	Cabinet 9 November 2026
	Report from the Corporate Director of Resident and Housing Services

Housing Management Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Annual Report 2025/26

Wards Affected:	All
Key or Non-Key Decision:	Non-Key Decision
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Open
List of Appendices:	Appendix 1 – Housing Ombudsman's performance report for Brent 2024/2025 Appendix 2 – Council's Self-Assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code
Background Papers:	N/A
Contact Officer(s): (Name, Title, Contact Details)	Mariza Barros Complaints and Casework Manager Brent Council 0208 937 1381

1.0 Executive Summary

1.1. This annual report sets out the Housing Management Service's complaints performance for the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026. It provides an overview of complaint volumes, complaint outcomes, compensation awarded, the key themes and causes of complaints, and the learning and service improvements that have been implemented as a result.

1.2 As Brent Council Housing Management is a registered provider of social housing, complaints relating to landlord services fall within the jurisdiction of the Housing Ombudsman. This report has therefore been written separately to the full Council Complaints Report, supporting the reporting arrangements for Housing Ombudsman complaints.

1.3 The report also includes the Housing Ombudsman's latest published landlord performance information for Brent 2024/25 (Appendix 1), and the Council's self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code (Appendix 2).

1.4 **Key Headlines 2025/26**

- Complaint volumes increased significantly, with Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints more than doubling compared to last year.
- Stage 1 complaints rose from 549 to 1191(83.2 per 1,000 homes), and Stage 2 complaints rose from 94 to 198 (13.8 per 1,000 homes). This increase reflects both improvements in complaint recording and accessibility, alongside continued issues in some areas of service delivery and the use of AI to generate and refer complaints.
- Although complaint volumes increased significantly, Brent's complaint rates remain broadly comparable with other London landlords, with Stage 2 complaint rates below the London median.
- The escalation rate (Stage 1 → Stage 2) fell slightly, from 18.1% to 16.8%.
- Total compensation paid across Stage 1 and Stage 2 rose from £109,787 in 2024/25 to £138,306 in 2025/26 across 449 cases. The average Stage 2 payment reduced from £526 to £424, while the average Stage 1 payment increased from £234 to £259.
- Repairs remain the largest single driver of complaints at both stages, with delays in service delivery identified as the most common underlying cause
- Ombudsman performance improved with Brent's maladministration rate falling from 92% in 2023/24 to 68.2% in 2024/25. There were no complaint handling failure orders and no severe maladministration findings.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

2.1 Cabinet is asked to note Brent Housing Management's performance in managing and resolving complaints during 2025/26 and provide any comments or direction.

2.2 Cabinet is asked to note the Council's latest self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code.

2.4 Cabinet is asked to approve the report for submission to the Housing Management Advisory Board and the relevant Scrutiny Committee(s).

3.0 Detail

3.1 Cabinet Member Foreword (Member Responsible for Complaints)

3.1.1 As a Council, we are committed to listening to our residents and ensuring that their experiences help us to improve the services we provide. Complaints are an important part of this process, providing valuable insight into where services are working well and where improvements are needed.

3.1.2 During 2025/26, Housing Management received 1,191 Stage 1 complaints and 198 Stage 2 complaints. This represents a significant increase compared with the previous year. The increase reflects a combination of changes to complaint

recording and accessibility, as well as continued challenges in some areas of service delivery. It is therefore important that we look beyond complaint volumes to understand the issues residents are raising and the learning arising from them.

3.1.3 The complaints data shows that repairs continue to be the most significant source of dissatisfaction, with delays and communication being the biggest issue causing resident dissatisfaction.

3.1.4 The Council has continued to use complaints as a source of learning and has taken action in response. This includes strengthening the management of complaints and learning within the new responsive repairs contracts, improving customer communications, developing and reviewing key Housing Management policies, and introducing more detailed case reviews to identify wider service improvements.

3.1.5 There are also positive signs in the wider performance data. Overall satisfaction with landlord services increased from 51.3% to 57.5%, while satisfaction that the Council listens to residents' views and acts on them increased from 39.2% to 45.6%. However, satisfaction with complaint handling remained low at 21.7%, demonstrating the importance of continuing to improve how complaints are handled and how learning is translated into better services for residents.

Contribution to Borough Plan Priorities & Strategic Context

3.1.6 This report supports the objectives of the Brent Borough Plan 2023–27, particularly the priority of Prosperity and Stability in Brent. Effective complaint handling provides an important mechanism for identifying issues affecting residents' experience of their homes and neighbourhoods and supports the Council's commitment to providing safe, secure and decent housing.

3.1.7 It also supports the Borough Plan priority of Thriving Communities by ensuring that residents' experiences are heard and used to inform service improvement. The learning identified through complaints provides insight into where services are not meeting residents' expectations and helps Housing Management to identify and address recurring issues, improve communication and strengthen accountability.

3.1.8 As a registered provider of social housing, Brent Council is also required to demonstrate effective complaint handling and learning in line with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code and the regulatory framework for social housing. This report provides assurance on Housing Management's complaints performance during 2025/26 and sets out the actions being taken to use complaints to improve services.

3.2 Background

3.2.1 Brent Council Housing Management is a registered provider of social housing and is therefore subject to the Social Housing Regulation Act, Housing

Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code and relevant Building Safety requirements. These include:

- submission of complaints related Tenant Satisfaction Measures;
- publication of complaints data for residents to scrutinise;
- publication of an annual complaints report;
- publication of a self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code; and
- clear identification and monitoring of building safety related complaints.

3.2.2 To align with our duties as a registered provider of social housing and member of the Housing Ombudsman scheme, this report focuses on complaints received by or on behalf of Brent Council's tenants and leaseholders relating to landlord services delivered by, or on behalf of, Brent Housing Management. This includes services delivered through Housing Management and other Council services carrying out landlord functions, such as Estate Services and the Contact Centre, where these complaints fall within the jurisdiction of the Housing Ombudsman.

