

Appendix 1  
Paper No. XX

**Wandsworth Borough Council Corporate Complaints Report 2024-5**

**1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 A key part of an effective complaints system is to highlight areas for learning from those complaints that can inform ongoing improvement of services. Learning is set out throughout this report including specific case directorate case studies which evidence where learning from complaints has directly resulted in service improvements. **Appendix 3** highlights outcomes and learning from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO), **Appendix 5** highlights outcomes and learning from the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) and **Appendix 7** provides examples of learning from stage 2 corporate complaints across the Council.
- 1.2 **Section 2** sets out the background to the complaints process and the role of the Complaints Team. **Section 3** provides an overview of complaints. **Section 4** provides breakdowns by Directorates. **Section 5** provides an overview of LGSCO complaints and **Section 6** provides an overview of HOS complaints. **Section 7** sets out the Complaints Teams' key achievements this year.
- 1.3 This year Wandsworth Council completed 1172 complaints across both corporate and statutory processes which is a 21% increase on the 965 complaints last year. It should be noted that only a very small proportion of interactions and contacts with the Council result in formal complaints, such context has been set out in greater detail in the report below.
- 1.4 Across all stages and processes, this year 472 complaints were not upheld (40%), 344 were upheld (29%) and 354 (30%) were partially upheld. In addition, 2 (1%) corporate stage 2 complaints were withdrawn before the process had completed. Chart 3 below details the split by percentage.
- 1.5 As in previous years, 'service delay or failure' was the most raised issue of complaint (49%).
- 1.6 This year 909 (78%) of complaints at all stages and both corporate and statutory processes were responded to on time.
- 1.7 The LGSCO contacted the Council 418 times (394 in 2023-24) regarding 160 complaints. This included enquiries for 142 new complaints as well as 20 ongoing cases which resulted in 23 investigations, of which 18 were upheld. This equates to a 17% increase on the 121 complaints received last year.
- 1.8 The 23 formal investigations is a 28% reduction on the 32 last year. This is despite a 17% increase in residents escalating their complaints to the LGSCO. The LGSCO have confirmed that Wandsworth are successfully remedying more complaints at stage 2. This has directly reduced the number of formal investigations they have undertaken.
- 1.9 In addition, the LGSCO made 45 premature decisions (referring the complaint back to the Council to consider) and 72 Assessment Final Decisions (a full investigation into the matter

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was not proportionate or had not caused a significant injustice to the complainant, or it was more appropriate for the matter to be pursued through an appeal, the courts or similar).

- 1.10 Wandsworth's average upheld rate of 78% equates to **5.4 upheld decisions per 100,000 residents** and is below the average of 9.1 per 100,000 residents of similar authorities.
- 1.11 The Council is performing well in relation to similar sized boroughs. The average 'upheld' rate for the three statistical neighbouring boroughs with the closest profile to Wandsworth (Lambeth, Bromley and Enfield) is 86%. Additionally, Wandsworth's only received 23 formal investigations compared to an average of 49 across its statistical neighbours.
- 1.12 There were no new Public Reports issues this year, and the Council achieved 100% compliance in satisfactorily implementing LGSCO recommendations.
- 1.13 The HOS contacted the Council 298 times regarding 95 individual cases (199 contacts for 82 cases in 2023-24). This included enquiries regarding 67 new cases as well as ongoing investigations. From these enquiries, the HOS considered carrying out 33 investigations and made determinations (service fault or maladministration findings) on 25 of these after detailed investigations which resulted in 108 orders.
- 1.14 The overall increase in orders is to be expected and is not unique to Wandsworth as in the Housing Ombudsman's Annual Complaints Review 2024–25, formal investigations and determinations continued to rise, with a 30% increase in decisions compared to the previous year.
- 1.15 The Housing Ombudsman has reported in their annual Landlord Report that Wandsworth Council has a slightly higher maladministration rate of 82% in comparison to the national rate of 80% when comparing to landlords of a similar size, which are those with housing units above 10,000.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The Corporate Complaints Team's role is to support the organization, to ensure that the Council has effective and efficient complaints procedures, in line with best practice and statutory requirements. The Complaints Team also have responsibility to train and support Council officers to respond effectively to complaints and ensure learning from complaints feeds directly into service improvement.
- 2.2 The Council's response to complaints it receives remains a key element of its approach to the delivery of quality services. Dealing positively and swiftly with complaints continues to be a high priority task for Directors, managers and staff at all levels. The Council encourages residents and businesses to provide feedback on services, to make a complaint or comment or to submit a suggestion, through various channels and online arrangements.

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- 2.3 Data gathered for both the Adult and Children's Social Care annual reports has been included in this report to provide a complete picture of all complaints that the Council dealt with during the past year, from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025.
- 2.4 There is a statutory duty on Monitoring Officers to report to Council Members where there has been maladministration or service failure. This annual corporate complaints' report details the organisation's performance against internal performance measures as well as steps being taken to continually improve. improve.
- 2.5 The Council's corporate complaints procedure is available on the public webpages. A useful definition of a complaint is provided below, along with a description of other enquiries which follow different procedures and are therefore not considered under Wandsworth's Council's corporate complaints' procedure.
- 2.6 A complaint is:
- "...an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions or lack of action by the organisation, its own staff, or those acting on its behalf, affecting an individual or group of individuals".*
- 2.7 Other enquiries: In line with LGSCO guidance, the council logs minor matters such as missed refuse collections, street related issues, abandoned vehicles, graffiti and fly tipping as '**faults**' or '**service requests**.' They are often resolved quickly by the service or the relevant contractor. However, if the same issue occurs repeatedly (more than twice), it is elevated to a formal stage 1 complaint.
- 2.8 Other matters which have a separate appeals procedure are:
- Housing Benefit appeals
  - Council Tax disputes
  - Planning application appeals
  - School admission appeals
  - School exclusions
  - Special Educational Needs and Disability decisions (Education, Health and Care Plan)
  - Penalty Charge Notice appeals
  - Homelessness decisions
- 2.9 Wherever possible, a corporate complaint should be dealt with at stage 1. If, however, the complainant is not satisfied with the response received or the action taken, the matter can be referred to a senior manager for a review of the way the complaint was handled (stage 2). There are separate complaint regulations for Adult Social Care complaints and some statutory functions for Children's Social Care
- 2.10 For this reporting year, the timescale to respond at stage 1 is 20 working days and the review at stage 2 is currently 25 working days (total 45 days). Further recourse is open to the complainant through the LGSCO or the HOS, who may choose to investigate the matter to see if there has been evidence of fault leading to injustice by the Council or possible

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maladministration. From 1 April 2025, timescales reduce to 10 working days at stage 1 and 20 working days at stage 2 in line with the HOS and LGSCO's aligned Complaints Handling Code.

- 2.11 Complaints are counted in the year in which they were responded to or closed. Therefore 2024-25 complaint figures include complaints that will have been initiated in the previous year but then closed in the reporting year.

### **3. OVERVIEW OF COMPLAINTS**

- 3.1 This section sets out the key messages regarding the number of complaints, the types of complaints, the timescales in which they were responded to, and a summary of the outcomes and learning.
- 3.2 Timescales and types of complaints for Adult and Children's statutory complaints have been separated as they follow a different process. Both Adult and Children's statutory complaints have a separate more detailed report as required by the complaints' legislation. These reports will go separately to the relevant Adult and Children's Scrutiny Committees<sup>1</sup>.
- 3.3 Where available, specific examples are explored for each Directorate in **Section 4** below but examples of learning from complaints are outlined below:
- **Housing Regeneration Directorate** - Complaints about reasonable adjustments for disabled residents resulted in staff training and improved case alerts, ensuring accessible communication formats are consistently used. Feedback from complaints about anti-social behaviour and management transfers led to improved communication, clearer handovers between officers, and enhancements to the Anti-Social Behaviour database for better resident support
  - **Environment and Community Services** - Following complaints about missed waste collections, ECS improved communication with collection crews and introduced targeted inspections, ensuring recurring issues are addressed proactively rather than reactively. Additionally, complaints about the Battersea Park fireworks event led to a review with Enable Leisure and Culture, resulting in changes to event management to enhance the experience for attendees next year.
  - **Finance Directorate** - A complaint about delays and unclear communication in Housing Benefit claims prompted the Benefits Service to reinforce early intervention for elderly and vulnerable claimants, improving accessibility and support. Additionally, Complaints about delays in insurance claim processing led to refresher training for staff and enhancements in communication protocols, ensuring claimants receive timely updates and clearer explanations.
  - **Adult Social Care**- Complaints about delays in assessments and support plans led to improved monitoring of staff workload, increased supervision, and prompt case reassignment to ensure continuity of care.

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<sup>1</sup> Children's Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2025

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- **Children’s Services** - Complaints about delays in issuing EHCPs led to a comprehensive review of processes, increased staffing, and targeted training to ensure annual reviews are completed promptly and in line with statutory requirements. Additionally, a complaint about customer service in the School Admissions team resulted in targeted training and ongoing monitoring of calls to reinforce professionalism and active listening

3.4 **Appendix 2** to this report provides figures for the whole Council and shows all corporate complaints by type, level and time and includes information on complaints received via the statutory reporting processes and equalities data. **Appendix 3** provides the learning arising from upheld LGSCO complaints. **Appendix 4** provides the LGSCO Annual Review letter in respect of Wandsworth Borough Council. **Appendix 5** provides a summary of the outcomes of investigations by the HOS during 2024-25. A link is provided to the Council’s self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman’s complaint handling code<sup>2</sup>. **Appendix 6** provides the HOS Landlord Report and **Appendix 7** provides examples of learning from upheld or partly upheld stage 2 corporate complaints across all directorates.

3.5 As **table 1** below shows, the number of complaints has increased by 21% from last year.

Table 1: WBC total number of complaints 2021-22 to 2024-25

Year	Number of Complaints
2021/22	995
2022/23	921
2023/24	965
2024/25	1172

3.6 The volume of complaints should be set in context by looking at the wider picture of the level of contact and interaction the Council has with its residents and services users. For example, complaint numbers are low given that the Council’s Customer Services handled 160,268 customer calls (and 5,702 callback requests), 8,918 emails and 18,664 webchats. This year Wandsworth Council also handled approximately 10,583 Member Enquiries.

Chart 1: Total number of complaints 2021-22 to 2024-25

<sup>2</sup> The Council’s self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman’s Complaints Handling Code was approved on 18<sup>th</sup> July 20254 via Housing Overview & Scrutiny Committee  
<https://democracy.wandsworth.gov.uk/documents/s120257/25-190%20App3%20Self-Assessment%20Form%202025%20DRAFT.pdf>

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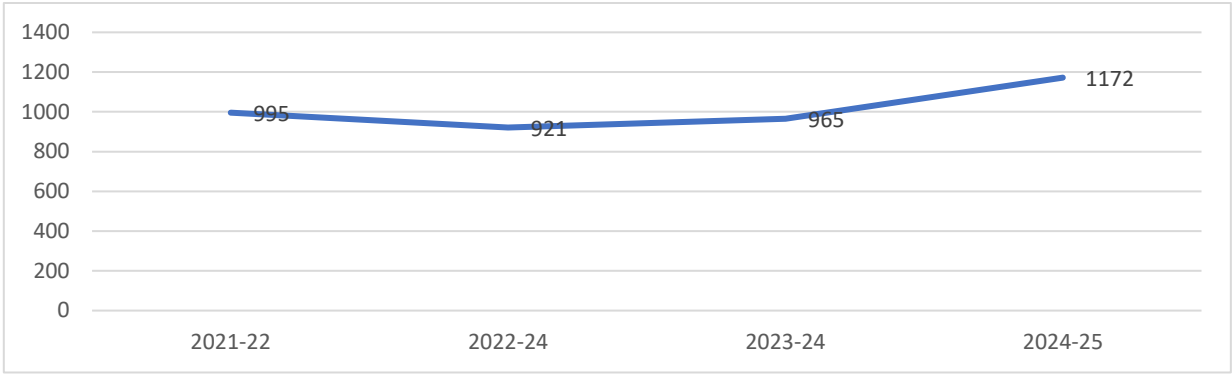
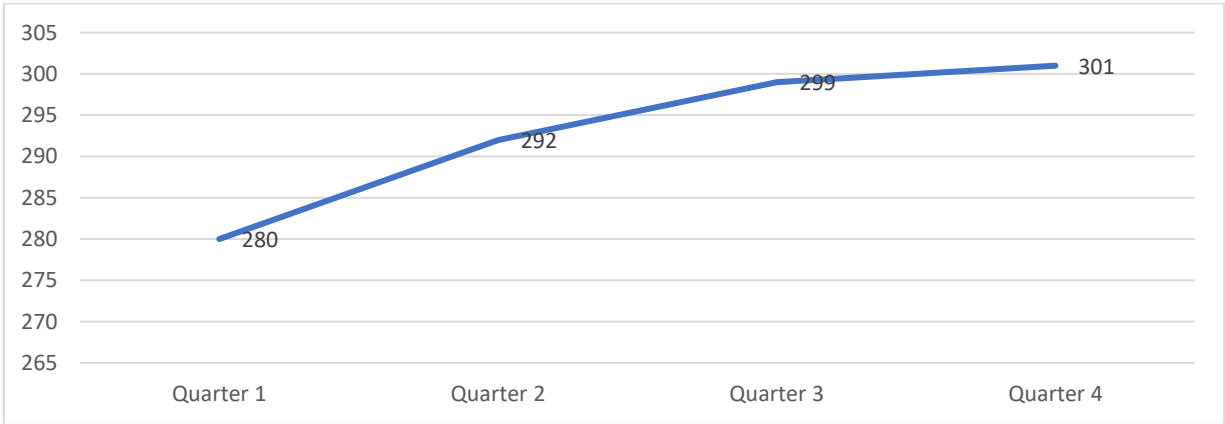


