

LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN	WARDS: All
REPORT TITLE London Borough of Camden Annual Complaints Report 2022/2023 (CS/2023/16)	
REPORT OF Borough Solicitor	
Submitted to & Approved by: Resources and Corporate Performance Scrutiny Committee Cabinet	DATE 22 nd January 2024 24 th January 2024
STRATEGIC CONTEXT We Make Camden is our joint vision for the borough, developed in partnership with our community. In the partner document The Way We Work which is how we will change as an organisation to deliver our shared priorities we have said that we are committed to connecting to our communities and listening and responding to make change to what we hear. This report contributes to the Council’s aspirations by acknowledging that complaints and formal enquiries provide a regular and rich source of feedback from our citizens that inform us when things have gone wrong. Learning from these gives the Council the opportunity to improve services to support our citizens. Insight from complaints plays a key role in how we deliver the right outcomes to our citizens and in continually improving our service delivery to deliver our ambitions.	
SUMMARY OF REPORT This is the London Borough of Camden’s annual complaints report for the period 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023. It is a single report that includes information on complaints across all directorates. The report also provides information for decisions issued by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) and the Housing Ombudsman (HO) in the same period. The report, how it is presented and what it contains, continues to develop and evolve and as in previous years suggestions for improvements are sought from Members. Members are an important source of insight and intelligence on concerns raised by residents and communities.	

The report also includes information on other types of formal enquiries which are often linked to complaints:

- Member Enquiries and MP Enquiries.
- Freedom of Information (FOI) Requests.
- Judicial Reviews

The Council's Constitution states that the Ombudsman decisions on cases where there have been mistakes or failings (called "maladministration") should be presented to Cabinet on an annual basis for their information only. Therefore, the report provides the decisions issued by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) and the Housing Ombudsman (HO) in the same period and this report will be presented to Cabinet.

Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information

No documents that require listing were used in the preparation of this report.

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Date: 10th January 2024

1. CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

Purpose of the report

- 1.1 This is London Borough of Camden's annual complaints report for the period **1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023**.
- 1.2 We are committed to being a listening and learning Council and The Way We Work is our Council call to action address complex issues and work with our communities to make them better. We are continuing to adapt how we work and how we respond to issues and concerns to ensure we are working in an open and human-centred way. The key questions that we have asked ourselves about customer experience include:
- How might we use digital technology and culture to support a more human-centred approach, where staff spend more of their time working with citizens?
 - How might we enable all staff to develop strong, inclusive relationships with our citizens and be empowered to act on them?
 - How might we ensure we remain connected to the borough, with teams embedded in the communities we serve and close to the issues that matter most to them?
- 1.3 Effective management of complaints is an important part of this work. We know there is good work going on across the Council to deliver better, more relational services – but we know we could do better and ensuring we are learning and responding to complaints is critical to this.
- 1.4 The Council provides a wide range of services to a large number of people and receives relatively few complaints. When citizens do complain, we seek to learn from them and look for patterns of service failure. We continue to use the feedback we receive from our complaints to fuel ideas for service improvements both in the short and long terms [See Section 4].
- 1.5 The Council works hard to view the complaints we receive as a positive opportunity while of course remaining focussed on trying to resolve them to the satisfaction of our residents as quickly as we can. We recognise that complaints are an important source of insight in how our processes and policies are working – and we do reflect on them as service leaders on what they mean for how we are working and could work differently in the future.
- 1.6 This is a single report on all Council services' formal enquiries which are:
- Complaints
 - Member Enquiries and MP Enquiries
 - Freedom of Information (FOI) Requests
 - Judicial Reviews.
- 1.7 There is a separate detailed report for the statutory Children's social care services complaints as these are processed and monitored under a specific statutory framework which was presented to Children, Schools and Families' Scrutiny Committee on 9th November 2023.

Scope of the report

- 1.8 Many complaints and enquiries are dealt with informally by officers and managers every day without the need for the formal complaints process to be followed. Officers are encouraged to try to resolve customer dissatisfaction as part of their normal business. The vast majority of complaints are resolved quickly and efficiently without the need for a formal complaint to be made. Whilst these are not formally reported upon, data and evidence from these cases are collected and use to improve services. This report outlines a summary of complaints across services and our organisational approach to complaints. It necessarily presents a high-level overview and there may be more context and detail that Members wish to draw out directly with services.
- 1.9 Our complaint procedure is for those complaints where a formal documented response is requested as they could not be resolved earlier in the process.
- 1.10 The complaints policy and procedure (2019) was reviewed and updated in June 2023. Following approval from the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee it came into effect from 1st July 2023. The latest version of the complaints policy and procedure can be found here:
<https://www.camden.gov.uk/complaints>
- 1.11 This report focuses not only on volumes and timeliness of responses but also aims, when it is possible, to identify themes and lessons learnt that result in service improvements.
- 1.12 All Heads of Service have contributed to the report and the report has been considered by senior managers. They have added their comments and feedback as well as having had the opportunity to consider how the report and details concerning their service could influence future service delivery and practice generally.

2. THE OVERALL PICTURE

2.1 Number of Complaints and Enquiries for the period 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023 - all stages

Level	2022/2023	2021/2022
Stage 1	2431	1216
Stage 2	420	138
Housing Ombudsman & Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman	202	152
Member Enquiries	4052	3530
MP Enquiries	836	745
FOI/EIR Requests	1418	1388
TOTAL Formal Enquiries	9359	7169

2.2 Overarching nature of complaints for the period 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023

- 2.3 We had a total of **9359** formal enquiries which is a 30% increase to 2021/2022. The biggest increase was in Stage 1 complaints.
- 2.4 We had a total of **2431** Stage 1 complaints which is a 100% increase to the previous year.
- 2.5 At stage 1 of the complaints process the top 5 reasons for submitting a complaint are:
1. Outstanding repairs
 2. Repairs responsibilities
 3. Repairs communication
 4. Damp and Mould
 5. Missed repairs appointments.
- 2.6 This increase was expected. Our housing services are responding to increased demand within a failing wider system. Government funding for social housing development and maintenance has been shrinking – and capacity across community partners and public sector partners (such as Police and Health) is constrained.
- 2.7 We recognise that everyone in Camden should have a safe, warm and secure home and we have been actively working with our communities to understand the condition of their homes and encourage them to report concerns to us – whether that is damp and mould, fire safety or wider tenant issues. We have written to all our tenants to encourage them to speak to us about issues within their housing and conducted intensive tenant engagement on a number of our estates to understand the priorities and concerns of our communities.
- 2.8 Our proactive outreach has resulted in significantly increased reporting and we have acted on 6,000 reports on damp and mould since December 2022 alone.
- 2.9 Additionally, we have carried out over 125,000 repairs and scheduled servicing appointments during this period which was up from 119,000 the year before. During 2022 and in line with the Ombudsman's expectations, we have proactively encouraged customers across various mediums to get in touch to raise dissatisfaction.
- 2.10 We are seeing a significant pressure across our housing services relating to the need for temporary accommodation and the risk of homelessness in Camden. We have seen an 8% increase in homelessness approaches with over 2,460 in 2022/23 on top of a 60% increase over the last three years. Due to the increasing cost of housing in Camden there are effectively no private rented sector (PRS) homes in Camden affordable on local housing allowance – PRS placements in Camden have decreased by 57% since 2020. This has led to an increased number of complaints relating to allocations, the housing register and homelessness.

- 2.11 London currently suffers from a disproportionate number of Housing related complaints – about half compared to a third of England’s total stock. This is likely due to the condition of London housing stock, the volume and density of homes, the challenges and costs in London of contractors.
- 2.12 As with all London Boroughs, Camden is experiencing a significant increase in Housing related complaints at all stages of the process. The increase is primarily in Housing Management, Property Management and Housing Support Services. In addition, we have made it easier and more accessible for citizens to submit their complaint via a form which goes straight into the case management system and officers are able to log complaints that they receive via other channels directly on to the system which would have previously been dealt with but not formally captured. The increased profile of the Housing Ombudsman and Regulator Social Housing in the media increasing awareness of Housing issues and making complaints.
- 2.13 Camden is being proactive in order to address this increase and has made a number of service improvements in relation to responding to complaints:

2.14 Corporate Complaints Service Improvements

- 2.15 Over the last 18 months we have been developing and transforming the processes and resourcing within the Corporate Complaints team to respond to the significant uplift in the number of Complaints received by the Council.
- 2.16 We recognise the importance of ensuring that complaints are effectively responded to – and recognising the increased demand across services we have increased staff resources in the Corporate Complaints Team to meet demand and to ensure more rigorous performance management. The team now escalates Stage 2 and Ombudsman cases to Heads of Service and Directors when no response has been received from the services. If this does not result in a response then it is escalated to the relevant ED. This is proving to increase the response rate from services. This action has resulted in increased speed to responding to complaints and in addition reduced delays in processing complaints, such that all Stage 1 complaints and Stage 2 reviews are assigned within 48 hours of receipt.
- 2.17 The Corporate Complaints team are taking a more active role in holding services to account for the quality of responses to complaints and monitoring service improvement priorities including regular meetings with Repairs managers to go through active Housing Ombudsman cases to ensure requests are responded to on time.
- 2.18 Implementation of the new case management system allows citizens to submit their complaints via an online form, enabling swifter allocation of cases, improved monitoring of performance and outcomes, and an audit trail of who is handling the cases. Improvements have continued to be made to the case management system following feedback from both residents and staff. Users are becoming more familiar with the functionality, which has improved case record keeping and accessibility to information. The case management system is there to provide a comprehensive catalogue of complaints cases and enables analysis of the data to enable service improvements.

- 2.19 Processes are being put in place to improve responsiveness to Ombudsman cases, ensuring requests for information are provided in a timelier manner.
- 2.20 The Complaints Policy and Procedures and Remedies procedure were reviewed and updated in June 2023 and a revised Housing Ombudsman Self-Assessment against its Complaint Handling Code was recently presented to Resources and Corporate Governance Scrutiny Committee for approval. These have been completed in collaboration with the Housing Ombudsman who is satisfied that we comply with the Code.

2.21 Property Customer services and Engagement

- 2.22 We recognise that complaints about homes are often complex – but also are emotive and relate to often difficult quality of life issues for our residents. To deal with dissatisfaction at the earliest opportunity, extensive customer satisfaction measures are in place to engage with our residents. In Property services, we now speak to and receive SMS feedback from over 1000 customers per month. On the whole, our transactional feedback about the service results in an approximately 85% positive score.
- 2.23 We are looking to work closely with the Housing Ombudsman who has new and stronger powers to censure and force landlords to respond to poor service. Nationally there has been a 323% increase in serious findings against social housing landlords for findings of poor-quality services. To better prioritise the handling of Ombudsman cases, a new way of working across Property services has been introduced which ensures that responses show we are thinking from the customer's point of view, not just an operational one. The Corporate complaints team will continue to be the lead liaison with the Ombudsman, filtering and logging enquiries and tracking the progress of all cases.
- 2.24 A new approach to complaints handling across Housing and Property Services was introduced in 2023 to put our customers at the heart of what we do.
- 2.25 In early 2024 we will bring together case management across Property services and Neighbourhoods to have one case management team so a named officer is able to own the whole complaint not just in part and complaints are not passed around between services.
- 2.26 Working with colleagues in central complaints and our outbound call provider, in early 2024, we are introducing a new way of measuring customer satisfaction in handling stage one complaints. The aim is to have conversations where the feedback can help drive performance and customer satisfaction.
- 2.27 The Housing and Property Residents' panel was created and already we are seeing an enthused group of residents helping us shape future policy direction, firmly focused on improving customer needs and demands and having a wider awareness of our challenges as an organisation. A new resident complaints oversight panel will be introduced from January 2024 to

review the current level of stage one, stage two, and ombudsman cases and review the trends that have been identified.

3. Summary analysis of Stage 1 complaints 2022~2023

- 3.1 We had a total of **2431** Stage 1 complaints which is a 100% increase to the previous year.
- 3.2 A slightly lower proportion of Stage 1 complaints (38%) than last year (44%) were responded to within the recommended timescales. This is mainly due to the significant increase in the number of complaints received. All services endeavour to focus on providing a high-quality response that resolves all the issues raised and finding a suitable outcome in a timely way, whilst keeping the complainant informed and up to date with progress. [See Section 6 for detailed analysis of key service areas].
- 3.3 A similar proportion of complaints were upheld (27%) to last year (26%) indicating that despite the increase in number of complaints the same proportion were found to be unsatisfactory. [See section 6 for detailed analysis of key service areas].

4 Identifying lessons learnt and themes in complaints

- 4.1 Complaints are a way in which we can gain insight into how we need to improve the experience that residents have with the Council. They highlight where things have not gone well, and how we can improve our services to prevent similar complaints in the future. We are committed to building our services with the voice of residents at the centre and learning how we can do things better is an important part of this.
- 4.2 The case management system has made it easier to identify themes, recurrent issues and better resolutions that has enabled improved learning from complaints across the whole Council. [See Section 6 for detailed analysis of key service areas].

5 Breakdown of Data and Analysis of Stage 1 complaints

Stage 1 (Local resolution)

5.1 There has been a 100% increase in the number of Stage 1 complaints with slightly fewer being responded to within ten working days and a similar proportion being upheld to last year.

5.2 Stage 1 complaints by directorate and division

2021/22 figures in brackets	Some directorates have restructured services during 2022/23 so data may be located in different divisions from 2021/22
*Average response time. Excludes open cases and cases 100+ days to respond.	If a service/team does not appear in the table it is because it has not received any complaints in the last two years

Service Area	Stage 1	Stage 1 Upheld	% Upheld	Stage 1 responded to within 10 w/days	Stage 1 responded to within 20 w/days	Outside Timescales Or Open/withdrawn	Average Time to respond w/days*
Corporate Services	284 (72)	48 (12)	17% (17%)	37% (47%)	43% (72%)	57% (28%)	29 (11)
Participation, Policy & Communication	5 (1)	0 (0)	0% (0%)	20% (0%)	20% (0%)	80% (100%)	34 (N/A)
Digital & IT	5 (1)	1 (0)	20% (0%)	0% (0%)	0% (0%)	100% (100%)	25 (N/A)
Law & Governance	7 (3)	0 (0)	0% (0%)	0% (0%)	0% (0%)	100% (100%)	N/A (N/A)
People & Inclusion (HR)	5 (1)	0 (0)	0% (0%)	20% (0%)	20% (0%)	80% (100%)	36 (N/A)
Finance	0 (2)	0 (0)	0% (0%)	0% (0%)	0% (0%)	0% (100%)	N/A (N/A)
Customer Services	262 (64)	47 (13)	18% (19%)	39% (53%)	45% (81%)	55% (19%)	19 (11)

Service Area	Stage 1	Stage 1 Upheld	% Upheld	Stage 1 responded to within 10 w/days	Stage 1 responded to within 20 w/days	Outside Timescales Or Open	Average Time to respond w/days*
Supporting Communities	2051 (1055)	617 (307)	30% (29%)	39% (46%)	60% (69%)	40% (31%)	30 (17)
Community Services	84 (9)	6 (1)	7% (11%)	33% (11%)	45% (11%)	55% (89%)	25 (18)
Development	12 (6)	2 (2)	17% (33%)	17% (33%)	17% (83%)	83% (17%)	53 (17)
Housing Management	304 (139)	46 (14)	15% (10%)	20% (24%)	32% (47%)	68% (53%)	28 (25)
Property Management	1150 (728)	500 (264)	43% (36%)	55% (53%)	83% (78%)	17% (22%)	8 (12)
Economy, Regeneration and Investment	129 (84)	7 (12)	5% (14%)	9% (25%)	13% (38%)	87% (62%)	44 (10)
Environment & Sustainability	108	7	6%	13%	19%	81%	15
Housing Support Services	253 (89)	47 (14)	19% (16%)	25% (40%)	40% (61%)	60% (39%)	19 (24)
Resident Safety	11 (0)	2 (0)	18% (0%)	9% (0%)	18% (0%)	82% (0%)	51 (N/A)

Service Area	Stage 1	Stage 1 Upheld	% Upheld	Stage 1 responded to within 10 w/days	Stage 1 responded to within 20 w/days	Outside Timescales Or Open	Average Time to respond w/days*
Supporting People	96 (89)	2 (3)	2% (2%)	11% (17%)	15% (22%)	85% (78%)	23 (24)
Adult Social Care	39 (25)	0 (1)	0% (4%)	5% (20%)	8% (28%)	92% (72%)	27 (21)
Children's S&SW	29 (51)	0 (2)	0% (4%)	14% (18%)	21% (20%)	79% (80%)	41 (32)
Early Intervention & Prevention	24 (13)	1 (0)	4% (0%)	13% (8%)	13% (23%)	87% (77%)	13 (12)
Education & Integrated Commissioning	4 (0)	1 (0)	25% (0%)	50% (0%)	50% (0%)	50% (0%)	8 (N/A)

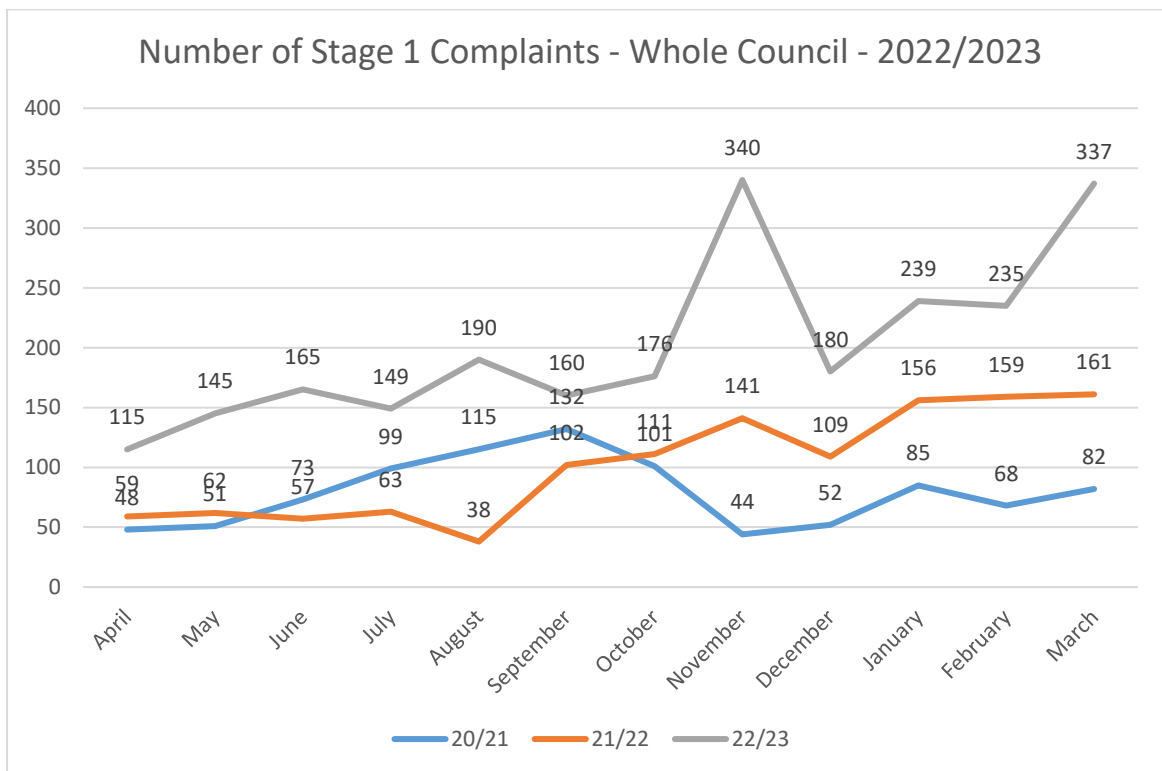
	Stage 1	Stage 1 Upheld	% Upheld	Stage 1 responded to within 10 w/days	Stage 1 responded to within 20 w/days	Outside Timescales Or Open	Average Time to respond w/days*
Total	2431 (1216)	667 (322)	27% (26%)	38% (44%)	56% (66%)	44% (34%)	27 (16)

5.3 Stage 1 complaints Numbers received in previous years by directorate

Directorate	2021/2022	2020/2021	2019/2020	2018/2019	2017/2018	2016/2017
Corporate Services	72	60	127	113	138	223
Supporting Communities	1055	813	677	572	461	573
Supporting People	89	78	188	182	137	217
Grand Total	1216	951	992	867	736	1013

[Note: The directorates have changed over the years and some services are no longer in the same directorates].