3.2.3 The Housing Management service currently manages 14,313 properties as part of its landlord service. Brent Council also has two housing companies, i4B Holdings (i4B) and First Wave Housing (FWH). These organisations will be reported on separately, as FWH is a separate Registered Provider.

3.2.4 Where data has been reported to the Regulator of Social Housing through the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) submission, this will be included in the report. This is tenant-only data and does not include our leaseholders. The report also highlights relevant resident insights from the TSMs.

Tenant Satisfaction Measure	2024/25	2025/26	Difference (+/-)
Satisfied with complaint handling	22.2%	21.7%	-0.5%
Satisfied listens to views and acts	39.2%	45.6%	+6.4%
Overall satisfaction with landlord services	51.3%	57.5%	+6.2%

3.2.5 The TSM results show an improvement in overall satisfaction with landlord services and in residents' perception that the Council listens to their views and acts on them. However, satisfaction with complaint handling remains low, highlighting the importance of the service improvement activity set out later in this report.

3.3 Data quality

3.3.1 An extensive data validation exercise was undertaken to ensure the robustness of the complaints data. This is the second year that this exercise has been required to verify cases relating to Housing Management. The Council has

sought to verify all tenant and leaseholder complaints in line with regulatory reporting requirements.

3.3.2 Prior to 2024 reporting, the data only captured casework allocated to Housing Management Property and Neighbourhood teams on the complaints system. The Council has sought to replicate the methodology used in the 2024/25 report, where possible, to include complaints assigned to other Council directorates delivering landlord services, such as Estate Services and the Contact Centre.

3.3.3 As a result, comparisons with previous years may be affected by changes in the reporting methodology. Where appropriate, the report provides a consistent reporting boundary to enable meaningful comparison between years.

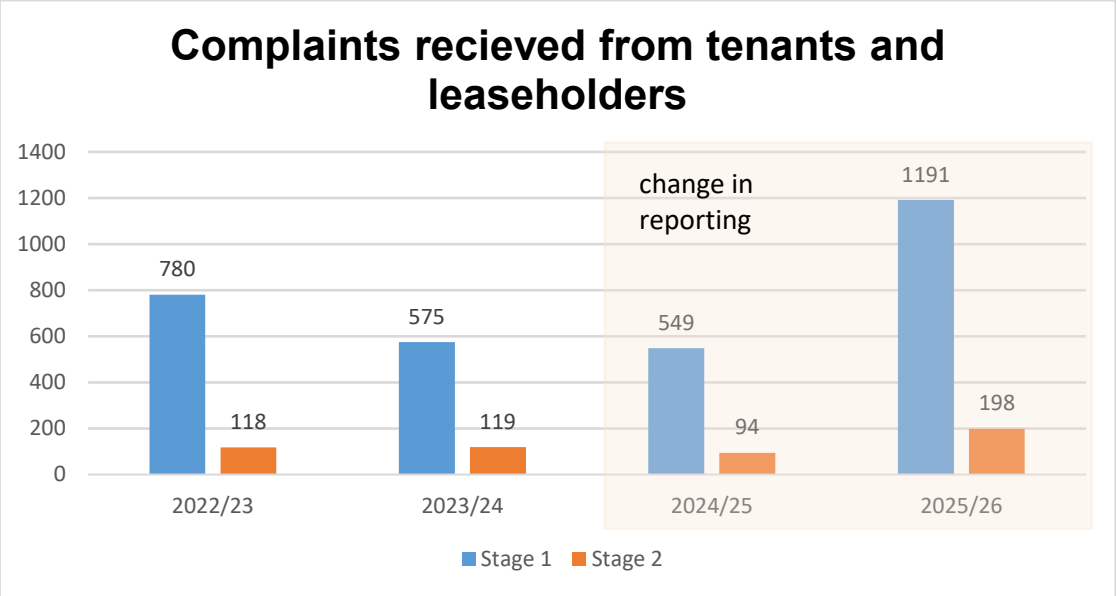
3.3.4 Data quality remains an area for improvement and will require system changes to improve the accuracy and efficiency of reporting, as elements of the current process remain highly manual.

3.4 Complaints Performance

3.4.1. During 2025/26, Housing Management received 1,191 Stage 1 complaints, equivalent to 83.2 complaints per 1,000 homes, and 198 Stage 2 complaints, equivalent to 13.8 complaints per 1,000 homes. Stage 1 complaints increased by 642 (116.9%) compared with the previous year, while Stage 2 complaints increased by 104 (110.6%).

The key performance findings are:

- 76.9% of Stage 1 complaints were recorded as service failures, with delays accounting for the largest proportion of these cases.
- The most common reason for escalating a complaint to Stage 2 was disagreement with the Stage 1 response, accounting for 48.9% of escalations.
- £138,306 in compensation was paid across 449 complaints, compared with £109,787 across 353 complaints in 2024/25.
- Repairs remained the largest source of complaints, with delays and communication among the key issues identified.



3.4.2 The significant increase in complaint volumes should be considered in the context of changes to complaint recording and accessibility, as well as continued pressures across Housing Management services. In the past year there has been an internal focus on ensuring that matters that meet the definition of a complaint are recorded as complaints rather than service requests. This has been supported by reviews of information on the Council's webpages and communications to residents to improve awareness of how to make a complaint.

3.4.3 The increase in recorded complaints does not, on its own, indicate a deterioration in service performance. The outcome and root cause of complaints provide a more useful indication of where services are not meeting residents' expectations and where improvements are required.

3.4.4 A number of other factors are likely to have contributed to the increase in complaint volumes. The Complaints Service has observed that increased awareness amongst residents of their right to complain, alongside the increasing use of AI tools to prepare complaints and escalation requests, may be contributing to the increase in complaints being received across the Council.

3.4.5 The volume of complaints received was also significantly higher than anticipated, creating capacity pressures across both operational services and the Complaints Service. The Complaints Service manages complaints across the whole Council and has experienced increased demand across multiple service areas, not only Housing.

