

LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN	WARDS: All
REPORT TITLE London Borough of Camden Annual Complaints Report 2021/2022 – (CS/2022/12)	
REPORT OF The Borough Solicitor	
FOR SUBMISSION TO Resources and Corporate Performance Scrutiny Committee Cabinet	DATE 12th December 2022 14 th December 2022
STRATEGIC CONTEXT We Make Camden is our joint vision for the borough, developed in partnership with our community. This report contributes to the Council’s aspirations by acknowledging that complaints and formal enquiries provide a regular and rich source of feedback from our citizens that inform us when things have gone wrong. Learning from these gives the Council the opportunity to improve services to support our citizens. The Way We Work is the Council’s response to We Make Camden. Insight from complaints plays a key role in how we deliver the right outcomes to our citizens and in continually improving our service delivery to deliver our ambitions.	
SUMMARY OF REPORT This is the London Borough of Camden’s annual complaints report for the period 1 st April 2021 to 31 st March 2022. It is a single report that includes information on complaints across all directorates. The report also provides information for decisions issued by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) and the Housing Ombudsman (HO) in the same period. The report also includes information on other types of formal enquiries which are often linked to complaints: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Member Enquiries and MP Enquiries. - Freedom of Information (FOI) Requests. - Judicial Reviews 	

The Council's Constitution states that the Ombudsman decisions on cases where there have been mistakes or failings (called "maladministration") should be presented to Cabinet on an annual basis for their information only. Therefore, the report provides the decisions issued by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) and the Housing Ombudsman (HO) in the same period and this report will be presented to Cabinet on 14th December 2022.

The report, how it is presented and what it contains, continues to develop and evolve and as in previous years suggestions for improvements are sought from Members.

Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information

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

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RECOMMENDATIONS

The Resources and Corporate Performance Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider the report and makes any recommendations to Cabinet.

Cabinet is asked to consider and note the contents of the report.

Signed:



Andrew Maughan
Borough Solicitor
Corporate Services

Date: 1st December 2022

1. CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

Purpose of the report

- 1.1 This is London Borough of Camden's annual complaints report for the period 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022.
- 1.2 The Council provides a wide range of services to a large number of people and receives relatively few complaints but when citizens do complain, we seek to learn from them and look for patterns of service failure. We continue to use the feedback we receive from our complaints to fuel ideas for service improvements both in the short and long terms [See Section 4].
- 1.3 The Council works hard to view the complaints we receive as a positive opportunity while of course remaining focussed on trying to resolve them to the satisfaction of our residents as quickly as we can.
- 1.4 It will, of course, be noted that during this period we were coming out of the global coronavirus pandemic which still had a significant impact on Council services, its staff and citizens and likewise continued to impact on the statistics presented in this report.
- 1.5 This is a single report on all Council services' formal enquiries which are:
 - Complaints
 - Member Enquiries and MP Enquiries
 - Freedom of Information (FOI) Requests
 - Judicial Reviews.
- 1.6 There is a separate detailed report for the statutory Children's social care services complaints as these are processed and monitored under a specific statutory framework which will be presented to Children's Schools and Families' Scrutiny Committee on 13th December 2022.

Scope of the report

- 1.7 Many complaints and enquiries are dealt with informally by officers and managers every day without the need for the formal complaints process to be followed. Officers are encouraged to try to resolve customer dissatisfaction as part of their normal business. These are not formally logged or reported on, though services are encouraged to record these informal enquiries in some way to inform the way they deliver and improve their services in the future. Dealing informally at an early a stage as possible represents best practice. It is worth bearing in mind these "hidden" cases when considering the report as a whole.
- 1.8 Our complaint procedure is for those complaints that require a formal documented response and therefore could not be satisfied earlier in the process.
The complaints policy and procedure can be found here:

[Complaints - Camden Council](#)

- 1.9 This report focuses not only on volumes and timeliness of responses but also aims, when it is possible, to identify themes and lessons learnt that result in service improvements.
- 1.10 All Heads of Service have contributed to the report and the report has been considered by senior managers. They have added their comments and feedback as well as having had the opportunity to consider how the report and details concerning their service could influence future service delivery and practice generally.
- 1.11 The Council has a commitment to learning and improvement. Complaints and other formal enquiries are important information, providing an opportunity to understand where and why things sometimes go wrong and provide a basis for us to make positive changes, informed by data and the resident voice.

2. THE OVERALL PICTURE

2.1 Number of Complaints and Enquiries - all stages

Level	2021/2022	2020/2021
Stage 1	1216	951
Stage 2	138	100
Housing Ombudsman & Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman	152	137
Member Enquiries	3530	2050
MP Enquiries	745	1022
FOI/EIR Requests	1388	1380

3. SUMMARY ANALYSIS OF COMPLAINTS DATA 2021~2022

- 3.1 The London Borough of Camden had a total of 1216 Stage 1 complaints which is a 28% increase to the previous year. There was a spike in complaints from August 2021 to December 2021. This could be attributable to the easing of Covid 19 restrictions with citizens having been at home more, beginning to submit complaints that had been put on hold during the pandemic.
- 3.2 The Council continued to provide complaint and enquiry services throughout the period with citizens able to submit a complaint via e-form, email, telephone or letter. As a result of secondments there were some continued delays in handling complaints although we felt it was important to continue to allow complaints to be made. [see Section 6].
- 3.3 In January 2022 a new case management system was launched which allowed citizens to submit their complaint via a form which went straight into the system where it was triaged and sent to the correct service area much more quickly.
- 3.4 Despite the ongoing challenges a much higher proportion of complaints (44%) than last year (31%) were responded to within the recommended timescales. This was highlighted as an area of improvement last year, so this is a positive

trend and work will continue to build on this in the coming year towards 90% of complaints responded to within 10 working days. [See Section 6.1 for detailed analysis]. All services endeavour to focus on providing a high-quality response that resolves all the issues raised and finding a suitable outcome in a timely way, whilst keeping the complainant informed and up to date with progress.

- 3.5 A slightly higher proportion of complaints were upheld (26%) compared to last year (22%). This trend will be monitored and analysed further to identify reasons for this, as it indicates, at first sight, that a higher proportion of services complained about have been found to be unsatisfactory. [See section 6 for detailed analysis].

4 Lessons Learnt and Service Improvements Highlights

- 4.1 Complaints are a way in which we can gain insight into how we need to improve the experience that residents have with the Council. They highlight where things have not gone well, and how we can improve our services to prevent similar complaints in the future. We are committed to building our services with the voice of residents at the centre and learning how we can do things better is an important part of this.
- 4.2 Lasting effects of the pandemic has continued to have an impact on the whole complaints handling process and the ability to maintain accurate and timely data in the first three quarters of this year. In January 2022 the new case management system was launched, and for Quarter 4 of the period, it has been easier to identify themes, recurrent issues and better resolutions which will enable improved learning from complaints across the whole Council.
- 4.3 Services now have direct live access to the data so that they can monitor performance and learning outcomes to make decisions about service improvements for the coming year, 2022/2023. With a full year of the new case management system officers are confident that next year the report will be able to supply even richer detail. This will enable us to make informed changes to improve services, with resident feedback at the very centre of these decisions.

Housing Management - Landlord Services

- 4.4 Our landlord services are establishing a neighbourhood model of working, which seeks to resolve problems more quickly through accessible and visible named officers who know the community they work in. This neighbourhood model has been informed by complaints made by our tenants and residents, and we seek to further refine this model based on feedback received by residents.

- 4.5 The following are steps underway to improve services and performance in relation to complaints:
- Concentrating on communication, face to face discussions and making contact to resolve matters sooner.
 - Our commitment to visit every tenant within 12 months. This will improve our relationship with our tenants and help understand what matters to them and identify any issues they may be facing.
 - New tenant satisfaction survey – following up on the property condition problems and complaints that have been reported for new tenants. Ensuring tenancies are off to the best start possible.
 - In-person viewing of our empty homes will reduce the complaints regarding not being able to view a property before making a decision which has been our offer until recently.
 - In September 2022, three pilot teams were created with officers focussing on three areas that matter most to our residents – rents, neighbourhood teams and a moving home team. These pilots are part of our lessons learnt to improve accessibility for our residents and to improve our service offer.
 - Managers' performance meetings on all areas of work but with a concentration on statistics including current complaints performance and trends. Using the complaints dashboard for easy identification of timescales and time remaining on targets for responses.
- 4.6 All of the above proposed changes have been driven by our commitment to learning from complaints and improving resident experience with our housing service.

Housing Management – Estate Management - Caretaking Services

- 4.7 We know that residents often complain as a last resort, and if they had known who to contact or had a better understanding of our services, the complaint may not have been raised. This in fact has been raised by District Management Committees (DMCs) themselves. To address this, we are committed to ensuring that we make available accessible and easy to use guidance around our services. We are in the process of creating and implementing an interactive Estate Management service webpage which will include information of services offered, key contacts and notices – this aims to not only promote the service but enhance the resident experience and build strong/better relationships with our community.
- 4.8 This is further supported by the regular walkabouts with residents and Tenant Resident Associations' (TRAs) representatives with the Caretaking Manager. These regular events allow us to hear from residents so we can help with specific concerns relating to an individual estate and ensure that these concerns and feedback are built into any future plans.

Housing Management – Estate Management – Parking and Garages

- 4.9 As a result of the restrictions placed upon local authorities to undertake enforcement measures to manage illegal parking, we are limited in our ability to fully manage this process as we were able to previously. This leads to unlawful parking in residents' bays causing dissatisfaction and complaints. Camden is committed to resolving this by the introduction of a borough wide Traffic Management Order allowing us stricter measures for enforcement and more importantly, resident safety. Resident consultation on these proposals will commence shortly.