5.4 Stage 1 complaints received by month



5.5 For a full table of numbers of complaints broken down by division and service area and by month see **Appendix 1**

5.6 Analysis of Stage 1 complaints data

Number of Complaints

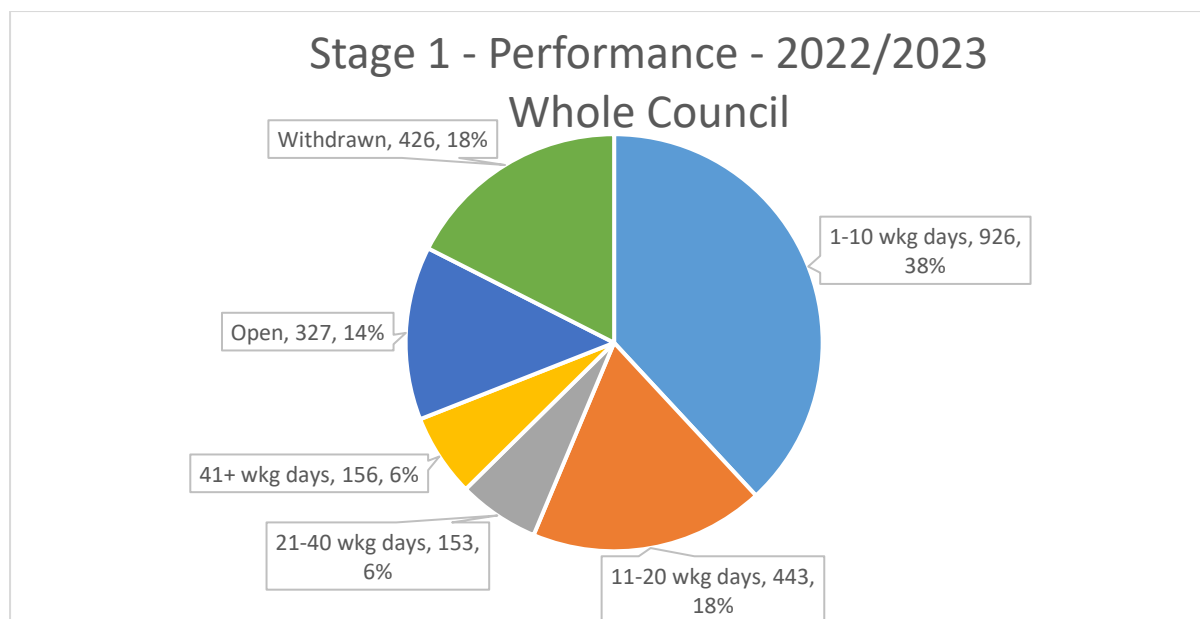
- 5.7 The net total number of complaints recorded at Stage 1 has increased by 100% (doubled) compared to a 28% increase in 2021/2022.
- 5.8 The graph shows how the increase started in Quarter 4 2021/2022 and has continued throughout 2022/2023. This corresponds to the introduction of the complaints case management system and e-form in January 2022 indicating that it has made it easier to log, track and monitor complaints in a single, centralised system and we are now capturing complaints which previously may not have been captured.
- 5.9 The service areas showing a notable increase in complaints compared to the previous year are:
- Property Management - an increase from 728 to 1150 which is 422 complaints (58%)
 - Housing Support Services - an increase from 89 to 253 which is 164 complaints (184%)
 - Housing Management – an increase from 139 to 304 which is 165 complaints (118%)
- 5.10 In Environment services there appears to be a large increase (from 35 to 98) but a high proportion of these (63) are categorised as ‘withdrawn’ which is a new category from the case management system which captures the complaints passed on to the contractor, in this case the waste contractor, Veolia.
- 5.11 In Parking Operations there appears to be a large increase (from 30 to 150) but a high proportion of these (80) are categorised as ‘withdrawn’. In this service this category has been used for those enquiries about penalty charges that are not formal complaints and have been dealt with informally.
- 5.12 In Economy and Regeneration and Community Services there appear to be large increases but this is due to organisational restructures so services have moved into and out of the divisions. The bottom line of these divisions shows a slight increase in complaints.

Timescales

- 5.13 It is acknowledged that target timescales are not an absolute marker of success nor of quality. The case management system has provided a better understanding and appreciation that the end-to-end time (i.e., the time from receipt of the complaint to the full and satisfactory resolution) alongside qualitative measures are better markers of success.
- 5.14 Our timescales are informed by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman’s (LGSCO) good practice guidance and the Housing Ombudsman’s (HO) Complaints Handling Code. Compliance with the latter is

mandatory as a Landlord. The LGSCO and HO are currently consulting on their planned joint Complaints Handling Code to come into effect in 2024. The proposed timescales to responding to a Stage 1 complaint remains at 10 working days and to a Stage 2 at 20 working days (LGSCO is currently 25 working days which we also followed). In June 2023 we changed our complaint policy to 20 working days to respond to Stage 2 complaints in anticipation of the Joint Code.

5.15 For a full table of complaints broken down by division and service area and by performance (timescales) see **Appendix 2**



5.16 38% of stage 1 complaints were responded to within 10 working days. This is slightly lower than last year (44%).

5.17 Notable performance is Housing Repairs who had the highest number of complaints and a large increase but were able to respond within 10 working days to 55% of the cases (626) and to 84% within 20 working days.

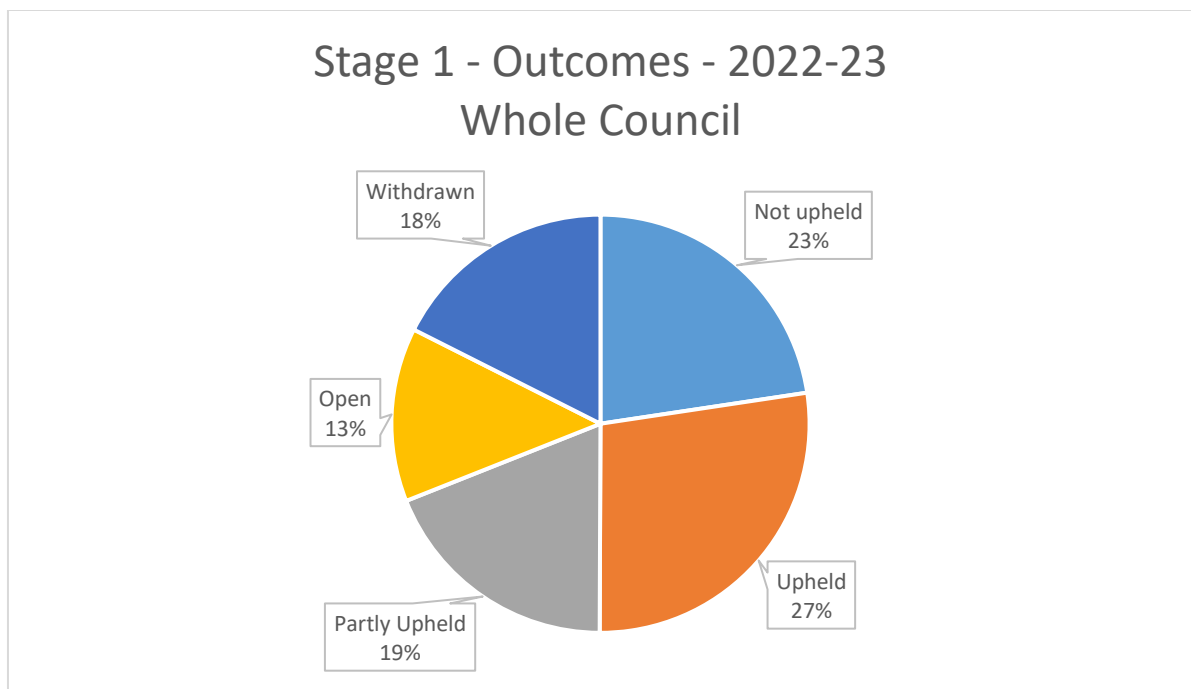
5.18 The drivers of performance are likely to be a combination of:

- Significant increase in the number of complaints received and the need to increase resources to respond to this.
- Introduction of the new case management system and time taken to improve organisational knowledge.
- The nature of the complaints is complex, with residents requiring an approach which involves multiple services, most often Housing services and Adult Social Care and Children's Services.
- There has been a continued focus on the quality of response and appropriate resolution rather than the time taken to complete the response, ensuring that residents' issues are resolved properly.
- There is a continued focus on improving communication with residents to keep them informed.
- In areas with a low volume of complaints, those that are outside the timescales have a large impact on the overall council performance.

- 5.19 It is acknowledged that target timescales are not an absolute marker of success nor of quality. The case management system has provided a better understanding and appreciation that the end-to-end time (i.e., the time from receipt of the complaint to the full and satisfactory resolution) alongside qualitative measures are better markers of success.
- 5.20 Our timescales are informed by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's (LGSCO) good practice guidance and the Housing Ombudsman's (HO) Complaints Handling Code. Compliance with the latter is mandatory as a Landlord. The LGSCO and HO are currently consulting on their planned joint Complaints Handling Code to come into effect in 2024. The proposed timescales to responding to a Stage 1 complaint remains at 10 working days and to a Stage 2 at 20 working days (LGSCO is currently 25 working days which we also followed). In June 2023 we changed our complaint policy to 20 working days to respond to Stage 2 complaints in anticipation of the Joint Code.

Outcomes (Upheld/Not Upheld)

- 5.21 For a full table of complaints broken down by division and service area and by outcomes see **Appendix 3**



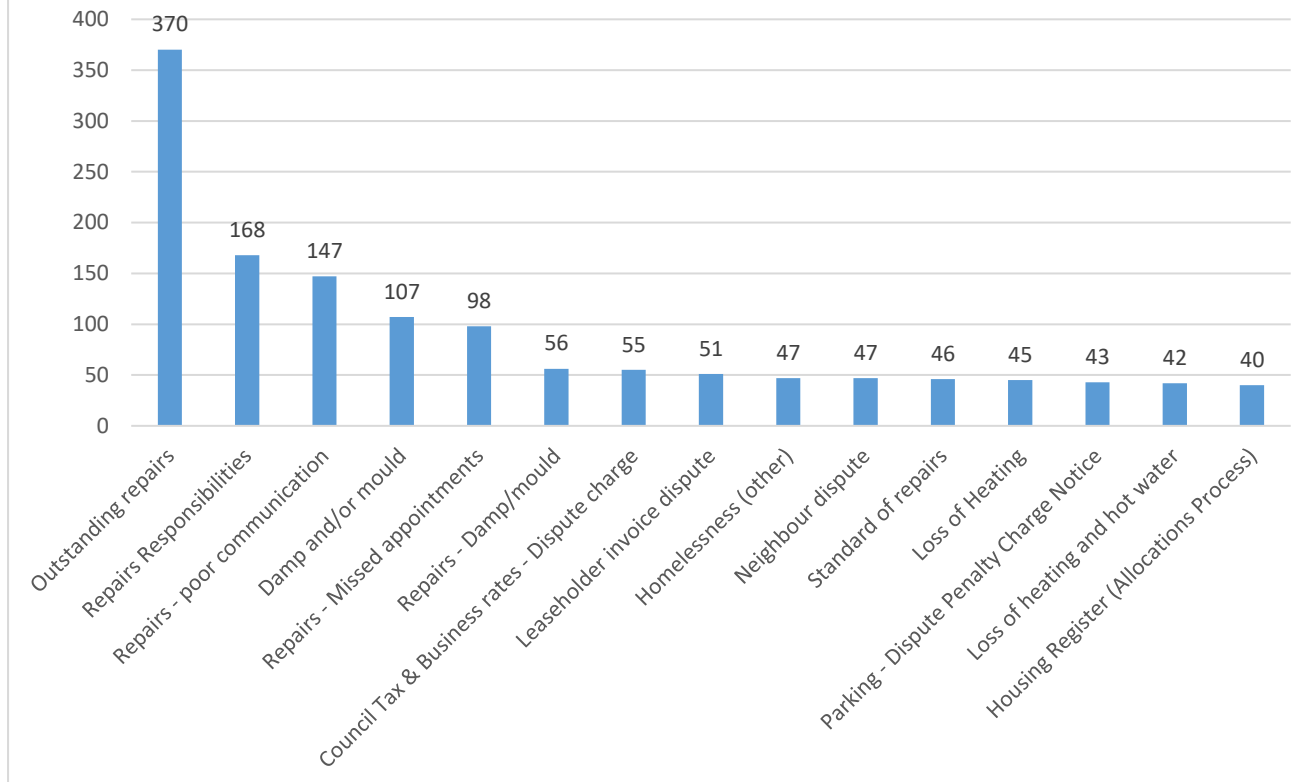
- 5.22 With the continued focus on services resolving complaints informally to ensure only those with merit go into the formal process, the number of upheld cases at the formal stage 1 remains stable at 27%.
- 5.23 Property Management had a high upheld rate (36%) in 2021/2022 and this has increased in 2022/2023 to **44%** which is nearly double the Council's average rate. This means that a high proportion of Stage 1 complaints the service agreed that there had been a service failure that needed to be put right.

- 5.24 We currently include a third outcome, 'Partly Upheld' which is used when there are multiple issues within a complaint and one or more of them is upheld and is considered good practice. The LGSCO and Housing Ombudsman are creating a joint complaint handling code in 2024 and they are proposing in this to remove 'partly upheld' as an outcome and to have only 'not upheld' or 'upheld'. Where a complaint has a number of elements, if one or more is upheld then the overall outcome will be recorded as 'upheld.' This will result in higher figures in future years for complaints being 'upheld.'

Types of Complaint

- 5.25 In previous reports the main category types have been taken from the LGSCO guidance on complaints handling.
1. Delay in providing a service
 2. Lack of communication
 3. Staff behaviour/Poor customer service
 4. Quality of service
 5. Disagree with decision/action
 6. Compensation request
 7. Lack of information/advice/access to service
- 5.26 Whilst these are useful in understanding failings at a high level, they don't change significantly from year to year with the highest two being the 'quality of service' and 'delays in providing a service'.
- 5.27 The case management system is now able to report in more detail about the reason for complaints as identified by the complainants. These allow services to specifically identify the issues and themes and make targeted service improvements as a result.

Stage 1 - Top 15 - Types of Complaint - 2022-23 Whole Council



5.28 9 of the top 15 types relate to Property Management which is to be expected as this area receives the highest number of complaints.

5.29 'Outstanding repairs' is the highest reason given for making a complaint.

Cases remaining Open

5.30 The 2022/2023 data shows that 327 (13%) complaints are "open" compared to 20% last year. This means that at the point the data was downloaded for analysis in July 2023 these cases had not been resolved with an outcome. Whilst some remain open as they were only received towards the end of the period in the final quarter, there is a variety of factors that mean others remain open for a prolonged period:

- 1) The case is complex and involves multiple agencies.
- 2) The data has not been updated on the case management system in a timely way
- 3) The service has provided a response outside of the case management system and not uploaded it to the case record.

5.31 Adult Social Care and Children's Services whilst they do not have high numbers of complaints, do have a high proportion of open cases. Whilst this is partly due to their complexity and need to involve multiple agencies across Health and Social Care, this is an area requiring improvement and further training on the case management system will be offered in January 2024.

Escalation to further Stages

Stage 1 to Stage 2

- 5.32 The proportion of stage 1 complaints that progressed to stage 2 has increased to **17%** compared to 11% in 2021/2022.
- 5.33 The proportional increase in the number of stage 2 complaints is twice that of stage 1 complaints with the number of Stage 2 complaints increasing 200% and Stage 1 complaints increasing by 100%.
- 5.34 In both the Property Services and the Housing Needs Services the number of Stage 2 reviews has increased by over 200% and in Housing Management by over 100%.
[See section 7 for details of Stage 2 cases].

Stage 2 to an Ombudsman

- 5.35 Whilst a resident can approach the LGSCO or the Housing Ombudsman at any point, an Ombudsman will only formally investigate a complaint once it has been through our local procedures at Stages 1 and 2.
- 5.36 The proportion of stage 2 complaints (420) that were formally investigated by either the LGSCO (20 cases investigated) or the Housing Ombudsman (19 cases) is **9%**. This is very low considering the large increase in Stage 2 complaints in 2022/2023 indicating that the majority of complainants are satisfied with the outcomes at Stage 2.

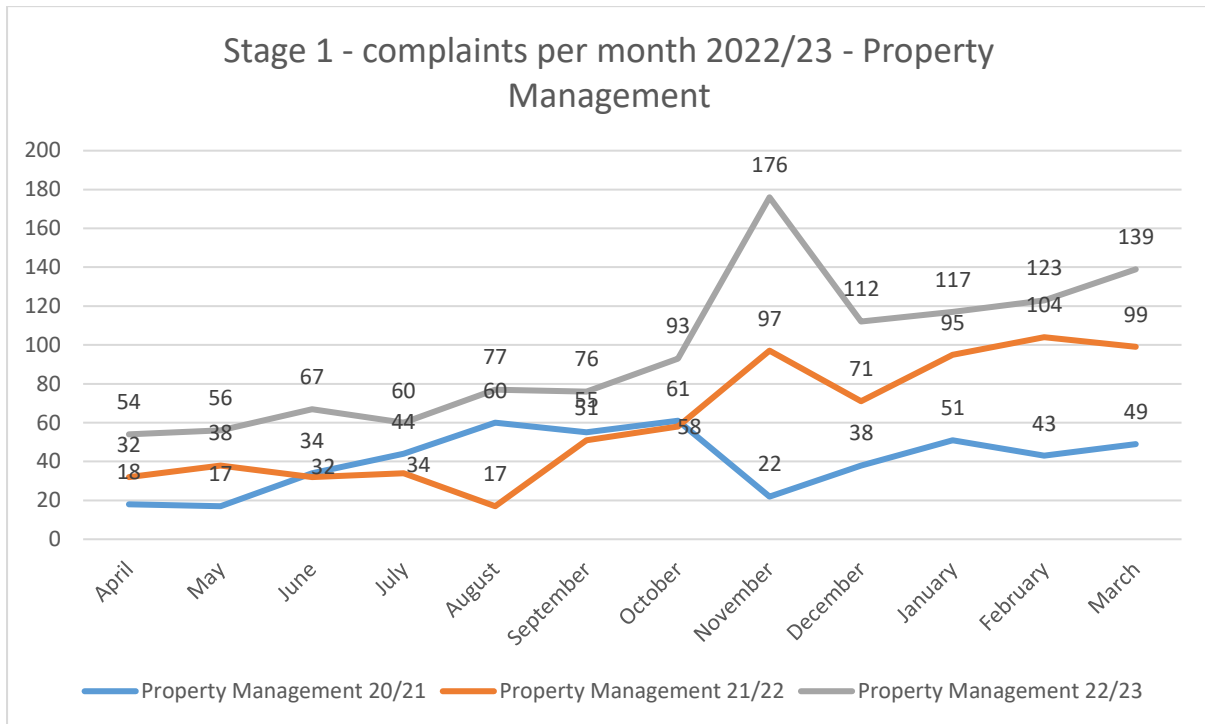
6 Key Service Areas – Analysis of Stage 1 complaints

6.1 Property Management Services

[2021/2022 figures in brackets]

Service Area	Number of complaints	percentage upheld	percentage within 10 w/days	percentage within 20 w/days	Average w/days
Facilities Management	2 (3)	0% (33%)	0% (33%)	33% (33%)	10 (10)
Planned Works	10 (7)	0% (29%)	40% (43%)	71% (71%)	5 (11)
Property Planning & Asset Management	2 (1)	0% (0%)	50% (0%)	0% (0%)	3 (N/A)
Repairs & Operations	1136 (717)	44% (36%)	55% (54%)	84% (78%)	15 (14)

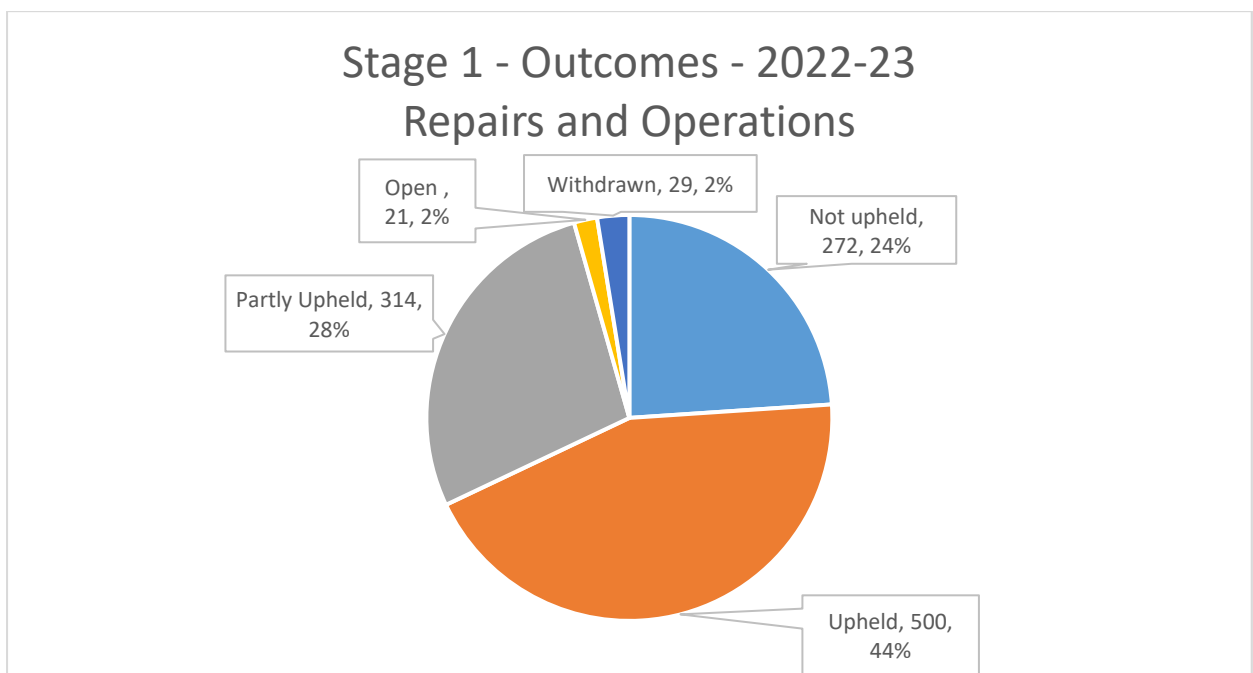
- 6.2 Although any increase in complaints is of concern, this increase was expected. We carried out over 125,000 repairs and scheduled servicing appointments during this period which was up from 119,000 the year before. During 2022 and in line with the Ombudsman's expectations, we have proactively encouraged customers across various mediums to get in touch to raise dissatisfaction.