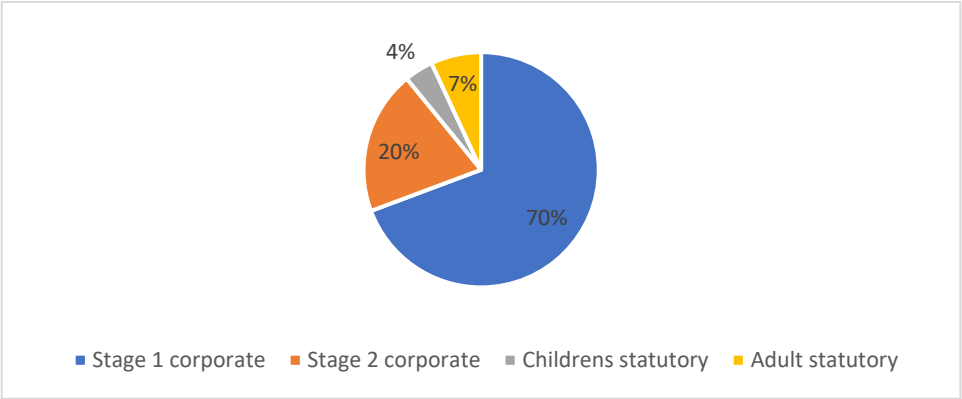
Chart 2: Total number of complaints across corporate and statutory process by quarters 2024-25



- 3.7 As **Chart 2** demonstrates, there has been a continuous increase in complaints across the years from 2021-2.
- 3.8 Whilst a detailed breakdown and analysis across directorates is provided later in the report, **Chart 3** below sets out the proportion of the 1172 complaints across stages 1 and 2 corporate process and both statutory processes.
- Stage 1 corporate complaints accounted for most complaints. 820 complaints (70%) were completed which is a 20% increase on the 682 (71%) completed last year.
  - Stage 2 corporate complaints accounted for 232 (20%) complaints, which is a 27% increase on the 183 completed last year.
  - Children’s statutory complaints accounted for 46 (4%) complaints which is a 24% increase on the 37 completed last year.
  - Adult statutory complaints accounted for 84 (7%) of complaints which is a 33% increase on the 63 completed last year.

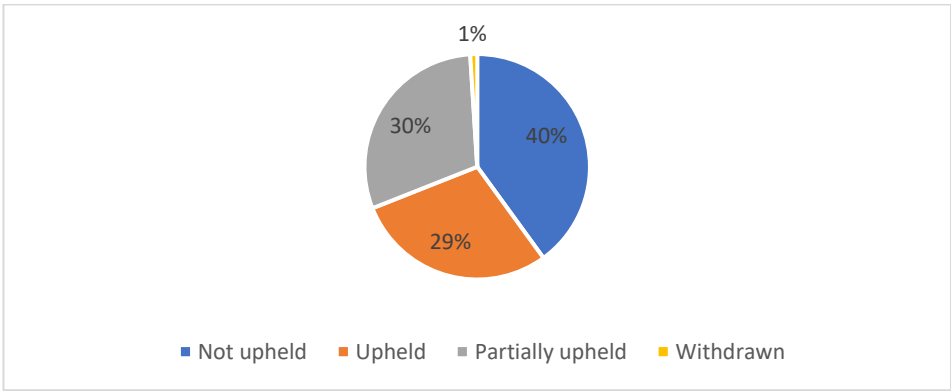
Chart 3: Percentage of complaints split by Corporate and Statutory processes 2024-25

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- 3.9 Statutory complaint numbers and trends are examined in detail in the Adult and Children’s Statutory Complaints reports 2024-25 and a summary is provided in the commentary for the two directorates later in this report.
- 3.10 This year 232 corporate complaints (or 27%) escalated from stage 1 to stage 2. Last year 19% of complaints escalated to stage 2.
- 3.11 Across all stages and processes, this year 472 complaints were not upheld (40%), 344 were upheld (29%) and 354 (30%) were partially upheld. Additionally, 2 (1%) complaints were withdrawn before completing the process. **Chart 3** below details the split by percentage.

Chart 4: Chart 4 percentage of complaints by outcome across all stages and types 2024/25



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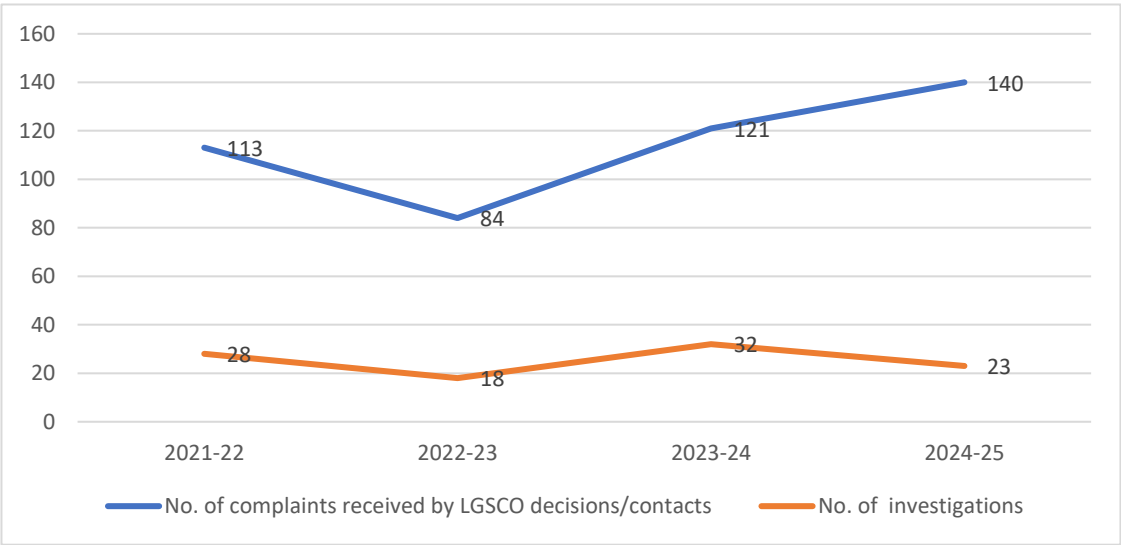
3.12 **Table 2** below shows outcome of complaints from for the past two years, following the removal of service requests from the complaints process. Across all three complaint outcomes, proportionally the numbers are similar.

Table 2 Complaints by outcome 2023/24 to 2024/25

Outcome	2023/24	2024/25
Upheld	268 (28%)	344 (29%)
Partially Upheld	287 (30%)	354 (30%)
Not Upheld	410 (42%)	472 (40%)
Withdrawn	0	2 (1%)
Total	965	1172

3.13 In **2024-25** the LGSCO made contact with the Council 418 times (394 in 2023-24) regarding 160 individual complaints. This included enquiries for 142 new Wandsworth cases as well as 20 ongoing cases from 2023-24. These contacts resulted in 23 investigations, of which 18 were upheld. This equates to 17% increase on the 121 complaints received last year but a 28% decrease on the 32 detailed investigations in the previous year. In addition, the LGSCO made 45 premature decisions (referring the complaint back to the Council to consider) and 72 Assessment Final Decisions (a full investigation into the matter was not proportionate or had not caused a significant injustice to the complainant, or it was more appropriate for the matter to be pursued through an appeal, the courts or similar).

Chart 5 Number of LGSCO decisions and investigations: 2021/22 – 2024/25



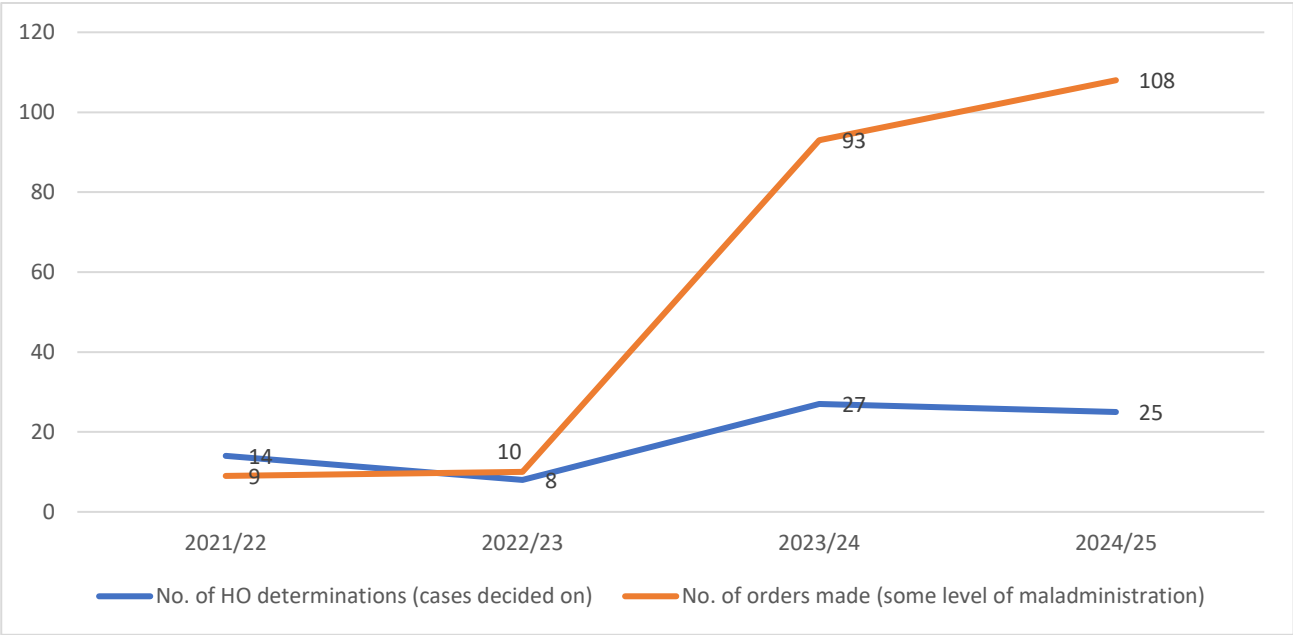
3.14 In 2024-25 the HOS made contact with the Council 298 times regarding 95 individual cases (199 contacts for 82 cases in 2023-24). This included enquiries regarding 67 new cases as well as ongoing investigations. The HOS contacted the Council 298 times regarding 95 individual cases (199 contacts for 82 cases in 2023-24). This included enquiries regarding 67 new cases as well as ongoing investigations. From these enquiries, the HOS considered carrying out 33 investigations and made determinations (service fault or maladministration findings) on 25 of these after detailed investigations which resulted in 108 orders. Wandsworth accepted all the 25 HOS determinations this year.



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3.15 The overall increase in orders is to be expected and is not unique to Wandsworth as in the Housing Ombudsman’s Annual Complaints Review 2024–25, formal investigations and determinations continued to rise, with a 30% increase in decisions compared to the previous year. This reflects the sector’s growing transparency and responsiveness, supported by the continued embedding of the Complaints Handling Code. Positively, the Ombudsman reported a 7% reduction in maladministration rates and a halving of severe maladministration findings, suggesting improvements in how landlords respond to complaints. There was also a notable rise in findings of reasonable redress, indicating that more landlords are taking proactive steps to resolve issues. These developments point to a sector that is becoming more accountable and resident-focused, even as demand continues to grow.