Housing Repairs

- 4.10 We know that housing repairs is a key area that residents send in complaints. This process is not always navigable and often issues arise that could have been solved a lot earlier. Throughout this year, our housing repairs service have adopted a proactive approach to addressing customer concerns through its new customer services and case management team which went live in August 2020.
- 4.11 There is in place customer satisfaction surveys which are carried out to highlight positive or negative feedback. We have independent telephone surveys and "Govmetrics" which operates text message surveys for every repair or service carried out. This went live with the call centre in September 2021 and has now also been put in place for responses provided by the Case Management Team.
Any praise and compliments that we receive is fed back to the operatives or staff concerned and we recognise their performance as part of our work to foster and develop a positive operational culture.
- 4.12 An essential improvement that was put in place partly as a result of previous complaints and the accompanying learning, was a dedicated damp, mould and condensation team. Residents who want to report these concerns can now do so easily via our dedicated web pages or by seeking advice from the contact centre team, who have been retrained to provide a solution-based response. In addition, we have proactively visited many properties and offered advice and, where appropriate, take action to deal with this. To date, the service has completed over 1,500 surveys, with works complete to 400 homes and works booked to a further 400.
- 4.13 We know from previous complaints just how disruptive leaks are for tenants and how many complaints they create. To try to address this, a wider restructure of the repairs team is underway which will see the introduction of a leak detection hub to take ownership and close out these most disruptive of repairs. There will also be the introduction of a roofing hub to provide additional focus to this important area.
- 4.14 The service has also continued to improve its new centralised case management approach throughout the year, with more cases than ever being answered within 10 and 20 days. We want to not only improve the responsiveness of our service but also the experience that customers have.

We are working to provide a more empathetic and joined-up approach with other services to solve people's issues quickly and effectively. This approach is already working well with higher satisfaction levels and praise on the increase. As a result of this team's success, not only are they now supporting colleagues in Caretaking Services and the CCTV programme to operate in this new way, but they are also currently in the process of taking on Landlord Service cases with more areas to follow.

- 4.15 We continue to adopt an open and honest approach with our residents by publishing our monthly performance on our web pages for complaint and call handling.
- 4.16 To assist with gathering this information the Case Management Team fill out data capture forms upon the completion of each complaint which is then accumulated onto a "Qliksense" dashboard. This not only identifies the number of days taken to complete cases but it also highlights failings, themes and trends. This data is then fed back to the heads of service to ensure required improvements are put in place.

Housing Needs Group - Service Improvement

- 4.17 The learning from complaints is still being developed as part of the housing transformation programme where we are interviewing residents and using the feedback to inform service design. Complaints are also being reviewed and analysed as part of that process.

Adult Social Care - Service Improvement

- 4.18 Adult Social Care (ASC) has faced unprecedented growing demand for social care, alongside greater complexity of need from those newly requiring social care support. Despite these service pressures, complaints have remained comparatively low. The case study below is indicative of this increasing complexity.
- 4.19 The complaint by VK was illustrative of the growing complexity of need and circumstances presented by people who draw on Adult Social Care. VK repeatedly attempted to take the council to a Judicial Review but this was rejected each time by the court. VK had complex needs related to their mental health, domestic abuse, social care and housing, and their complaint touched on all these areas. The complaint was not upheld and in fact revealed the extent to which every service had tried to support VK. The response was jointly coordinated between housing and adult social care. Whilst doing it in this way has its own challenges, the learning has been that taking a partnership approach in complex situations and complaints like this one can be an effective way of auditing the quality and collaborative nature of the support an individual receives.

Central Complaints Services

- 4.20 A proportion of complaints at all stages relate to how Council services handle those complaints in a timely and satisfactory way. The role of the two Ombudsmen is to monitor how effectively organisations handle their complaints and to provide guidance on more effective complaints handling. We use the LGSCO's effective complaints handling guidance and the HO's Complaint Handling Code to improve our complaints handling.
- 4.21 2021/2022 continued to be challenging due to the impact of the pandemic and even though the Council continued to handle complaints, it has not always been as effective or as timely as we would like.
- 4.22 The implementation of the case management system for complaints handling has seen improvements in complaints handling in the last quarter of 2021/2022 with an increase in the proportion of complaints responded to within the timescale and a significant improvement in acknowledgements being sent out within the timescales. We expect with the new system bedded in, to further improve next year.

5 Feedback on last year's annual report 20/21 from the Resources and Corporate Performance (RCP) Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet.

- 5.1 The RCP Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet provided feedback for making further improvements to the complaints process and requested further data for inclusion in the annual report. They requested that the report include feedback from complainants about the complaint experience and how complaints relating to issues with contracted services feed into the Council's learning from complaints.

Citizen feedback on the complaints experience.

- 5.2 There are several areas that have developed or are developing ways of capturing feedback from residents to improve our services:

Tenant and Leaseholder Participation

- 5.3 District Management Committees (DMCs) have been updated on Housing and Property Services complaints performance at their quarterly meetings and notified of the Council's requirement to submit a self-assessment against the Ombudsman's new Complaints Handling Code annually. During this year the DMCs resolved to consult Camden Tenants and Leaseholders on the Council's complaints process and to undertake a questionnaire to:
- ask tenants and leaseholders about their experience of Camden's complaints system over the last two years when the first version of the Ombudsman's Code was introduced
 - seek comments on improvements to Camden's processes they would like to see
 - invite volunteers to a Panel to work with Camden on revising the system and proposing further ongoing resident oversight.

- 5.4 We welcome the support and input of the DMCs and await the results and proposals arising out of the survey. Once received, we will consider the proposals and provide a timely response.

Housing Repairs

- 5.5 The Housing Repairs Service carries out a short survey on completion of a complaint. Govmetrics is used to measure and process customer feedback within Property Management. The survey reports, the dashboard and the voice of the customer is used to inform the way the service works and helps improve the service going forward.
- 5.6 There have been nearly 8,000 individual feedback responses in the last year. Individual services analyse the information to improve the customer experience and turn negative feedback into positive, including avoiding escalation of complaints with the services.

Customer Services

- 5.7 The introduction of a new satisfaction survey is likely to lead to a reduction in complaints as citizens will have the opportunity to give feedback immediately after their interaction without going through the complaints process. This will mean feedback can be shared instantly. Customer services are receiving high levels of positive feedback via this survey.
- 5.8 Also, as part of customer services' Voice of the Customer conversation, a complaints learning outcomes dashboard is being developed. Reports from this will look at the improvements customer services has made based on the complaints data as well as other data sources and demonstrate the measures of success from what we have learnt.

Complaints from contracted services

- 5.9 We are also keen to know how our contracted services collect and respond to complaints, and to understand how they use this feedback to improve these outsourced services. Here are examples of how contracted services' complaints are linked into the Council's processes.

Housing Repairs

- 5.10 Contract Managers meet monthly with their respective contractors to discuss performance levels. During these discussions, they will also review customer satisfaction and complaints data from the previous period and identify trends and patterns. New to 2022, with the introduction of Govmetrics, any identified customer satisfaction dissatisfaction is followed up immediately by a contract team member. **51** Contact is made with the customer to try and resolve this dissatisfaction before it becomes a formal complaint. Those that do progress to a formal complaint are captured in this report [See Section 6.50].

Parking Operations

- 5.11 Complaints about the Civil Enforcement Officers from the provider, NSL Limited (parking enforcement) and complaints about conduct of officers in the Enforcement Agent (formerly Bailiffs) are collated and used by the Operations team in their quarterly contract monitoring. These are logged as Stage 1 complaints so are captured in this. [See Section 6.72]

Adult Social Care – Adults Commissioning

- 5.12 Adults Commissioning work closely with ASC teams using quality assurance reporting to try to resolve issues quickly with both providers and residents. This can prevent issues being raised as a complaint. In future any complaints relating to service quality of providers will be included in this report.

6 Breakdown of Data and Analysis

Stage 1 (Local resolution)

6.1 Compared to the previous year, there have been more complaints submitted, with more being responded to within ten working days and more being upheld.

6.2 Stage 1 complaints by directorate and division

2020/21 figures in brackets	Some directorates have restructured services during 2021/22 so data may be located in different divisions to 2020/21
*Average response time. Excludes open cases and cases 100+ days to respond.	If a service/team does not appear in the table it is because it has not received any complaints in the last two years

Service Area	Stage 1	Stage 1 Upheld	% Upheld	Stage 1 responded to within 10 w/days	Stage 1 responded to within 20 w/days	Outside Timescales Or Open	Average Time to respond w/days*
Corporate Services	72 (60)	12 (17)	17% (28%)	47% (43%)	72% (62%)	28% (38%)	11 (10 days)
Participation, Policy & Communication	1 (0)	0 (0)	0% (0%)	0% (0%)	0% (0%)	100% (0%)	(N/A)
Digital & IT	1 (0)	0 (0)	0% (0%)	0% (0%)	0% (0%)	100% (0%)	(N/A)
Law & Governance	3 (1)	0 (0)	0% (0%)	0% (0%)	0% (0%)	100% (0%)	(N/A)
People & Inclusion (HR)	1 (0)	0 (0)	0% (0%)	0% (0%)	0% (0%)	100% (0%)	(N/A)
Finance	2 (0)	0 (0)	0% (0%)	0% (0%)	0% (0%)	100% (0%)	(N/A)
Customer Services	64 (59)	13 (17)	19% (29%)	53% (36%)	81% (49%)	19% (51%)	11 (10 days)

Service Area	Stage 1	Stage 1 Upheld	% Upheld	Stage 1 responded to within 10 w/days	Stage 1 responded to within 20 w/days	Outside Timescales Or Open	Average Time to respond w/days*
Supporting Communities	1055 (813)	307 (192)	29% (24%)	46% (31%)	69% (57%)	31% (43%)	17 (17 days)
Community Services	9 (13)	1 (0)	11% (0%)	11% (23%)	11% (31%)	89% (69%)	18 (18 days)
Development	6 (6)	2 (2)	33% (33%)	33% (33%)	83% (83%)	17% (17%)	17 (17 days)
Housing Management	139 (140)	14 (4)	10% (3%)	24% (22%)	47% (39%)	53% (61%)	25 (16 days)
Property Management	728 (492)	264 (154)	36% (31%)	53% (37%)	78% (70%)	22% (30%)	12 (14 days)
Regeneration and Planning	84 (60)	12 (4)	14% (7%)	25% (25%)	38% (35%)	62% (65%)	10 (10 days)
Housing Support Services	89 (98)	14 (27)	16% (28%)	40% (16%)	61% (38%)	39% (62%)	24 (22 days)
Resident Safety	0 (4)	0 (1)	0% (25%)	0% (50%)	0% (50%)	0% (50%)	N/A (24 days)