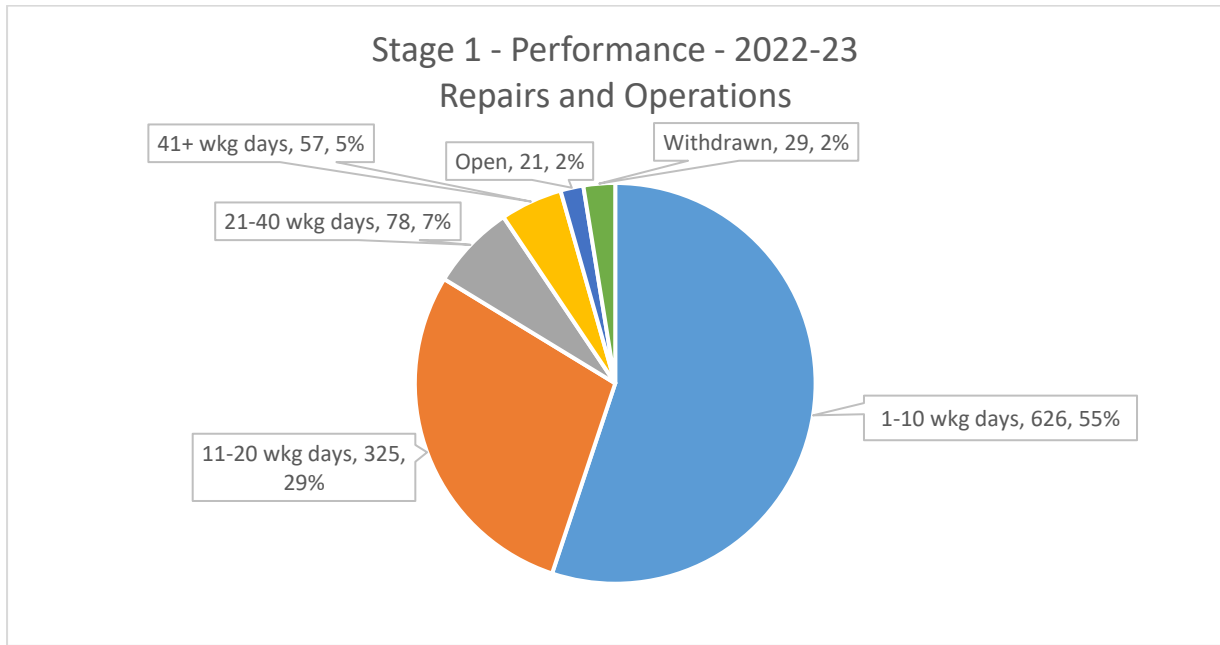
6.3 Whilst all months were higher than in the previous year there was a significant spike in November 2022 which corresponds to winter pressures and the associated issues such as hot water, heating, leaks and damp and mould. The number of complaints remained high for all subsequent months until March 2023.

Repairs and Operations

6.4 Repairs have the majority of complaints within the Property Management Divisions so the further analysis below is for the Repairs service only.



6.5 In Repairs & Operations a higher proportion of complaints were upheld - **44%** this year compared to 36% last year. Upheld and Partly Upheld represent nearly 75% of Stage 1 complaints. This means that in three quarters of Stage 1 complaints, the service agreed that there was at least one element where the service had failed and that needed to be put right. As the majority of complaints are related to outstanding repairs and delays in carrying them out, these were the elements that were generally upheld.

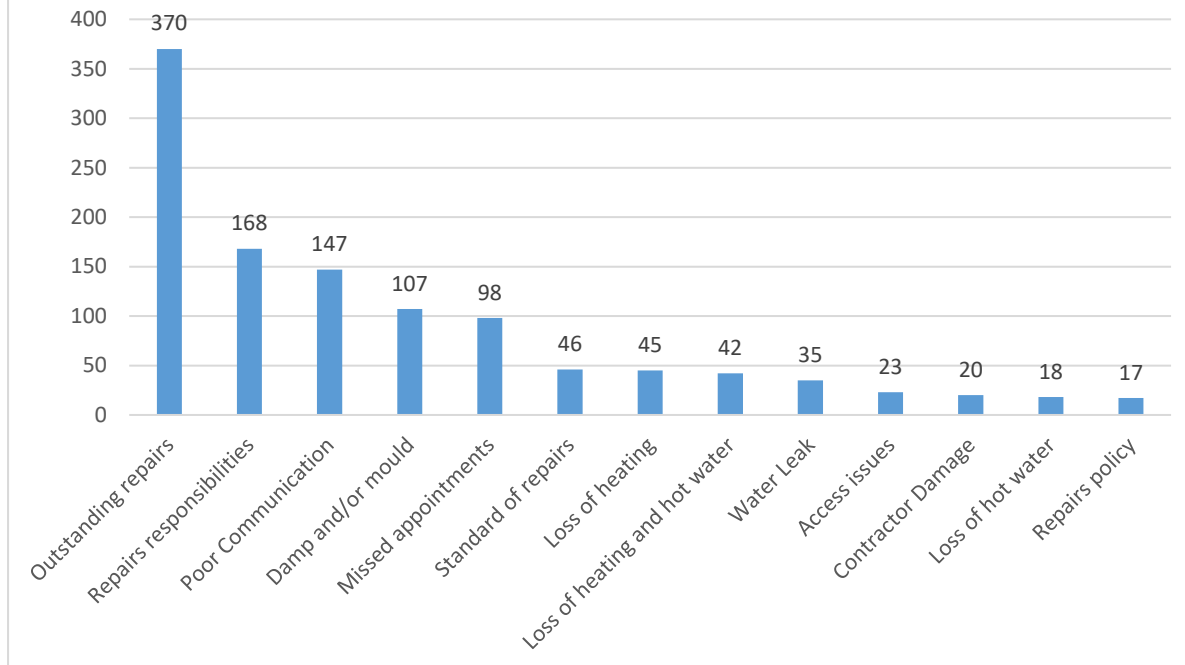


6.6 In Repairs & Operations, performance on response times has improved despite seeing an increase in complaints.

6.7 Responding within 10 working days has remained the same as last year at 55%. This is good performance especially given the large increase in the number of complaints.

6.8 Performance on responding within 20 working days has improved from 78% last year to 84% this year.

Stage 1 - Types of Complaints - 2022-23 Repairs and Operations



6.9 One third of complaints relates to outstanding repairs – this could be delays in providing a service or quality of service.

Learning Outcomes and service improvements

6.10 Property services have proactively engaged with residents to report damp and mould and have acted on over 6,000 reports since last December alone.

6.11 In line with the Ombudsman's expectations, we have proactively encouraged customers across various mediums to get in touch to raise dissatisfaction at the earliest opportunity and extensive customer satisfaction measures are in place to engage with our residents. We now speak to and receive SMS feedback from over 1000 customers per month. On the whole, our transactional feedback about the service results in an approximate 85% positive score.

6.12 A new approach to complaints handling across Housing Management and Property Services is being introduced this year (2023) to put our customers at the heart of what we do. In December (2023) we are bringing together case management across Property service and Housing Management to have one case management team. A named officer is able to own the whole complaint not just in part and it is not passed back and forth. We have already been trialling this within Camden Town district with significant success.

- 6.13 To better prioritise the handling of Ombudsman cases, a new way of working across Property services was put in place in 2023 utilising the work of the neighbourhood liaison team. This team will own the necessary actions and work closely with colleagues in Housing, the case management team and the central complaints team to ensure we reply with one voice and within the required timeframes. This team remit will ensure that our responses show we are thinking from the customer’s point of view, not just an operational one. The central complaints team will continue to be the lead liaison with the Ombudsman, filtering and logging enquiries and tracking the progress of all cases.
- 6.14 Due to this new partnership way of working, a new resident complaints oversight panel model will be introduced in January 2024. Fully supported by the wider Council. This panel of up to five members will review the current level of stage one, stage two, and ombudsman cases and review the trends that have been identified. The panel will carry out a lessons-learned approach and will meet with Senior Managers to report on improvements to avoid repeated issues. The work of the panel will be fully tracked and shared with the Director of Housing, the Director of Property Services, the relevant Head Of Service, the Housing Transformation Group and the Departmental Management Team. The panel will produce regular lessons learned reports, including a quarterly portfolio outcomes report. This new concept aligns with the Ombudsman’s recommendations, where we include residents in the areas that directly affect them and continue along our agreed path of being more open and honest about the decisions we make and how it helps improve overall customer satisfaction.

Housing Management

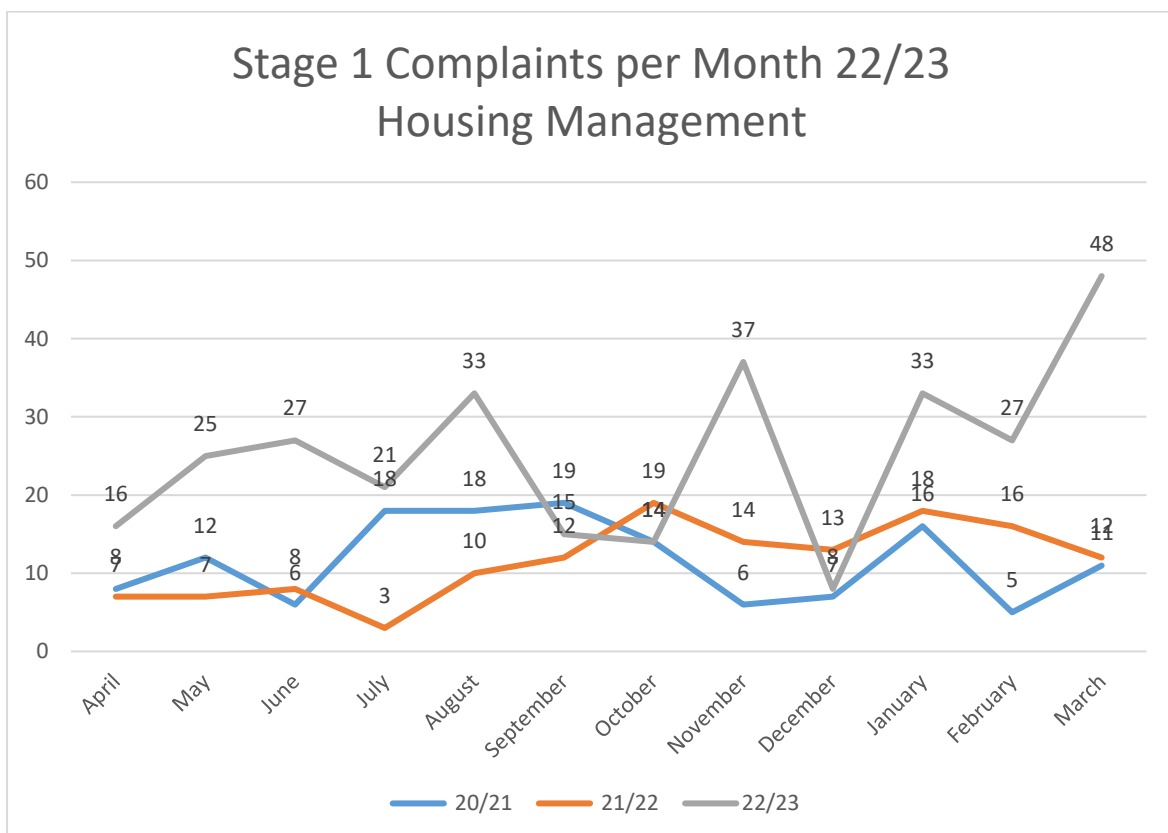
- 6.15 The number of complaints has more than doubled compared to the previous year.

2021/2022	139
2022/2023	304

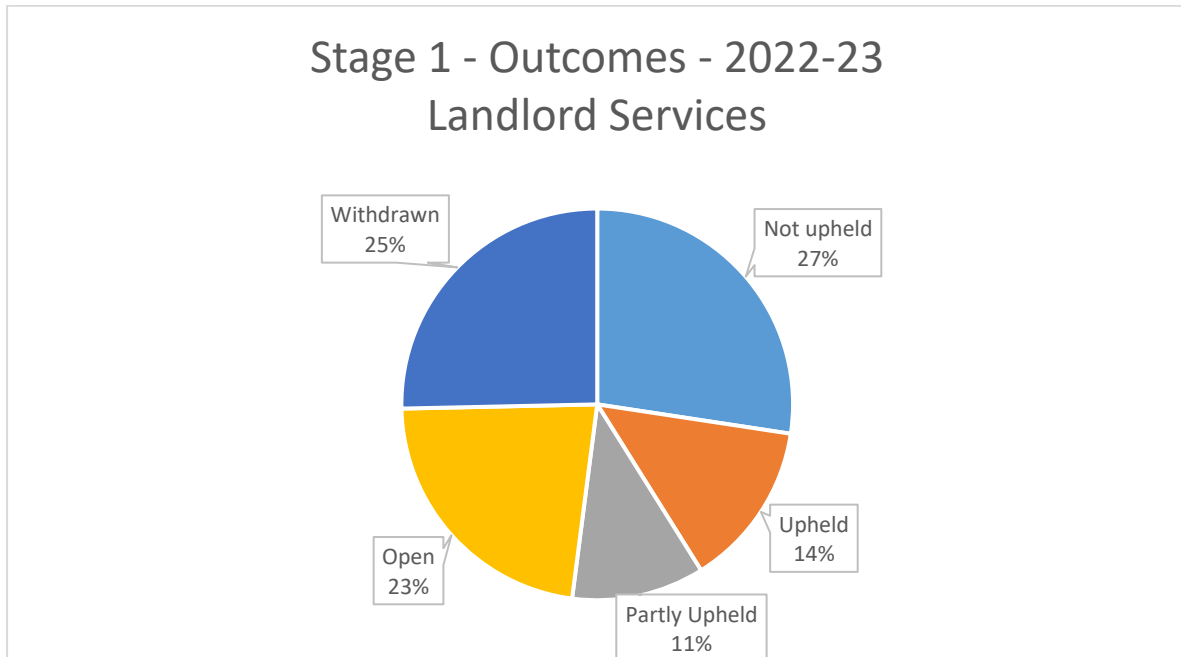
[2021/2022 figures in brackets]

Service Area	Number of complaints	percentage upheld	percentage within 10 w/days	percentage within 20 w/days	Average w/days
Estate Management (Caretaking & Estate Parking)	86 (34)	15% (12%)	15% (22%)	35% (42%)	25 (19)
Leaseholder Services	53 (18)	21% (17%)	45% (44%)	53% (72%)	26 (15)
Landlord Services	146 (87)	14% (8%)	12% (22%)	23% (44%)	44 (27)
Tenant & Leaseholder Participation	18 (0)	11% (0%)	28% (0%)	39% (0%)	17 (0)
Camden Safety Programme	1 (0)	0% (0%)	0% (0%)	0% (0%)	N/A

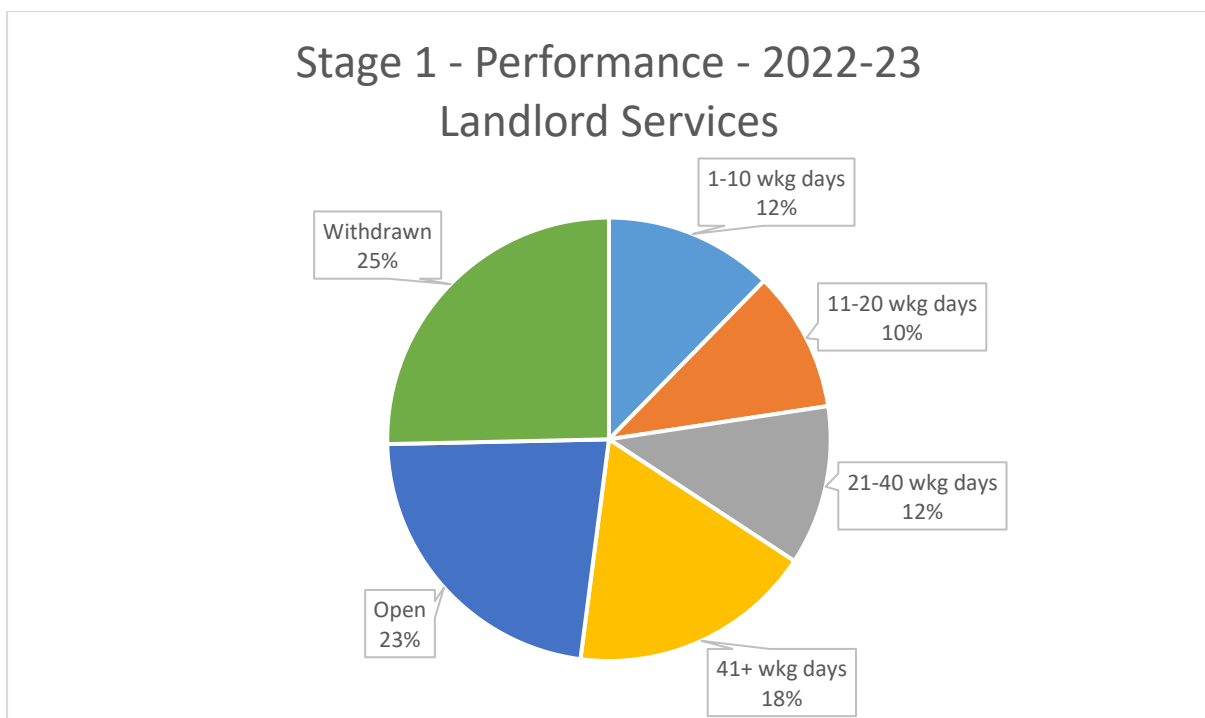
6.16 Whilst there were more complaints in each month compared to the previous year, there are clear spikes in August, November, January and March. Across the sector we are seeing a rise in complaints due to better awareness, publicity and campaigns about raising complaints with social landlords.



Landlord Services



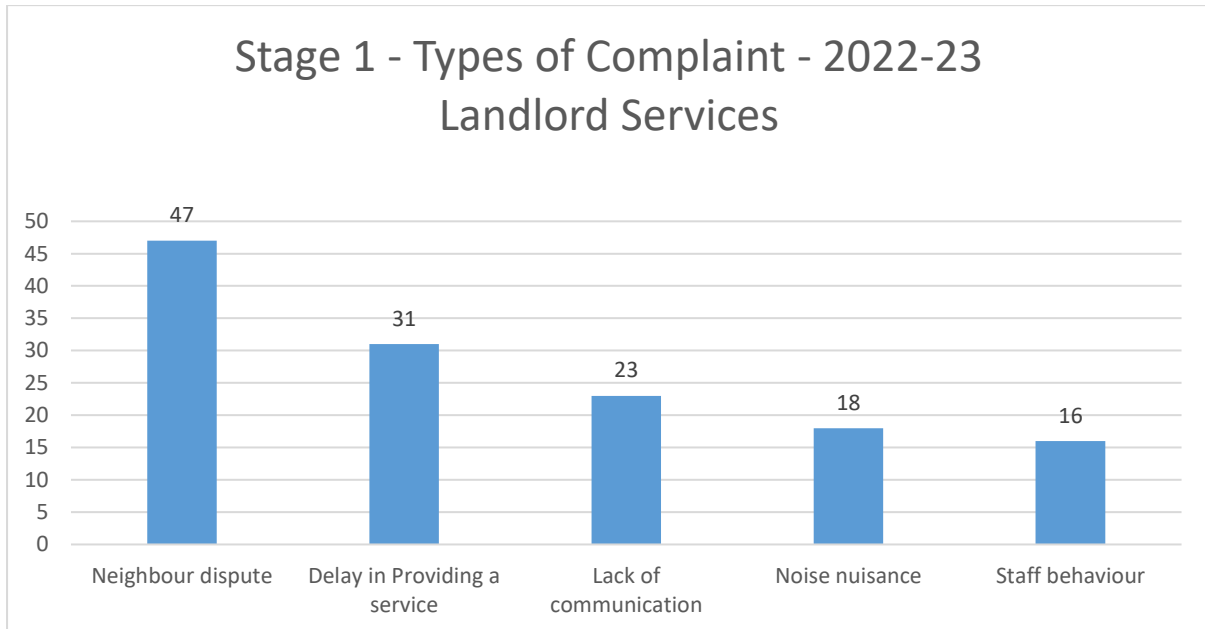
- 6.17 Despite the increase in complaints the proportion of upheld Stage 1 complaints continues to be relatively low at 14% which indicates that there was a low number of complaints with service failure.



- 6.18 Across Housing Management, the average time to respond to a complaint is 25 working days which is higher than the previous year (16 working days) with Landlord Services, which sees the highest number of complaints in this division, having an average response time of 27 days.

6.19 Performance in Landlord Services is:

- responding within 10 working days has dropped from 22% last year to **12%** this year.
- responding within 20 working days has also dropped from 44% last year to **23%** this year.



6.20 The highest number of complaints to landlord services were about neighbour disputes and anti-social behaviour on estates which is comparable to last year. These types of complaints are often complex, involving vulnerable people and several agencies and services and therefore require time, continuous communication, and mediation, to resolve.

6.21 Housing Management - Compliments

I wanted to leave some feedback regarding my Neighbourhood Housing Officer. He has been fantastic in advising on various things I have needed help with as I get ready to move into my property. I'm extremely grateful to be able to call on him for my questions and am impressed with the speed and expertise with which he problem-solves. If he is an example of the efficiency of your team, then I'm confident you must work with some truly excellent people.