3.4.6 The sustained increase in demand has placed considerable pressure on the Council's ability to process and respond to complaints within the required timescales. However, these factors provide context rather than an explanation for all the increase.

3.4.7 The escalation rate decreased from 18.1% in 2024/25 to 16.8% in 2025/26. The reasons for escalation and the implications for complaint handling are considered further later in this report.

3.5 Benchmarking

3.5.1 As most Councils had not published their 2025/26 annual complaints reports at the time of writing, full benchmarking against comparable landlords is not yet possible. However, the TSM data provides an indication of Brent's position against other London landlords:

	Complaints per 1,000 homes	Complaints per 1,000 homes
	Stage One	**Stage Two**
Brent	**93.4**	**17.5**
London Q3	114.98	30.95
London Median	89.85	22.9
London Q1	68.3	16.88

3.5.2 Brent's Stage 1 complaint rate of 93.4 complaints per 1,000 homes was slightly above the London median of 89.85, but below the upper quartile of 114.98. Brent's Stage 2 rate of 17.5 complaints per 1,000 homes was below the London median of 22.9 and close to the lower quartile of 16.88.

3.5.3 This indicates that, despite the significant increase in Brent's complaint volumes during 2025/26, Brent's complaint rates remain broadly within the range seen across London landlords. The relatively low Stage 2 rate also suggests that a smaller proportion of complaints progress to escalation compared with the London median.

3.5.4 The benchmarking should be treated as indicative rather than a direct measure of performance. The TSM comparison is based on tenant data only and does not include leaseholders. In addition, differences in how landlords record and manage complaints can affect complaint volumes and rates.

3.6 Timeliness of Responses

3.6.1 The Council's Complaints Policy requires complaints to be acknowledged within five working days. Corporate complaints will normally be responded to within 10 working days after acknowledgement at Stage 1 and 20 working days at Stage 2. Where required, these timescales can be extended by up to 10 working days at Stage 1 and 20 working days at Stage 2, with the complainant informed of the reasons for the extension and the expected response date.

3.6.2 The Council monitors complaint timeliness through its Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs), which provide a consistent measure of residents' experience of the complaints process.

During 2025/26:

	Avg days to acknowledge	Avg days to respond	Compliance with Complaint Policy timescales (including permitted extensions)
Stage 1	3 days	10 days	84.4%
Stage 2	5 days	39 days	51.6%

3.6.3 Performance against the Council's Complaints Policy timescales was mixed during the reporting period. Stage 1 complaints were acknowledged within an average of 3 days and responded to within an average of 10 days, achieving an overall compliance rate of 84.4%, including permitted extensions. In contrast, Stage 2 complaints were acknowledged within an average of 5 days but took an average of 39 days to respond, resulting in compliance of 51.6%.

3.6.4 The reduction in Stage 2 performance reflects the unprecedented increase in complaint volumes experienced during the year. Complaint numbers have risen significantly due to a combination of factors, including improvements in complaint recording and accessibility, the use of AI to identify expressions of dissatisfaction and generate complaint referrals, and increased service demand within across the Council, including Housing. Additional pressures were also experienced during the mobilisation and embedding of the new Mears repairs contract, which contributed to higher levels of resident dissatisfaction and complaint activity. The sustained increase in volumes has placed significant pressure on both operational services and the Complaints Team, requiring the recruitment of additional temporary resources to support investigations and response handling. Despite these challenges, work continues to reduce the Stage 2 backlog, improve the timeliness of information provided by services, and strengthen complaint handling performance across the Council.

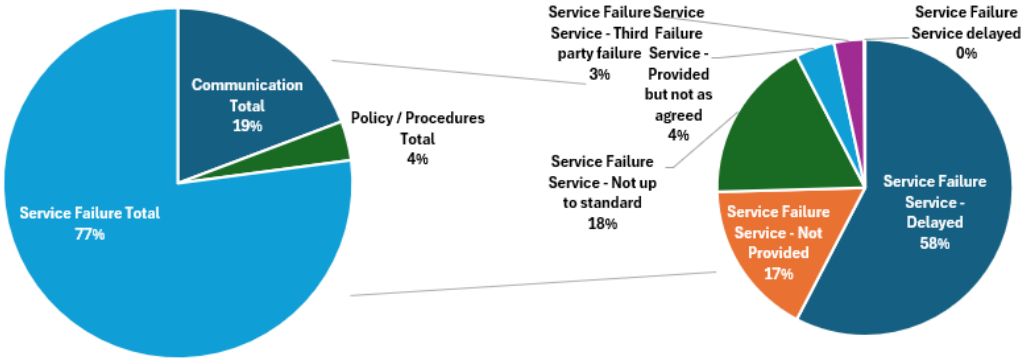
3.7 Nature and Reasons for Complaints

3.7.1 We record the root causes of complaints at Stage 1 once a complaint has been closed. The root cause analysis therefore relates to complaints closed during 2025/26.

3.7.2 The Council classifies root causes of complaints into three main categories: Communication, Policy/Procedures, and Service Failure. The confirmed data shows that Service Failure was the predominant root cause, accounting for 916 (76.9%) complaints where a root cause was recorded. Communication accounted for 229 complaints (19.2%), while Policy/Procedures accounted for 43 complaints (3.6%).

3.7.3 The breakdown of Service Failure cases shows that service delays are the main underlying issue, accounting for 528 complaints (58% of Service Failure cases). A further 163 complaints (18%) related to services not being delivered to the required standard, and 155 complaints (17%) related to services not being provided. The remaining Service Failure complaints related to services being provided but not as agreed (39 complaints, 4%) and third-party service failures (30 complaints, 3%).

3.7.4 The analysis indicates that timeliness and consistency of service delivery are key factors contributing to resident dissatisfaction. The Service Failure breakdown is shown below.