Service Area	Stage 1	Stage 1 Upheld	% Upheld	Stage 1 responded to within 10 w/days	Stage 1 responded to within 20 w/days	Outside Timescales Or Open	Average Time to respond w/days*
Supporting People	89 (78)	3 (3)	2% (4%)	17% (21%)	22% (35%)	78% (65%)	24 (20 days)
Adult Social Care	25 (21)	1 (2)	4% (10%)	20% (24%)	28% (43%)	72% (57%)	21 (23 days)
Children's S&SW	51 (49)	2 (1)	4% (2%)	18% (20%)	20% (33%)	80% (67%)	32 (20 days)
Early Intervention & Prevention	13 (7)	0 (0)	0% (0%)	8% (0%)	23% (14%)	77% (86%)	12 (13 days)
Education & Integrated Commissioning	0 (1)	0 (0)	0% (0%)	0% (100%)	0% (100%)	0% (0%)	0 (1 day)

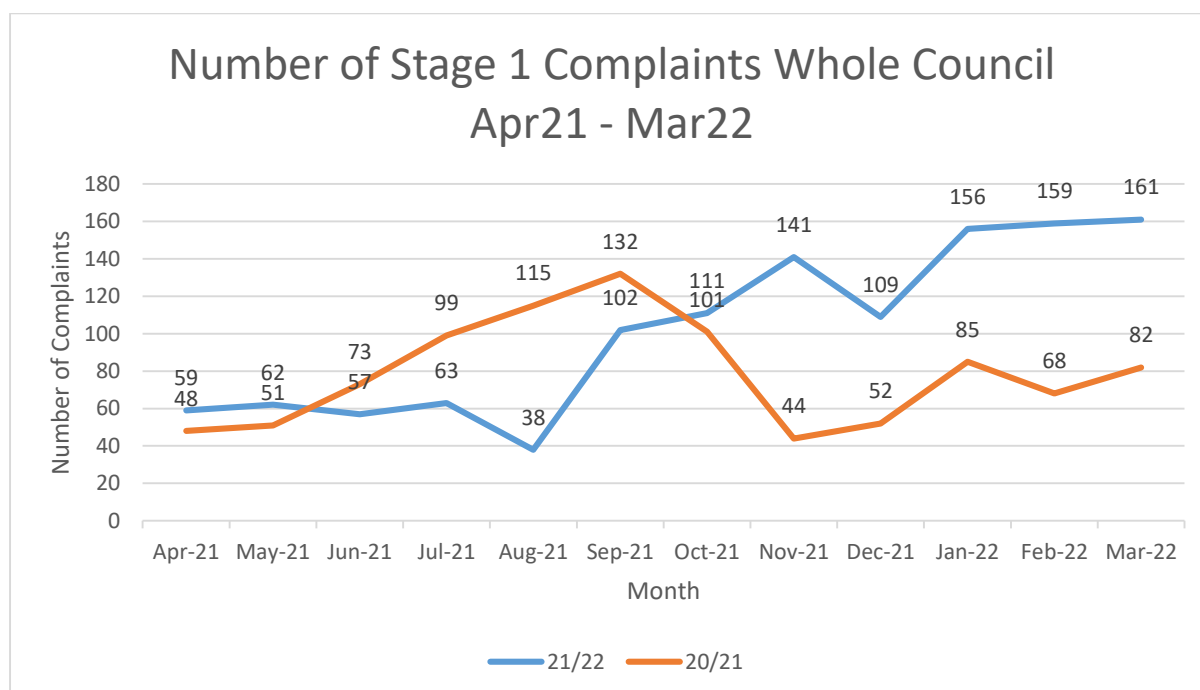
	Stage 1	Stage 1 Upheld	% Upheld	Stage 1 responded to within 10 w/days	Stage 1 responded to within 20 w/days	Outside Timescales Or Open	Average Time to respond w/days*
Total	1216 (951)	322 (212)	26% (22%)	44% (31%)	66% (56%)	34% (44%)	16 (16 days)

6.3 Stage 1 complaints Numbers received in previous years by directorate

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

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

6.4 Stage 1 complaints received by month



6.5 For a full table of numbers of complaints broken down by division and service area and by month (April 2021 to March 2022) see **Appendix 1**

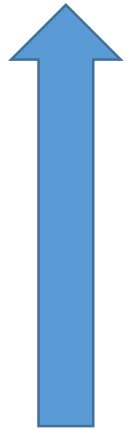
6.6 Analysis of Stage 1 figures

Number of Complaints

6.7 The net total number of complaints recorded at Stage 1 has increased significantly by 28%.

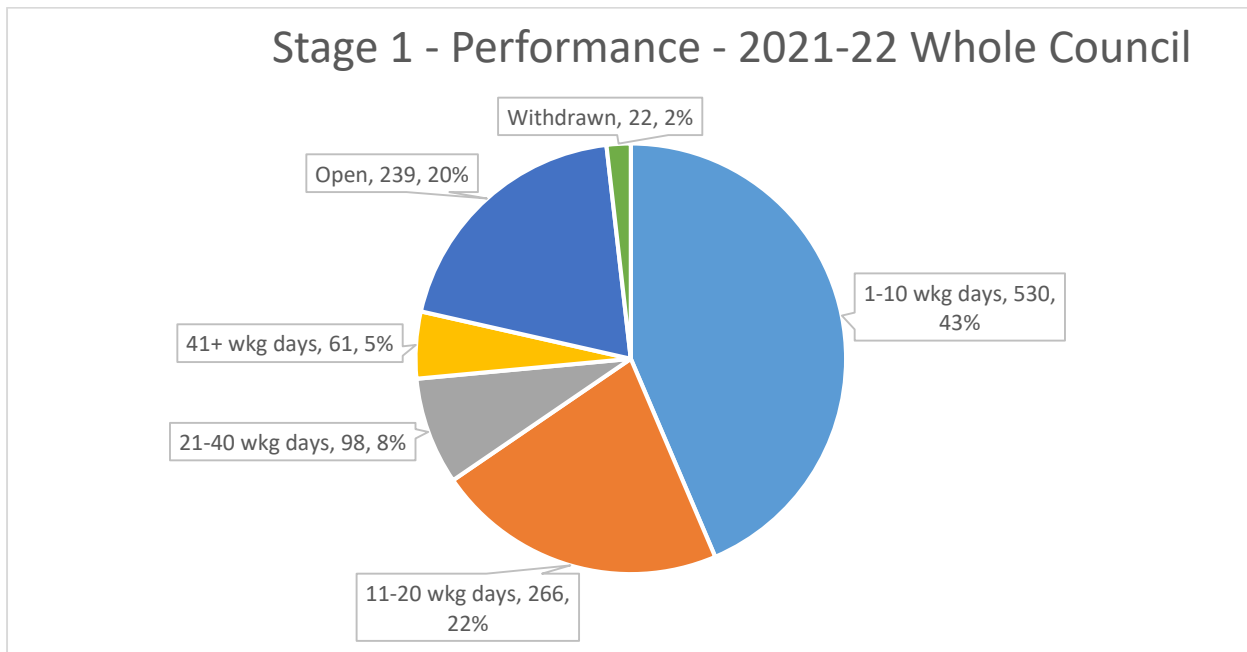
6.8 The graph shows how the number of complaints corresponds to the stages of the pandemic. Between April 2021 and August 2021, restrictions were still in place and the number of complaints is comparable to those in the previous year under the same conditions. From September there started to be an increase in complaints, corresponding to restrictions being lifted and returning to more normal service provision. By the last quarter (January 2022 to March 2022) the number of complaints continues to increase which indicates residents and services returning to business-as-usual.

- 6.9 The increase in the last quarter is also attributable to the introduction of the new case management system making it easier to log, track and monitor complaints in a single, centralised system.
- 6.10 The service areas showing a notable increase in complaints compared to the previous year are:
- Property Management - Repairs - an increase from 484 to 717 which is 233 complaints (48%)
 - Housing Support Services – Housing Needs – an increase from 62 to 86 which is 24 complaints (39%)
 - Regeneration & Planning – Development Management - an increase from 13 to 31 which is 18 complaints (138%)
 - Housing Management – Estate Management (Parking & Sheds) – an increase from 5 to 15 which is 10 complaints (200%)
 - Customer Services – Council Tax & Business Rates – an increase from 9 to 16 which is 8 complaints (89%)
 - Customer Services – Parking Operations – an increase from 19 to 30 which is 11 complaints (58%)
- 6.11 The detailed analysis of key areas is given from section 6.36 onwards - specific service areas.