My new housing officer has been so brilliant, and I just wanted to get in touch and let you know what a wonderful job I think she is doing. She has been warm and friendly and instantly made me feel comfortable around her. Not only that but I feel she has been so understanding of my situation and helpful that I know having her as my housing officer will be lovely as she is so nice. It is not often you come across people who make an effort to be kind and who go that extra mile whilst doing their jobs and she really does.

thank you for all what you do for us, you save my family you make my kids happy, now we are all happy, god bless you, many thanks

I wanted to reach out to you about our housing officer during our tenancy in the Regent's Park Estate. He was knowledgeable, always available to answer any questions, and made us feel reassured and safe. We can't thank him enough for how hard he worked. We have all settled in well and are forever grateful to him- he is a tremendous asset to

your department and Camden Council; I genuinely hope he is recognised for his hard work and commitment to the community.

I'm so happy. The flat is more than I expected It's a forever home and I'm relieved Thank you so much and thank you for understanding. I'm feeling more positive and hopeful things will work out.

I wanted to take this opportunity to sincerely thank you for the support you have given me over these last few months- at a time when I needed it the most!

The reason I write this is to praise and pass on thanks to two members of Camden's staff who helped me finally bring to an end the long running leak which has caused me upset and problems.

I am writing to you as I'd like to express my thankfulness for my housing officer for 2 and a half years. He constantly went above and beyond. He was very efficient and professional, always communicating with us and returning calls. All in all, he is an asset to Camden Council and we are very, very grateful that he was our housing officer during this period.

My housing officer was very helpful and always easy to get in contact.

Housing Management Service comments

- 6.22 We are undergoing a significant transformation in our Housing directorate, moving towards a more seamless and joined up service. Housing Managers have taken up training offered by the Housing Ombudsman Service. We now review Housing Ombudsman findings and spotlight reports at our team meetings. We are in the process of undertaking a review of many of our policies and procedures using the learning from the Housing Ombudsman as one of the drivers to make changes to enable a more positive experience. We are in the process of centralising our complaint response to improve our response times and ensure that our residents receive a comprehensive and consistent approach when responding to the issues they raise.

Key themes and Service Improvements

- 6.23 Using our complaint data, we can identify areas that we need to strengthen. We know that our residents have raised Anti-Social Behaviour as a concern, and we have put together a task force to address this. We will use insight the Housing Ombudsman e.g., Spotlight on Noise Complaints as part of our review on dealing with these types of reports from our residents. We also note that communication is a common theme along with delay in providing services. We are looking at ways in which we can provide a more proactive approach to our customers, making sure they know what to expect and how we will communicate any further information to them.
- 6.24 Communication and delays in providing services are common themes in complaints. We are looking at ways in which we can provide a more proactive approach to our residents, making sure they know what to expect and how we will communicate any further information to them.

- 6.25 As part of our transformation in housing, we have set a new vision underpinned by 8 key principles that will inform how we deliver our services in future. The key outcomes we expect to achieve following our transformation are:
- A responsive and joined up service
 - Better access to housing and advice
 - Feedback driven improvement
 - Greater sense of community
 - Effective and efficient operations
- 6.26 Housing Managers have taken up training offered by the Housing Ombudsman Service on ‘spotlight’ subjects such as damp and mould and noise nuisance. Housing Ombudsman findings and spotlight reports are reviewed at team meetings.
- 6.27 The service is undertaking a review of many of the policies and procedures using the learning from the Housing Ombudsman as one of the drivers to make changes to enable a more positive experience.
- 6.28 The service is bringing together complaint handling for Housing Management complaints with Property services complaint handling teams to improve our response times and ensure that our residents receive a comprehensive, consistent and joined up approach when responding to the issues they raise.

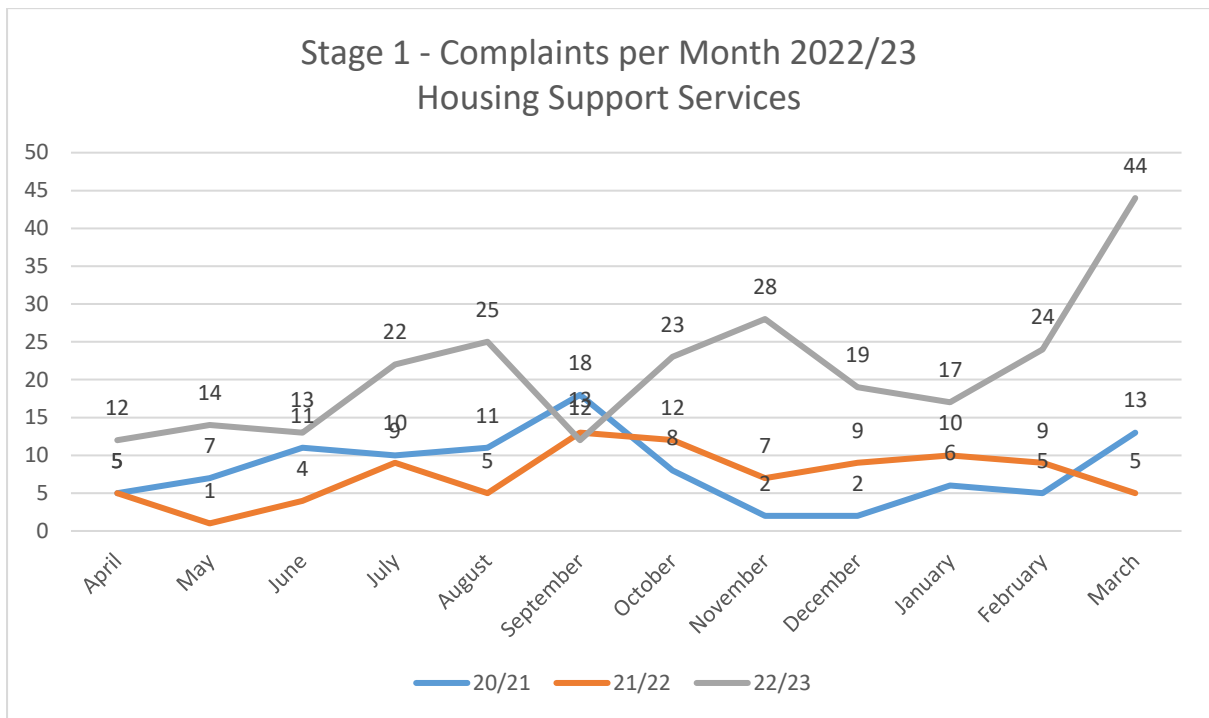
Housing Support Services

- 6.29 The number of complaints has almost tripled compared to the previous year

2021/2022	89
2022/2023	253

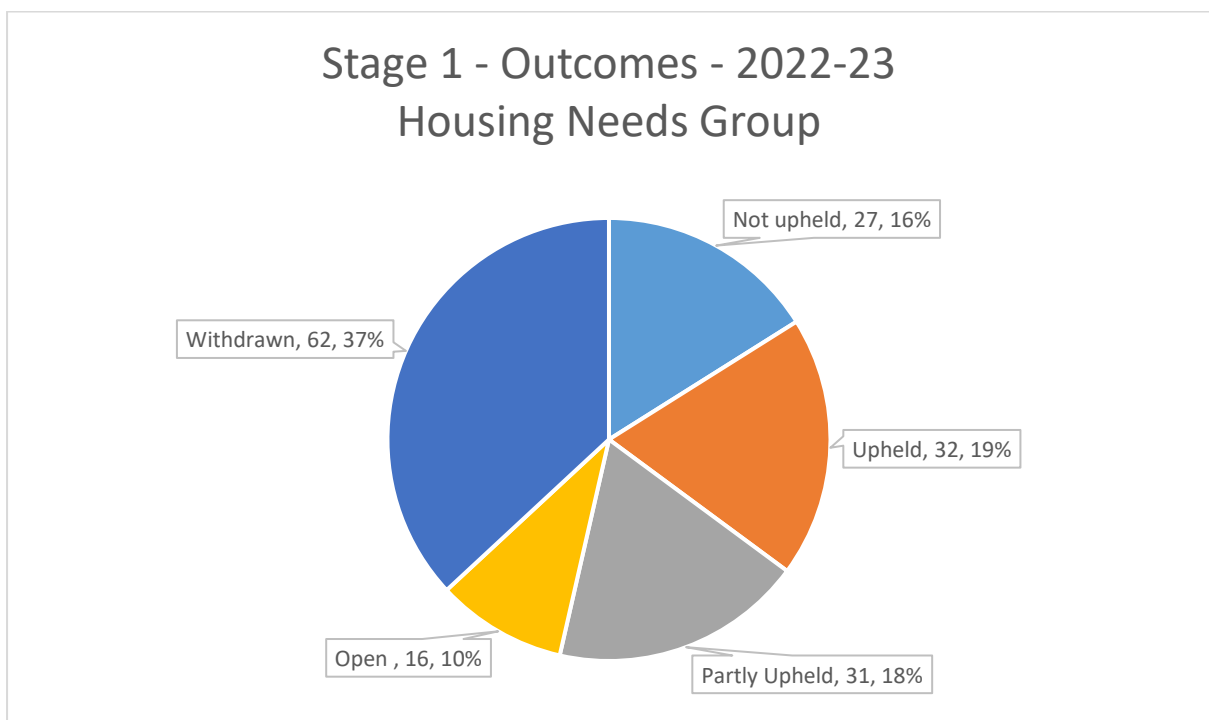
[2021/2022 figures in brackets]

Service Area	Number of complaints	percentage upheld	percentage within 10 w/days	percentage within 20 w/days	Average w/days
Camden Accessible Travel Solutions	9 (1)	22% (0%)	33% (0%)	33% (0%)	18 (N/A)
Housing Needs	168 (87)	19% (16%)	16% (39%)	30% (61%)	35 (15)
Housing Commissioning & Partnerships	71 (1)	18% (0%)	45% (100%)	63% (100%)	13 (10)
Private Sector Housing	1 (0)	0% (0%)	100% (0%)	100% (0%)	10 (N/A)
Temporary Accommodation	4 (0)	0% (0%)	0% (0%)	0% (0%)	N/A (N/A)

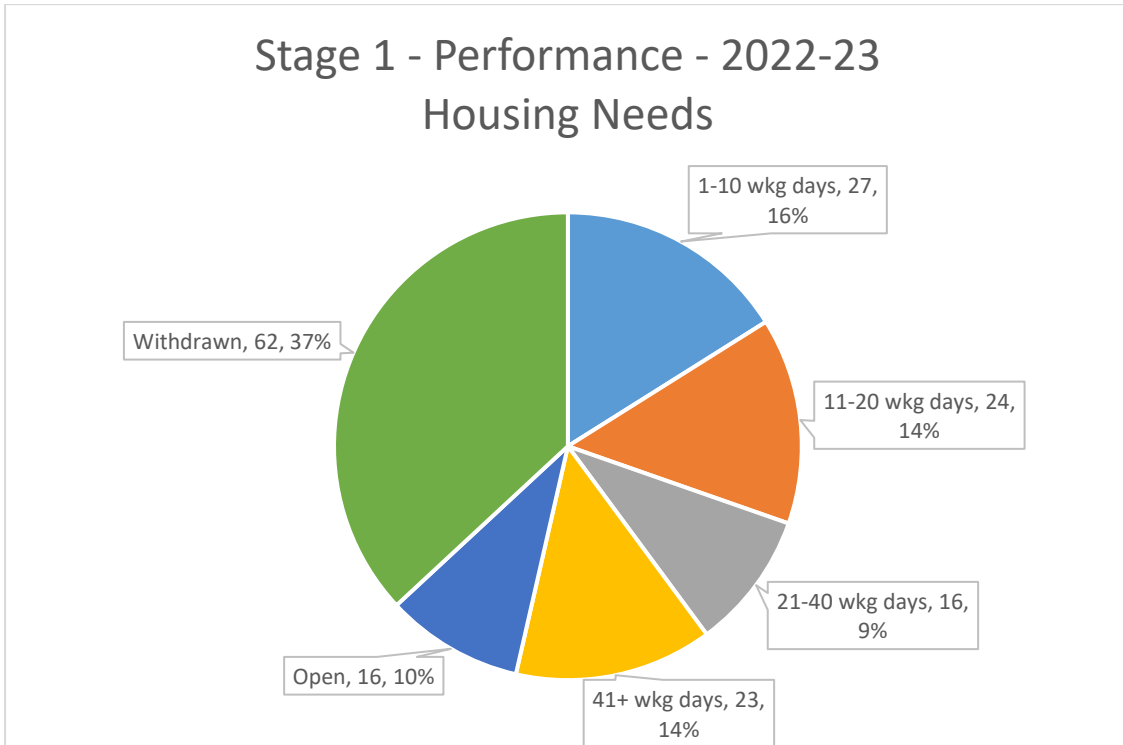


Housing Needs

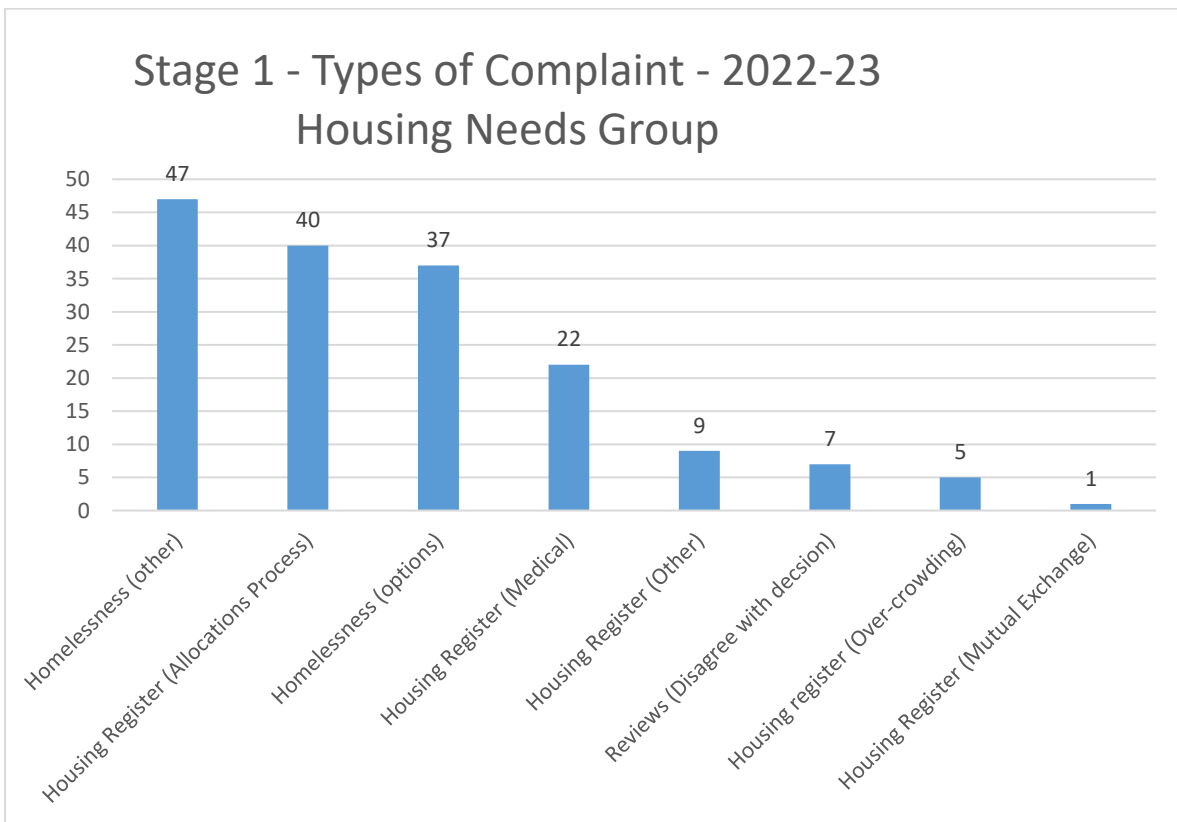
6.30 The large increase in complaints is likely to partly be due to the current housing crisis. The complaints are all related to allocations, the housing register and homelessness. There were spikes in August 2022, November 2022 and March 2023.



6.31 37% of the complaints were withdrawn. In this service this category has been used for those enquiries that are not formal complaints and have been dealt with informally as business as usual or via other housing allocations procedures.



6.32 Only 16% of the complaints were responded to within the required timescale compared to 39% in 2021/2022.



6.33 Reviewing complaints received across the service, we have identified the following areas and trends:

Temporary Accommodation

- 6.34 Complaints regarding location & type of accommodation, short placement and need to frequently move.

The Council has continued to see a rise in the demand for temporary accommodation - an increase by almost 60% in the last 3 years. As a result, the service has been reliant on commercial hotels across London when placing households facing homelessness.

We are actively growing the number of hotels which we work with, whilst securing agreements for longer term placement thus minimising the disruption caused by the need to frequently move.

- 6.35 The service is also developing several options to bolster the supply of self-contained temporary accommodation within and close to the borough. In 2023 we will deliver an increased supply of accommodation which will reduce the need for placements out of Camden/London and provide more stable tenure.

Housing Allocations and Lettings

- 6.36 Complaints regarding delays to housing assessment and lack of information.

The service has begun working with transformation and design colleagues with a view to improve the resident experience when undergoing the Council's housing allocation process. The first phase of work includes delivering changes to ensure clearer communication of key decisions to residents and access to better information about the process and housing options.

Experimental changes to process are now underway in 2023, the changes have been developed with feedback secured from service users.

The 2nd phase of the transformation programme will include a review of the housing policy, systems and IT platforms. The aim of this work is to simplify and speed up the process with use of smarter IT. This work will be designed and co-produced with residents. The delivery date is expected to be in the final quarter of 2024 and is expected to trigger significant changes to the allocations and lettings process, which will bring about wholesale improvements.

Housing Information

- 6.37 Complaints regarding lack of information or clarity of the process has featured within complaints regarding the service.

Whilst we undergo transformational changes to the process, we also actively updating our website content and written communications to bring about greater clarity and improved information for residents and service users. All housing services are in the process of undertaking a review of policies and procedures which will be shaped using feedback from complaints and Ombudsman cases.

Customer Services

6.38 The number of complaints has increased in all areas compared to last year.

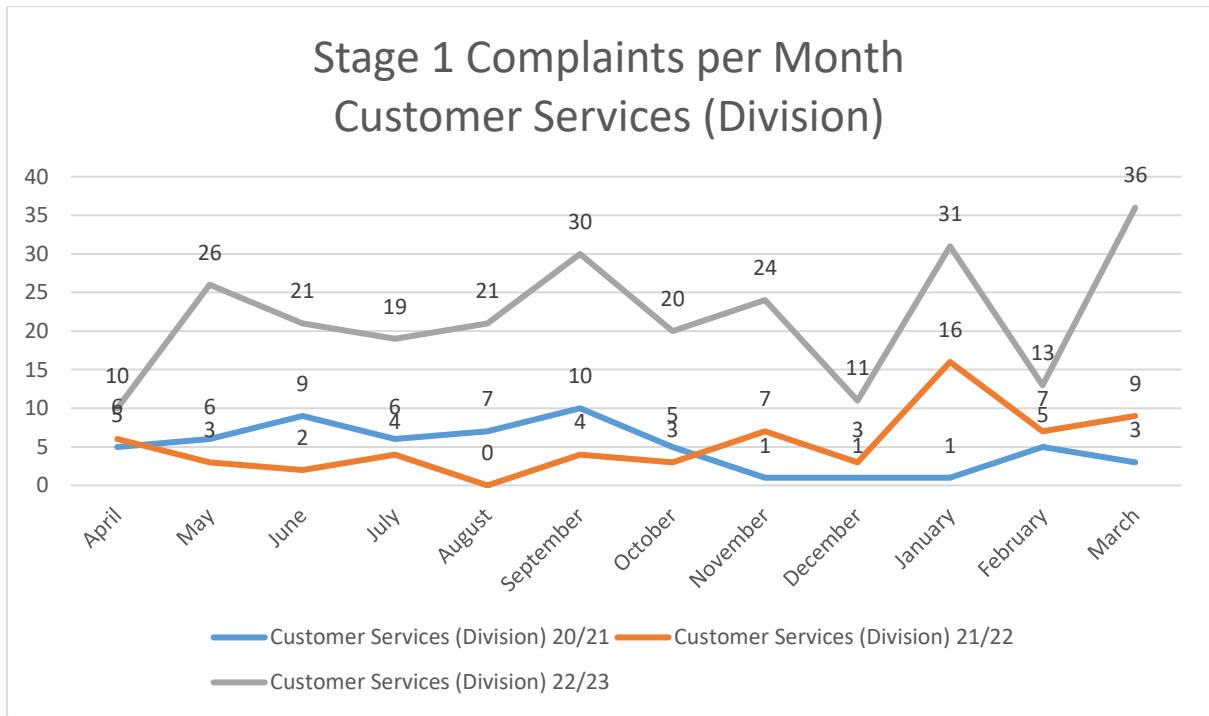
2021/2022	64
2022/2023	262

[2021/2022 figures in brackets]

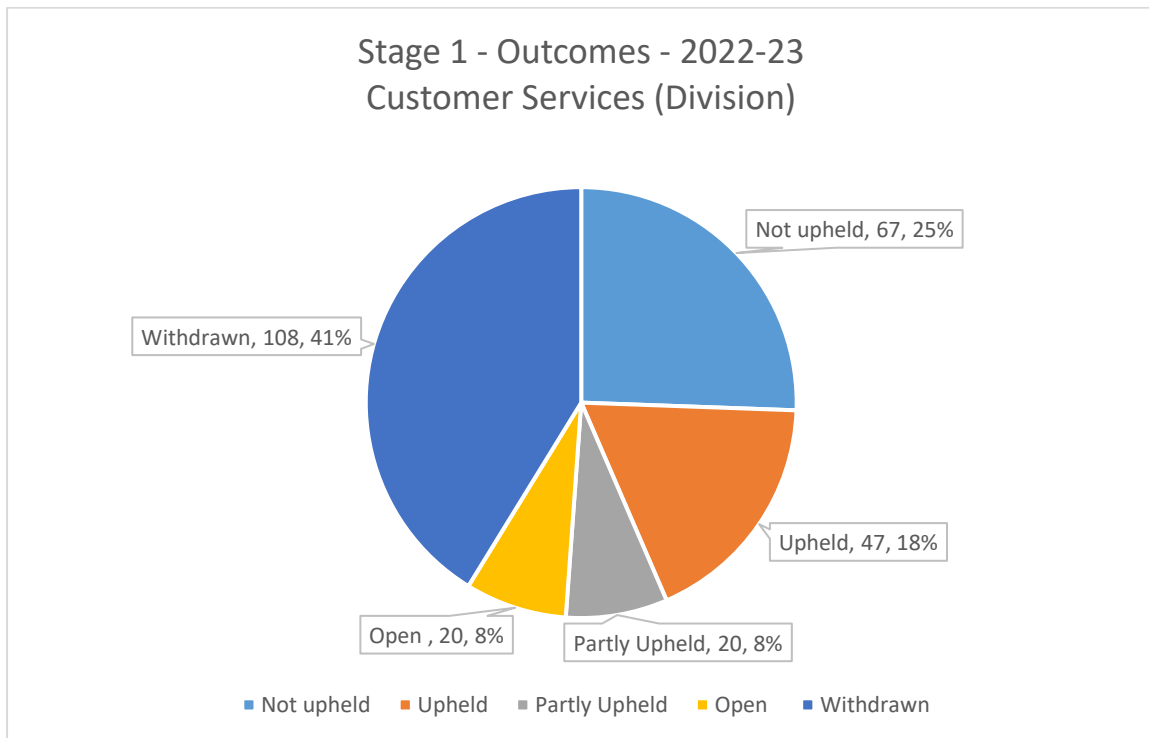
Service Area	Number of complaints	percentage upheld	percentage within 10 w/days	percentage within 20 w/days	Average w/days
Benefits	14 (7)	14% (14%)	29% (57%)	29% (57%)	17 (8.5)
Council Tax & Business Rates	55 (16)	55% (25%)	71% (44%)	75% (88%)	10 (13)
Customer & Registration/Contact Camden	43 (11)	12% (18%)	14% (36%)	19% (55%)	50 (7)
Parking Operations	150 (30)	7% (17%)	36% (63%)	44% (93%)	11 (12)

6.39 The distribution of complaints across service areas has changed from last year. Council Tax and Business Rates saw an increase and Contact Camden a decrease as when analysed the complaints logged to Council Tax and Business Rates in fact related to Contact Camden who handle Council Tax and Business Rates calls and correspondence.