Chart 6: Number of Housing Ombudsman cases closed 2021/22 – 2024/25



Types of Corporate complaints by directorate

- 3.15 This section sets out the main type of issue raised in the 1042 Corporate complaints closed this year. **Table 3** shows the main type of issues raised but does not include statutory complaints as these are categorised differently. Complaint types for statutory Adult and Children’s social care complaints are analysed in detail within the 2024-25 Statutory Complaint reports. Therefore, analysis of the types of corporate complaints this year should be based on the proportion of times raised when compared to previous years.
- 3.16 This year, and as in previous years, ‘service delay or failure’ was the most raised issue of complaint (49%). It is recognised that ‘service delay or failure’ is a broad category and from 1 April 2025 will be split into two distinct categories. Positively there has been a decrease in complaints about ‘staff error/attitude’.

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Table 3: Types of corporate complaints 2023-24 to 2024-25

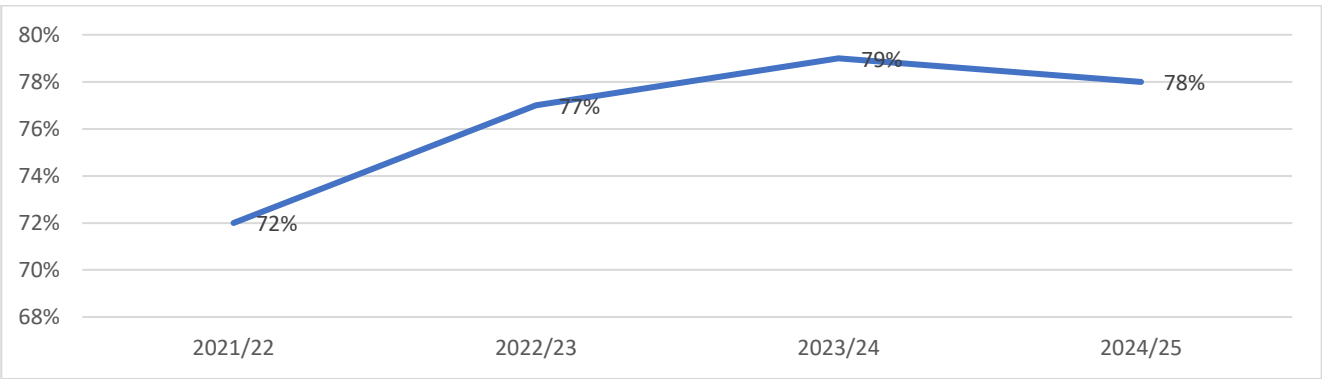
Type of Complaint	2023-24	2024-25
Service delay or failure	481 (56%)	511 (49%)
Outside service procedure	74 (8%)	241 (23%)
Staff error/attitude	184 (21%)	165 (16%)
Disagreement with/failure to implement assessment	45 (5%)	41 (4%)
Financial charges/billings/costs	32 (4%)	40 (4%)
Poor/incorrect information	49 (6%)	44 (4%)
TOTAL	865 (not including statutory complaints)	1,042 (does not include statutory complaints)

3.17 A more detailed breakdown of the types of issues raised in stage 1 and 2 corporate complaints by Directorate is provided further in the report.

Timescales for responding to complaints

3.17.1 This section sets out the timescales of complaints responded to. As shown in **chart 7**, this year 909 (78%) of complaints at all stages and both corporate and statutory processes were responded to on time. This is only 1% lower than the 79% on time last year despite the increased complaints received.

Chart 7: Overall % of complaints on time across corporate and statutory 2021-22 – 2024-25

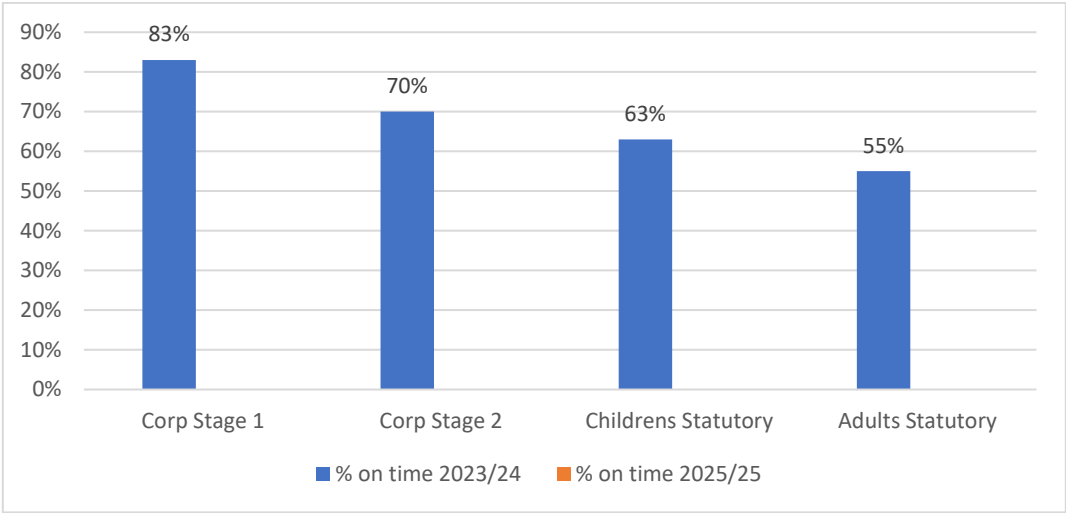


3.18 When analysing the proportion of complaints completed within the target timescales, statutory social care (Adults and Children’s) complaints are also shown separately in **Chart 8** as they follow different procedures and timescales.

3.19 **Chart 8** below provides a breakdown of the percentage of complaints on time compared to last year.

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Chart 8: Percentage of complaints on time by complaint processes and corporate stages 2023/24 and 2024/25



- 3.20 Stage 1 of the corporate process currently has a timescale of 20 working days to investigate and respond. This year 671 (83%) of the 810 stage 1 complaints were completed on time which is slightly lower than the 573 (85%) of the 682 stage 1 complaints completed on time last year.
- 3.21 At stage 2 of the corporate process, the Council has 25 working days to undertake a review of the stage 1 investigation and respond. Of the 232 stage 2 complaints, 163 (70%) were completed on time. As a percentage, this is lower than the 135 (74%) completed on time last year, although the increased volume of complaints on time is a significant number (18 cases).
- 3.22 Adults Statutory Complaints completed 55% of complaints within the local 25-day target which is an improvement on the 43% last year. These complaints are within the six-month statutory resolution period and follow local targets. Adult social care complaints are complex and often require more time for investigation. The Complaints Team keeps complainants informed throughout the process.
- 3.23 Childrens Statutory Complaints completed 63% on time across all 3 stages which is slightly lower than the 68% on time last year.

4. BREAKDOWN BY DIRECTORATE

- 4.1 This section focuses on numbers of complaints, the timescales, and any directorate specific context that will give context to the complaint numbers. **Table 4** below shows the breakdown of complaints per Directorate (and includes statutory complaints) for 2024/25.

Table 4: Volume of Corporate complaints by directorate 2021-22 – 2024-25

	Directorate Totals				
	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	% +/-
				5	

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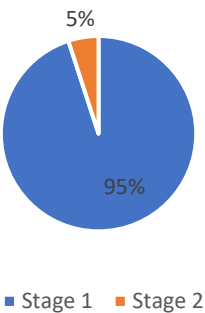
Environment and Community Services	273	244	229	273	+19%
Finance	185	188	153	131	-14%
Housing and Regeneration	276	291	403	474	+18%
Children's Services Corporate <sup>3</sup>	59	63	64	94	+47%
Adult Social Care Corporate	18	6	1	11	+1000 %
Children's Service - Statutory	96	62	46	37	-24%
Adults Social Care - Statutory	80	66	63	84	+33%
Chief Executives Group	8	1	15	53	+253%
Change and Innovation	N/A	N/A	N/A	6	
<b>Total</b>	<b>995</b>	<b>921</b>	<b>965</b>	<b>1,172</b>	

4.2 This year Housing and Regeneration completed the most complaints and saw an 18% increase on last year. This is to be expected as the demand for housing has increased significantly and the Housing Ombudsman Service continues to raise its profile, resulting in greater publicity about how leaseholders and tenants can raise complaints to landlords. Decreases in Finance are due to changes in the Directorate, following Customer Services, HR and IT moving to the Change and Innovation Directorate in April 2024. The reduction in statutory complaints for Children's Social Care can be attributed to reduction in the number of young people being supported through child protection and a reduction in turnover rates for social workers which has provided more continuity to families.

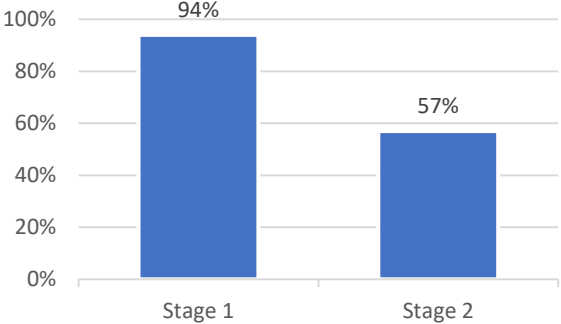
Environment and Community Services (ECS)

Chart 9: Percentage of corporate complaints completed by stage and 'on time' for ESC 2024/25

% of complaints by stage



Complaints 'on time' by stage



4.3 This year ECS completed 273 complaints compared to 229 last year which is a 19% increase. Of the 273 complaints, 259 (95%) were completed at stage 1. Also, 14 (5%) of complaints were completed at stage 2. Whilst this is the same as the 14 stage 2 complaints last year, this, along with the percentage increase in recorded complaints, should be set against the context of some key services within the new Place Division (e.g. Development Management and Building control) moving to the Chief Executive's Group.

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- 4.4 As well as the 273 complaints, there were a total of 15 LGSCO complaints received in the year (and 1 complaint brought forward from 2023-24) with only 2 of these resulting in full investigations following assessment. ECS also responded to 4187 Member Enquiries this year.
- 4.5 Whilst inevitably some complaints will escalate to stage 2, the relatively low numbers after stage 1 demonstrate the Directorate's commitment to putting things right at stage 1.
- 4.6 In terms of timeliness, 244 (94%) stage 1 complaints were completed on time, and 8 (57%) stage 2 complaints were completed on time.
- 4.7 The type of complaint raised most often this year was 'outside service procedure' which was raised 181 times (66%). This relates to complaints where the matter is outside the remit of the Council i.e. the Council is not the lead Authority on the relevant legislation, policy, law, or right of appeal. Other notable types are 'service delay or failure' which was raised 61 times (23%) and 'staff error/attitude' which was raised 13 times (5%).
- 4.8 For 2024/25 one reason for an increase in complaints compared to the previous year was receipt of number of complaints associated with a licensing application by Enable to vary license conditions for the hosting of events, which was subsequently withdrawn. The complaints were focussed upon the Council, through Enable, improving the communication with residents about forthcoming events.
- 4.9 After taking the transfer of services to Chief Executive's Group and the complaints associated with licensing application into account; the numbers of complaints for ECS has continued to decline over the last three years (**Table 4**), although there has been a 19% increase in 2024/25 compared to last year.
- 4.10 During 2024/25 the Council received a number of complaints in relation to the operation of the Battersea Park fireworks display. The Battersea Park fireworks display is a major event with significant numbers of attendees. There were a range complaints with regard to various different perceived issues, including noise, access and seating and the overall numbers of attendees. The consideration and learning from feedback and complaints received for previous is a key part of planning and preparation for the fireworks event. The Council will continue to work with Enable Leisure and Culture who organise and operate the fireworks display to seek to address the issues raised as part of a review of the event to deliver a better experience for all for the next year, with the understanding that such a major event will always have prospect for contention between contrasting wishes.
- 4.11 The Department has taken action to seek to improve service standards and strive to improve performance following complaints. This has involved attempts to enhance the availability and detail of information to residents and users of services about various services provided by ECS. This has been the case for waste and street cleansing collection and for tree maintenance in parks and on street.
- 4.12 There has also been continued investment to support better integration between the Council and council contractors and partners delivering vital front-line services. For Waste and Street Cleansing, as part of the Cleaner Borough Phase 2 investment programme the

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Council has funded an increase in additional contract monitoring officers to ensure contractors deliver the high standards expected for residents in the Borough.