Timescales

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



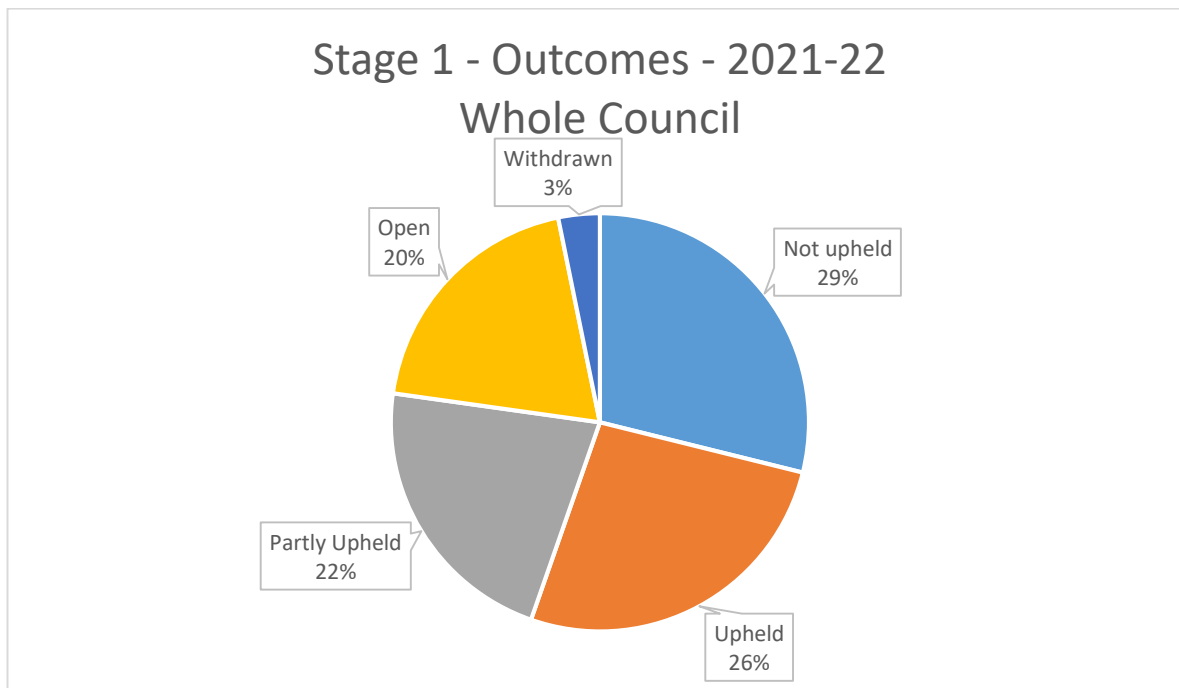
- 6.13 44% of stage 1 complaints were responded to within 10 working days. This is an improved performance from last year (31%) even though the number of complaints has increased.

- 6.14 The pandemic has had a significant impact on the complaints handling process which has caused inevitable delays in responding within the target timescales. Delays were experienced in quarters 1 to 3 with the triaging of complaints at the point of receipt which meant that there were delays in getting the complaint to the right service area to respond. The new case management system implemented in quarter 4 allowed for triaging to be done in a timelier way via the system and services are now being assigned complaints within 24-48 hours of receipt.
- 6.15 Notable performance is Housing Repairs who had the highest number of complaints but were able to respond within 10 working days to 54% of the cases (384).
- 6.16 The drivers of performance are likely to be a combination of:
- In the first three quarters of the year there was a delay in getting the complaints to the right service area due to the limitations of the complaints process and the volume of general enquiries coming into the same system. The introduction of the new case management system from Quarter 4 allowed complaints to be logged and sent to the right service area within 48 hours.
 - The nature of the complaints is often complex, with residents requiring an approach which involves multiple services, most often Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Landlord Services.
 - There has been a greater focus on the quality of response and appropriate resolution rather than the time taken to complete the response, ensuring that residents' issues are resolved properly
 - There has been a focus on improving communication with residents to keep them informed
 - In areas with a low volume of complaints, those that are outside the timescales have a large impact on the overall council performance.
- 6.17 It is acknowledged that target timescales are not an absolute marker of success nor of quality. There is now a better understanding and appreciation that the end-to-end time (i.e., the time from receipt of the complaint to the full and satisfactory resolution) alongside qualitative measures are better markers of success. The new case management system introduced allows these measures to be captured more effectively. The system also allows us to see where there are blockages in that end-to-end journey and so make service improvements to remove those blockages.
- 6.18 A question from Members last year was whether the target timescales were the right ones to use. Our timescales are informed by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's (HO) Complaints Handling Code. Compliance with the latter is mandatory as a Landlord. Whilst the HO Code only relates to Housing-related complaints, it was considered clearer to use the timescales in the Code for all Council complaints for clarity. The only exception where we are not following the HO Code is with Stage 2 Reviews. The Code stipulates these must be completed within 20 working days but the Council's policy is to complete them within 25 working days. This is because for non-Housing complaints and statutory complaints the guidance is 25 working days so we

apply that across all complaints. In practice the average time for responding to a Stage 2 Review is less than 20 working days.

Outcomes (Upheld/Not Upheld)

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



6.20 With the continued focus on services resolving complaints informally to ensure only those with merit go into the formal process, the number of upheld cases at the formal stage 1 has seen a very slight increase this year at 26% where it has stayed stable at 22% in previous years.

6.21 The detailed analysis of key areas is given in section – from sections 6.36 onwards - specific service areas.

Types of Complaint

6.22 For a full table of types of complaint broken down by division and service area see **Appendix 4**.

6.23 The main category types have been taken from the LGSCO guidance on complaints handling.

1. Delay in providing a service
2. Lack of communication
3. Staff behaviour/Poor customer service
4. Quality of service
5. Disagree with decision/action
6. Compensation request
7. Lack of information/advice/access to service

6.24 In addition, there are some types that are relevant to a specific service area:

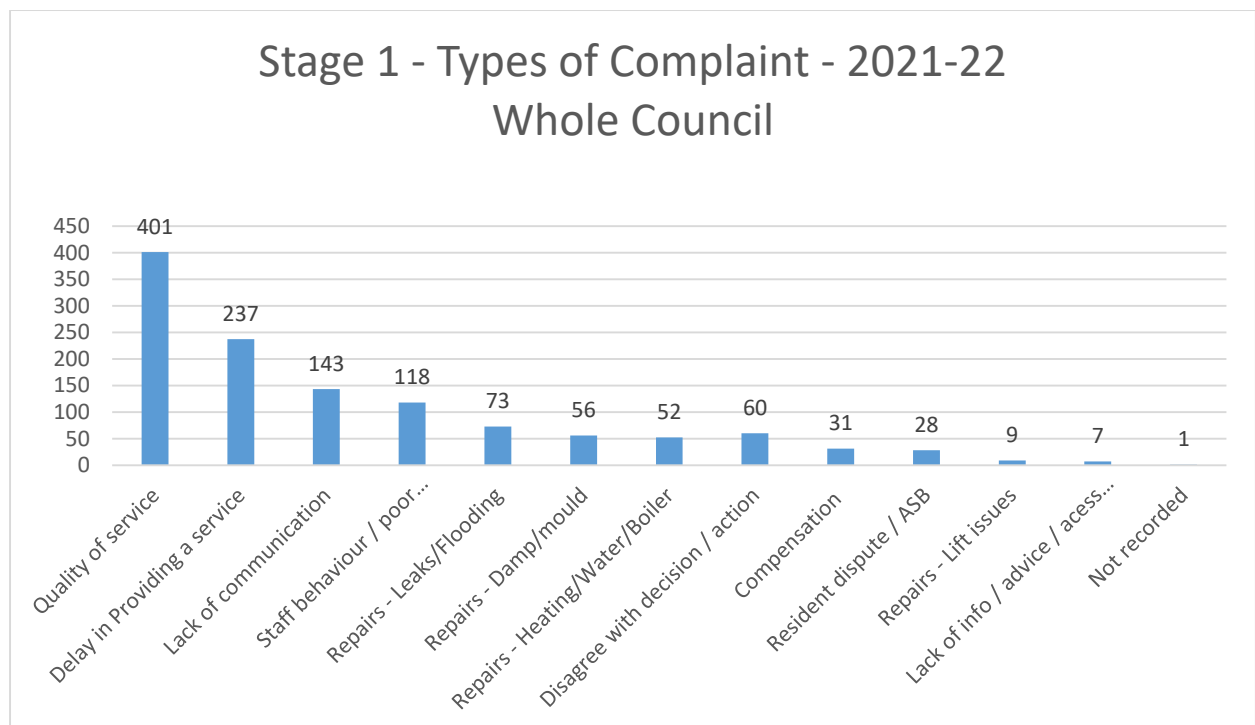
Landlord Services

- Resident dispute/Antisocial Behaviour

Repairs & Operations

- Lift issues
- Leaks/Flooding
- Damp/Mould
- Heating/Water/Boiler

6.25 Complaints are often a combination of more than one of these types. For example, a complaint may be about a delay in providing a service and not having been contacted (lack of communication) and is requesting compensation as a result. In this report the primary reason identified by the complainant has been used for the complaint report.



Analysis of Types of Complaint

Quality of service and Delay in Providing a Service

- 6.26 A third of complaints are related to the quality of service provided and this has **increased** by **64%** (156 complaints) compared to last year whereas the number of complaints related to a delay in providing a service has remained the same. The new case management system will allow services to track and monitor both timeliness and the quality of service, easily identifying any recurring types of complaint and addressing them sooner.

Lack of Communication

- 6.27 The number of complaints relating to a lack of communication has increased by 66% (57 complaints). These are when the citizen cannot get through to the right service on the phone or they do not receive a response from an email or they have been told someone will get back to them and nobody does. Members will note that during the year the pandemic was still impacting service provision, with staff shortages and reduced services. Work is being done by Customer Services on improving the customer experience and communication channels.

Disagree with a decision/action

- 6.28 The number of complaints where the complainant disagrees with a decision or an action taken has increased by 71% (25 complaints). These are things like disagreeing with how a housing register application has been processed, disagreeing with who holds responsibility for a housing repair, or disagreeing with level or type of social care is provided or otherwise.

Staff behaviour/Poor customer care

- 6.29 The number of complaints relating to staff behaviour or poor customer care has decreased by 28% (45 complaints). These are where the complainant considers that an employee has behaved poorly either in person or on the phone. These are front facing roles such as civil enforcement officers, caretakers, neighbourhood officers, customer services officers (Contact Camden) and usually are related to a disagreement over a decision or action taken. This is likely to indicate that customer care has improved.

Cases remaining Open

- 6.30 The 2021/2022 data shows that 239 (20%) complaints are “open” compared to 16% last year. This means that at the point the data was downloaded for analysis in June 2022 these cases had not been resolved with an outcome. Whilst some remain open as they were only received towards the end of the period in the final quarter, there is a variety of factors that mean others remain open for a prolonged period:
- 1) The case is complex and involves multiple agencies.
 - 2) The data has not been updated in a timely way or the service has provided a response but not informed the Central Complaints team.