6.40 Parking Operations saw an increase and when analysed it was noted that over half (80) complaints were withdrawn. A complaint is withdrawn when it is not considered to be a formal complaint and so is dealt with as Business As Usual (BAU) or as a service request.
A high number of these in Parking Operations were disputes over Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) which are handled through a statutory process and not the complaints process. They were therefore withdrawn from the formal complaints process.

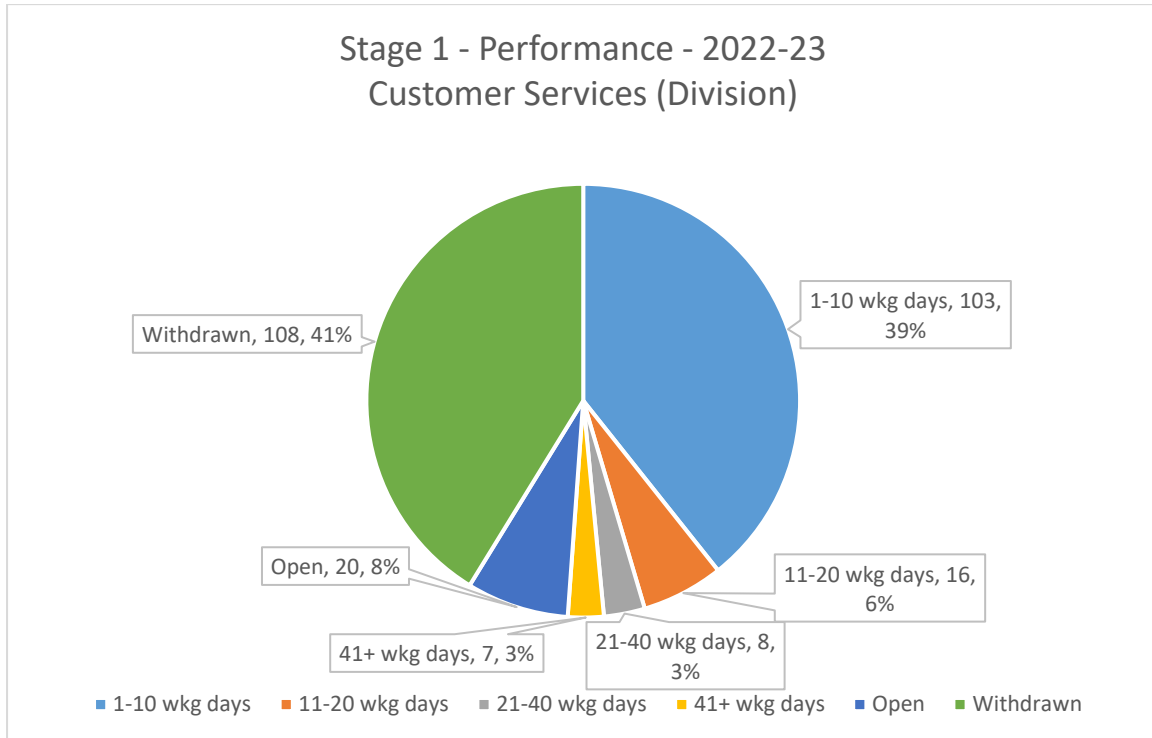


6.41 There were spikes in May 2022, September 2022, January 2023 and March 2023.



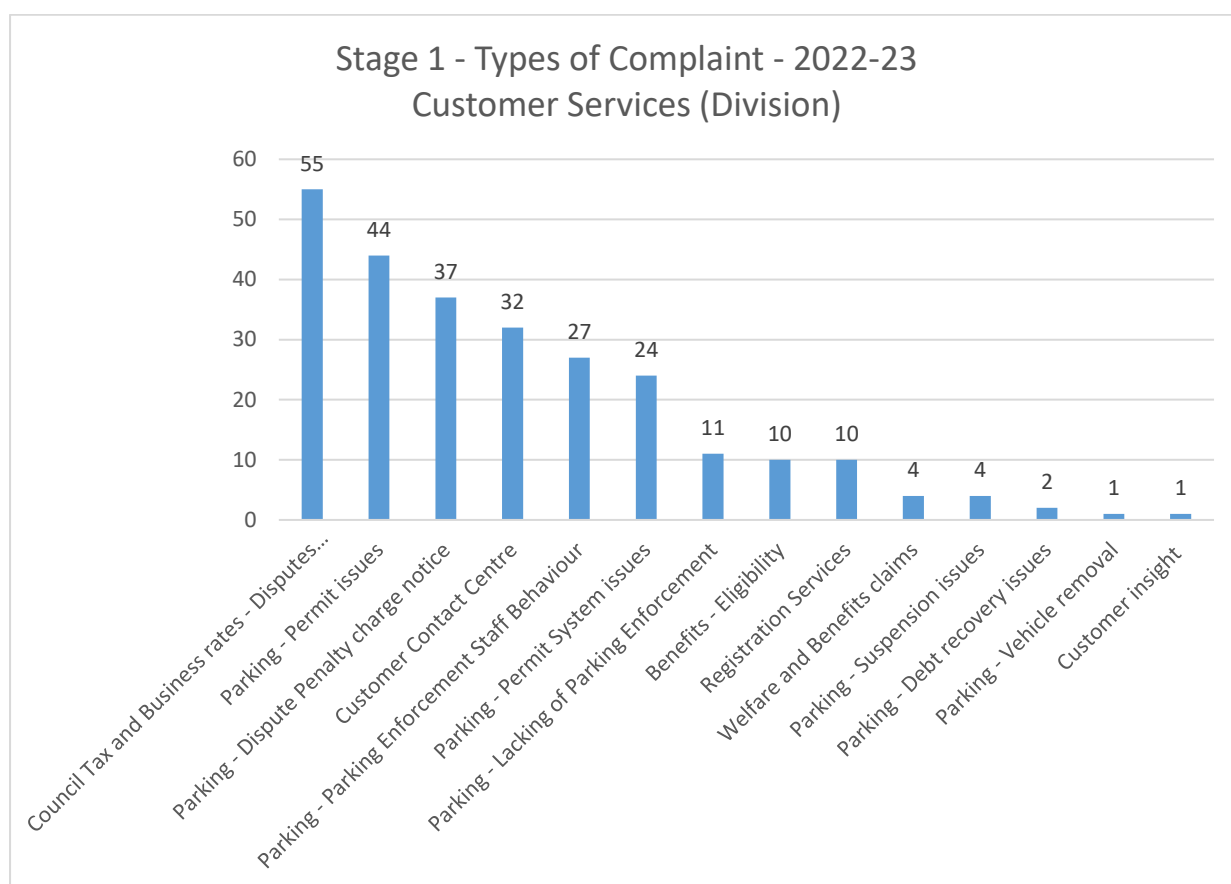
6.42 The proportion of complaints which were upheld was similar to last year at 18% though Council Tax and Benefits had an unusually high uphold rate at 55% which is likely to be the acknowledgement of service failures in the delays and difficulties with contacting the service in Contact Camden.

Stage 1 - Performance - 2022-23
Customer Services (Division)



- 6.43 The average time to respond to a complaint is 22 working days compared to 11 days last year
- 6.44 In Council Tax and Business Rates, performance on responding within 10 working days has significantly improved from 44% last year to 71% this year despite the increase in the number of complaints. Performance in the same service has dropped slightly within 20 working days from 88% last year to 75% this year.
- 6.45 In Parking Operations, performance on responding within 10 working days has dropped from 63% last year to 36% this year. Performance has also dropped for responding within 20 working days from 93% last year to 40% this year.
- 6.46 In Customer Services & Registration, performance on responding within 10 working days has dropped from 36% last year to 14% this year. Performance has also dropped for responding within 20 working days has dropped slightly from 55% last year to 19% this year. Customer services has seen a notable change in demand profile which has increased waiting times in some areas, leading to a slight increase in complaints volume. Overall, our customer satisfaction rates remain stable. Often complaints relating to customer service are multifaceted and require joint responses with back-office services which can make it challenging to complete them within the timescales set.

Type of Complaint



6.47 In all customer service areas the majority of complaints relate to poor communication or lack of communication which includes not being able to contact the service and not following up on issues.

6.48 Customer Services (Contact Camden) - Compliments

Never met someone so professional, eager to assist and helpful, and helped me to resolve an issue that multiple other parties hadn't been able to - within 20 minutes! I only thought it right that someone should be aware of the fantastic job she is doing and hope she will be commended for it.

The officer I spoke to, was polite, efficient, and rather than keep me waiting on the line promised to look into my issue and call me back in 15 minutes

The lady who answered my call was so helpful, polite and efficient, she soon had my problem solved and I appreciate the way I was attended to

Just wanted to say thank you for your help and being so nice - so refreshing!

Thank you for helping me with my paperwork, it really meant a lot. I wish you the warmest of best wishes

He was absolutely wonderful, really patient and helpful, he is your number one officer in my view, he is absolutely a treasure for you and I wanted to thank him and the department

thank you so much for your helpful proactive approach and your wonderful customer service skills.

You and your colleagues have been unfailingly patient, polite and helpful

So helpful and polite and patient, and it was so refreshing, he took my stress away immediately

Customer Services comments

Parking Operations

- 6.49 As a service, we will continue to use customer complaints as a tool to help us improve performance across our teams and to give us an insight into areas where we could improve.

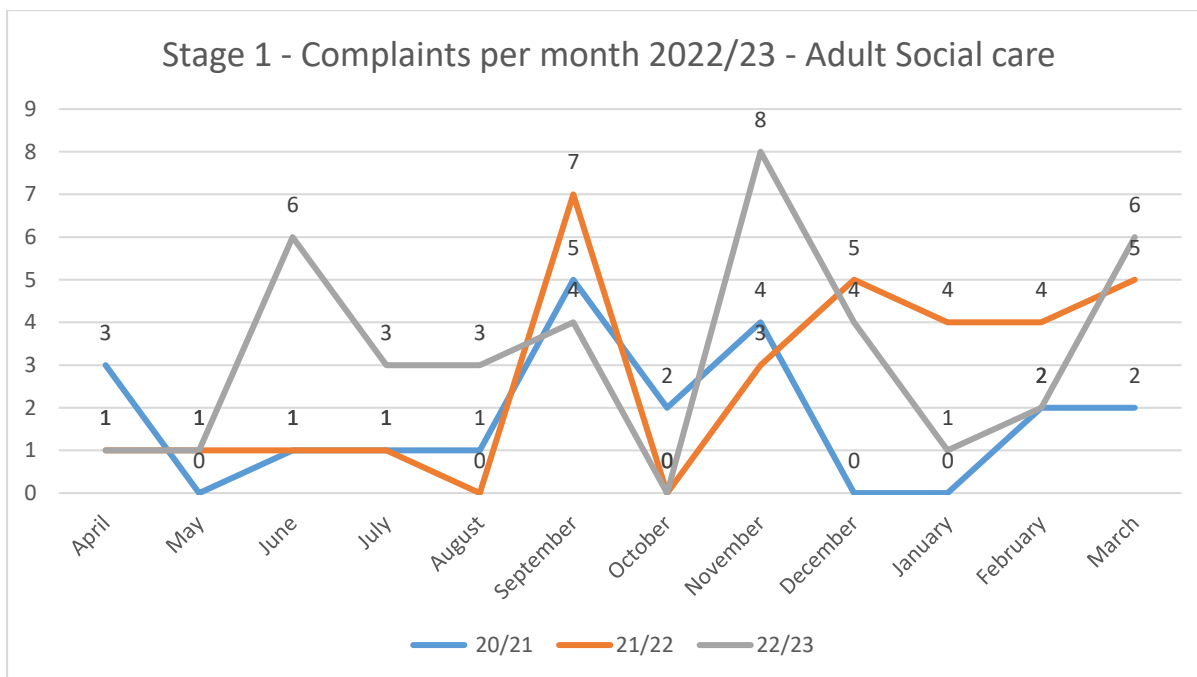
Council Tax and Business Rates

- 6.50 The current cost of living crisis continues to cause significant increased demand on telephone and written correspondence demand. The Council is looking to address these issues to continue to support our residents. We also offer a number of online self-service forms to try enable resident so self-serve to bypass the telephone and correspondence process where possible so that the finite resources available can be used for those that require greater assistance such as our most vulnerable residents.

Adult Social Care Services (ASC)

2021/2022 figures in brackets

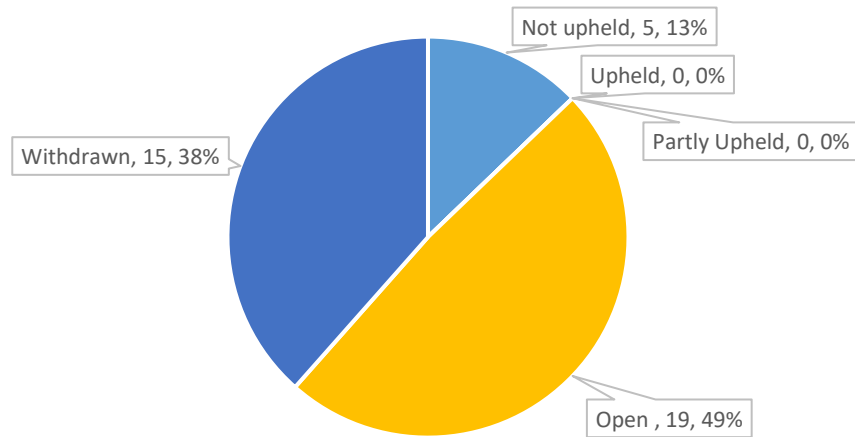
Service Area	Number of complaints	percentage upheld	percentage within 10 w/days	percentage within 20 w/days	Average w/days
Support & Safeguarding Adults	30 (18)	0% (6%)	7% (6%)	10% (17%)	27 (22)
Integrated Learning Disabilities	1 (3)	0% (0%)	0% (67%)	0% (67%)	N/A (9)
Mental Health Social Work	1 (0)	0% (0%)	0% (0%)	0% (0%)	N/A (N/A)
Provider Services	7 (2)	0% (0%)	0% (100%)	0% (100%)	N/A (8)



6.51 Adult Social Care (ASC) received 39 complaints during 2022/23. This is a 56% increase (14 complaints) compared to 2021/22. This may be partly attributable to a more accessible system for making a complaint. It is notable that 38% (15 complaints) received were subsequently withdrawn during the complaint handling process. 'Withdrawn' is a new category introduced when the new case management system was implemented. A complaint can be withdrawn for a number of reasons but the main one is that the enquiry received via the complaints portal may be a service request rather than a complaint and can be better resolved outside of the formal complaint handling process. The highest number of complaints were received in September and November and this looks like an annual pattern. It is hard to know why this is, but it could possibly be connected to the start of winter pressures. Whilst the complaint volume has increased, it remains comparatively low and it should be noted that many more issues continue to be dealt with before reaching the formal complaint stage.

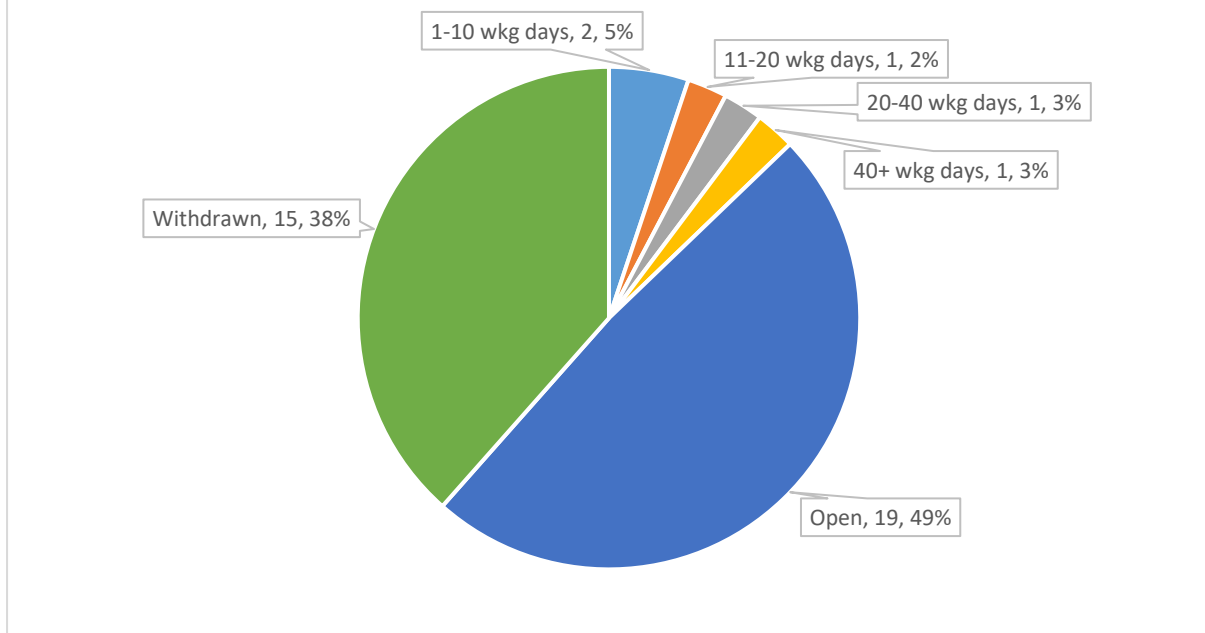
6.52 Support and Safeguarding received the largest number of complaints (30). The service is by far the largest in ASC, and many of these complaints contain multiple elements including those of other services such as financial assessments and direct payments. The Support and Safeguarding service are currently experiencing extreme service pressures and, in some situations, people have had to wait longer to access support, which is likely to be a factor in the increase in complaints. The Support & Safeguarding service is in the process of a service review and complaints raised are being considered in the learning and redesign process.

Stage 1 - Outcomes 2022-23 Adult Social Care



- 6.53 In 2022/23 no complaints were upheld or partly upheld compared to 2 upheld or partly upheld last year. ASC are reviewing all recent complaints to ensure that they have been responded to appropriately. Complaints provide us with rich insight into the quality of our services and the interactions that we have with residents; we are committed to learning from them.
- 6.54 Adult Social Care has established a 'Complaints and Compliments Working Group' this year to ensure that we learn from this rich source of feedback and to improve the timeliness and quality of our responses. The group operates under the governance of the ASC Quality Assurance Board. We review complaints which have closed, and which remain open to ensure we capture the process from end to end, as well as quality checking complaints that have not been upheld.

Stage 1 - Performance - 2022-23 Adult Social Care



6.55 Only 5% of complaints were responded to within 10 working days which is lower than 2021/22 (20%). Statutory timescales state that Adult Social Care (ASC) complaints should be responded to within 20 working days. The service only responded to 8% within that timescale; this is a proportional decrease from 2021/22 (28%).

6.56 The average time to respond complaints is 27 working days longer than last year (14 days) but 49% of the complaints logged remain open with no response recorded so cannot be counted in the average response time data.

6.57 ASC accepts that the current times to respond are unacceptable, and we need to improve performance relating to complaint response timescales.

The Complaints and Compliments working group will take a systemic approach to understanding and driving improvement with response times and taking learning into our Quality Action Plan. This group will also take a 'live' role in tracking complaints as they come in and ensuring they are responded to in a timely way.