3.7.5 While root-cause analysis identifies why complaints arise, issue-type analysis provides insight into the services generating the highest levels of complaint demand. Repairs continue to be the most significant area of dissatisfaction. The largest individual issue type was Repairs to My Property (Including Inspections), with 354 Stage 1 complaints (29.6%), followed by Outstanding Repairs - Other, with 139 complaints (11.7%), and Communal Repair, with 66 complaints (5.5%).

3.7.6 The root-cause data indicates that delays are the dominant underlying cause of complaints about service delivery. This suggests that improving the timeliness and management of the repairs service should remain a key area of focus, alongside ensuring that repairs are completed to the required standard. This is consistent with the wider complaints analysis, which identifies repairs as the largest single driver of complaints and delays as the most significant issue.

3.7.7 The root-cause analysis also shows that Service Failure was the predominant cause of repairs-related Stage 1 complaints, accounting for 552 of the 599 cases (92.2%). This reinforces the finding that improving the timeliness and quality of the repairs service should remain a key area of focus.

3.7.8 Communication is also a significant contributor to dissatisfaction (229 complaints). 75 related to customers not being kept informed or updated (6.4%), while a further 45 related to delays in contacting customers (3.8%). Other communication-related causes included third-party communication failures (33 complaints) and inaccurate information being provided or recorded (31 complaints).

3.7.9 This indicates that communication is a cross-cutting issue, which can exacerbate dissatisfaction where there is already a delay or other service failure. Improving proactive communication therefore remains important, particularly where an underlying service issue cannot be resolved immediately.

3.7.10 Policy and procedure-related causes account for a smaller proportion of complaints, with 43 Stage 1 complaints attributed to this category. Although these represent a relatively small proportion of complaints, they remain important from a service improvement and governance perspective. Complaints in this category can indicate where responsibilities, processes or service expectations are not sufficiently clear to residents or staff. This learning is particularly relevant where several teams or services are involved in resolving a resident's issue

3.7.11 Overall, the analysis identifies three broad areas for continued improvement: timely service delivery, consistent delivery of services to the required standard, and proactive communication with residents. Repairs remain the largest source of complaints, while service delays represent the most significant underlying cause of dissatisfaction. These findings provide a clear evidence base for the service improvement activity set out in Section 4.0.

3.7.12 **Stage 1**

3.7.13 The table below shows the five most common Stage 1 issue types and the most frequent root cause associated with each. This provides further insight into where complaints are arising and the underlying reasons for resident dissatisfaction.

	Issue Type	Stage 1 complaints	Most common root cause
1	Repairs to my property	354 (30%)	Service delayed – 243
2	Housing Customer other	168 (14%)	Service delayed – 39
3	Outstanding repairs	139 (12%)	Service delayed – 76
4	Communal repair	66 (6%)	Service delayed – 38
5	Anti – Social Behaviour	61 (5%)	Service not provided – 10

3.7.14 The table reinforces the wider finding that delay is a recurring cause across several of the highest volume complaint areas, particularly repairs. It also highlights the need to improve the categorisation of complaints. The Housing Customer – Other category is relatively broad and provides limited information about the specific service that generated the complaint. Work is being done to improve the use of issue categories to enable the Council to identify more precisely where dissatisfaction is arising and target service improvement.

3.7.15 **Stage 2**

3.7.16 Stage 2 complaints show a different pattern because the root-cause information relates primarily to the reason for escalation rather than the original service issue. The five most common Stage 2 issue types and the most frequent reason for escalation are shown below.

	Issue type	Stage 2 complaints	Most common reason for escalation
1	Repairs to my property	55	Disagreed with Stage 1 decision (25)
2	Housing Customer other	30	Disagreed with Stage 1 decision (19)
3	Outstanding repairs	26	Stage 1 did not address issues in full (12)
4	Damp and/or mould	15	Disagreed with Stage 1 decision (8)
5	Anti-Social Behaviour	12	Stage 1 did not address issues in full (4)

3.7.17 Of the Stage 2 complaints for which a reason for escalation was recorded, 48.9% were escalated because the resident disagreed with the Stage 1 decision, while 12.1% related to follow-up actions not being completed. Disagreement with the Stage 1 decision has also been the most common reason for escalation over the past two years.

3.7.18 Looking at issue type, escalations most commonly related to repairs. The Council identifies five issue types as repairs-related: Repairs to My Property (Including Inspections), Outstanding Repairs - Other, Communal Repair, Complaints about Wates and Repairs to My Property. Together, these accounted for 599 (50.3%) Stage 1 complaints and 90 (45.5%) Stage 2 complaints during 2025/26, representing an escalation rate of 15%.

3.7.19 Overall, the analysis demonstrates a clear relationship between the services generating the highest volumes of complaints and the root causes recorded. Repairs remain the largest source of complaints at both stages, while service delays are the most common underlying cause of dissatisfaction. Communication also remains a significant cross-cutting issue, particularly where residents are not kept informed about delays or actions being taken. These findings provide a clear evidence base for the service improvement activity set out in Section 4.0.

3.8 Comparison with 2024/25

3.8.1 To allow for comparison with the previous year, only cases directly assigned to the substantive areas of the landlord service have been included in the table below. This provides a consistent basis for assessing changes in the volume of complaints and escalation rates.

	2024/25			2025/26		
	S1	**S2**	**Esc. rate**	**S1**	**S2**	**Esc rate**
Housing and Neighbourhoods	156	27	17.3%	346	63	18.2%
Housing Management Property	386	66	17.1%	740	119	16.1%
Overall	**512**	**93**	**18.1%**	**1086**	**182**	**16.8%**

3.8.2 The table shows a significant increase in both Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints across the substantive Housing Management service areas. Stage 1 complaints increased from 512 to 1,086, while Stage 2 complaints increased from 93 to 182. Despite this increase in complaint volumes, the overall escalation rate reduced from 18.1% in 2024/25 to 16.8% in 2025/26. Housing and Neighbourhoods experienced a small increase in escalation rate, from 17.3% to 18.2%, while Housing Management Property saw a reduction from 17.1% to 16.1%.