*Table 5: Types of complaint Environment & Community Services 2023-24 and 2024-25*

Type of complaint	Times raised 2023-24	%	Times raised 2024-25	%
Service Delay or Failure	153	67%	61	23%
Outside Service Procedure	26	11%	181	66%
Staff Error/Attitude	29	13%	13	5%
Disagreement with/failure to implement assessment within timescales	17	7%	9	3%
Financial Charges/Billings/Costs	4	2%	3	1%
Poor/Incorrect Information	0	0%	6	2%
	<b>229</b>		<b>273</b>	

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**Case Study Stage 1: Improving Waste Collection Response: Lessons from a Stage 1 Complaint**

**Background**

A resident submitted a Stage 1 complaint to Wandsworth Council regarding repeated missed recycling sack collections at their property and neighbouring addresses. The issues began following changes to the waste collection service in the borough. Despite multiple reports made by the resident and others, the problem persisted over several weeks. In some instances, the resident resorted to personally disposing of the waste at a local facility due to the lack of collection.

**Investigation Findings**

The Council's investigation involved reviewing email records, the internal customer management system and the contractor communication system. It was found that although missed collections were reported and resolved weekly by dispatching a crew to collect the waste, the root cause was not addressed. The regular collection crew was not informed of their errors, resulting in repeated failures. Furthermore, the Council did not promptly link the reports to identify the issue as a recurring fault, nor did it initiate a timely investigation to prevent further occurrences. These oversights led to a cycle of reactive rather than proactive service delivery.

**Learning**

This case highlights the importance of timely and thorough responses to service complaints. Missed collections, while occasionally unavoidable, must be addressed with urgency and strategic oversight. The Council recognised the need to improve communication with collection crews, utilise in-cab technology for accountability, and enhance the tracking of missed collections through Whitespace. Supervisors now conduct targeted inspections, and key performance indicators have been embedded into the contractor's obligations. The overarching lesson is that repeated service failures require systemic solutions, not just short-term fixes, and that complaints should trigger a broader review to prevent recurrence.

***Annual Corporate Complaints Report 2024-25*****Case Study Stage 2: Improving Claims Communication: Lessons from a Delayed Liability Decision****Background**

A resident raised a formal complaint regarding repeated missed waste collections and the improper handling of bins, including lids being left off or bins being thrown into the garden. The complaint, initially submitted in June 2023, was processed as a service request. The resident expressed dissatisfaction with the Stage 1 response and escalated the matter to Stage 2, citing confusion over the complaints process, the lack of timely action, and the inadequacy of the initial goodwill gesture offered.

**Investigation Findings**

The Stage 2 review confirmed that the officer handling the original complaint failed to follow the Council's corporate complaints procedure. Instead of treating the submission as a formal Stage 1 complaint, it was mistakenly processed as a routine service request. This procedural error delayed appropriate action and contributed to the resident's frustration. The investigation also acknowledged that the waste collection crews had not exercised sufficient care, resulting in bins being mishandled and left in unsafe or unsanitary conditions. The Council admitted that had the complaint been properly addressed in June 2023, corrective measures could have been implemented much earlier. In recognition of these failings and the distress caused, the Council increased the goodwill payment to £400.

**Learning from the Complaint**

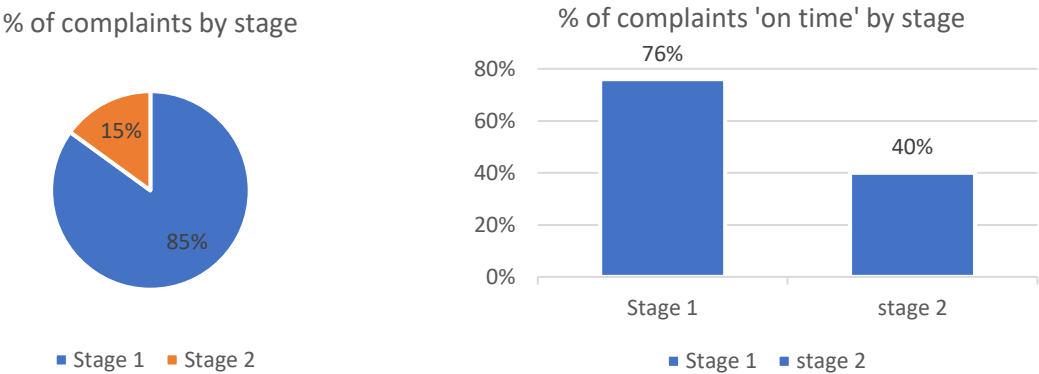
This case highlighted the importance of correctly identifying and processing complaints through the formal corporate procedure. As a result, the Waste Management team underwent comprehensive training on the complaints process to ensure future submissions are handled appropriately. Additionally, the Council has committed to extending monitoring of the waste collection contractor to ensure improved service standards. The case underscores the need for timely, accurate responses and clear communication with residents to maintain trust and accountability in public services.



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Finance Directorate

Chart 10: Percentage of corporate complaints completed by stage and 'on time' for Finance 2024/25



- 4.13 In 2024-25 Finance completed 131 complaints which is 14% lower than the 153 completed last year. The Directorate is responsible for processing in excess of 160,000 parking permits annually (resident, business and visitors permits), over 190000 PCN's and also deals with other high-volume areas including almost 27,000 benefit claims, and over 150,000 Council Tax accounts.
- 4.14 111 (85%) were completed at stage 1 compared to 139 (91%) last year. Only 20 (15%) escalated to stage 2 of the process compared to 14 (10%) last year. Therefore, the Directorate continues to resolve most complaints at stage 1. As well as the 131 complaints, there were a total of 12 LGSCO complaints received in the year. None of these resulted in a full investigation following assessment by the LGSCO. Finance also handled 292 Member Enquiries this year.
- 4.15 In terms of timeliness, 84 (76%) were on time at stage 1 compared to 112 (81%) last year. At stage 2, 8 (40%) complaints were completed on time compared to 10 (71%) completed on time last year. A review has been carried out to ascertain the reasons for the drop in performance on Stage 2 response times and improvements will be implemented to ensure performance is enhanced next year. To support this, the Complaints Team have undertaken refresher complaint briefing sessions with services. The out of time responses were spread across various sections within Finance and were mainly complex, multi service complaints. In most cases letters were sent to confirm there would be a delay in providing a full response
- 4.16 The most raised type of complaint (37%) was 'Outside Service Procedure' which was raised 48 times and included 33 disputing policies on parking permits, or appealing PCN's. 'Service delay or failure' was raised 41 times and included delays processing refunds, insurance claims or dealing with correspondence. Complaints about Financial Charges were raised 19 times mainly in relation to invoices related to Housing Benefit overpayments, Council Tax or Service Charges. 'Poor or Incorrect information' was raised 16 times and included issues processing permits, PCN, benefit claims administration and Council tax enforcement.
- 4.17 For Finance Directorate, only 27 (21%) of complaints were upheld or partially upheld. The main learning from the complaints completed during 2024/25 was in relation to carrying out team and individual officer training including the wider consideration of further ways the

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services can support the vulnerable, reviewing policies and procedures, and the further development of software to deal with routine enquires which has freed up a greater number of officers to deal with more complex queries.

Table 6: Types of complaint Finance 2023-24 and 2024 - 25

Type of complaint	Times raised 2023-24	%	Times raised 2024-25	%
Service Delay or Failure	56	37%	41	31%
Outside Service Procedure	44	29%	48	37%
Staff Error/Attitude	11	7%	6	5%
Disagreement with/failure to implement assessment within timescales	2	1%	1	0.5%
Financial Charges/Billings/Costs	20	13%	19	14.5%
Poor/Incorrect Information	20	13%	16	12%
	153		131	

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**From Oversight to Opportunity: Learning from a Benefits Service Complaint**

**Background**

A Stage 1 complaint was submitted to Wandsworth Council’s Benefits Service regarding the handling of a Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction claim. The complaint was made on behalf of an elderly couple by their son, following a series of communications and actions that left the family feeling distressed and unsupported. The core issues raised included delays in updating the claim, lack of clarity in correspondence, and insufficient support in gathering required documentation.

**Investigation Findings**

The investigation revealed that the claim had not been updated since 2014, despite changes in the couple’s financial circumstances, including increases in State Pension. A review initiated in April 2024 required updated information on income and capital. Several letters were sent requesting bank statements and pension details, but the process lacked proactive support. A visiting officer was only dispatched after multiple failed attempts to obtain the necessary documents.

The claim was suspended—not cancelled—due to missing information and eventually amended following a home visit on 25th June 2024. It was found that the couple’s savings had exceeded the £16,000 threshold from February 2024, rendering them ineligible for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction. This resulted in large overpayments for Housing Benefit for Council Tax Reduction, which are now subject to recovery.

**Learning**

This case highlights the importance of tailoring service delivery to meet the needs of elderly and vulnerable residents. The delay in arranging a home visit contributed to confusion and distress, and the reliance on written communication proved ineffective. The Benefits Service acknowledged that earlier intervention via a visiting officer could have prevented the escalation of the complaint and facilitated a smoother resolution.

As a result, the service has committed to reinforcing the use of its visiting officer resource for elderly and/or vulnerable claimants at the earliest stage of information gathering. This approach aims to improve accessibility, reduce misunderstandings, and ensure that claimants receive the support they need to comply with benefit requirements.

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**Case Study Stage 2: Learning from Delay: Strengthening Claimant Support and Communication**

**Background**

A resident submitted a personal injury claim to the Council. The complaint arose due to significant delays in processing the claim and communication from the Insurance Team, confusion over liability between the Council and its contractor, dissatisfaction with the financial remedy offered, and ongoing safety concerns for residents. The complainant escalated the matter to Stage 2 of the Council's corporate complaints procedure, seeking further compensation for the stress and inconvenience caused.

**Investigation Findings**

The Stage 2 investigation confirmed that the complainant's concerns were valid. It was acknowledged that the Council took longer than expected to determine liability and provide regular updates or clear explanations for the delays, falling short of its own service standards. The investigation also clarified that the Council was not liable for the injury, as the contract with the cleaning contractor placed responsibility on the contractor. However, the Council recognised that the complainant was not adequately supported during the process and that the initial financial remedy did not account for the distress caused. As a result, the financial offer was increased to £350.

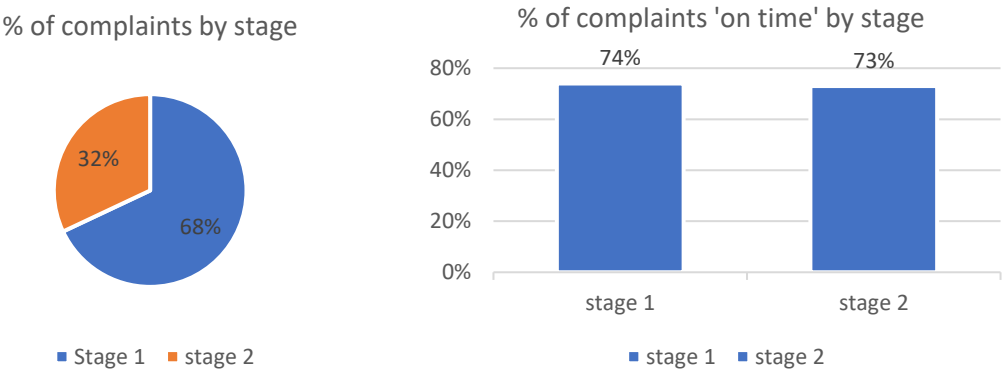
**Learning from the Complaint**

This case highlighted several areas for improvement. The Insurance Service has since taken steps to enhance its communication protocols with claimants, including exploring software enhancements for automated reminders and supervisory prompts. The Claims Administrator involved received refresher training and is now under enhanced supervision. Additionally, the Council and its contractor reviewed the incident to implement any necessary safety measures at the site of the original incident. These actions aim to prevent similar service failures and ensure claimants are treated with greater transparency and responsiveness in future.