6.58 Type of complaint

Service/Type	Quality of Service	Poor communication/ Lack of communication	Disagree with decision/ action	Lack of information/ advice/ access to service	Delay in providing a service	Lack of customer care/ Staff behaviour	Total
ASC	12	10	6	2	7	2	39

6.59 When considering the complaints by type, the majority relate to either the quality of service, or delays / issues with information and communication. This is likely to have been exacerbated by the current service pressures. The complaints and compliments working group will analyse these complaints to ensure themes are identified and addressed.

6.60 Local Government Ombudsman
10 ASC complaints were escalated to the ombudsman in 2022/23. 5 of the 10 complaints related to assessment and planning, 1 safeguarding, 1 transport, 1 residential care, and 2 for other reasons.

The Ombudsman issued the following outcomes.

- 3 were closed after an initial check
- 2 were closed after an initial enquiry
- 1 was not upheld after a detailed investigation
- 3 are pending a decision
- 0 were upheld

6.61 Adult Social Care – Compliments from service users

<i>The occupational therapist was wonderful and spurred me to recover by being so encouraging.</i>
<i>I think it is nothing short of a miracle the work that M has put in place with shared lives to get P a workable solution to suit her various needs for the future.</i>
<i>The hoist and the bed have made a big difference in how we look after our mum. And I've felt that a heavy weight has been lifted, it's made me more mindful about my own health.</i>
<i>My parents wanted me to say the way you've positioned the bath chair. They are both so happy about it and said to tell you that they can't thank you enough. The same from me too. Thank you.</i>
<i>I would like to commend your OT for her brilliant work with my mother. Following the repair of her broken hip and return home she arranged for my mother to have a recliner chair which has made her life so much better she has had a bad back from before she broke her hip and is no longer suffering from pain now, she has the chair. She has also arranged for other equipment and is very efficient and helpful. I thank her and Camden Social Care.</i>
<i>Thank you very much for all the work you have done dealing with a complex situation regarding my Mother's care and her home. Thank you for your compassion, empathy and patience. Although a very stressful time, you've been excellent to communicate with.</i>
<i>It was really good to have somebody who cared, listened and acted whenever something was required. She would also follow things up. She acted professionally throughout. But what is more important she understood the pressure we were under with a mother who was towards end of her life. She helped and managed to reduce the burden that we were naturally under.</i>
<i>[You are] the first practitioner who has really involved [us] in any meetings about P and feel you have valued our opinions, which has made our experience of ASC much better.</i>

6.62 Development Management – Complaint Type (General)

Service/Type	Poor communication/ Lack of communication	Quality of Service	Disagree with decision/ action	Lack of information/ advice/ access to service	Delay in providing a service	Lack of customer care/ Staff behaviour	Total
Development Management	26	4	18	1	14	0	63
TOTAL							63

6.63 Development Management – Complaint Type (service specific)

Complaint Type (Specific to Dev Mgt)	Number
Delay in Processing Application	26
Building Enforcement	17
Disagree with a planning decision	11
Land Charge Search (No response)	3
Request for Information	3
Trees (Private Land)	3
TOTAL	63

Development Management Service Comments

6.64 The development management service has been dealing with a backlog of planning applications this year and that has resulted in more complaints from people about delays and seeking updates on progress of applications. Often these complaints are sent direct to officers and also via the formal complaint route, in many instances the matter has already been dealt with by a phone call or email before the complaint has been logged, but it has then not been properly closed down by officers. It is clear that officers would benefit from additional training on using the system to ensure that performance in terms of responding to complaints is accurately reflected in the stats.

6.65 Complaints handling by contracted services

Environment Services - Rubbish and recycling contract.

6.66 Complaints to Veolia about recycling or rubbish collections or street cleansing services can be made via Camden's website, by email, the Love Clean Streets app, social media or telephone to the Veolia Customer Service Centre. Complaints are logged onto Veolia's ECHO data management system and acknowledged within two working days of being received and responded to within 20 days. All complaints and outcomes are kept on file for the duration of the contract. Veolia regularly monitor complaints to gain an understanding of the issues raised, services concerned, response times and to identify hot-spot complaint areas. This information is used to develop and deliver projects and campaigns to prevent future complaints and reduce avoidable contact.

Veolia also use case studies for lessons learnt examples that can be shared with staff for further improvements.

7. Stage 2 Complaints (review/investigation)

- 7.1 If a complainant is not satisfied with the response at the initial stage, they can escalate their complaint for consideration at a more specialist level which is independent from the service area that the complaint is about. There are different names for this stage under the different statutory frameworks, but this report describes them all as stage 2 for ease of comparison.
- 7.2 The Central Complaints team are responsible for carrying out the reviews and liaise with the relevant service area as required.
- 7.3 Statutory children's services stage 2 reviews are undertaken by an independent investigator and work to slightly different timescales.
- 7.4 Statutory adult social care services complaints do not have a stage 2 though the complaints team may re-look at a stage 1 if the complainant is dissatisfied. After that, the complainant can go to the LGSCO if they remain dissatisfied.

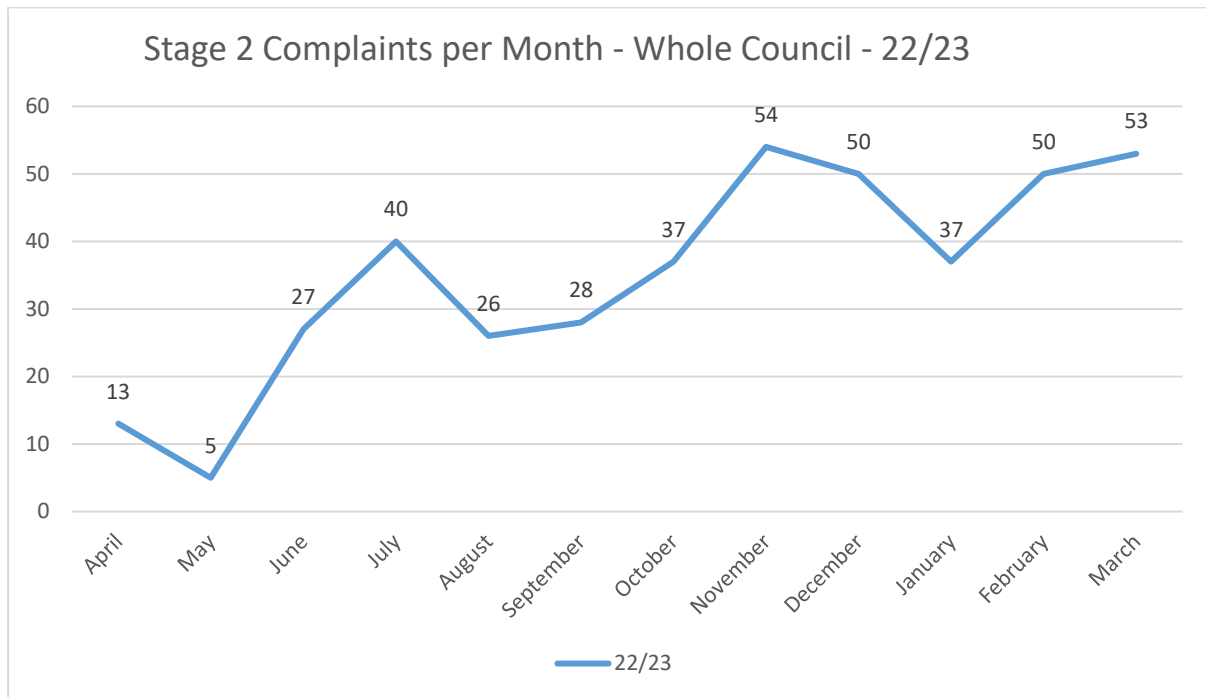
7.5 Stage 2 complaints recorded by directorate and division

[2021/2022 figures in brackets]

Service Area	Stage 2	Stage 2 Upheld
Corporate Services	28 (8)	0% (0%)
Law & Governance	0 (1)	0% (0%)
Customer Services	28 (7)	0% (0%)
Supporting Communities	383 (126)	22% (22%)
Property Management	223 (71)	32% (32%)
Housing Management	62 (28)	7% (7%)
Housing Support Services	54 (17)	18% (18%)
Economy, Regeneration and Investment	16 (7)	0% (0%)
Community Services	16 (1)	0% (0%)
Environment and Sustainability	12 (0)	0% (0%)
Supporting People	9 (4)	0% (0%)
Children's Safeguarding & Social Work	8 (2)	0% (0%)
Adult Social Care	0 (1)	0% (0%)
Early Intervention & Prevention	1 (1)	0% (0%)
Total	420 (138)	20% (20%)

7.6 Stage 2 complaints received by month

7.7 For a breakdown by service by month please see Appendix 4



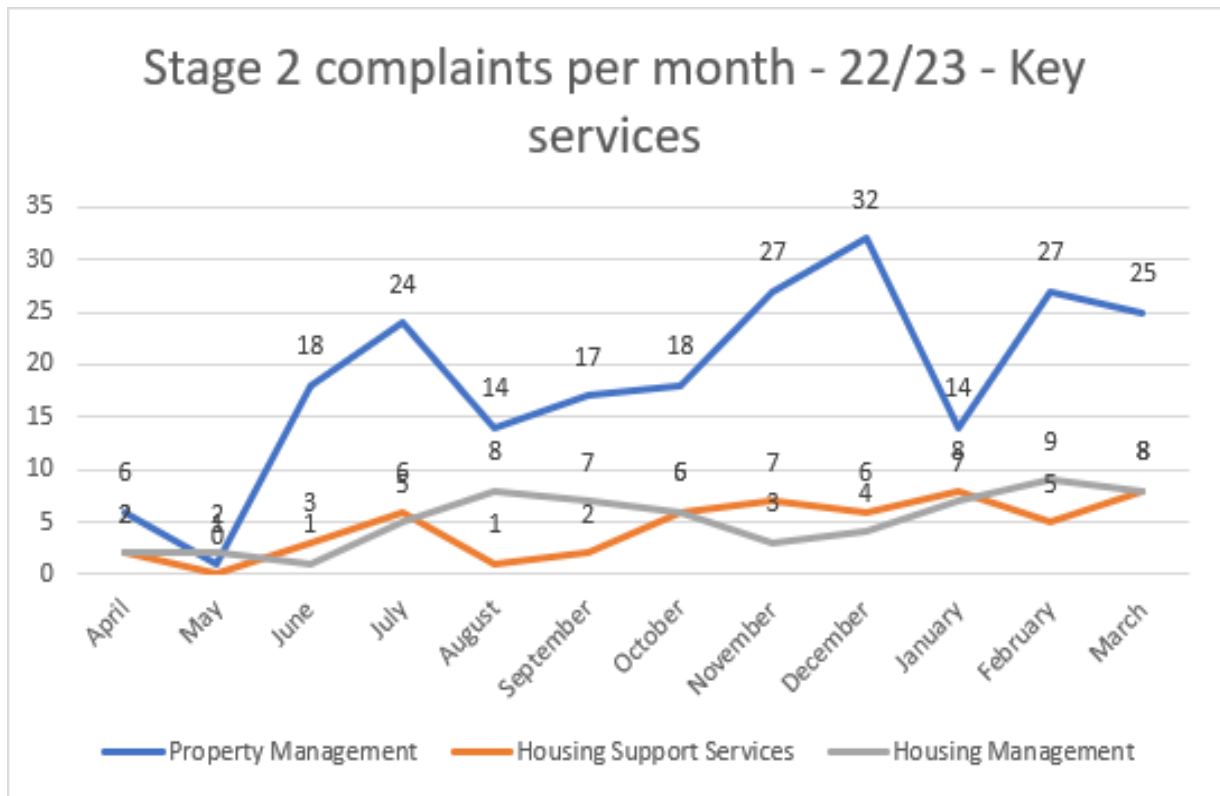
7.8 We had a total of **420** Stage 2 reviews of complaints which is a 200% increase to the previous year. This is twice the increase that we saw in Stage 1 complaints in year.

7.9 This increase is primarily in Property Management and Housing Support Services which saw a 210% increase and Housing Management a 110% increase.

7.10 This increase is attributed to the following:

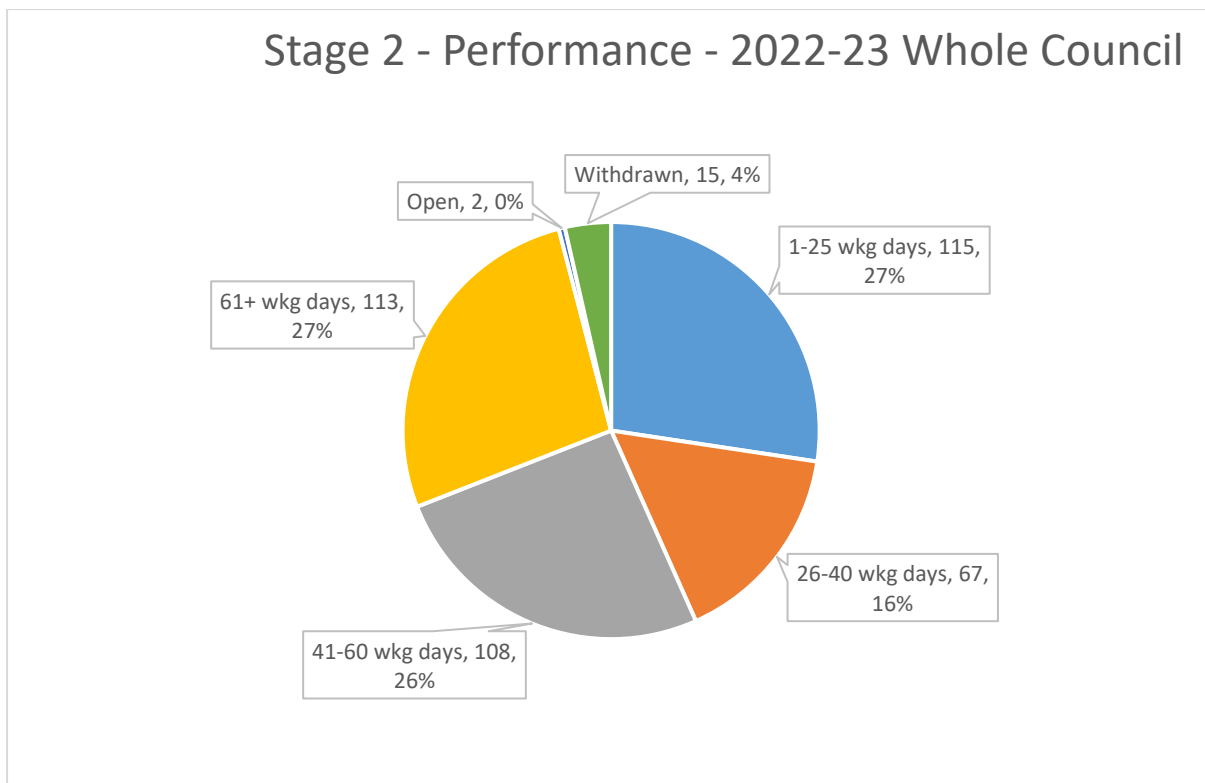
- Making it easier and more accessible for citizens to submit their Stage 2 via a form which goes straight into the case management system
- Increased profile of the Housing Ombudsman and Regulator Social Housing in the media increasing awareness of residents.
- Delays in responding to Stage 1 complaints resulting in requests for escalation to Stage 2 reviews.

7.11 Key Services – Stage 2 Reviews by month



7.12 Stage 2 Performance (meeting timescales)

7.13 For a breakdown of performance by service please see Appendix 5



7.14 The complaints policy effective in 2022/2023 states that stage 2 reviews aim to be responded to within 25 working days. [Note: from July 2023 the policy was updated and the timescale is now 20 working days to bring it in line with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code]. The Central Complaints team are responsible for carrying out the Stage 2 reviews to be independent from the services who dealt with the Stage 1 complaints. The Central Complaints team liaises with the relevant service area during the investigation as required.

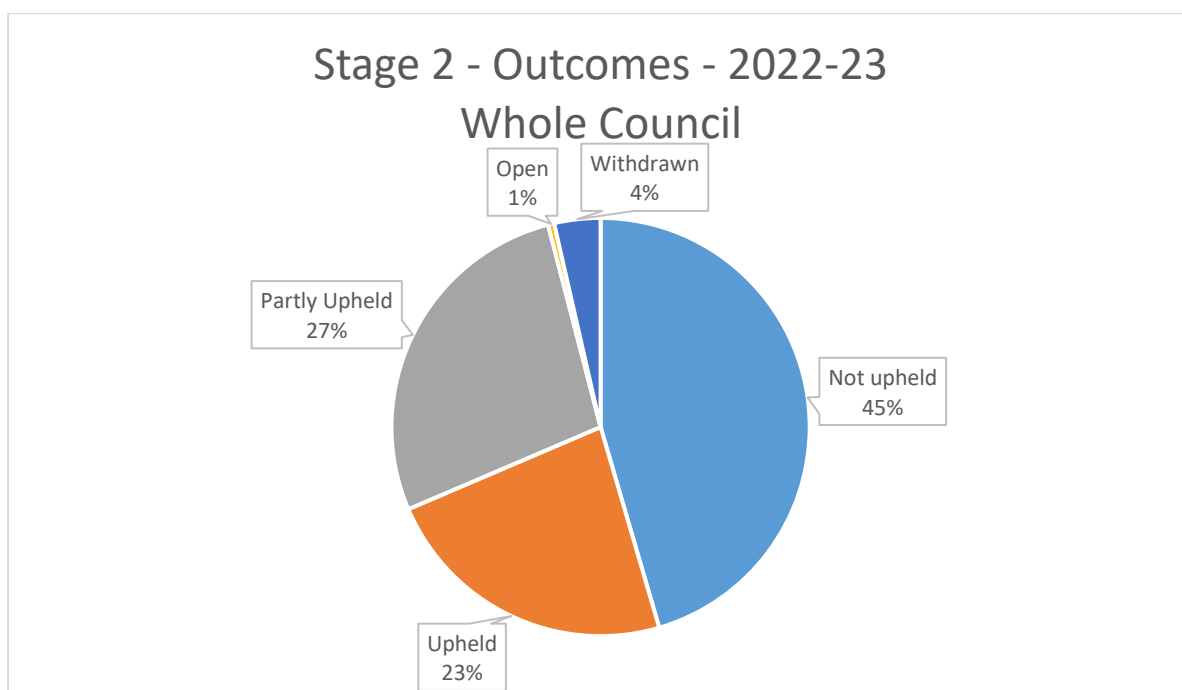
7.15 Stage 2 reviews of statutory children’s services are carried out by independent investigators.

7.16 27% of stage 2 reviews were responded to within the required timescales compared to 62% in the previous year. This drop in performance is likely to be a combination of:

- the significant increase in the number of Stage 2 reviews from June 2022 onwards
- insufficient resourcing to respond to the uplift in complaints (this has now been resolved and resourcing increased).
- the time taken to recruit additional staff.
- There was a high demand across the sector for suitably qualified staff as all councils were experiencing the same increase in complaints.
- Services were not able to provide information in a timely way to complaints officers due to workloads and managing the increase in Stage 1 complaints.