3) Delays due to the pandemic

- 6.31 Some of the complaints may have now been resolved and closed although some complex cases will remain open for a significant amount of time.
- 6.32 Adult Social Care and Children’s Services whilst they do not have high numbers of complaints, do have a high proportion of open cases which are not being dealt with in a timely manner. Whilst this is partly due to their complexity and need to involve multiple agencies across Health and Social Care, this is an area requiring improvement.
- 6.33 The case management system allows better monitoring of open cases as managers can view lists of open cases for their service area to determine reasons they have not been resolved and take action to resolve and close them. The Central Complaints Team now monitor the status of complaints much more effectively and send reminders to services where cases remain open. This has resulted in more cases being resolved and closed in a timely way.

Escalation to further Stages

- 6.34 The proportion of stage 1 complaints that progressed to stage 2 has remained stable compared to the previous year at 11% of stage 1 complaints escalated.
- 6.35 However, the increase in the number of stage 2 reviews mirrors the increase in stage 1 in both the Repairs Service and the Housing Needs Services where it is inevitable that the combination of high demand and the backlog due to restrictions on service delivery due to the pandemic, will have led to a rise in complaints and escalation of those complaints. In regard to repairs, there is also the fact that citizens are now at home more and therefore repairs issues impact them more and issues such as condensation could be made worse by being at home more often.
[See section 7 for details of Stage 2 cases].

Specific Service Areas

Housing Management

- 6.36 The number of complaints has stayed around the same compared to the previous year.

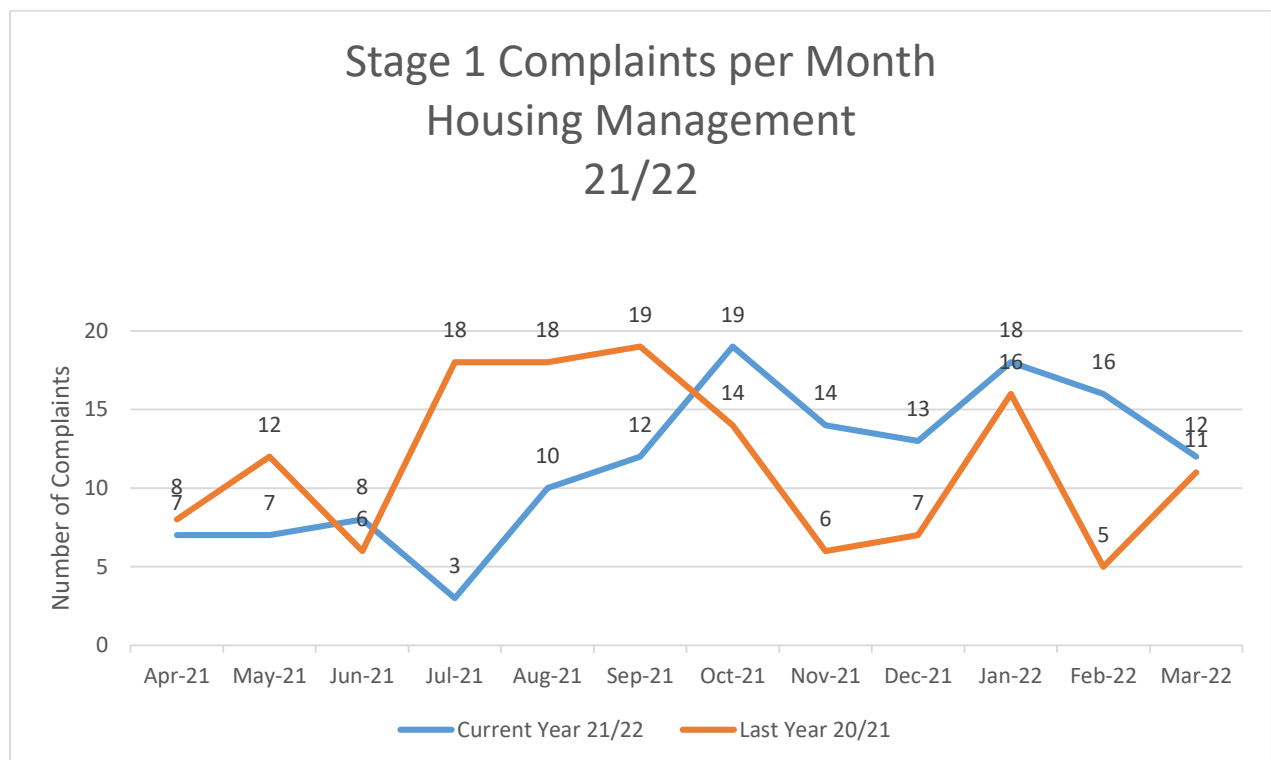
2020/2021	140
2021/2022	139

- 6.37 However, there has been a shift in complaints to the service areas with Estate Management (Parking) and Leaseholder services seeing an increase and Landlord Services seeing a decrease.

6.38 The majority of complaints were made in the last quarter of the year (January 22 to March 22). This is partly attributable to the introduction of the new case management system making it easier for citizens to complain and easier to log and track formal complaints.

2020/2021 figures in brackets

Service Area	Number of complaints	percentage upheld	percentage within 10 w/days	percentage within 20 w/days	Average w/days
Estate Management (general)	19 (19)	11% (0%)	11% (5%)	37% (21%)	23 (27)
Estate Management (estate parking)	15 (5)	13% (0%)	33% (40%)	47% (60%)	15 (9)
Leaseholder Services	18 (10)	17% (20%)	44% (60%)	72% (90%)	15 (10.5)
Landlord Services	87 (96)	8% (2%)	22% (17%)	44% (32%)	27 (25)
Tenant & Leaseholder Participation	0 (10)	0% (0%)	0% (60%)	0% (80%)	0 (8)



Estate Management (Caretaking Service)

- 6.39 The number of complaints has remained the same as the previous year. Three quarters of the complaints were related to the quality of the service provided which can be attributed to the increase in the number of fly tipping on estates and the difficulties presented to staff to try and clear rubbish and detritus from hard-to-reach areas, such as basements and avian deterrents structures fixed to our buildings. These are a particular problem as they are usually at height and very difficult to clean. This reflects the ongoing impact of the pandemic on caretaking services with reduced staff resources and residents spending more time at home.
- 6.40 We know that residents often complain as a last resort, and if they had known who to contact or had a better understanding of our services, the complaint may not have been raised. This in fact has been raised by District Management Committees (DMCs) themselves and is something that we are working with colleagues in the Communications to develop and include all Council services.

(See Service Improvements section: paragraph 4.7)

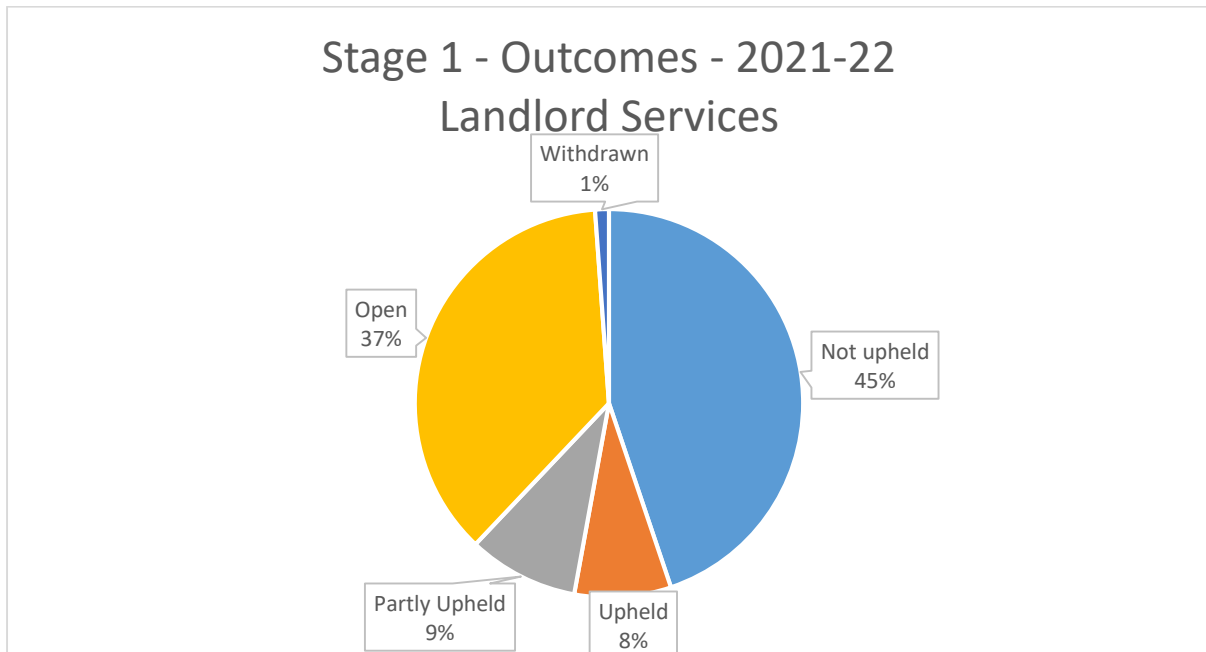
Estate Management (Parking & Garages/Sheds)

- 6.41 The increase in complaints witnessed for estate parking derive from two main themes:
- Illegal parking on estates
 - Provision of garages and sheds for storage.