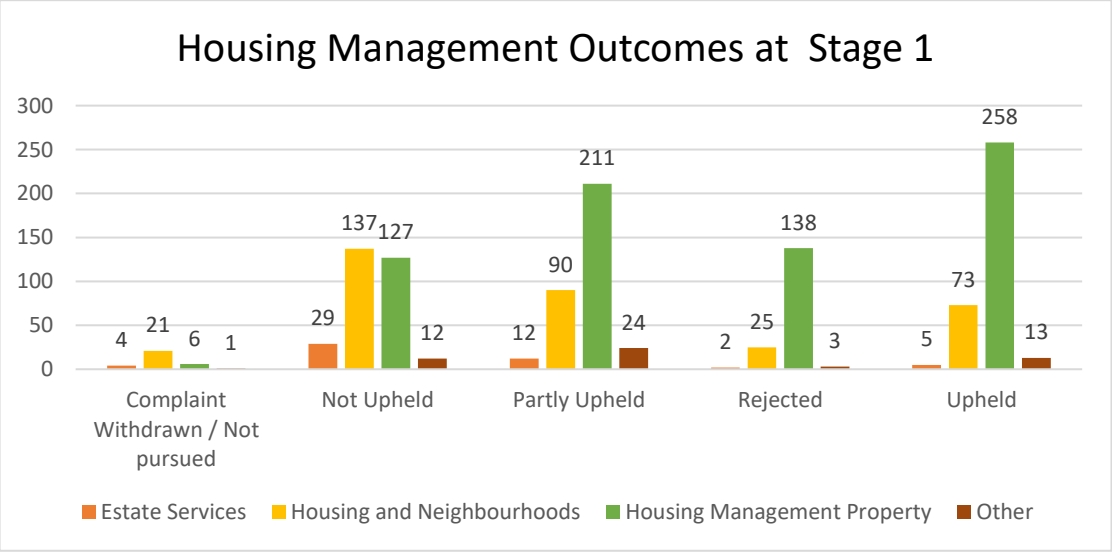
3.8.3 Although complaint volumes increased significantly, the escalation rate remained broadly consistent with the previous year. This indicates that the proportion of complaints progressing to Stage 2 changed relatively little despite the substantial increase in complaints received.

3.9 Complaint Outcomes

3.9.1 Complaint outcomes provide an indication of the extent to which investigations identify that the service provided did not meet the expected standard, as well as cases where the complaint was not upheld or was not appropriate for investigation through the complaints process.

3.9.2 At Stage 1, 1191 complaints were received during 2025/26. Of these cases, 349 complaints were upheld and 337 were partly upheld. This means that complaints 686 (57.6%) were upheld or partly upheld.

3.9.3 A further 305 complaints were not upheld, while 168 were rejected and 32 were withdrawn or not pursued.



Note on the data: The Service Area 'Other' category includes Affordable Housing and Partnerships, Complaints, Customer Services and Assessments

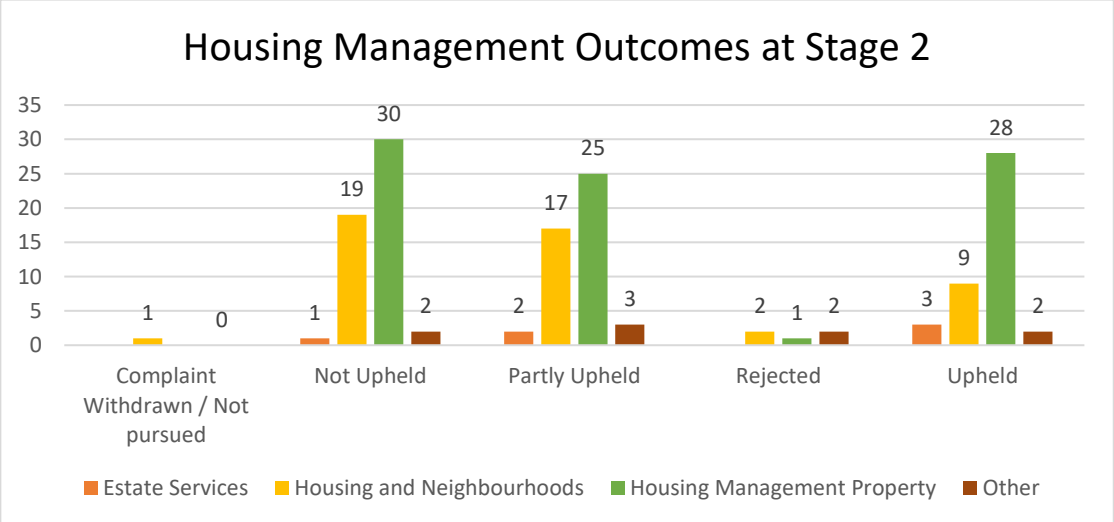
3.9.4 The 57.6% uphold or partial uphold rate at Stage 1 indicates that complaints are identifying a significant level of service failure or dissatisfaction that is

substantiated through the complaints investigation. While complaint volumes increased significantly during 2025/26, the outcome data suggests that complaints continue to identify genuine service issues, with more than half of all complaints investigated being upheld or partly upheld.

3.9.5 Of the 168 rejected Stage 1 complaints, the majority were rejected because the complaint was a duplicate request or had already been investigated. In 141 cases, this was recorded as the reason for rejection. This indicates that a significant proportion of rejected complaints did not represent new service failures requiring a further investigation through the complaints process. The findings also suggest that improvements are needed to identify duplicate complaints earlier in the process, reducing unnecessary administrative activity and enabling resources to focus on new complaints.

3.9.6 At Stage 2, 198 complaints were received during 2025/26. An outcome was recorded for 147 cases, with 51 cases having no outcome recorded as they were still open at the end of this reporting period. Of the cases with a recorded outcome, 42 were upheld and 47 were partly upheld, meaning that 89 cases (60.5%) were upheld or partly upheld.