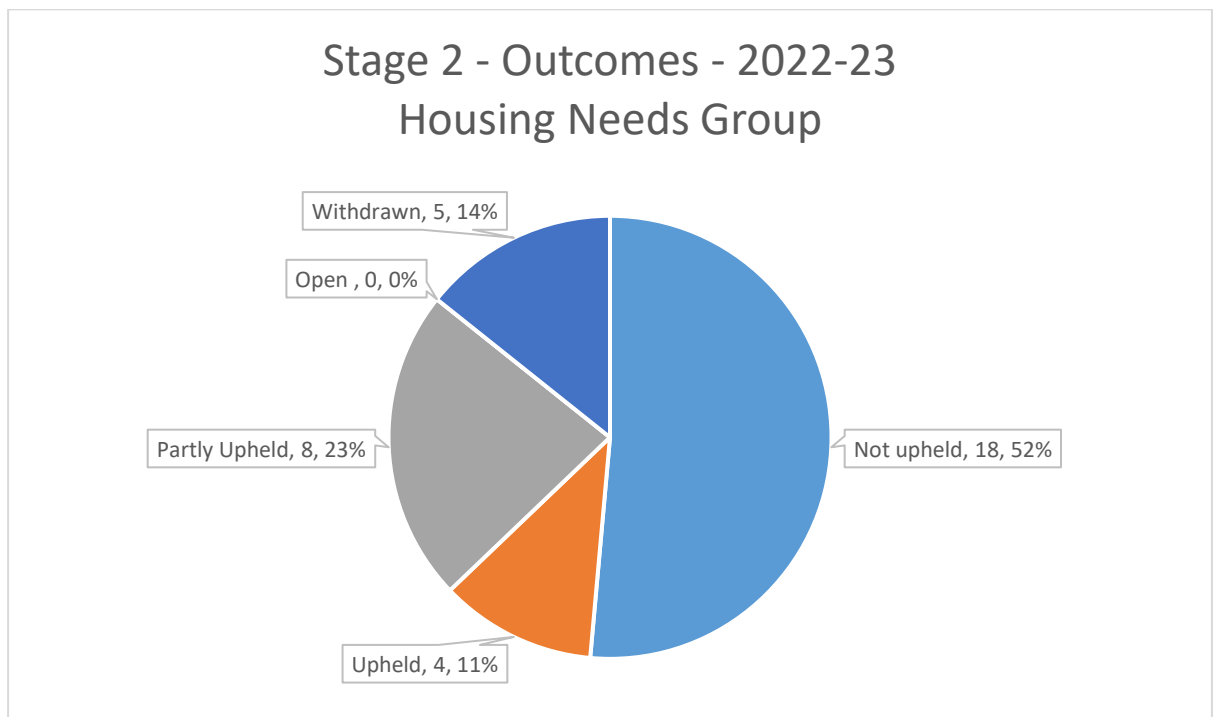
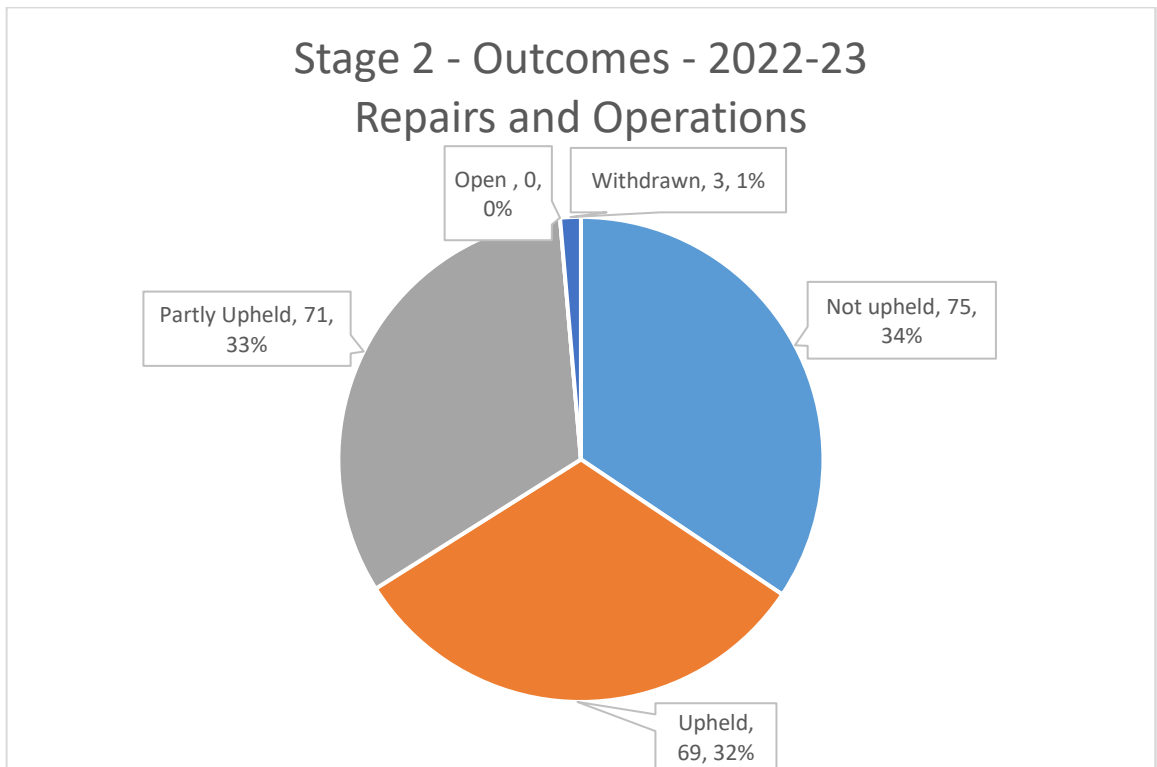
7.17 Stage 2 Reviews – Outcomes (Upheld/Not Upheld)

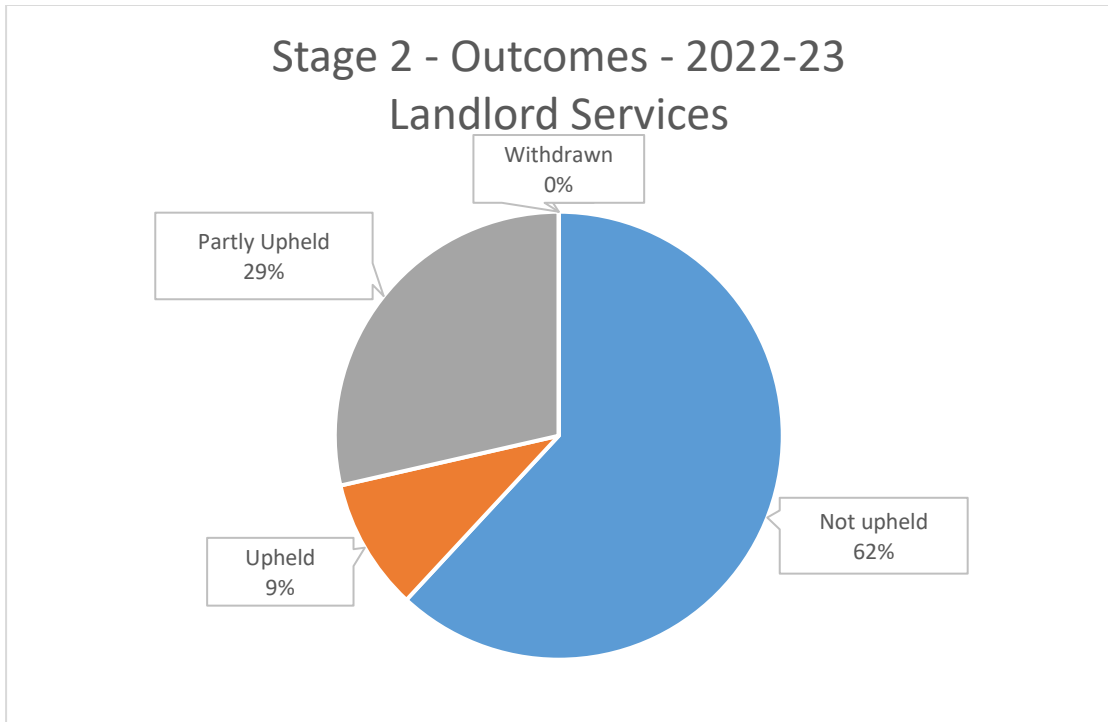
7.18 For a breakdown of outcomes by service see Appendix 6



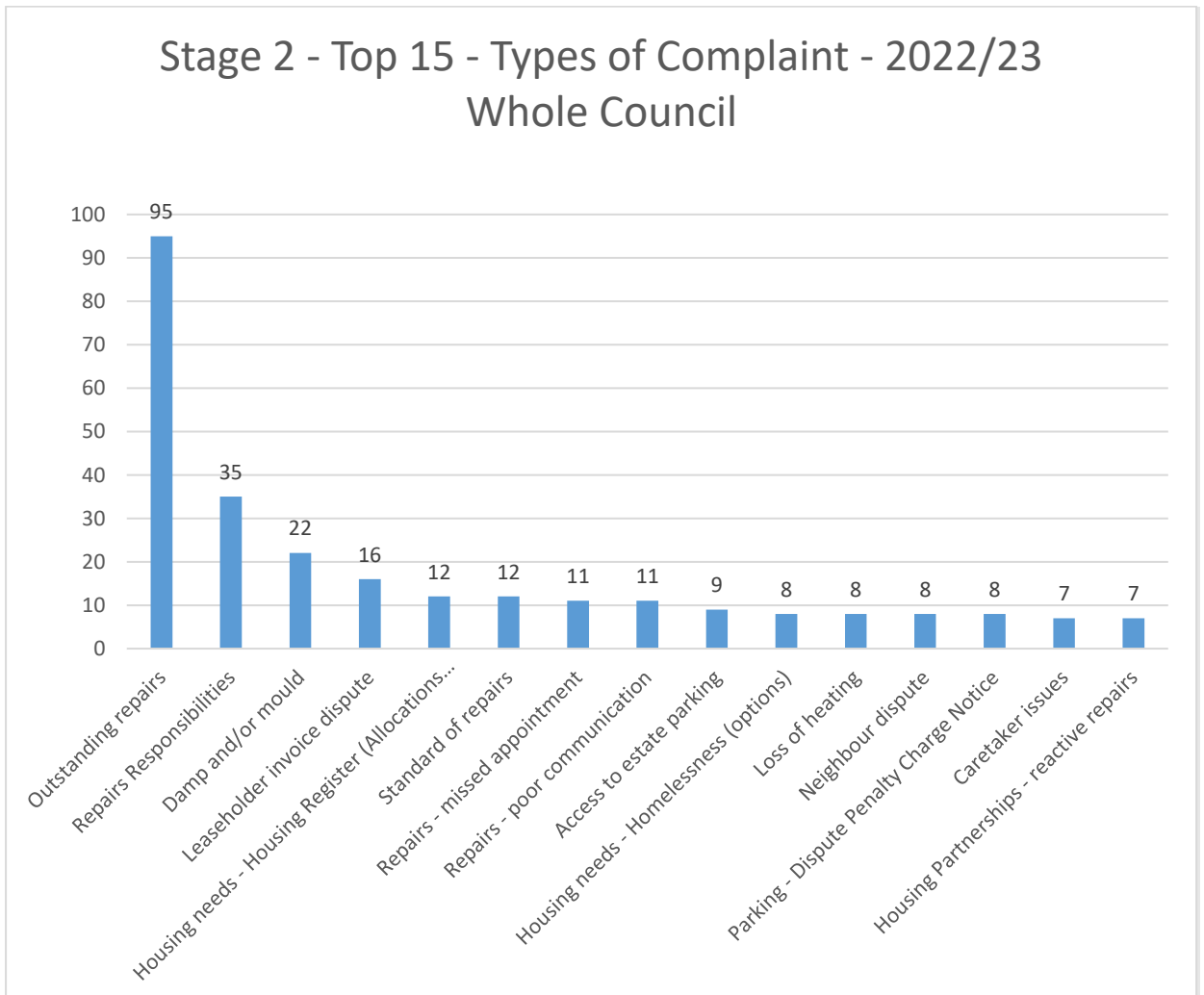
7.19 The proportion of stage 2 reviews that were upheld has increased to 23% from 20% in 2021/2022 and 12% in 2020/2021. This upward trend indicates that an increasingly higher proportion of responses at Stage 1 have been found to be unsatisfactory. The increase in Stage 1 complaints has impacted on the ability of services to provide a satisfactory response at Stage 1 within the required timescales so more are escalated and upheld at stage 2.

7.20 Key Services – Stage 2 Reviews Outcomes





7.21 Stage 2 Types of complaint



- 7.22 In Property services the main reason for a Stage 2 review is ongoing delays to outstanding repairs which were not resolved at Stage 1.
- 7.23 In Housing Needs the main reasons relate to ongoing delays and disputes on the allocation process and homelessness.
- 7.24 In Housing Management the main reasons are ongoing neighbour disputes, noise and caretaker issues.

8 External Bodies

- **Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)**
- **Housing Ombudsman (HO)**

Introduction

- 8.1 This section of the report provides information on cases that the Ombudsman has made decisions on in the period.
- 8.2 The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman deals with enquiries and complaints that are related to all council services. This includes non-landlord housing issues such as housing allocation, homelessness and temporary accommodation which is categorised in LGSCO reports as “Housing.”
- 8.3 The Housing Ombudsman deals with enquiries and complaints that are related to services provided by the council as a social landlord e.g., repairs to properties.
- 8.4 The LGSCO and HO produce annual performance reports and the data, feedback, recommendations, and remedies made in these are reviewed by the Central Complaints team who ensure the relevant service areas act on them in a timely manner.

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)

LGSCO – National Picture

- 8.5 The LGSCO publishes an annual review of Local Government Complaints. The 2022/2023 report highlights that the LGSCO work has returned to pre-pandemic volumes across the Country.
- 8.6 The highest proportion of fault in complaints are related to Education and Children’s Services, and they feature in more than half of the public interest reports. The themes of these reports are failure to properly provide for Special Educational Needs and Education, Health and Care plans.
- 8.7 The LGSCO issued overall 38 public interest reports about local authorities, the majority of which were about Education and Children’s Services and Adult Care Services.

8.8 LGSCO – Camden Local Picture

[Data from the LGSCO Annual Review Letter 2022/2023]

Description	2022/2023	2021/2022
Complaints Investigated	20	25
Complaints Upheld	70% (14)	68% (17)
Upheld - average similar orgs	77%	71%
Compliance with recommendations	100% (13 cases)	100% (15 cases)
Compliance – average similar orgs	99%	99%
Satisfactory remedy provided by authority	0% (0/14)	18% (3/17)
Satisfactory remedy – average similar orgs	15%	11%
Enquiries received	96	95
Decided	93	104
Compliance with remedies	13	15
Late completion of remedies	2	4
Public Reports	0	2

Complaints Upheld

8.9 The LGSCO has changed its process and is now more selective about the complaints it looks at in detail, prioritising where it is in the public interest to investigate and are less likely to carry out investigations on ‘borderline’ issues. It is therefore much more likely that those they do investigate, they will find fault. Average uphold rate for all investigations has increased this year therefore the LGSCO recommends we compare this statistic with that of similar organisations rather than previous years.

8.10 The LGSCO chose fewer of our cases to go to full investigation than the previous year which indicates that we had fewer cases that looked like there was fault during the application of the new selection criteria. Our proportion of complaints upheld is similar to last year and lower than the average which indicates that the LGSCO changes above have not significantly impacted on our uphold rate.

Compliance with recommendations

8.11 We continue to be fully compliant with LGSCO recommendations in all cases. Our compliance with remedies has improved since last year with just 2 cases where remedies were completed late compared to 4 cases in 2021/2022.

Satisfactory remedy provided by the authority

8.12 The LGSCO defines this measure as when “we found the organisation had provided a satisfactory remedy before the complaint reached the Ombudsman.” This will always be a relatively small proportion as cases that are escalated to the LGSCO are nearly always those where the complainant considers the

remedy offered at local stages to be unsatisfactory. The LGSCO's new process of only investigating cases likely to find fault means that this figure will be even lower as they will look at the organisation's remedies to decide whether to investigate or not.

Therefore, it is not surprising that we had 0% as this means the LGSCO had selected the 14 cases to be investigated having looked at the remedies offered and considered them unsatisfactory.

Decided

- 8.13 The number of complaints to the LGSCO remained consistent and there was a 10% drop in the number of cases that the LGSCO made a decision on. The type of decision is also consistent to the previous year

Decision	2022/2023	2021/2021
Not investigated		
Advice given	16	17
Closed after initial enquiries	26	31
Incomplete/Invalid	3	4
Referred back for local resolution	28	27
Investigated		
Not Upheld	6	8
Upheld	14	17
TOTAL	93	104

- 8.14 There were **14** cases upheld and **12** of these had an outcome decision of either maladministration with injustice or maladministration without injustice.

Service area	Maladministration with Injustice	Maladministration without injustice	Injustice remedied during LGO consideration
Benefits & Council Tax		1	
Corporate & other services	1		
Education & Children's services	4		
Environment, Public Protection & Regulation	1		1
Highways & Transport			1
Housing	5		
TOTAL	11	1	2

- 8.15 The number of cases related to Education & Children's services in Camden is lower than the National figures. Over half of Camden cases where there was fault, are Housing-related.

Public Reports

8.16 There were no public reports issued to us in 2022/23.

Areas for improvement

8.17 The LGSCO has highlighted the timeliness of responding to LGSCO requests for information as an area for improvement. This remains an area where we can be better and an email has been sent to all relevant heads of service and managers reminding them of the importance of responding to requests in a timely way from LGSCO and the Housing Ombudsman. Further communications to relevant staff will be sent on the need to prioritise Ombudsman cases and reviewing processes to make them as effective as possible.

8.18 Case details are available in Appendix 7

8.19 LGSCO Annual Review Letter and Performance available here: [London Borough of Camden - Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman](#)

Housing Ombudsman

Housing Ombudsman's role and powers

8.20 The Ombudsman's role has been expanded under the new Social Housing Regulation Act (SHRA), with new expectations to issue guidance and measure landlords against it, alongside powers to order landlords to review their policies and practices.

8.21 The SHRA sets out an expanded role for the Housing Ombudsman, widening its powers and encouraging further action from the Ombudsman in the following areas.

- It encourages the Ombudsman and the Regulator of Social Housing RSH to take steps as they see fit to work together to carry out their respective functions. While a memorandum of understanding between the two bodies is already in place, an updated version is expected to be published in advance of the introduction of a new proactive regulatory system in April 2024.
- The Act expands the Ombudsman's power to issue guidance which it is able to measure landlords against, including a code of practice for procedures relevant to complaints handling. This Complaints Handling Code which was introduced in 2020 will become statutory in 2024, with landlords expected to comply with the provisions of the Code. The Ombudsman will be assessing this as part of its mandated duty to monitor.
- It gives new powers to order landlords to review their policies and practices where they are continuously leading to complaints arising against the landlord.

8.22 Key areas in the Code

- Universal definition of a complaint
- Providing easy access to the complaints procedure and ensuring residents are aware of it, including their right to access the Housing Ombudsman Service
- The structure of the complaint procedure - only two stages necessary and clear timeframes set out for responses
- Ensuring fairness in complaint handling with a resident-focused process
- Taking action to put things right and appropriate remedies
- Creating a positive complaint handling culture through continuous learning and improvement
- Demonstrating learning in annual reports
- Annual self-assessment against the Code.

8.23 The HO's Complaint Handling Code and the Council's self-assessment for 2022/2023 can be found at: [Complaints - Camden Council](#)

8.24 Where a landlord does not comply with the Code, the Ombudsman may issue a Complaint Handling Failure Order (CHFO)

Complaint Handling Failure Orders

8.25 Complaint Handling Failure Orders (CHFOs) may be issued in relation to failings in an individual case where the Ombudsman has taken reasonable steps to seek engagement from a landlord, but the resident remains unable to progress a complaint. They may also be issued where there is evidence of a systemic issue within a landlord's complaint handling. CHFOs are published and shared with the Regulator of Social Housing. The order types are:

- Type 1: Issued due to the landlord's unreasonable delays in accepting or progressing a complaint through its process.
- Type 2: Issued due to unreasonable delays in providing information requested by the Ombudsman.
- Type 3: Issued where a landlord fails to comply with its membership obligations.

Camden's Complaint Handling Failure Orders

8.26 In 2022/2023 Camden has improved its compliance to the Code and was issued with 1 CHFO compared to 3 in 2021/2022.

8.27 The CHFO was for 'unreasonable delays in providing the Ombudsman information'. (Type 1). The case related to various repairs issues. The CHFO was issued as 12 weeks after the initial request was sent, the Council had not sent the information requested by the Ombudsman. The Order required the Council to provide the requested information within two weeks from the date of the order which was subsequently complied with.

8.28 *[Note: the Housing Ombudsman Annual Report states that Camden was issued with two CHFOs in 2022/2023. However, one of these was subsequently withdrawn but this was done too late to amend the performance report].*

8.29 CHFOs - Comparison with other boroughs:

Council	Nos of CHFOs in 2022/2023
Camden	1
Islington	1
Haringey	6
Lambeth	5
Southwark	4
Hackney	0

8.30 Section 49 Investigation

8.31 On 2nd of November 2023, the Housing Ombudsman formally wrote to the Council to advise that they had taken the decision to commence an investigation under paragraph 49 of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme into the landlord's handling of leaks, damp and mould, complaints and repairs. They are undertaking a number of these investigations including Hackney Council and Hyde Group Housing Association. The Ombudsman expressed concern that the council maladministration rate for 2023-2024 currently stands at just under 75%, and they had issued 10 severe maladministration findings on cases from 2021/2022. The maladministration rate for complaints handling and leaks, damp, and mould is currently above 80%, and they had upheld all findings for general repairs.

8.32 Following a further meeting with the Housing Ombudsman on the 6th of December 2023, they have advised that they will commence their investigation from January 2024 onwards, and this is expected to take approximately six months to complete, with the report being published in the Autumn 2024. Officers welcome the opportunity to work with the Ombudsman at this crucial time, as we establish higher standards across our services

8.33 In order to ensure the Housing Ombudsman visit is supported throughout, the Head of Property Customer Services will lead this project, supported by colleagues in corporate complaints and others in the Housing Innovation and Improvement team.

8.34 An all member briefing will be arranged in the New Year.

8.35 Local Data

8.36 In 2022/2023 we received 106 enquiries from the Housing Ombudsman

Division	Service	Nos of enquiries
Housing Management	Estate Management	2
	Leaseholder Services	3
	Landlord Services	16
	TOTAL HM	21
Property Management	Repairs & Operations	85
	TOTAL PM	85

Enquiry Type	Housing Mgt	Property Mgt
Awaiting decision/next steps	6	29
Premature (complaint has not gone through local procedures. Usually comes with request to go through local procedures – Stage 1, Stage 2)	8	26
Information Request (to decide whether to proceed to investigation)	3	22
Decision - Maladministration	1	3
Decision – Service Failure	1	2
Outside Jurisdiction	1	1
No Maladministration	1	0
Case closed after initial investigation	0	1
Resolved satisfactorily	0	1
TOTAL	21	85

8.37 Housing Ombudsman Performance Data 2022/2023.

The performance review data can be found here:

[Landlord-Report-Camden- Council.pdf \(housing-ombudsman.org.uk\)](#)

8.38 Decisions

8.39 The Housing Ombudsman made a decision on **19** cases. This is not the number of cases they received in 22/23 but the number they made a decision on in year. Some will have been received in 2021/22 (or earlier) and taken time to investigate.

8.40 Across those 19 cases, HOS made **33** findings as below:

Finding	Number	Percentage
Severe Maladministration	0	0%
Maladministration	6	18%
Service Failure	13	39%
No Maladministration	8	24%
Redress	2	6%
Mediation	0	0%
Outside Jurisdiction	4	12%
Withdrawn	0	0%
TOTAL	33	100%

Service	Housing Management	Property Management	Complaint Handling
Severe Maladministration	0	0	0
Maladministration	1	3	2
Service Failure	3	3	7
No Maladministration	5	2	1
Outside jurisdiction	3	1	0
Redress	0	2	0
TOTAL	12	11	10

8.41 11 findings were related to Repairs and Operations:

- 3 general repair issues
- 4 damp or leaks
- 1 district heating networks
- 1 heating and hot water issues
- 2 staff behaviour.