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Housing and Regeneration Directorate

Chart 11: Percentage of corporate complaints completed by stage and 'on time' or Housing and Regeneration 2024/25



- 4.18 In 2024-25, the Housing Directorate’s Business Support team completed:
- 322 complaints at stage 1 and 152 complaints at stage 2.
  - 95 HOS complaint enquiries (67 for new cases) of which 8 were closed following assessment with a further 25 being determined following full investigations.
  - 64 LGSCO individual complaint enquires (55 new cases) of which 47 were closed after initial enquiries or assessment and 9 closed after a full investigation.
- 4.19 Combining these figures for stage 1 and 2 complaints, the directorate completed 474 complaints which is a 18% increase on the 403 complaints completed last year and a 63% increase on the 291 completed in 2022-23. As well as the 474 complaints, HRD handled approximately 5,470 Member Enquiries. They also received 55 new LGSCO complaints (as well as 9 brought forward from 2023-24) with: 9 of these resulting in full investigations following assessment, 18 being closed after detailed assessment and 29 cases being referred back to the Council to take through the complaints process after initial enquiries. In addition they closed 33 HOS complaints, with 25 of these resulting in full investigation and determinations.
- 4.20 This year, 322 (68%) were completed at stage 1 compared to 271 (67%) last year. This is a 19% increase. 152 (32%) escalated to stage 2 compared to 132 (33%) last year. This is a 15% increase on last year.
- 4.21 In terms of timeliness, 239 (74%) of stage 1 complaints were completed on time compared to 210 (77%) last year. At stage 2, 111 (73%) of stage 2 complaints were completed on time compared to 94 (71%) last year.
- 4.22 Broken down across housing management (where recourse is to the Housing Ombudsman)
- 221 were at stage 1 and 108 were at stage 2.
  - 155 (70%) stage 1s and 75 (70%) stage 2s were on time.
- 4.23 Broken down across other housing services (where recourse is to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

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- 101 were at stage 1 and 44 were at stage 2
- 84 (82%) stage 1s and 36 (83%) stage 2s were on time.

- 4.24 A significant factor contributing to the rise in housing complaints is the growing awareness among residents of their rights and the mechanisms available to address complaints. Public campaigns, media investigations, and high-profile cases have spotlighted housing issues, encouraging more individuals to come forward. The Council has also undertaken regular circulations (Homelife) to residents which has raised the profile of their right to complain. Additionally, the Housing Ombudsman Service has made its processes more accessible and transparent, empowering tenants to escalate unresolved issues. The introduction of the HOS' statutory Complaint Handling Code has further clarified expectations for both landlords and tenants, ensuring that residents are better informed about how to navigate the complaints process.
- 4.25 In Housing Management, the common topics complaints have been about are summarised as dissatisfaction with the quality of repairs and time taken to make repairs, communication issues with both contractors and Council staff, issues such as leaks, ingress, damp and mould, dissatisfaction with Major Works schemes timeframes and quality, contractor conduct and finally the handling of anti-social behaviour cases. This has resulted in the following HOS defined learning: complaint handling, reasonable adjustments, progression of repairs, record keeping, communication, proportionate remedies, policy and practice, staff training and development, information provision, constructive third-party dialogue and work provision.
- 4.26 Some of these complaint topics are interlinked, i.e. the time taken to make repairs crossing with communication issues with residents' Estate Managers or contractors. The department has been consistently learning from these common themes and meets regularly with their contractors to review their quality and performance. In addition, the Area Housing teams are regularly updated with findings from stage 1, stage 2 and HOS complaints, with Area Housing Managers leading with taking forward learning found in stage 1 complaints that they investigate. The department has produced several responses to HOS spotlight reports, such as the damp and mould spotlight, noise/ASB and knowledge and information management as examples. Regarding knowledge and information management, training has been provided to all front-line housing officers over the past six months. In addition, a new Vulnerable Residents policy has been created with training for front line staff currently being provided.
- 4.27 The Council's approach to damp and mould has developed and improved significantly over the past two years with a dedicated mould removal team being created in March 2023 and expanded in September 2024. Further changes are being implemented to ensure compliance with Awaab's Law and to continue to improve the service provided to tenants.
- 4.28 Complaints about major works schemes tend to mainly be about costs, the quality of the works or the time it takes to complete a scheme once it has been approved. The Council seeks competitive tenders for all its major works schemes and so has limited control over costs. However, officers ensure that, for repairs and maintenance schemes, only necessary works are included in the specification, thereby reducing leaseholder recharges as much as possible. Officers have also been instructed to complete the final account adjustments more promptly, thereby giving certainty to leaseholders as to their final charges.

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- 4.29 Two resident focus groups were held in March 2025, looking at repairs and complaints satisfaction. Each session gathered valuable feedback and insight from residents, which has generated short, medium and long-term actions for the department to consider and learn from. For complaints, six actions were agreed with residents which include more frequency and clearer communications with residents who have raised a complaint, closer working with third parties (such as contractors) and increasing awareness of the complaints process and improving transparency. The department also produces articles on complaints and any subsequent learning or changes bi-annually in the Homelife residents' newsletter. The Council's corporate complaints policy also allows for complainants to simply ask for an escalation of their complaint without providing detailed reasoning (although complainants can provide reasoning if they wish to).
- 4.30 In the Housing Services division, many complaints relate to residents that were unhappy with the communication received from Council officers, difficulties with housing register applications and assessment times, long waiting times for housing, unsuitable temporary accommodation (TA) offers and conditions of TA. As ever, the demand for housing has continued to increase year on year due to a variety of factors and challenges.
- 4.31 Complaints are seen as learning, and specifically where complaints arise around delay in communications, quality of information and customer care. Any learning and complaints are addressed in team meeting inviting input from the team around how to avoid further complaints, as well as discussions held with individuals who were the case officers to monitor individual performances. All teams have had knowledge and information training which is about record keeping' to change the shift to effective knowledge and information management based on key pillars: created, stored, used, shared and deleted. Training around delivering customer care is sourced, as well as referring to good complaint handling. The temporary accommodation team have had training on suitability issues to ensure that offers are made correctly the first time. More inspections are taking place of TA and a new team is being created to carry out inspections of TA which will mean that queries around condition be addressed quickly and not turn into complaints. The procurement team have challenging targets to procure more private sector properties for use of TA to ensure the complaints around 3rd party landlord accommodation are minimised.
- 4.32 Where learning is shown, it is mostly with regards to ensuring reported repair issues are routinely followed up and action taken promptly with regular and clear communication updates provided to residents, monitoring performance of contractors in monthly meetings and also staff where appropriate when complaints are reported, ensuring regular training is completed for colleagues in areas where complaints are raised to ensure the issues raised do not happen again, acting in a timely manner when it comes to dealing with issues of temporary accommodation and application queries
- 4.33 For context, at the start of the financial year, the Housing complaints process had changed significantly with the move in Housing Services to follow the Housing Ombudsman's complaints handling code. Wherein the department's complaints that fell within the remit of the Housing Ombudsman changed from 20 working days to 10 working days for stage 1 complaints and stayed at 20 working days for stage 2. Despite this change, a significant rise in the number of complaints and ongoing challenges with its services affected by ongoing high demands upon it during the year, the department only saw a 2% decrease in

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performance for stage 1 responses in time, but a 3% improvement in stage 2 response times. It is worth noting that despite the increase in stage 2 complaints, the amount of responses submitted in time at stage 2 increased. Managers are regularly reminded of the importance of meeting deadlines and complaints performance and mitigation is discussed regularly in the departmental management team and senior management meetings. With learning discussed in cases where the Ombudsman bodies have found fault or maladministration.

- 4.34 The common topics that have been summarised in the category of 'Service Delay or Failure' are delays on repairs, dissatisfaction with cases of anti-social behaviour that remain unresolved, dissatisfaction with the way the Council have handled their reports about the suitability of their temporary accommodation and their housing/homelessness applications and finally the condition of the TA they have been placed in and the handling of repairs by the Council/Landlords. The most common complaint topic was the delays on repairs, and keeping residents updated. The Housing Management division has increased its monitoring of contractor performance and reviewed its processes with its contractors to help deliver a better repair service to residents, along with reminding colleagues of the importance of keeping residents up to date with clear and regular communication. The property management team in Housing Services division have amended their procedures to ensure that once a property has been offered then they will keep the resident updated. The TA team now request condition reports and photographs prior to placing on nightly paid accommodation and are creating SLAs on basic condition expected for such units. There is currently consultation on the Reformed Decent Homes Standard for Social and Privately Rented Homes Consultation which will establish the minimum housing standards that tenants in both social and private rented sectors can expect from their landlords

*Table 7: Types of complaint Housing & Regeneration 2023-24 and 2024-5*

<b>Type of complaint</b>	<b>Times raised 2023-24</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Housing management 2024-25</b>	<b>Housing Services 2024-25</b>	<b>Times raised 2024-25</b>	<b>%</b>
Service Delay or Failure	213	53%	223	68	291	61%
Outside Service Procedure	2	1%	4	0	4	1%
Staff Error/Attitude	130	32%	84	43	127	27%
Disagreement with/failure to implement assessment within timescales	25	6%	0	21	21	4.5%
Financial Charges/Billings/ Costs	8	2%	10	7	17	3.5%
Poor/Incorrect Information	25	6%	8	6	14	3%
	<b>403</b>		<b>329</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>474</b>	



***Annual Corporate Complaints Report 2024-25*****Case Study Stage 1: The importance of Reasonable Adjustments****Background**

The complaint was raised by a resident with a visual impairment because the Housing and Benefits services had not implemented reasonable adjustments as required under the Equality Act 2010. The complainant had requested that all written communications be sent in accessible formats—specifically, within the body of emails and not as links or attachments. Despite these requests, multiple teams within the Housing and Benefits Services continued to send information in inaccessible formats. The complaint also included concerns about a Prevention and Solutions Officer in Housing who had failed to follow the complainant's request for email-only communication and a Subject Access Review response that was initially sent via a link.

**Investigation Findings**

The investigation confirmed that while some teams responded appropriately by resending information in the correct format and apologising, others failed to maintain consistency. The Benefits Team initially sent attachments but later corrected this. The Procurement and Lettings Team also acknowledged the issue and took corrective action. However, the Assessment Team and Prevention and Solutions Officer within Housing did not adhere to the complainant's requests. The Subject Access Review response was also initially sent in an inaccessible format but was later corrected. The cumulative effect of these oversights caused distress to the complainant.

**Learning**

The complaint was upheld, and the authority acknowledged its failure to meet obligations under the Equality Act 2010. A formal apology and a financial remedy of £1,250 were offered. Alerts were added to the complainant's case files to ensure future communications adhere to the required format. Staff were reminded of their responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty, and further training was planned to reinforce how to record and implement reasonable adjustments effectively.

A report was submitted to the Director's Board noting that this issue had also appeared in a small number of complaints from various directorates. Senior managers distributed key points from the report across all services and advised arranging refresher training as needed. Additionally, an internal news item reminded all staff of their duty to provide reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010.

**Annual Corporate Complaints Report 2024-25****Case Study Stage 2: Strengthening Resident Support in Complex ASB Cases****Background**

A resident raised a formal complaint regarding the Council's handling of persistent anti-social behaviour (ASB) from a neighbour, and delays in processing a management transfer request. The resident had previously applied for a transfer due to ongoing harassment and property damage, and had also engaged with the Community Safety team and the Housing Ombudsman to escalate concerns. The complaint was reviewed at Stage 2 of the Council's corporate complaints procedure following dissatisfaction with the initial response.

**Investigation Findings**

The investigation confirmed that the Council had taken legal action by securing an ASB injunction against the neighbour in 2022. However, breaches of the injunction continued, and further court proceedings were delayed due to the need for a capacity assessment of the neighbour. The resident's subsequent management transfer request, initiated in late 2022, was not progressed due to insufficient new evidence at the time. Although the resident later provided an impact statement in January 2024, the application was not processed promptly, and communication about its status was lacking.

The review also found that while the resident had reported further ASB incidents, including property damage and verbal abuse, these reports were sporadic and lacked corroborating evidence, limiting enforcement options. The Council acknowledged that the resident's appeal regarding the closure of an ASB case review had been handled appropriately, with the case eventually reviewed by a multi-agency panel.

**Learning from the Complaint**

The complaint highlighted several areas for improvement in the Council's handling of ASB cases and communication with affected residents. Key lessons included the need for:

- Timely and transparent communication with residents about the status of their applications and ongoing actions.
- Clear handovers between officers to prevent correspondence from being overlooked during staff transitions.
- Regular updates to residents experiencing ASB to ensure they feel supported and informed.
- Enhancements to the ASB database and task management system to prompt officers to provide updates and take necessary actions.