3.9.7 A further 52 complaints were not upheld, five were rejected and one was withdrawn or not pursued.



Note on the data: 51 Stage 2 complaints were still under investigation at 31 March 2026 and therefore had not yet received a final outcome. These cases are excluded from the chart and outcome analysis. The Service Area 'Other' category includes Affordable Housing and Partnerships, Complaints, Customer Services and Assessments

3.9.8 The proportion of Stage 2 cases that were upheld or partly upheld (60.5% of cases with a recorded outcome) is higher than the Stage 1 rate of 57.6%. Disagreement with the Stage 1 decision is the most common reason for escalation, suggesting that some residents remain dissatisfied with the original investigation outcome or proposed remedy.

3.9.9 The outcome data also highlights the importance of implementing remedies and agreed actions arising from complaints. Failure to complete follow-up actions can undermine confidence in the complaints process and is one of the recurring reasons residents escalate complaints to Stage 2.

3.9.10 Overall, the outcomes demonstrate that complaints remain an important source of evidence about service performance. More than half of complaints investigated at both Stage 1 and Stage 2 were upheld or partly upheld, indicating that complaint investigations continue to identify areas where services have not met expected standards.

3.10 Compensation

3.10.1 Compensation data provides an indication of the financial remedies provided to residents following complaints. The total number of cases in the table below refers only to cases where compensation was awarded.

	2024/25			2025/26		
	Cases	**Amount**	**Average per case**	**Cases**	**Amount**	**Average per case**
Stage 1	260	£60,897	£234	315	£81,485	£259
Stage 2	93	£48,890	£526	134	£56,821	£424
Total	**353**	**£109,787**	**£311**	**449**	**£138,306**	**£308**

Compensation comparison table

3.10.2 The Council paid a total of £138,306, in compensation for Housing Management complaints in the year 2025/26, comprising 449 cases. At Stage 1, compensation was awarded in 315 cases with a total of £81,485 compensation given overall. This only includes data for the cases that were closed at Stage 1.

3.10.3 The average compensation per case rose from £234 last year to £259 in 2025/26. Stage 2 involved 134 cases where £56,821 was awarded in compensation. The average compensation per case is lower than last year at Stage 2, falling from £526 to £424.

3.10.4 Overall compensation increased from £109,787 in 2024/25 to £138,306 in 2025/26, alongside an increase in the number of cases where compensation was awarded from 353 to 449. The reduction in the average Stage 2 payment, alongside the increase in Stage 1 compensation, may indicate that more complaints are being remedied at an earlier stage

3.10.5 The most frequently recorded reason for awarding compensation was delay or failure to provide a service. This accounted for 209 Stage 1 cases and 64 Stage 2 cases, representing 273 of the 449 cases (60.8%) where compensation was awarded across the two stages. When awarding compensation, we credit a resident's rent account if they are in arrears, make direct payments to their bank or, if the amount awarded is under £500, compensation is awarded as a postal voucher to be claimed at any post office.

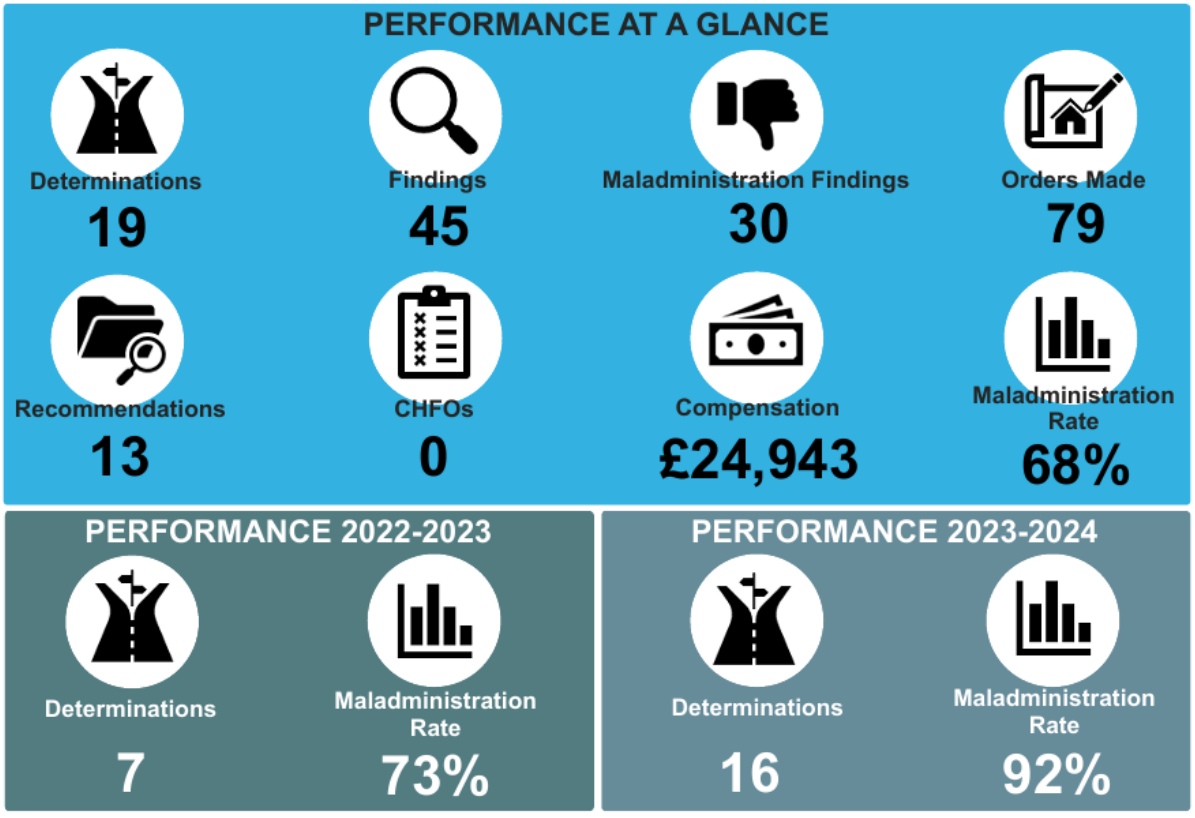
3.10.6 Compensation awarded by Brent Council is benchmarked against the Housing Ombudsman's remedies guidance.