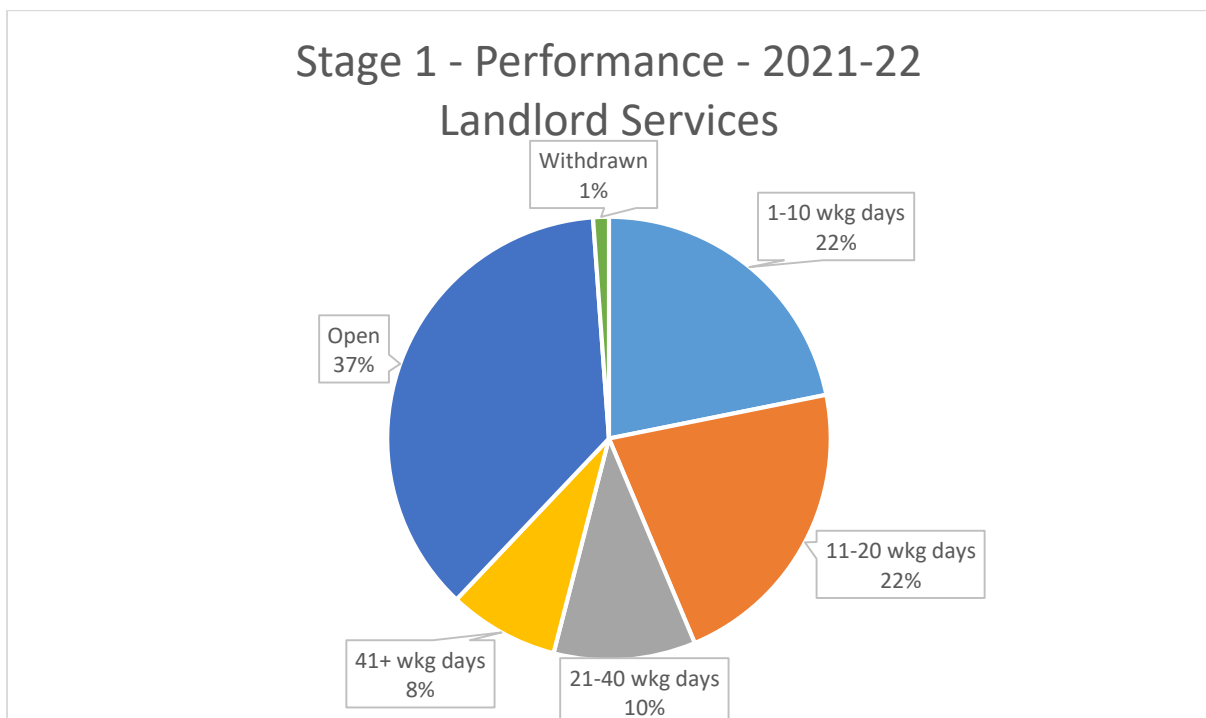
[See Service Improvement section: paragraph 4.2]

- 6.42 Demand for garages and sheds, usually for storage purposes, has increased considerably over the last year as people continue to be at home more and require more space. However, demand on some estates exceeds supply, resulting in frustration from residents associated with the length of time they often have to wait until the asset becomes available. Staff will work with residents to find an alternative facility for them on another estate but understandably most residents prefer to wait for one to be available on their own estate.

Landlord Services



- 6.43 In landlord services, despite a decrease in the number of complaints, the percentage of those upheld by residents increased from 2% last year to **8%** this year. This can be attributed to better initial triaging of complaints where more enquiries are managed informally or as Business As Usual (BAU) so it is only the more complex complaints that are handled through the formal procedures which are likely to be upheld.



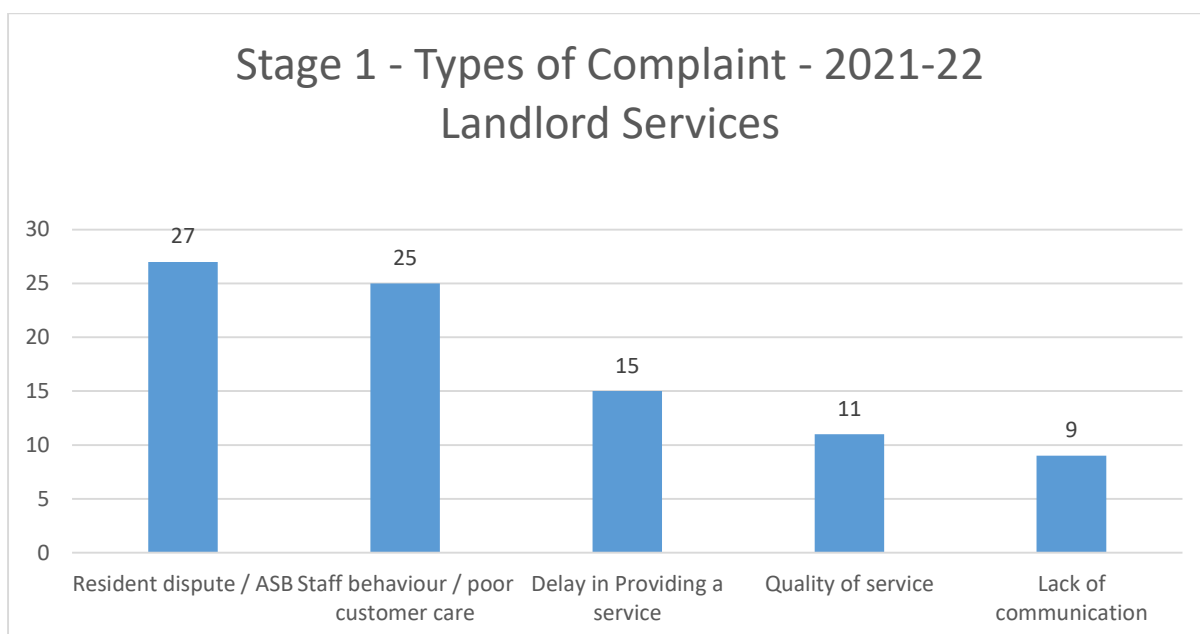
- 6.44 Across Housing Management, the average time to respond to a complaint is 25 working days which is higher than the previous year (16 working days with

Landlord Services, which sees the highest number of complaints in this division, having an average response time of 27 days.

6.45 Performance in Landlord Services is:

- responding within 10 working days has risen from 17% last year to **24%** this year.
- responding within 20 working days has also risen from 32% last year to **44%** this year.

6.46 Despite showing an improvement in responding to complaints within the timescales since last year, this is still too low. The steps we are taking to improve this service are outlined in section 4.1.1. The overall aim is to improve the satisfaction that residents have with our services and reduce the numbers of complaints further.



6.47 31% of complaints to landlord services were about neighbour disputes and anti-social behaviour on estates which is comparable to last year and reflects the ongoing impact of the pandemic. These types of complaints are often complex, involving vulnerable people and several agencies and services and therefore require time, continuous communication, and mediation, to resolve.

6.48 Housing Management - Compliments

<p><i>This is just to let you know how happy I am with one of your staff on how she responded to my recent enquiry. I know being in public sector you can get blamed quickly & not told when you are doing well. So I have to say that C has nailed again this time as she waste no time in dealing with the issue. I am sure having a team members like C must be great. Please thank her for me, job well done.</i></p>
<p><i>You really have all been amazing helping me with my case and I thank you all again</i></p>
<p><i>I hope you are well. You really changed our lives, everything is different for the better. Peace quiet lovely we live in the middle of a nature reserve at westcroft so you can hear beautiful birds tweeting most of the time its like listening to heaven, its so beautiful and dad loves to see all the sparrows around. Life has been so much better thank you so much I will always say a prayer for you when you come to mind. Thank you</i></p>
<p><i>I can honestly say that I have NEVER come across a person within a local authority who shows as much energy & determination to help tenants to improve their living conditions. I believe that people often complain when things go wrong however sometimes forget to convey their gratitude and thanks for the times when things go well and when professionals go above and beyond to help achieve good outcomes. I am happy to say that this has been my recent experience.</i></p>
<p><i>I love everything about where you move me - is the perfect area. I'm overwhelmed thank you ever so much I don't know what to say but thank you ever so much you're gonna change my life. And I feel like crying it's amazing I can't wait to move in just to be around the area. Thank you all so much</i></p>
<p><i>We writing to let you know how much we deeply appreciated the help that we received from N whilst finding our forever home. She was so kind, highly efficient and had a great sense of humour which helped to take the stress out of the whole process. We won't forget her.</i></p>
<p><i>I would like to thank you very much for being such a wonderful estate manager at Taplow house. Thank you for supporting our son in processing the re-housing processes and answering all his questions and our questions always in a very nice and helpful manner. We are very happy and proud that you are our wonderful estate manager and I have this feeling that you respect and consider our needs individually. I like to thank all your colleagues, who I don't know their names unfortunately, that they are always helpful to the residences and especially the ones who gave the key to my son, and nicely explain the process after viewing. From our family big thank you.</i></p>
<p><i>I would also like to say thank you for your outstanding service to the residents and TRA of Woodyard and Cressfield Close.</i></p>
<p><i>I just wanted to make contact with you to express my absolute and sincere gratitude to you and your entire housing management team for your approval of my change of housing application.</i></p>
<p><i>You went over and above your role to help and you were a great advocate.</i></p>
<p><i>I found all of the staff I dealt with to be incredibly supportive with regard to my issues. I am hugely appreciative of this aspect of the service.</i></p>
<p><i>my housing officer, was incredibly helpful and responsive to all my messages.</i></p>
<p><i>I had a lot of support throughout the process which I really appreciated.</i></p>
<p><i>T has been an amazing support from the moment I spoke to him. He has explained exactly what to do, who to speak to and continued to be supportive if ever I have had to call him. It's a refreshing change to be able to talk to someone who actually seems bothered about what you are saying! I wouldn't normally do anything like this but I felt compelled to inform you what a lovely, pleasant and helpful person T is, exactly the type of person to be a Neighbourhood Housing Officer!</i></p>
<p><i>I cannot express adequately my gratitude for the care given to Y by yourself and your colleagues. I can't remember his name I'm afraid, but please pass this on to the caretaker who is obviously a very lovely person</i></p>