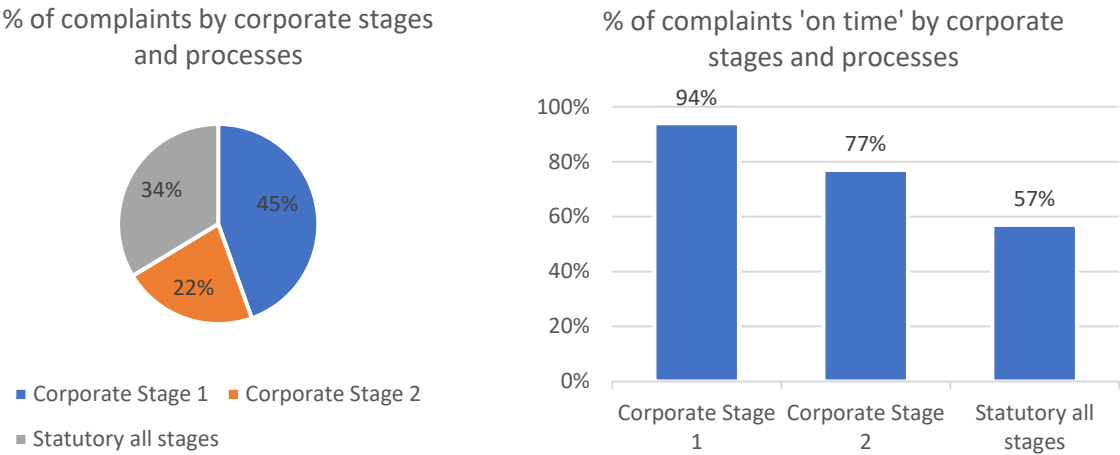
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As a result of the complaint, the Council committed to reinforcing these practices among staff and offered a goodwill payment of £200 to the resident in recognition of the stress and inconvenience caused by the communication failures.

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Children’s Services

Chart 12: Percentage of corporate (by stage) and statutory complaints completed and ‘on time’ for Children’s Services 2024/25



4.35 The department receives two types of complaint and deals with them under separate processes:

- (i) Corporate complaints: these relate to non-statutory services which have not met the expectations of clients, perceived or actual attitudes of staff, or where clients have not achieved the outcome, they desired. These can be received from any service user or parent using any Children’s Service, e.g social care, early help, school transport, school admissions, special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) etc.
- (ii) Children’s statutory complaints relate to complaints made by a child, young person (or their representative), who receives or is entitled to receive, a service relating to specialist provision covered under the Children Act 1989 and subsequent amendments made in 2004 and 2006, delivered by children’s services. Where a complainant is not eligible to access this statutory procedure, the Council’s corporate complaints procedure is applied.

4.36 In total, the Directorate completed 140 complaints which is a 39% increase on the 101 complaints last year. Additionally, there were a total of 30 new LGSCO complaints received in the year (and 6 ongoing from 2023-24), but positively only 9 of these resulted in full investigations following assessment whilst 21 were closed after detail assessment enquiries. As well as the 140 complaints, Childrens Services handled 178 Member Enquiries.

- 63 (45%) were at stage 1 of the corporate process which is a 43% increase on the 44 (45%) last year.
- 31 (22%) were at stage 2 of the corporate process, which is a 55% increase on the 20 (20%) completed last year.

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- 46 (33%) were completed through the statutory process compared to 37 (38%) last year. Statutory complaints have decreased by 24%<sup>4</sup>.

4.37 The increase in stage 1 corporate complaints is partly due to increase in corporate complaints for social care teams (an additional 10 complaints this year) and a small increase of 7 stage 1 complaints for the Education/SEND team; however, this year the SEND team responded to 5 stage 1 complaints and 6 stage 2 complaints from the same parent.

4.38 There has been an increase in corporate complaints for social care due to triaging by the Complaints Team to ensure that any complaints that are investigated through the statutory process, are covered by the relevant parts of the Children Act 1989 legislation and are child-focused complaints. For example, some complaints about Child Protection (Section 42) are excluded from the statutory complaint regulations and complaints about Early Help (non-statutory services) are more appropriately dealt with the corporate complaints process. Also, some parents make complaints about how the actions have social care have affected them personally, and if these complaints are not child-focused; these are triaged through the Corporate complaint process.

4.39 The timeliness of responding to corporate complaints is very good and there has been an improvement in responding to statutory complaints on time:

- 59 (94%) stage 1 corporate complaints were completed on time compared to 42 (95%) last year.
- 24 (77%) stage 2 corporate complaints were completed on time compared to 17 (85%) last year
- 26 (57%) of statutory complaints across all 3 stages<sup>5</sup> were responded to on time compared to 26 (70%) last year.

4.40 At stage 1 of the corporate process stage 1 complaints were split as follows:

- 35 complaints were for Education which is 30% higher than the 27 stage 1 complaints last year. 6 complaints were for School Admissions. The remaining 29 were for SEND but as above, 5 of these were from a single parent.
- 21 were for Children's Social Care which is 90% higher than the 11 stage 1 complaints last year.
- 6 complaints were for Business and Resources (which covers School Transport) which is the same as last year.
- 1 complaint was for Place and Partnerships (Early Help) which is the same as last year.

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<sup>4</sup> A full breakdown of statutory complaints across stages is provided in the Children's Services Annual Statutory Complaints report 2024/25 submitted to Children's Scrutiny Committee.

<sup>5</sup> Statutory stage 2 requires an Independent Person to oversee the investigation. The Council also use Independent Officers to carry out the main investigation. Statutory stage 3 involves a complaints panel made up of 3 Independent Officers and the Independent Officer and Independent Person appointed to carry out the stage 2 investigation.

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*Table 8: Types of complaint for the 59 **stage 1 and 2 corporate complaints** for Children's Services 2023-24 and 2024-25*

Type of complaint	Times raised 2023-24	%	Times raised 2024-25	%
Service Delay or Failure	54	84%	76	81%
Outside Service Procedure	2	3%	3	3%
Staff Error/Attitude	6	9%	6	6%
Disagreement with/failure to implement assessment within timescales	1	2%	4	4%
Financial Charges/Billings/Costs	0	0	1	1%
Poor/Incorrect Information	1	2%	4	4%
	<b>64 (corporate only)</b>		<b>94 (corporate only)</b>	

4.41 For SEND and School Admissions corporate complaints key learning has focused on:

- **Improving EHCP Quality:** Wandsworth is reinforcing the importance of issuing high-quality Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). Additional training will be provided to the SEND team to ensure all relevant appendices — including those from independent professionals — are consistently included in Section K.
- **Strengthening the Annual Review Process:** Over the past six months, the service has reviewed and refined all processes and procedures. Staffing levels have been increased to reduce caseloads and improve responsiveness. A full data audit was conducted to better track and manage Annual Reviews in line with legal requirements. A clear action plan has been developed and targeted training delivered to prevent delays in Annual Reviews for children and young people with EHCPs.
- **Addressing Therapy Provision Gaps:** The Local Authority is working closely with the NHS Speech and Language Therapy (SLT) provider to identify and address gaps in therapy caused by staffing shortages and maternity leave. A comprehensive list of therapists assigned to schools has been compiled to support continuity and planning.
- **Improving the school admissions portal:** This has been revised to improve clarity for parents, particularly in cases where applications are being considered under special medical or social circumstances. This change was prompted by feedback indicating that the information displayed was not always easily understood.

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- **Strengthening communication:** Concerns were raised about communication during the application process for school placements. In response, the service has acknowledged the need for families to feel informed and involved throughout the process and put measures in place to strengthen supervision and provide enhanced training for staff.

4.42 For statutory social care complaints key learning has focused on:

- **Improving support for foster carers:** The role of Placement Support Lead has been introduced and embedded to provide enhanced, ongoing support to foster carers and residential placements, with the aim of promoting stability and continuity of care.
- **Front Door assessments:** The Family Front Door service has taken steps to improve the quality and timeliness of outcome-focused planning with families. Supervisors delivered training to staff on how to develop effective plans following an initial assessment, with a strong emphasis on time management and the importance of implementing actions promptly. Monthly audits are now conducted by Practice Supervisors, which include direct contact with children and their parents to gather feedback. This process will help assess the quality of practice and identify areas for improvement.
- **Strengthening safeguarding processes:** All advice from the LADO, even if it does not lead to a formal investigation, must now be clearly recorded. The Education Safeguarding Lead Officer will remind all schools—including independent ones—of their obligation to report allegations against professionals to the LADO. This reminder will be regularly reinforced in Designated Safeguarding Lead forums.

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**Case study stage 1: Improving customer service standards in the School Admissions team**

**Background**

A parent contacted the local authority’s School Admissions team by telephone to discuss an enquiry regarding their child’s school placement. During the call, the parent experienced what they perceived as unprofessional conduct from the staff member handling the enquiry. Specifically, the parent reported that the staff member became defensive, repeatedly interrupted their explanation, and ultimately terminated the call. The parent subsequently submitted a Stage 1 complaint, seeking an apology and assurance that the staff member’s conduct would be addressed by management.

**Investigation Findings**

As all calls are recorded, the relevant manager was able to retrieve and review the call in question. Upon listening, it was acknowledged that the response was not reflective of the usual standards of the team or the individual involved. The manager concluded that the parent’s enquiry was reasonable in both tone and content, and that the staff member should have taken further details and followed up with the relevant school. There was no justification for the call to have been ended prematurely. As a result, the complaint was upheld, and an apology was issued to the complainant.

**Learning**

This case highlighted a lapse in the expected standard of customer service within the School Admissions team. While the incident was considered uncharacteristic, it highlighted the importance of maintaining professionalism and active listening during all resident interactions. In response, targeted training and guidance was provided to reinforce expectations and more broadly, the service committed to ongoing customer service training for all staff and continued monitoring of calls to ensure high standards are consistently met. This case serves as a reminder of the impact of communication style on public trust and the importance of reflective practice in service improvement.

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**Case Study Stage 2: Strengthening the EHCP Review Process**

**Background**

A parent submitted a Stage 2 complaint to the Council regarding the handling of their child’s Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) annual review. The concerns included delays in issuing the revised EHCP, lack of consideration of parental input, and failure to implement the provision outlined in the previous year’s plan. The parent also expressed dissatisfaction with the compensation offered and the overall responsiveness of the service.

**Investigation Findings**

The Stage 2 review confirmed that the Council had failed to issue a revised EHCP within the statutory timeframe following the annual review, thereby upholding the complaint. The delay hindered the parent’s ability to appeal the plan in a timely manner and contributed to unmet educational needs for the child. While the Council acknowledged the parent’s concerns, it clarified that issues related to the content of the EHCP and its implementation would need to be addressed via the tribunal process. A goodwill payment of £300 was offered to acknowledge the distress and inconvenience caused by the delay.

**Learning from the Complaint**

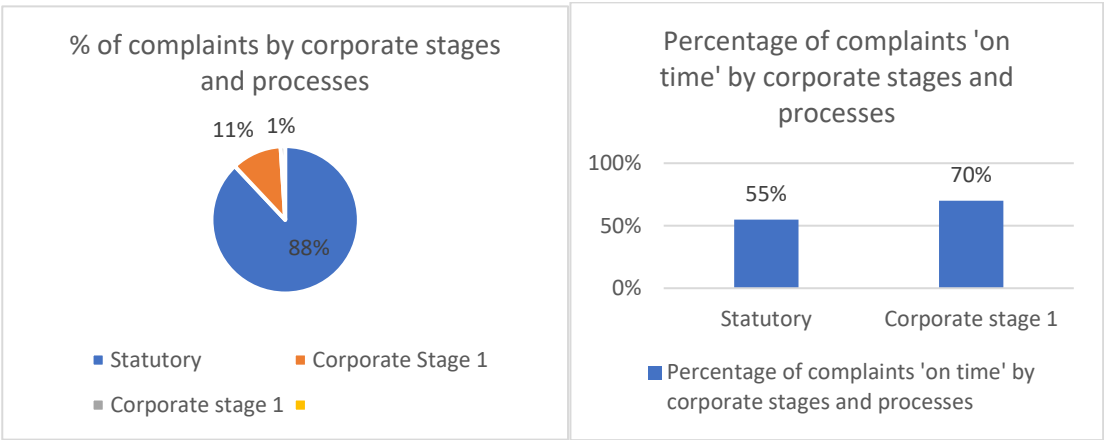
The complaint highlighted improvements were needed in the timeliness and management of EHCP annual reviews. In response, the Council undertook a comprehensive review of its processes, including a full data audit and administrative adjustments to improve tracking and compliance. Staffing levels were increased to reduce caseloads, and further training was provided to ensure that annual reviews are completed promptly and in accordance with legal requirements. These measures form part of a broader action plan aimed at preventing similar delays and ensuring that children and young people with EHCPs receive timely and appropriate support.