3.11 Ombudsman Decisions in 2024/2025

3.11.1 The Housing Ombudsman has not yet published its annual landlord performance report for 2025/26. It is therefore not yet possible to report on Ombudsman determinations relating to cases referred during the 2025/26 financial year. The most recent available data covers cases determined between April 2024 and March 2025.

3.11.2 The Housing Ombudsman has asked landlords to include their 2024/25 performance information within their 2025/26 annual complaints reports. Brent's full Housing Ombudsman landlord performance report is included at Appendix 1.

3.11.3 The table below has been included from the 2024/25 report on the Housing Management Service's performance.



3.11.4 During 2024/25, the Housing Ombudsman made 19 determinations relating to Brent, resulting in 45 findings. Of these, 30 were findings of maladministration, giving Brent a maladministration rate of 68.2%. The determinations resulted in 79 orders and 13 recommendations. There were no Complaint Handling Failure

Orders (CHFOs) and no findings of severe maladministration, which are positive outcomes.

3.11.5 Brent's maladministration rate improved significantly compared with 2023/24, when the rate was 92%. The 2024/25 rate of 68.2% remains above the national rate for landlords of a similar size and type, however, indicating that there remains scope to strengthen the quality and consistency of services and complaint handling.

3.11.6 The largest number of Ombudsman findings related to Property Condition (18 findings) and Complaints Handling (15 findings). Property Condition accounted for 65% maladministration findings, while Complaints Handling accounted for 87%. This reinforces the findings from Brent's internal complaints data, which identifies repairs as the largest source of dissatisfaction and delays in service delivery as a significant underlying cause.

3.11.7 Within Property Condition, 12 of the 18 findings related to responsive repairs involving leaks, damp and mould. Complaints Handling was the second largest category, with 15 findings, of which 10 were maladministration and three were service failures.

3.11.8 The Ombudsman issued 79 orders across 29 category findings. The most common orders related to compensation, repairs and taking specific action, with further orders for policy review, case review, apologies and staff training. Brent complied with 66 orders within three months (96%), with a further three orders completed within six months.

3.11.9 A total of £24,943 in compensation was ordered by the Housing Ombudsman during 2024/25. The largest proportion related to Property Condition, followed by Moving to a Property and Complaints Handling. Brent's own compensation arrangements are benchmarked against the Housing Ombudsman's remedies guidance.

3.11.10 Overall, the reduction in Brent's maladministration rate from 92% to 68.2%, alongside the absence of severe maladministration findings and Complaint Handling Failure Orders, indicates an improvement in Ombudsman performance. However, the volume of findings relating to property condition and complaints handling demonstrates that further improvement is required.

4.0 Learning from Complaints and Service Improvements

4.1 Complaints are an important source of insight to show us where things are going wrong and how we can improve the service to our residents

4.2 Repairs

4.2.1 Housing Repairs continued to account for the largest proportion of complaints during the reporting period. This reflects a sustained trend and highlights the need for continued focus on repairs delivery and communication with residents.

4.2.2 Complaint investigations relating to repairs have identified several recurring themes requiring improvement, including:

- Improved recording of 'no access' visits
- Greater consistency needed between contractor records and Housing Ombudsman expectations
- Improved triaging at the first point of contact including correct Schedule of Rates (SOR) coding and repair priority setting
- The need for clearer communication with residents throughout the repairs process

4.2.3 Since the commencement of the responsive repairs and maintenance contracts with Wates and Mears in October 2025, complaint learning has been embedded within contract management arrangements. This includes:

- Weekly operational meetings to review live complaint cases and emerging issues
- Monthly performance meetings to analyse trends, performance concerns and complaints learning
- Increased scrutiny of contractor communication and record keeping
- Targeted engagement sessions and 'toolbox talks' with contractors to reinforce expectations around resident communication and appointment management

4.2.4 Due to an increased volume of complaints relating to pest infestation Property Services and Pest Control trialled joint treatment and proofing visits to reduce repeat appointments. Although the trial was not continued, it identified opportunities for closer working and highlighted the benefits of a more coordinated approach between the services.

4.2.5 <u>Case Study – Improving Repairs Triaging</u>
Driven by a rise in complaints linked to failures in triaging repairs issues e.g. incorrect SOR coding, Property Services has been conducting monthly interactive learning sessions with Customer Services where they have run morning sessions and invited different stakeholders to provide informal training on how repairs should be dealt with at first contact. Early improvements have been seen in repairs logging and escalation management.

4.3 **Policy Development**

4.3.1 Complaint investigations have highlighted occasions where responsibilities or service standards were not sufficiently clear. In response, Housing Management has accelerated the development and review of key housing policies to strengthen governance and provide greater clarity for residents and staff.

4.3.2 Policies currently in development or review include:

- Damp and Mould
- Assignment & Succession
- Domestic Abuse
- Vulnerable Residents and Safeguarding

- Anti-Social Behaviour
- Hate Crime
- Repairs
- Rent Setting
- Rent Collection and Financial Inclusion
- Mechanical and Electrical Services; Gas Safety; Asbestos and Water Safety
- Fire Safety

4.3.3 The development of these policies has been informed by both complaint investigations and the experience of frontline staff responsible for handling complaints. This has helped ensure that recurring issues identified through complaints are reflected in policy development.

4.3.4 Case Study – Developing the Asbestos Policy

A Stage 2 complaint concerning the collapse of a bedroom ceiling and the subsequent decant of a family highlighted uncertainty regarding asbestos-related responsibilities and processes.

The complaint investigation identified the need for greater clarity around how asbestos issues are managed and communicated to residents. Learning from this complaint has informed the development of a dedicated Asbestos Policy, which will set out responsibilities and expectations for managing asbestos-related risks.