<i>You both have made 5 children very very happy, and I feel thanks to you both my children will and should be able to move forward into 2022 with a better outlook on things and put this year fully behind them. Again I cannot thank you both enough and I truly mean that.</i>
<i>I would just like to take the time to say how helpful D's service was. She would at times even communicate in my native language to help breakdown and simplify things so that I understand better. I am very satisfied with her attitude, and quick responses via email.</i>
<i>The process of moving in was really good. Camden were very helpful, my housing officer has been very patient and approachable</i>
<i>The help I received was fantastic, every time I called they contacted me very quickly</i>
<i>The service was nice and quick, and the staff very polite</i>
<i>I would also like to say a massive thank you to our neighbourhood officer who has been extremely supportive and always there whenever I need any support with my flat. Indeed bray tower Residents are very lucky to have him. I was blessed to have such a kindhearted and caring officer.</i>
<i>I just wanted to say a big thank you for your help and support over the last few weeks. With your guidance it has made the whole moving experience less stressful. I have never met a housing officer who generally cares on a human level, who has been so swift and on top of everything. I am aware that you have a heavy case load, and for you to find the time to go out of your way to help is very much appreciated. Please don't ever leave :) Just a quick note to say thank for being a lovely housing officer and for always considering the interests and needs of your tenants.</i>
<i>Before closing please allow me to thank you and the rest of team for being so caring as and when my mother needed help during the period of her tenancy.</i>
<i>I am writing to you with a small thank you with regards to an amazing person. She has helped me over the years as my housing manager. She helped with all sort of problems and I just want to praise all her efforts towards me as a vulnerable tenant.</i>
<i>I just wanted to take this opportunity to thank you for all your help and support with both myself and my daughter and helping us get the moves we need to feel more safe.</i>

Property Management

- 6.49 In a typical year the repairs service manages over 200,000 calls and handles more than 100,000 repairs including servicing. Post lockdown our call volumes continued to increase up to 100% at times during 2021/22. The reasons for the increased call volumes were people being at home more. The easing of restrictions has affected the type of work carried out and creating peaks of activity.
- 6.50 This ultimately led to an increase in complaints too during this period compared to last year.

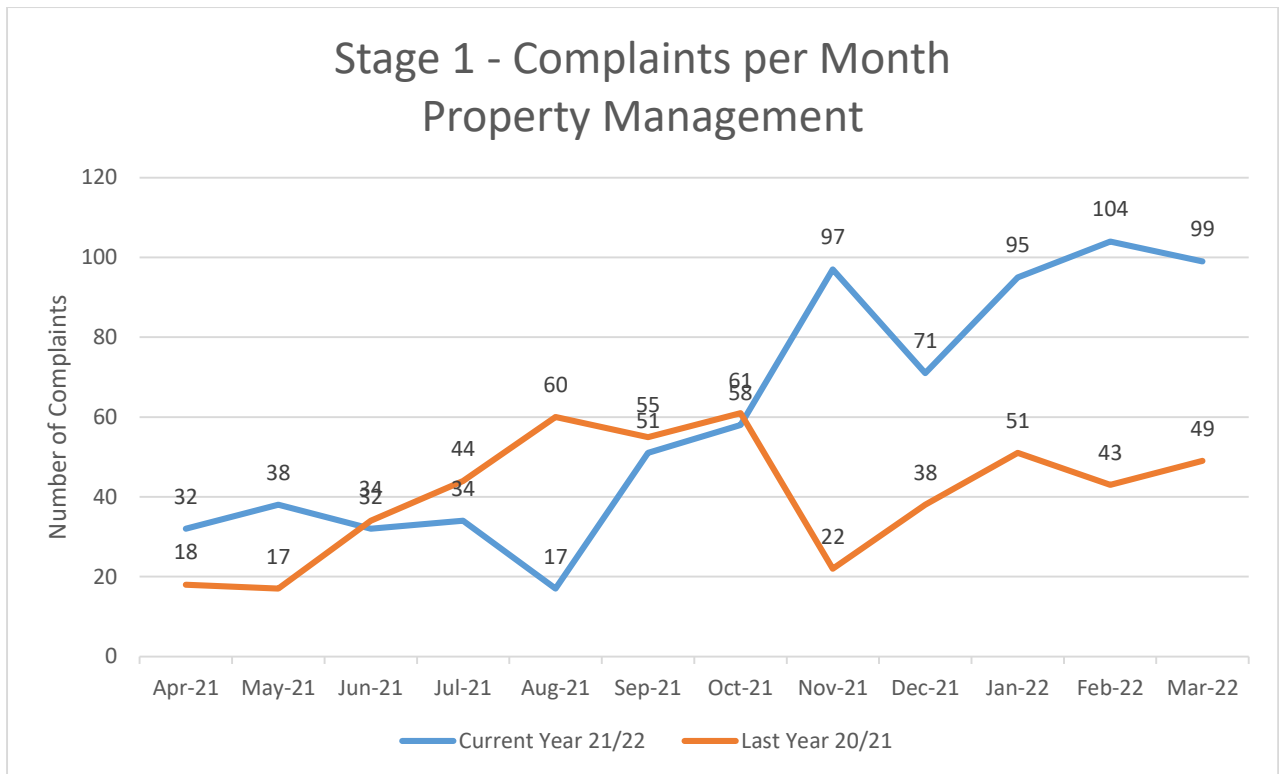
2020/2021 figures in brackets

Service Area	Number of complaints	percentage upheld	percentage within 10 w/days	percentage within 20 w/days	Average w/days
Facilities Management	3 (3)	33% (33%)	33% (0%)	33% (0%)	10 (25)
Planned Works	7 (2)	29% (0%)	43% (50%)	71% (50%)	11 (3)
Property Planning & Asset Management	1 (3)	0% (0%)	0% (0%)	0% (0%)	N/A (N/A)
Repairs & Operations	717 (484)	36% (32%)	54% (37%)	78% (70%)	14 (16)

Repairs Local Data

6.51 The Repairs case management team hold local data which is collected slightly differently to corporate data. This is used to measure specific performance against timescales within the service. The timescale for responding starts from when the repairs service receives the complaint whereas corporate data starts from when the complaint is received into the Council.

Service Area	Number of complaints	percentage upheld	percentage within 10 w/days	percentage within 20 w/days	Average w/days
Repairs & Operations	593	44%	75%	89%	12



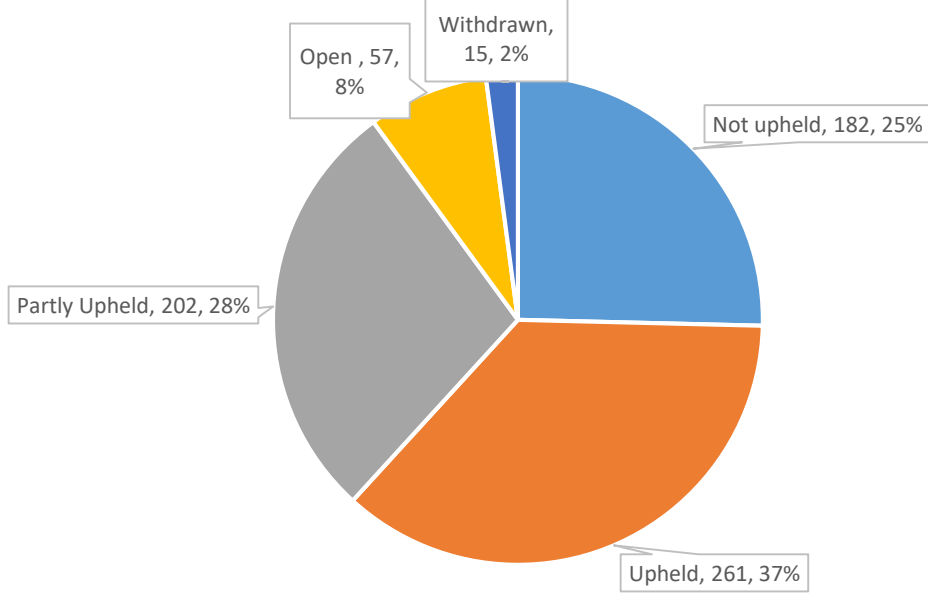
6.52 There would have been a dip in August due to many people going away for the summer and a rise in November due to heating and hot water season, where communal heating systems have been turned on.

Housing Repairs

6.53 Housing Repairs continued to experience levels of unprecedented demand for services as they had in the previous year due to the backlog of work following the pandemic. At that time only urgent works were being carried out, however it is now returning to business as usual. This meant many residents have outstanding work, which have resulted in an increase in complaints, mainly relating to works outstanding and the time taken for works to be completed. This is because repair timescales were lengthened so that the service could remain within budget in addition to delivering the increased volume of works.

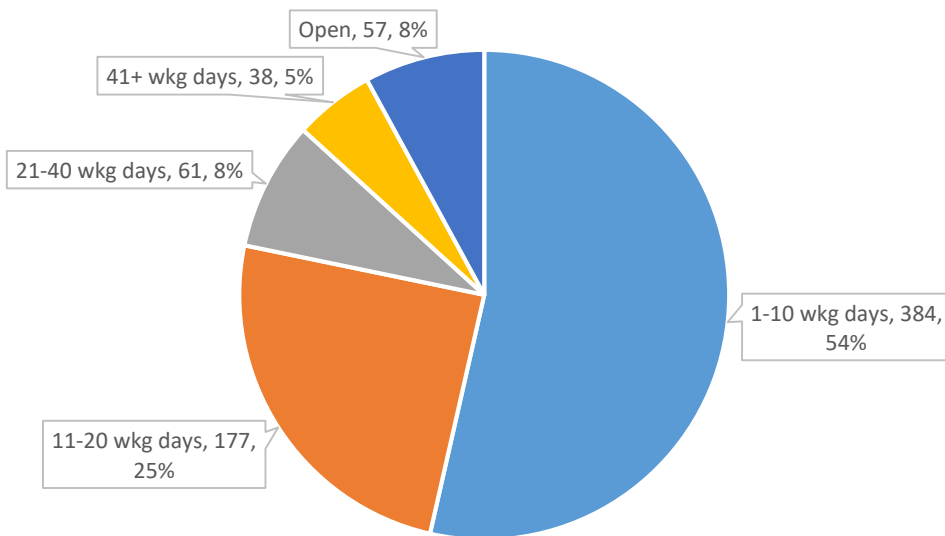
6.54 There is a steady overall increase in formal complaints, MP Enquiries and Member Enquiries 1,345 in the 2021/22 period. This reflects the stages in the lifting of restrictions in the pandemic and the re-opening of services. During 21/22 the service received 290,297 calls. New repairs requests doubled in this period and the trend has continued ever since. As more repairs are requested then waiting times can be longer, this leading to an increase in customer dissatisfaction.