8.42 12 findings were related to Housing Management:

- 5 Anti-social Behaviour and Neighbour disputes,
- 2 Noise nuisance,
- 2 Leaseholder service charges
- 2 Moving into a property
- 1 Estate Management.

Findings against cases

8.43 Of 13 decisions published on HOS website:

- 6 had 1 finding each
- 4 had 2 findings each
- 2 had 3 findings each
- 1 had 4 finding

Maladministration Rate

8.44 The maladministration rate is the number of findings of severe maladministration, maladministration and service failure, expressed as a percentage of the total number of findings (excluding findings of Outside Jurisdiction and Withdrawn).

Camden Mal Rate = $19 / 29 = 65.5\%$

Note: 45% of the Mal Rate are service failures (minor failings)

The average for Local Authorities is 62%

8.45 Decisions compared to previous year

	2022/2023		2021/2022	
Nos of cases investigated	19			
Nos of findings	33		24	
Severe Maladministration	0	0%	0	0%
Maladministration	6	18%	8	33%
Service Failure	13	39%	9	38%
No Maladministration	8	24%	4	17%
Outside Jurisdiction	4	12%	3	13%
Redress	2	6%	0	0%
Maladministration Rate	66%		81%	

Complaint Handling Failure Orders	1	3
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8.46 There were 6 findings of Maladministration across 4 cases. Case details within a finding of Maladministration can be found in Appendix 5

Orders (Remedies)

8.47 Orders are made where the investigation has resulted in a finding of some level of maladministration. They are intended to put things right for the resident.

8.48 Of the 19 maladministration findings, 28 orders were made to put things right. From the 13 published cases where a type of maladministration was found:

- 2 cases had 1 order each
- 3 cases had 2 orders each
- 3 cases had 3 orders each

In each case, 1 of the orders was to pay a financial remedy.

Note: Recommendations are also made in some cases. Recommendations are not compulsory though we do act on them in all cases.

Enquiry Type	Housing Mgt	Property Mgt
Awaiting decision/next steps	6	29
Premature (complaint has not gone through local procedures. Usually comes with request to go through local procedures – Stage 1, Stage 2)	8	26
Information Request (to decide whether to proceed to investigation)	3	22
Decision - Maladministration	1	3
Decision – Service Failure	1	2
Outside Jurisdiction	1	1
No Maladministration	1	0
Case closed after initial investigation	0	1
Resolved satisfactorily	0	1
TOTAL	21	85

9 Financial Remedies awarded

9.1 Stages 1 & 2

2021/2022 figures in brackets)

Stage	Financial remedy
Stage 1 (Local Resolution)	£34,000 (£8,942)
Stage 2 (Review/Investigation)	£16,155 (£4,830)
Total	£50,155 (£13,772)

9.2 Ombudsman-awarded financial remedies 2020/2021

(2021/2022 figures in brackets)

Housing Ombudsman orders	£3,205	(11,950) (combined)
LGSCO orders	£1,500	

9.3 This is the total amount ordered by the Ombudsman to be paid as redress for delays and service failures. It does not include the amounts paid as refunds for amounts complainants have paid out due to the service failure (e.g. in rents, service charges, replacement items).

10 Member Enquiries (MEs)

10.1 This report incorporates MEs data due to the notable similarity between the complaints received and MEs, recognising that residents often raise complaints and also reach out to their Councillor regarding the same matter.

10.2 For the period 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023, the total number of Member Enquiries received was 4,052 compared with 3,530 in the previous period. This is a 15% increase in the number of MEs.

The reasons for this increase are a combination of:

- The resumption of face-to-face advice surgeries by Members with residents preferring personal contact with the Member as a way of making contact with the Council.
- The case management system has led to greater encouragement for all Member questions to be raised officially through the system rather than emailing officers directly leading to a greater number being formally logged.

10.3 Member Enquiries by Quarter – Whole Council

(2021/2022 figures in brackets)

Qtr 1 (Apr-Jun 2022)	Qtr 2 (Jul-Sep 2022)	Qtr 3 (Oct-Dec 2022)	Qtr 4 (Jan-Mar 2023)	TOTAL
1001 (797)	965 (826)	985 (784)	1101 (1123)	4052

10.4 The quarterly totals are roughly similar for each quarter though, as with the previous year, rising in the last quarter, January 2023 to March 2023.

10.5 Member Enquiries by Directorate

Member Enquiries by Directorate	
Directorate	No of Enquiries
Supporting Communities	3660
Corporate Services	294
Supporting People	98
Total	4052

10.6 As in previous years, the largest volume (**90.3%**) of MEs is found to relate to the Supporting Communities Directorate. Corporate Services make up **7.3%** of the total, with Supporting People accounting for **2.4%**.

Member Enquiries by Service Area

10.7 Supporting Communities

[2021/2022 figures in brackets]

Supporting Communities Directorate by division	Totals	% responded to within 10 working days
Housing Support Services	1002 (796)	61.1
Property Management	849 (755)	73.7
Economy, Regeneration & Investment	604 (544)	53.3
Community Services	452(425)	62.2
Environment & Sustainability	401 (292)	66.6
Housing Management	287 (268)	41.1
Development	31(75)	45.2
Resident Safety	24 (11)	54.2
TOTAL	3660 (3166)	61.7

10.8 Housing Support Services had the highest number of cases in this division and saw a 25% increase in the number of enquiries, reflecting the current national Housing and financial situation. 56% of these were related to Housing Needs, specifically:

- queries about the allocation of points
- length of time to be housed or re-housed
- overcrowding and the effects of this
- enquiries requesting medical housing points

10.9 Property Management received the second largest number of MEs in this directorate seeing a 12% increase, with 96% of these relating to Housing repairs. Key areas include:

- Housing repairs delays, standard of repairs or missed appointments 558 (66%)
- Damp and mould 94 (11%)
- Cyclical repairs/window replacement 56 (6.6%)
- Water leaks 45 (5.6%)
- Loss of heating or hot water 37 (4%)

10.10 Economy, Regeneration, and Investment services saw a 11% increase in MEs. Most of these cases fell within the Inclusive Economy, Regeneration and Planning (386) and Development Management (206) divisions. Traffic Control and Transport picked up many MEs (175), with many asking for increased or decreased traffic calming measures. There were also requests for the Council to liaise with Transport for London to request more time to cross at some major intersections.

- 10.11 Community Services saw a 9% increase in MEs compared to the previous year. Just over a fifth of all enquiries in this area 94 (21%) concerned the management of trees either in the streets or on the public highway; followed closely by enquiries concerning community safety and anti-social behaviour (90 or 20%). Other notable areas include noise pollution 61 (13%) and community safety generally 46 (10%). Regulatory services received 39 enquiries around the licensing of local premises.
- 10.12 Environment and Sustainability services saw a 37% increase compared to the previous year, with Environment services accounting for 391(91%) of all MEs in this directorate. Notable MEs in this directorate include Environment enforcement 133 (33%), waste cleanliness enforcement 55 (14%), waste/rubbish collections 52 (13%), Missed waste/Rubbish collections 48 (12%), recycling collections 19 (5%) and missed recycling collections 13 (3%).
- 10.13 Development, although not high in volume, has seen a significant decrease in member enquiries from 75 to 31, a decrease of 41% over the last year. Street lighting received the highest number of MEs in this directorate, 13 (41%), followed by grounds maintenance 12 (39%).
- 10.14 Housing Management saw a 7% increase in MEs compared to the previous year. The largest number of enquiries in this directorate 75 (26%) concerned access to estates or communal areas followed by access to parking 47 (16%). Other notable areas were leaseholder invoice disputes 32 (11%), neighbour disputes 23 (8%), noise nuisance 23 (8%), and matters concerning caretaking 18 (6%).

10.15 Corporate Services

[2021/2022 figures in brackets]

Corporate Services by division	Totals	% responded to within 10 working days
Customer Services	247 (230)	88.2
Digital and Information Office	11 (11)	63.6
Finance	21 (14)	9.5
Law & Governance	6 (3)	66.7
Participation and Partnerships	7 (1)	28.5
People & Inclusion	2 (6)	50
TOTAL	294 (265)	79.6

10.16 Corporate Services had a 9% increase in overall MEs representing 7% of the total of MEs received in this period. This percentage is 1% lower than the previous year. Corporate Services remains the directorate with the highest number of member enquiries responded to on time, achieving just under 80% (79.6%).

10.17 Customer Services remains the top recipient of MEs in this directorate, 247 (84%) and again the majority of the enquiries were around parking matters, 163 (55%). Issues related to parking are broken down into Parking - Dispute Penalty Charge Notice 58 (20%), lack of enforcement 46 (16%), Parking permit/ system issues 44 (15%) and parking suspension issues 9 (3%). Other high-volume areas in Customer Services are Council tax and Business rate enquiries 52 (18%) and Welfare and benefits matters 28 (9%)

10.18 Supporting People

[2021/2022 figures in brackets]

Supporting People by division	Totals	% responded to within 10 working days
Adult Social Care	59 (74)	23.9 (22.1)
Children's Safeguarding & Social Work	21 (4)	47.6 (50)
Early Intervention & Prevention	13 (9)	46.2 (42.8)
Education & Integrated Commissioning	5 (12)	40 (33.3)
TOTAL	98 (99)	32.7

10.19 Supporting People has the lowest number of MEs, with 2% of the total for the year, which is similar to last year. The majority of MEs are in Adult Social Care, specifically: Support and safeguarding adults 37 (38%), Provider services 15 (15%), Camden and Islington Foundation Trust 4 (4%).

10.20 These are often some of the most complex cases to resolve due to the nature of the enquiry and the number of agencies required to engage to provide a joined-up response. This is reflected in the response times, too, as they take a longer time to provide a full response.

Performance – Member Enquiries

Whole Council

10.21 With the introduction of the new case management system, we can provide more accurate performance data.

10.22 We aim to respond to a ME within 10 working days (extending it to 20 working days for complex cases). The below figures relate to performance across the whole Council for the full year, April 2022 to March 2023.

[2021/2022 figures in brackets]

Measure	Number	Percentage
Responses sent within 10 working days	2534 (2164)	62.4% (61%)
Responses sent more than 10 working days	1529 (1366)	37.6% (39%)
Average Days to Respond	23.2 (16)	
Number of extensions requested	176(151)	(4.3%) (6%)
Average length of extension	(10.1) (9.1) days	

Analysis of performance

10.23 The Council achieved 62.4% of all cases responded to within the 10-day target window. This is slightly higher than the 61% achieved last year. However, even though it is below the target of 90%, it should be recognised that more of the MEs received year on year are responded to on time - 2,534 compared with last year 2,164. It is recognised that there is still a lot of work to do to improve the turnaround time of MEs by looking at the following causes and resolving the issues:

- A number of cases still remain open for a significant time (in excess of 50 days) after they have been responded to. This can be due to the officer responding directly to the Member via email and not uploading the response to the system or the officer uploading the response but failing to close the case. Member Support is working with colleagues across the organisation to address both issues and provide more training on the system when required.
- Cases that fall between two or more teams are particularly problematic and it can take a significant amount of time to agree on which team should lead on the case.
- Cases were incorrectly assigned initially and, therefore, not progressed to the next step in a timely way to the correct service officer. Member Support colleagues continue to work closely with heads of service across the Council to ascertain which team and individual is best placed to respond to the query in the first instance and provide further training where required.

10.24 It is recognised that the case management system is still relatively new, and there is, therefore a need for ongoing support and training for officers to help use it effectively. Member Support are providing ongoing support and training to officers and Members.

10.25 Member Support are further flagging up overdue cases with heads of service and directors and visiting divisional management team meetings to discuss MEs and help services across the board.

10.26 Summary of Member Enquiry Type (Top 10)

Enquiry Type	No of Enquiries
Outstanding repairs	475
Housing Needs - Housing register (Allocations process)	177
Housing Partnerships - Reactive repairs	153
Traffic Control & Transport Strategy	150
Environmental Enforcement	118
Road works	107
Damp and/or mould	96
Trees (Public spaces and Streets)	94
Housing Needs - Housing register (Over-crowding)	94
Community Safety - Antisocial Behaviour	90

11 MP Enquiries

11.1 MP Enquiries are those enquiries received primarily from the offices of the two Parliamentary representatives for Camden, Keir Starmer and Tulip Siddiq. MP enquiries should be responded to within 10 working days.

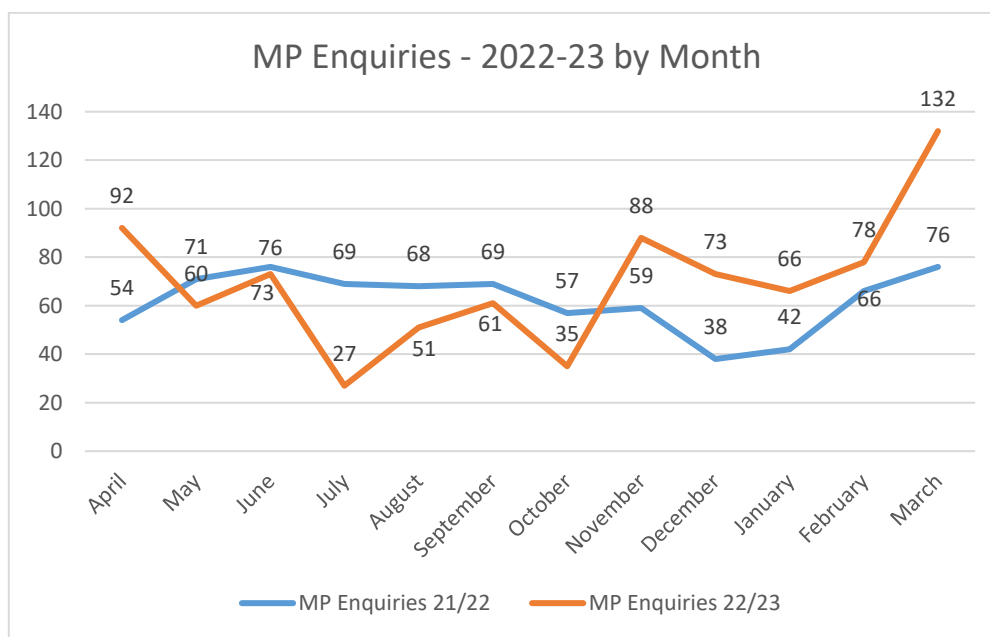
11.2 For the period **April 2022 to March 2023** the total number of MP enquiries received was **836**.

11.3 MP Enquiries by directorate and division

(2022/2023 figures in brackets)

Service Area	Number
Corporate Services	52 (66)
Law & Governance	2 (5)
Finance	2 (2)
Customer Services	48 (59)
Supporting Communities	759 (655)
Community Services	33 (26)
Property Management	203 (147)
Regeneration and Planning	75 (110)
Housing Management	63 (99)
Housing Support Services	381 (249)
Development	4 (23)
Resident Safety	0 (1)
Supporting People	25 (24)
Adult Social Care	15 (11)
Children's Safeguarding & Social Work	4 (8)
Early Intervention & Prevention	4 (4)
Education & Integrated Commissioning	2 (1)
Total	836 (745)

11.4 MP Enquiries received by month



Analysis of MP Enquiries

- 11.5 In most instances, responses to MP enquiries are signed off at Director level and involve significant input from officers at all levels to provide a response. Often these enquiries have already been raised by the constituent or councillor via other routes such as complaints, Member enquiries and Freedom of Information (FOI) requests which means work is duplicated.
- 11.6 The types of MP enquiries vary slightly from the types of complaints. Housing Support services continues to receive a high number of MP enquiries compared to complaints. The majority of these enquiries are requests for intervention with Housing applications, points allocation and issues with temporary accommodation. Regeneration and Planning issues also saw a much higher proportion in MP Enquiries than in complaints and these are requests for intervention with planning applications and issues with waste management.
- 11.7 The MP Enquiries module of the case management system went live in October 2022. This allows for better tracking of all types of enquiries and will link enquiries together to ensure a consistent response and reduce duplication.

12 Freedom of Information (FOIs)/Environmental Information Regulations (EIRs) Requests

- 12.1 FOI requests are requests for recorded information held by the Council and handled under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA). EIR requests are the equivalent for environmental information which comes under the Environmental Information Regulations 2005 (EIR).
- 12.2 Requests must be responded to within 20 working days of receipt. There are only limited occasions when the timescale can be extended. The Council's average time to respond is around 13 working days which is far shorter than the statutory maximum.
- 12.3 Requests are not usually service-specific and cross over several different service areas so they are not logged by service area.

[2021/2022 figures in brackets]

	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	Full Year
Number of FOI/EIRs requests received	351 (316)	321 (311)	336 (373)	410 (388)	1418 (1388)
Percentage of FOI/EIR requests responded to within the time period within 20 working days of receipt	99.4% (99.7%)	99.4% (99.4%)	100% (100%)	100% (99.7%)	99.7% (99.6%)
Number of enquiries treated as Business As Usual	172 (162)	164 (145)	241 (155)	311 (186)	888 (648)

- 12.4 The Council continues to be one of the top performing London boroughs for FOI/EIR and our good practice is well recognised nationally. The Council's innovative BAU approach has been used by the regulator (the ICO) on their website as a national good practice recommendation. In the National eCase FOI awards the FOI Team won the 2023 Team of the Year award and the Data Protection Manager won the FOI Practitioner of the Year award.
- 12.5 We have achieved such high performance by a combination of factors:
- A dedicated expert team that works closely with services to ensure information is collated quickly and responses are drafted to a high standard.
 - Requests coming up to deadline are rapidly escalated to managers which has dramatically reduced late requests.
 - Engagement with services to identify pinch points and to work collaboratively to improve performance and quality of responses.
 - The case management system is now established and effective in tracking requests, monitoring their status and providing detailed performance data.
 - Seeking to proactively publish more FAQs and datasets on the Open Data Portal in response to hot topics, and signposting requesters to this to provide the information they have requested. In 2022/2023 the following datasets were added to the Open Data Portal:
 - Reinforced Aerated Autoclaved Cladding (RAAC) FAQs
 - Low Traffic Neighbourhoods FAQs
 - Residents Council Tax Payments FAQs

Types of FOI received

- 12.6 To illustrate the many diverse types of FOI/ EIRs requested, a sample of a two-week period was taken between 10th and 24th July 2023. In this two-week period a total of 48 information requests were received.
- 12.7 Below are examples of the types of requests received in the above period that show the wide-ranging types of information requested.

No. of schools unsuccessful in applying for funding for remedial / construction work
Relative waiting times for an accessible home in Camden
No. of children at risk of criminal exploitation did Camden identify in 2021/22 and 2022/23
No. of job roles dedicated to arts and culture policy at the Council
call-off contracts in the public sector
development of 15 minute cities, ULEZ, Net Zero etc
road closure, on or including 25th May 2023, on Swinton Street, London WC1X.
No. of children Looked After during each of the financial years detailed by age + gender
Undersubscribed primary and secondary schools for the school year beginning September 2022
Shop wall signage - T's Fried Scoop
Planning permissions granted for C3/C4 categories from 2015-2023
Contact details for buying housing stock for Camden
prosecuted businesses on food hygiene grounds
Penalty Charge Notice CU64369421
Details of parking suspension
noise complaints filed against licensed premises/ A4 pubs in your area
complaints relating to conditions of properties in the Private Rented Sector
Homes for Ukraine scheme
Copy of Quality Assurance for Children's Services documents

13 Judicial Reviews (JRs)

13.1 Number per year

[2021/2022 figures in brackets]

Description	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	2022/23
JRs issued	7 (4)	1 (7)	2 (8)	2 (3)	12 (22)
Pre-action protocol letters	28 (59)	20 (87)	13 (17)	29 (17)	90 (180)

- 13.2 The data above gives a valuable insight into the work of the Legal Department and gives a wider indication of the level of scrutiny the Council can come under and the times when our decision making is formally challenged or in the case of pre-action letters is questioned.
- 13.3 The drop in the number of Judicial Reviews and pre-action protocol letters reflect the difficulties in obtaining legal aid for such cases. Following a consultation on Judicial Review Reform, the government stated that it intended to introduce essential reforms. We are waiting to see if these changes are amended in the future.

13.4 It will be appreciated that Pre-action protocol letters are formal letters and still require a formal and detailed response requiring a great deal of input from both Legal Services and the relevant departments.

14 Legal Implications - Comments from the Borough Solicitor

14.1 The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) states that good practice on the approach to dealing with complaints are outlined in The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints Regulations 2009. The report shows that the approach adopted in the Local Authority reflects those Regulations.

15 Resource Implications

15.1 Funding for the complaints service is secured through revenue budget provision within Business Support Services. Financial remedies are paid from directorate services' budgets. There are no specific financial implications arising from this report.

16 Environmental Implications

16.1 The Information and data presented in this report have no environmental implications.

17 Appendices

Appendix 1: Stage 1 Complaints by Month 2022/23

Appendix 2: Stage 1 Complaints Performance 2022/23

Appendix 3: Stage 1 Complaints Outcomes 2022/23

Appendix 4: Stage 2 Complaints by Month 2022/23

Appendix 5: Stage 2 Complaints Performance 2022/23

Appendix 6: Stage 2 Complaints Outcomes 2022/23

Appendix 7: LGSCO Data 2022/23

Appendix 8: Housing Ombudsman Data 2022/23

REPORT ENDS