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Adult Social Care and Public Health

Chart 13: Percentage of corporate (by stage) and statutory complaints completed and 'on time' for Adult Social Care and Public Health 2024/25



4.43 In total, the Directorate completed 95 complaints which is a 48% increase on the 64 complaints last year (63 statutory and 1 corporate complaint). Additionally, there were a total of 15 LGSCO complaints received in the year (and 2 ongoing from 2023-24), but positively only 3 of these resulted in full investigations following assessment. A further 10 Ombudsman cases were closed after initial enquiries or detailed assessment. Wandsworth Adult Social Care also handled 309 Member Enquiries. A breakdown of the complaints is as follows:

- 84 (88%) were through the statutory process which is 33% increase on the 63 statutory complaints last year<sup>6</sup>.
- 10 (11%) complaints were at stage 1 of the corporate process. Last year there were 1 stage 1 corporate complaints.
- Only 1 complaint escalated to stage 2 of the corporate process. Last year, there were no stage 2 corporate complaints.

4.44 In terms of timeliness:

- 46 (55%) of the 84 statutory complaints were completed within the ambitious 25-day local target. This compares to 42% on time last year. Where longer was needed to complete a complaint investigation, additional time was agreed with the complainant.
- 7 (70%) of the stage 1 corporate complaints were sent on time.

4.45 The Statutory complaints legislation does not provide a required timescale to respond to complaints, other than to ask Authorities to risk assess complaints and respond within an appropriate timescale (full resolution should be achieved within six months). This flexibility recognises the complexity of Adult Social Care complaints, which often require input from multiple teams, and at times, partner organisations. The focus within Adult Social Care is the quality of responses and achieving resolution within this process with no defined stages.

<sup>6</sup> A full breakdown and analysis of complaints made through the Adult Statutory Process is provided in the Adults Statutory Annual Report 2024/25.

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- 4.46 This year key learning from statutory complaints, is summarised below and case studies (below) have been taken from the stage 2 corporate complaint:

**Delays**

- Monitoring of task throughput for part-time staff and during staff leave is being improved to prevent delays.
- The timeliness of Support Plans and assessments has been improved to ensure they are sent promptly to avoid oversight.
- Increased supervision and team meetings are being used to manage workload and prevent delays in services, including ensuring there is prompt case reassignment when social workers leave to ensure continuity of care.

**Finance**

- Apologies were issued for miscommunication during financial assessments with an emphasis placed on empathy and clarity.
- Financial Assessment Officers were reminded to escalate queries appropriately.
- Staff in social care teams were reminded about funding agreement processes, terminology, and the importance of timely and comprehensive information for high-cost cases.

**Quality of Provider Care**

- Providers committed to improving communication with both people who draw on services and their families to prevent future misunderstandings or concern
- The importance of prompt incident reporting including informing next of kin, and professional communication was reinforced
- Work was undertaken with the equipment service to make improvements to the community equipment service, addressing concerns and working together on solutions.

**Communication**

- There was a strong emphasis on clearer, more sensitive, and timely communication with people who draw on services and families.
- Staff were reminded to record family preferences and requests clearly in service user records.
- The use of interpreters was recognised as essential for effective communication.
- The need for clearer explanations of team roles, especially in complex or cross-borough cases was highlighted.
- The hospital social work teams and NHS worked together on improving communication around discharge pathways.
- Staff were encouraged to identify and respect service users' preferred methods of contact.

**Quality of Assessments**

- Staff were reminded to ensure draft assessments reflect the latest family input.
- Training was delivered to improve thoroughness and appropriateness of assessments.
- Families will be informed of all assessment visits, even if they are not attending, to ensure they remained involved and informed.
- Support plan quality was addressed through training and supervision.

**Annual Corporate Complaints Report 2024-25****Case study stage 1: Learning from a Mental Health Act Assessment Complaint: Enhancing Communication and Inclusivity in AMHP Practice****Background**

A parent submitted a Stage 1 complaint to the Richmond and Wandsworth AMHP Service regarding the conduct and process of a Mental Health Act (MHA) assessment carried out for their child, a young person, by an Approved Mental Health Professional (AMHP). The complainant raised six specific concerns, including the use of incorrect pronouns, lateness to the assessment, limited legal explanation, contradictory communication about the nearest relative, lack of follow-up contact, and a general perception of the AMHP's approach as chaotic and unprofessional.

**Investigation Findings**

While the assessment was found to have been carried out in line with professional standards and legal requirements, the investigation acknowledged that aspects of the experience fell short of expectations. There were communication issues that contributed to the complainant's distress, including a lack of timely updates when the AMHP was delayed and insufficient follow-up contact after the assessment. These were recognised as areas where the service did not meet the expected standard. Additionally, although the AMHP provided explanations about the legal process and rationale for detention, the complainant felt these were not clearly conveyed, which impacted their confidence in the process.

The investigation also highlighted the importance of sensitivity around gender identity and the use of correct pronouns. While the AMHP demonstrated some awareness, the communication could have been more explicit and affirming. Overall, the findings pointed to the need for improved clarity, consistency, and empathy in communication with families during assessments.

**Learning**

This case highlighted several areas for learning and improvement within the AMHP service. Firstly, the importance of punctuality and proactive communication was reinforced, particularly in high-stress situations involving young people. The delay and lack of notice in this case contributed to increased distress and undermined trust.

Secondly, the need for clearer communication and better signposting to legal and procedural information was recognised. While the AMHP provided appropriate explanations, the complainant's experience suggests that more structured guidance and follow-up resources would be beneficial.

Thirdly, the case highlighted the importance of maintaining contact with family members throughout and after the assessment process. The failure to follow up promptly was acknowledged as a gap in practice.

Finally, the complaint prompted a broader reflection on inclusivity and gender identity awareness. The service committed to reviewing its processes to ensure preferred pronouns are considered from the point of referral and to providing training on gender identity for all AMHPs.

This case serves as a reminder of the critical role of communication, empathy, and procedural clarity in mental health assessments, particularly when working with young people and their families.

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**Case Study Stage 2 Corporate: Strengthening Administrative Accuracy in Client Affairs**

**Background**

A complaint was raised regarding the Council’s handling of matters following the passing of a resident, specifically concerning the management of her will, the identification of their legal representative, and the handling of her personal belongings. The complainant expressed distress over delays in communication, the involvement of a third-party genealogist firm, and the perceived insensitivity in responses to requests for access to personal items.

**Investigation Findings**

The Stage 2 investigation acknowledged that an administrative error had occurred, resulting in the complainant not receiving timely information about the original solicitor named in the will. This oversight also led to the unnecessary instruction of a genealogist firm to trace beneficiaries. Although the will had been securely stored, the Council had not initially contacted the correct solicitor, which contributed to confusion and frustration for the complainant.

The Council clarified that all matters concerning the estate were now being handled by the appropriate solicitor, and that the complainant could contact them directly. Regarding the handling of personal belongings, the Council explained that limitations in storage capacity and logistical constraints meant that only selected items were retrieved. The Council also confirmed that staff followed standard procedures, including not attending property visits alone.

The complaint was partially upheld due to the administrative error, but the Council maintained that its officers had acted within their authority and followed appropriate procedures in managing the resident’s affairs.

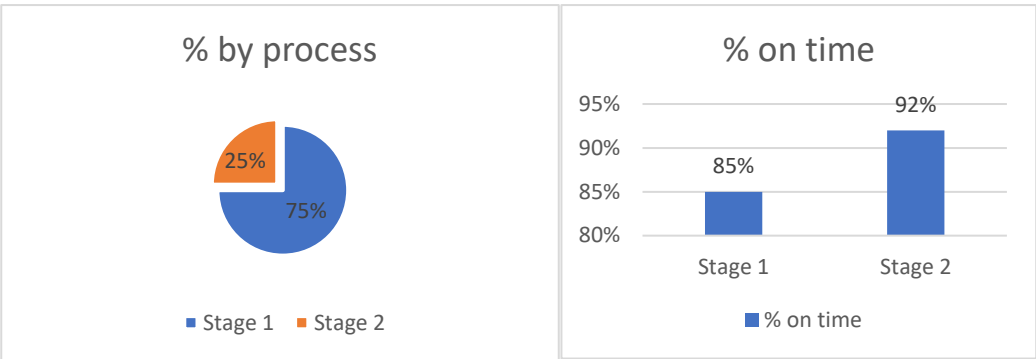
**Learning from the Complaint**

The Council recognised the need to improve its internal processes to prevent similar administrative oversights in the future. A review was initiated to refine protocols, ensure accurate and timely communication, and reinforce the importance of sensitivity in handling bereavement-related matters. Additionally, the Council committed to regularly reviewing its engagement with genealogist firms to ensure transparency and compliance with ethical standards. These actions aim to uphold a higher standard of service and maintain public trust in the Council’s responsibilities as appointee for

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CHIEF EXECUTIVE’S DIRECTORATE

Chart 14: Percentage of corporate (by stage) completed and ‘on time’ for Chief Executive’s 2024/25



- 4.47 This year there were 53 complaints for the Chief Executive’s Directorate (40 stage 1s and 13 stage 2s) compared to only 15 last year. This 61% increase is largely due to the completion of the transfer of the ECS and HRD services to Place within the year: as Place dealt with 19 stage 1s and 10 stage 2s during the year. The balance of the complaints largely related to concerns about Electoral Services (16 stage 1s and 1 stage 2).
- 4.48 Of the 53 complaints, 40 were at stage 1 and 13 were at stage 2. Additionally, there were a total of 15 LGSCO complaints received in the year, but positively none of these resulted in full investigations following assessment. 12 of these Ombudsman cases were closed after initial enquiries or detailed assessment and 1 case was awaiting an ombudsman decision at year end. The Chief Executive’s directorate also responded to 147 Member Enquiries.
- 4.49 Of the 40 stage 1 complaints, 34 (85%) were on time. 12 (92%) of the 13 stage 2 complaints were on time.
- 4.50 The complaints were for the following service areas:
- 19 stage 1 complaints were for Place. 10 of these escalated to stage 2.
  - 16 stage 1 complaints were for Electoral Services. 1 of these escalated to stage 2
  - 2 stage 1 complaints were for the Complaints Team. None of these escalated to stage 2 within this reporting year.
  - 1 stage 1 complaint for each of the following: Climate Change and Sustainability Voluntary Sector Partnership and Voluntary Sector Partnership of which the 1 for Democratic Services escalated to stage 2.
  - Information Governance responded to 1 stage 2 complaint within the year regarding access to a deceased person’s records.

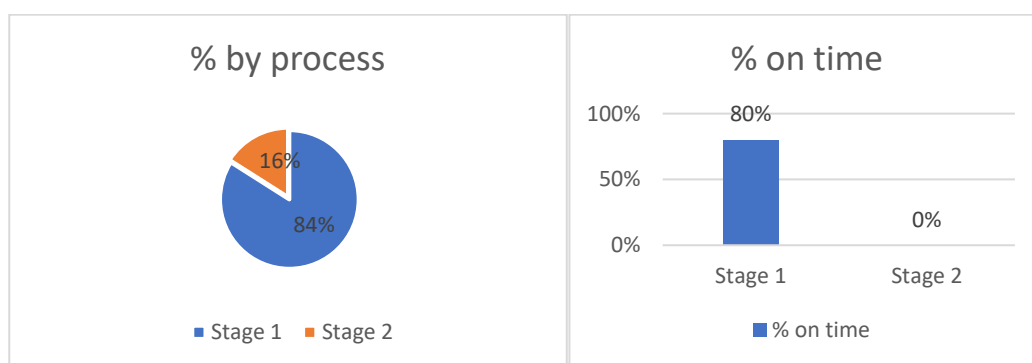
## Annual Corporate Complaints Report 2024-25

Table 9: Types of stage 1 and 2 corporate complaints for Chief Executive's Directorate 2023-24 and 2024-25

Type of complaints	Times raised 2023-24	%	Times raised 2024-25	%
Service Delay or Failure	5	34%	33	63%
Outside Service Procedure	0		5	9%
Staff Error/Attitude	8	53%	5	9%
Disagreement with/failure to implement assessment within timescales	0		6	11%
Financial Charges/Billings/Costs	0		0	
Poor/Incorrect Information	2	13%	4	8%
	<b>15</b>		<b>53</b>	

## CHANGE AND INNOVATION DIRECTORATE

Chart 15: Percentage of corporate (by stage) complaints completed and 'on time' for Change & Innovation Directorate 2024/25



- 4.51 This year there were 6 complaints within the newly formed Change & Innovation Directorate in April 2024. 4 of these were for Customer Services, which is a slight decrease (20%) on the 5 complaints for Customer Services, whilst they were within the Chief Executive's Group last year. The balance of the 2 complaints related to a HR communication for recruitment issue. In addition, no complaints for Change and Innovation were escalated to the LGSCO this year. The Change & Innovation Directorate also responded to 17 Member Enquiries.
- 4.52 Of the 5 stage 1 complaints, 4 (80%) were on time. Unfortunately, the 1 stage 2 complaint was not sent on time.

