	6	50%
Planning, Building Standards & Sustainability	3	0%
Other	14	21%
Total	44	23%

Table F – Performance improvement plan

Desired Outcome	Actions	Timeline	Responsible Team/Officer
Ensuring corporate prominence to FOI and EIR requests and raising awareness of the need for compliance.	<p>Reviewing data quarterly at Council leadership Team.</p> <p>Using dedicated communications, e.g. Feedback Forum and Leadership Network, to remind colleagues of the importance of compliance.</p>	Ongoing	Feedback and Resolutions Management Team
Learning from other local authorities with high rates of compliance with FOI and EIR requests.	Contacting peers in other local authorities to understand how they maintain compliance in a time of stretched capacity.	Meeting held with FOI lead at Camden Council in September 2024. Further meetings to follow.	Feedback and Resolutions Management Team
Self-assessing and learning from current performance.	<p>Internal FOI audit and report</p> <p>Implementing learnings identified in audit report.</p>	<p>Completed</p> <p>On-going</p>	Feedback and Resolutions Management Team
A skilled workforce that strives to continuously improve FOI and EIR compliance.	<p>Training for the corporate feedback team (who administer the process) to improve and streamline the FOI/EIR processing process and improve advice.</p> <p>Training for responding</p>	First round completed. Will be regular on-going	Feedback and Resolutions Management Team

	officers across the council being developed.		
Cleared FOI/EIR backlogs	Targeted support offered to services with the largest backlogs	Trialled with housing services, with plans to roll out across the organisation.	Feedback and Resolutions Management Team
Implementing a new software solution to better support compliance through effective case management and improved performance reporting	Procuring and implementing a new software solution.	April 2025	Digital Services