4.4 Improving Customer Communication

4.4.1 Communication continues to be one of the most common themes arising from complaint investigations. Residents frequently report that unclear or inconsistent information contributes to dissatisfaction and, in some cases, unnecessary escalation of complaints.

4.4.2 In response, Housing Management has prioritised improvements to customer communications. Recent actions include reviewing online information, ensuring webpages accurately reflect current policies and procedures, and introducing Plain English standards across customer correspondence.

4.4.3 For example, information relating to tenancy succession has been reviewed to ensure it aligns with the Council's Allocations Scheme following issues raised through complaints. Guidance relating to access to communal areas has also been reviewed to provide clearer information for residents.

4.4.4 The service has also introduced Plain English training to improve the accessibility and clarity of written communications.

4.4.5 Case Study - Find your ATM Tool & WhatsApp

Complaint investigations highlighted that some residents were unsure who their Area Tenancy Manager was or how to contact them. In response, Housing Management introduced an online "Find Your Area Tenancy Manager" tool enabling residents to identify the correct officer using their address. This has

made it easier for residents to access support and obtain information at an earlier stage. In addition, WhatsApp communication channels have been established to provide easier access to information and updates on common housing issues.

4.4.6 With the introduction of a new dedicated Housing Communications resource, Housing Management will continue to strengthen resident-facing information and proactively review customer journeys to identify opportunities for improvement.

4.5 Embedding Learning from Complaints

4.5.1 The introduction of a new complaint case review tool in April 2025 has strengthened the Council's approach to organisational learning. During this reporting period five in-depth case reviews have been completed.

4.5.2 These reviews are a particularly useful tool in the Council where complex cases can straddle lots of service areas. They bring together representatives from all relevant service areas to map the customer journey. They help to identify root causes, where the service failures have occurred and agree actions to prevent similar issues from recurring. The approach has also received positive feedback from the Housing Ombudsman as an example of proactive learning from complaints.

4.5.3 Case reviews are now embedded within the complaints process and are initiated once the Council is notified that a complaint has been accepted for investigation by the Housing Ombudsman. This enables learning to begin at an early stage rather than waiting for the Ombudsman's final determination.

4.5.4 Training has also been delivered to Housing Support staff to strengthen understanding of the distinction between service requests and complaints. This has helped ensure residents are directed to the most appropriate process at the earliest opportunity and has reduced delays in complaints being logged and investigated.

4.5.5 In October 2025 a dedicated Housing Management complaints page went live. This provides residents with clearer information about how to access the complaints process. It also helps residents resolve straightforward enquiries without the need to submit a formal complaint.

4.5.6 Alongside this work, Housing Management has strengthened partnership working with other Council services where complaints involve multiple service areas. This includes joint action planning with Adult Social Care to improve coordination in complex cases and ensure residents receive a more joined-up service.

4.5.7 Housing Management will continue to embed learning from complaints across services, ensuring that complaint outcomes are used to drive service improvements.

4.5.8 Complaints remain one of the Council's most valuable sources of feedback on the resident experience. The improvements outlined in this report demonstrate how Housing Management is using complaint investigations not only to resolve individual cases but also to identify strategic changes that can be made to improve outcomes for residents.

5.0 Financial Considerations

5.1 There are no relevant financial considerations arising from this report.

6.0 Legal Considerations

6.1 Under section 51 of the Housing Act 1996, the Housing Ombudsman Scheme is approved by the Secretary of State. Local housing authorities in England acting as registered providers of social housing must remain members of the scheme for their social housing management functions.

6.2 From 1 April 2024, the Housing Ombudsman's complaint handling code is a statutory requirement for social landlords. The code introduces timescales for acknowledging and dealing with complaints, as well as a requirement for a 2-stage complaints process.

6.3 Compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code is a mandatory legal requirement for social landlords including local authority landlords pursuant to the provisions of the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023. This requires the Council to monitor, publish, and report its annual complaints performance and service improvements to its governing body, which for an authority with executive arrangements is Cabinet.

6.4 Failure to meet the statutory code or follow required complaint procedures exposes the local authority to formal Complaint Handling Failure Orders (CHFOs) issued by the Ombudsman in line with the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023. In addition, council must ensure adherence to the regulatory powers and enforcement mechanisms introduced by the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 (SH(R)A 2023). From 20 September 2023, the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) has been empowered to monitor performance metrics, compel the delivery of key performance information, and enforce compliance with consumer standards. This includes serving performance improvement plan notices, enforcement notices, and taking emergency remedial actions where necessary. The council must ensure that its housing management practices align with these standards to avoid enforcement actions, which could include penalties or interventions in management.

7.0 Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Considerations

7.1 There are no direct Equality Act implications arising from the recommendations within this report.

7.2 The Council is committed to ensuring that all residents can access the complaints process. Reasonable adjustments are available in accordance with the Council's Vulnerable Residents and Reasonable Adjustments Policy.

7.3 Complaints can be submitted through a range of channels and in different formats. The Council also accepts complaints from authorised representatives acting on behalf of residents where appropriate.

7.4 Learning arising from complaints has informed improvements to customer communications, policy development and service delivery. This supports the Council's ongoing commitment to meeting its Public Sector Equality Duty obligations and ensuring services are accessible and responsive to the diverse needs of residents.

8.0 Climate Change and Environmental Considerations

8.1 The recommendations contained within this report do not have any direct climate change or environmental implications.

9.0 Communication Considerations

9.1 The Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code requires landlords to publish an annual complaints performance and service improvement report and to make information about complaints performance accessible to residents.

9.2 Subject to approval, the report, Housing Ombudsman self-assessment and updated Complaints Policy will be published on the Council's website.

9.3 Learning arising from complaints and the service improvements identified within this report will continue to be shared with residents through online and printed communications, supporting transparency and demonstrating how resident feedback is used to improve services.

Report sign off:

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Spencer Randolph

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