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Table 10: Table 9: Types of stage 1 and 2 corporate complaints for Change and Innovation 2024-25

Type of complaints	Times raised 2023-24	%	Times raised 2024-25	%
Service Delay or Failure	0		1	20%
Outside Service Procedure	0		0	
Staff Error/Attitude	5	100%	5	80%
Disagreement with/failure to implement assessment within timescales	0		0	
Financial Charges/Billings/Costs	0		0	
Poor/Incorrect Information	0		0	
	<b>5</b>		<b>6</b>	

### 5. LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN

#### LGSCO decisions

- 5.1 The LGSCO issued Wandsworth's Annual Review letter for 2024-25 on 16 July 2025.
- 5.2 In her Annual Review, Amerdeep Somal highlighted that complaints about education and children's services are still dominating LGSCO casework, taking up 27% of casework and 47% of upheld investigations. Housing cases are now the second biggest area of complaints, accounting for 17% with an upheld rate of 85% and the third highest area is Adult Social Care, taking up 13% with a 78% uphold rate.
- 5.3 In 2024/25 the LGSCO registered a record number of complaints, exceeding 20,000 for the first time. This compares to 17,937 complaints last year and 15,488 in 2022/23. Of the complaints investigated by the LGSCO, 83% were upheld, which they LGSCO say illustrates the systemic nature of issues across local government. 4,298 were investigated and 3,552 were upheld.
- 5.4 Across all Local Authorities, 27% of complaints were for Education & Childrens Services, 17% were for Housing, 13% were for Adult Social Care, 11% were for Highways and Transport, 8% were for Planning and Development, 10% were for Environmental Services and Public Protection, 6% were for Benefits and Tax and 5% were for other Corporate Services. A more detailed breakdown is provided in the LGSCO Annual review 2024-25 <https://www.lgo.org.uk/assets/attach/6814/LG-Review-2024-25-FINAL.pdf>
- 5.5 This year's Annual Letter reflected the LGSCO's view that an urgent change in national policy is needed to support young people with special educational needs and await the Government's White Paper in Autumn 2025. With regards to housing, nationally, complaints have highlighted how people are denied access to housing registers or not being treated fairly when faced with homelessness. Whilst there are challenges around supply whilst new homes are being built, the LGSCO are of the view that local authorities must implement policies fairly – as many do – with people at the heart of their approach.
- 5.6 When broken down for London Boroughs, 5,180 complaints were made to the LGSCO compared to 4,187 last year and 962 were investigated compared to 852 last year. The

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most complaints upheld by category were Housing and Education and Children's Services which is the same as last year.

### **LGSCO local level decisions**

- 5.7 There has been an increase in residents approaching the LGSCO this year as demonstrated on **Chart 5**, and this is in line with the increase nationally with regards to the number of complaints the LGSCO has received across all councils. However, as set out below, this year the number of complaints that LGSCO has formally investigated against Wandsworth as decreased.
- 5.8 The LGSCO received 142 complaints for Wandsworth this year (along with the 18 cases carried forward from 2023-24) which, following assessment, resulted in 23 investigations. This is a 17% increase on the 121 complaints last year and a 69% increase on the 84 complaints in 2022-23.
- 5.9 However, despite the 17% increase in residents approaching the LGSCO to escalate complaints, formal investigations have decreased to 23 from 32 last year (-28%). The LGSCO have confirmed that Wandsworth are successfully remedying more complaints at stage 2. This has directly reduced the number of formal investigations they have undertaken for the authority.
- 5.10 Fault was found in 18 of the 23 investigation which led to an upheld rate of 78%. This is improved performance to the 84% of complaints upheld last year. Wandsworth's average upheld rate of 78% equates to **5.4 upheld decisions per 100,000 residents** and lower than the average of 9.1 per 100,000 residents of London Boroughs.
- 5.11 The Council is still performing well in relation to similar sized boroughs. The average 'upheld' rate for the three statistical neighbouring boroughs with the closest profile to Wandsworth (Lambeth, Bromley and Enfield) is 86% or 13.2 per 100,000 population. Wandsworth's upheld rate as 78%, the Council received 23 formal investigations compared to an average of 42.6 across its statistical neighbours.
- 5.12 There have been no public reports this year and the Council achieved 100% compliance for the LGSCO's 19 actions to remedy fault: the LGSCO were satisfied the Council had successfully implemented its recommendations. This compares to an average of 100% in similar organisations.
- 5.13 With regards to the 142 complaints received by the LGSCO in 2024-25 (and the 18 brought forward from 2023-24), setting aside the 23 detailed investigations (18 upheld, 5 not upheld), 72 were closed after the Ombudsman's enquiries and assessment, whilst a further 45 were closed after initial enquiries (29 were referred back to the Council for local resolution (premature), 10 cases resulted in advice/signposting and a further 6 cases were invalid).



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### **Learning**

- 5.14 A summary of 2024/25 LGSCO activity is at **Appendix 2**. Examples of key practice from LGSCO investigations are as follows:

#### **Housing and Regeneration**

- Delays in making housing duty decisions and reassessing applications have caused distress and uncertainty. The Council has backdated housing register applications and made symbolic payments.
- Failure to properly consider medical evidence or SEN needs in housing applications. Staff have been reminded to evidence decision-making and communicate clearly.
- Issues with temporary accommodation including unsuitable placements and unresolved repairs. The Council has issued apologies, paid financial remedy, and made service improvements.

#### **Children's Services**

- Delays in issuing or amending EHCPs and failure to provide specified support. The Council has apologised, made symbolic payments and put in place commissioning action plans.
- Procedural faults in transport applications and appeals for children with SEN. Procedures have been updated to ensure individual circumstances are considered when making decision on school transport applications outcome letters are clear about how these decisions have been made.

#### **ECS Environment and Community Services**

- Faults in issuing Fixed Penalty Notices for waste offences. Staff and contractors have been reminded of DEFRA guidance, refunds of FPNs have been provided and staff have received further training on proper procedures and statutory guidance.

## **6 HOUSING OMBUDSMAN SERVICE**

- 6.1 The Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) looks at all complaints about social housing, including local housing authorities, housing associations, and other landlords, housing managers and agents. However, some complaints that relate to a council's wider duties, such as its statutory duties around homelessness, are still considered by the LGSCO.
- 6.2 The HOS is approved by the Secretary of State under Section 51 of, and Schedule 2 to, the Housing Act 1996 as amended by the Localism Act 2011, the Building Safety Act 2022 and the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 (the Act). The Act requires social landlords; to be members of an approved scheme and other landlords can join on a voluntary basis. From 1 October 2023 the HOS were given additional statutory powers, replacing the previous scheme that came into operation from 1 October 2022.

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- 6.3 The purpose of the scheme is to enable tenants and other individuals to have complaints about landlords investigated by the HOS. The role of the HOS is to resolve disputes involving members of the scheme. This may involve making awards of compensation or other remedies, and to support effective landlord and tenant dispute by others.
- 6.4 Wandsworth Council has a large housing stock with 32,871 properties. The borough is split into 4 localities for management purposes, Central area, Western area, Eastern area and Southern area. Each of these areas has an Area Housing Manager who deals with local issues, such as repairs and maintenance and is also responsible for responding to any formal complaints.
- 6.5 In 2024-25 the HOS made contact with the Council 298 times regarding 95 individual cases. This included enquiries regarding 67 new cases as well as ongoing investigations. The HOS contacted the Council 298 times regarding 95 individual cases (199 contacts for 82 cases in 2023-24). This included enquiries regarding 67 new cases as well as ongoing investigations. From these enquiries, the HOS considered carrying out 33 investigations and made determinations (service fault or maladministration findings) on 25 of these after detailed investigations which resulted in 108 orders. Wandsworth accepted all the 25 HOS determinations this year.
- 6.6 These determinations have taken an average of 154 working days for the HOS determine. However, it should be noted that 6 of the determinations received referred to cases that the HOS had started considering between October 2022 to October 2023, 1 of which took 455 days to determine. More recently received cases have been determined between 53 and 150 working days following the HOS making significant changes to their casework and information gathering processes and increasing their staff resourcing alongside the introduction of the Complaints Handling Code.
- 6.7 Details of cases closed during the year, and learning are attached at **Appendix 5**. Some examples of learning are:
- A resident reported Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) by a neighbour. Although noise issues were addressed, the risk assessment, action plan, and collection of evidence lacked urgency. The impact on the complainant was not sufficiently considered. Consequently, a review of practices regarding risk assessment and action planning was conducted.
  - A complaint about garden paving and repairs failed to consider the resident's lived experience. Although it apologised for the delays, it did not sufficiently reassure the resident that the work would be completed, especially given their vulnerabilities. The case highlighted the need to adhere to Equality Act requirements and improve how contractors handle complaints for the Council.
  - A complaint about damp and mould handling and rehousing requests was raised. Improvements were needed in record keeping, property assessment for residents' needs, and housing transfer evaluations. Learning included improving repair and maintenance services and creating an action plan for better record-keeping.

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- 6.8 The Housing Ombudsman has reported in their annual Landlord Report (**Appendix 6**) that Wandsworth Council has a maladministration rate of 82% in comparison to the national rate of 80% when comparing to landlords of a similar size, which are those with housing units above 10,000.
- 6.9 The overall increase in orders is to be expected and is not unique to Wandsworth as in the Housing Ombudsman's Annual Complaints Review 2024–25, formal investigations and determinations continued to rise, with a 30% increase in decisions compared to the previous year. This reflects the sector's growing transparency and responsiveness, supported by the continued embedding of the Complaints Handling Code. Positively, the Ombudsman reported a 7% reduction in maladministration rates and a halving of severe maladministration findings, suggesting improvements in how landlords respond to complaints. There was also a notable rise in findings of reasonable redress, indicating that more landlords are taking proactive steps to resolve issues. These developments point to a sector that is becoming more accountable and resident-focused, even as demand continues to grow.

### **Annual Complaints Handling Code Self-Assessment**

- 6.10 In June 2025 the Complaints Team and Housing directorate completed the annual self-assessment against the Complaint Handling Code to ensure Wandsworth Council's two stage corporate process is in line with the requirements of the HOS's Code. This year's self-assessment was submitted in time as the HOS changed the deadline to 30 September 2025. The self-assessment can be accessed via this link <https://democracy.wandsworth.gov.uk/documents/s120257/25-190%20App3%20Self-Assessment%20Form%202025%20DRAFT.pdf>
- 6.11 There is only one area where the Council remains non-compliant, and this requirement is that landlords must have a standard objective in relation to complaint handling for all relevant employees or third parties. Corporate complaints are working with Organisational Development to progress this over the next year.

## **7 KEY ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2024-25**

- 7.1 This year, the Complaints Team has demonstrated a strong commitment to ensuring the council remains fully compliant with the Complaints Handling Code jointly developed by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) and the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS). Through continuous review and refinement of internal processes, the team has worked diligently to embed the principles of fairness, transparency, and accountability into every stage of complaint handling. Regular training, a new Corporate Complaints Policy, adding complaint handling responsibilities to all new job descriptions, improving induction information on complaints practice, and collaborating with service areas have fostered a culture of learning and improvement. The Complaints Manager also held a session with the Think Bigger Network to look at complaints through the perspective of storytelling, to further embed a positive complaints culture that prioritises listening to our residents. As a result, the council is better equipped to respond to complaints effectively and in line with national standards, reinforcing public trust and driving service excellence.
- 7.2 This work led to the Complaints Team being honoured with the Team of the Year award at the December 2024 Staff Awards for exemplifying the organisational value of Leading By Example.

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This value recognises that leadership is not confined to roles or titles - it's about stepping up, taking responsibility, and setting a standard that others aspire to. Throughout the year, we consistently demonstrated dependability, professionalism, and a commitment to continuous improvement. We tackled complex and sensitive complaints with empathy and integrity, supported each other and staff through challenging cases, and proactively refined processes to improve outcomes for residents. Beyond our own performance, we played an important role in supporting services across the organisation to improve their own complaint handling. Through tailored guidance, collaborative briefings, and constructive feedback, we have helped further embed a culture of learning and accountability, enabling services to respond more effectively, robustly, more confidently and compassionately to residents' concerns.

### **Further Appendices**

Appendix 2 – Full Complaints Data

Appendix 3 – Examples of LGSCO Upheld Decisions 2024-25

Appendix 4 – LGSCO Annual Letter 2024-25

Appendix 5 - Examples HOS Upheld Determinations 2024-25

Appendix 6 – HOS Landlord Report 2024-25

Appendix 7 – Examples of learning from stage 2 complaints across all directorates.