Stage 1 - Outcomes - 2021-22 Repairs and Operations



6.55 In Repairs & Operations a higher proportion of complaints were upheld - 31% last year compared to **36%** this year.
 Note: The Case Management Teams data captures outcomes as “service failure” which relates to both upheld and partially upheld cases. They recorded 596 cases as “service failure”.

Stage 1 - Performance - 2021-22 Repairs and Operations

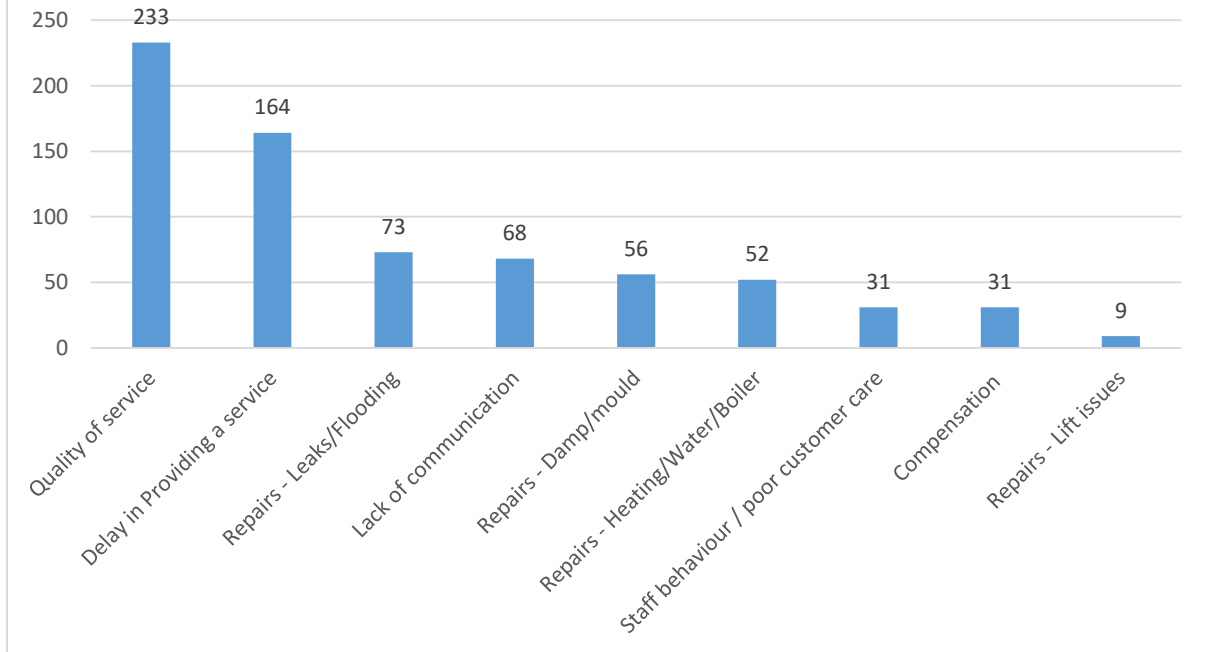


- 6.56 In Repairs & Operations, performance on response times has improved despite seeing an increase in complaints.
- 6.57 The average time to respond to a complaint is 14 working days which is an improvement of 2 working days to last year. This is still outside the target timescale but within the extended target timetable for complex cases.
- 6.58 Responding within 10 working days has significantly improved from 37% last year to 55% this year.
- 6.59 Performance on responding within 20 working days has also improved from 70% last year to 78% this year.

Local Data

- 6.60 The Repairs case management team hold local data which is collected slightly differently to corporate data. This is used to measure specific performance against timescales within the service. The timescale for responding starts from when the repairs service has been assigned the complaint whereas corporate data starts from when the complaint is received into the Council. This local data indicates:
 - 6.61 Responding within 10 working days from service being assigned the complaint = 75%
Responding within 20 working days from service being assigned the complaint = 89%
 - 6.62 This reflects the impact of the new case management team which works service wide to manage complaints and co-ordinate responses, tracking all live cases using a dashboard.

Stage 1 - Types of Complaints - 2021-22 Repairs and Operations

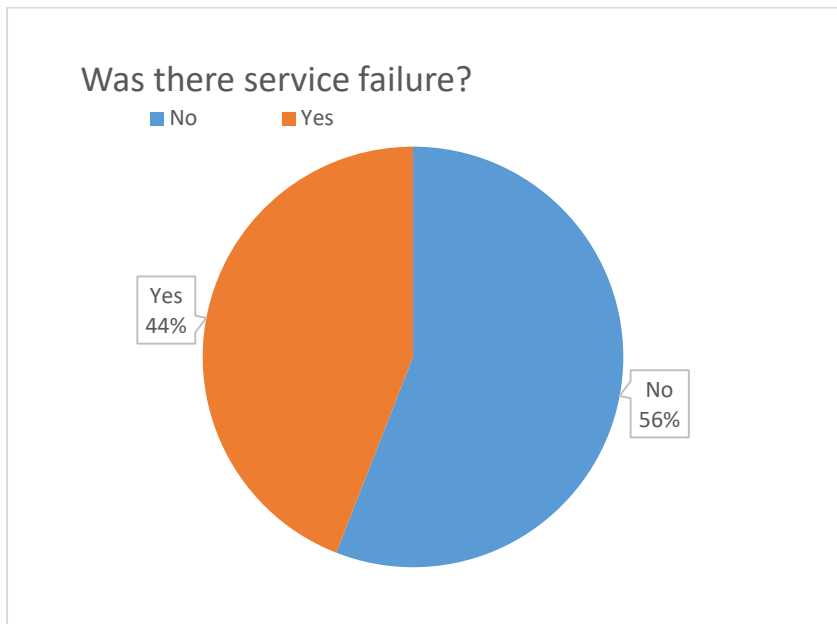


6.63 One third of complaints relates to the quality of service which includes specific issues such as failure to fix the repair, failure to return calls or not being able to contact the service for updates on current works. Another quarter relate to delays in providing a service which includes missed appointments and another quarter are related to the three main repairs issues – leaks/flooding, damp/mould and heating/boiler issues.

Data from Repairs Case Management teams - Trends



6.64 The main trends identified are 'updates on current work', and 'no service failure, resident's responsibility'.



6.65 Housing Repairs - Compliments

Bathroom adaptation. 'The men that did the work were lovely and did a great job. The adaption has transformed my life.

Just wanted to thank you for your help & advice when we were waiting for our walk-in shower. We have had it about 3/6 months. It's made a huge difference to our lives.

I recently had a sash window replaced in my property. I would like to take this opportunity to express how satisfied I am with the level of work achieved. The window is 100% better than that before it. The customer care I received was second to none. A fantastic level of service all round, something you don't get as a matter of course anymore sadly.

I have lived at X for more than 20 years. In all that time, I have never written a letter about a Camden contractor, except to complain. But Officer A has been exceptional. I had been writing and calling Camden about a major leak in my soffit and gutter for over three years. Finally, Camden decided to do something about it and Officer A oversaw the works. He was amazing: professional, courteous, intelligent and efficient. He kept me informed throughout the process and kept the communication lines open continuously. The work was completed on time and I am delighted by the end product. Please pass along my gratitude to Officer A and give the man a serious pay rise. He truly deserves it.

Thank you and I hope you tell your manager you have been great in service to tenants of Camber They have done an amazing job with clearing the mould and repainting

The team were great and officer B was amazing with my Dad as I got covid and couldn't attend the 2nd appointment and was really worried but your team were brilliant

Thank you to all of you for arranging the works and you all did a great job.

Today I picked up the keys to a new property which is way more suitable for the needs of my family. I just want to take this opportunity to thank you sincerely for all you did to assist me. For years I complained, and no one took my complaints seriously. My children's health was in jeopardy due to the terrible state of my pervious property (poor heating, persistent mould & lack of adequate ventilation). Thanks to you listening and acting on the issues, I believe my kids have a healthier and brighter future ahead of them. If there is ever a position for a promotion in your area of work, you certainly deserve it! You are making a real difference in the lives of people in Camden.

Thank you for encouraging the works to Oak Tree House - it means a lot.

I wanted to start by saying I've been to visit the flat and I think the place looks just amazing! And the best part, no damp smell!! I honestly cannot thank you enough!! But thank you!! So so much! :-) Thanks again for everything Officer C. We are so grateful. I cannot wait to bring mum and dad home. They will be thrilled!

What an incredible job, thank you so much for everything you've done.

Essex Drainage have finished the work on the drains and did a very good job to my unprofessional eye. They were friendly and respectful of the property and very efficient. They did an excellent job of cleaning up too before they left.

The tenant is happy with this and your help and assistance and everyone involved.

We are happy with the works completed by British Gas and relieved that we have constant hot water / central heating again after two months of erratic or limited service. Thanks for your interest and support.

I wanted to email you today to say a big THANK YOU for your work on this and being so organised and professional.

you are so helpful. I can't thank you enough!! Thank you

You are amazing!!! Tenant is very happy! Thank you all once again.

I really wanted to let you know what a fantastic job Officer G is doing. Quite often we / I forget to compliment staff about how great they are and what a huge difference they make.

Detailed Performance Comment

- 6.66 Since the pandemic, the housing repairs service have seen a 43% increase in repairs volumes. The service has worked effectively to catch up with the volumes we were unable to carry out during the period of government lockdown restrictions. We have seen volumes for our summer months reflect those of winter months from previous years, and our residents now use their homes in a different way - we are seeing more wear and tear right throughout the calendar year, such as windows needing easing and adjusting during hotter summer months and more plumbing repairs and blockages due to increased home working impact on services all year round.
- 6.67 The lockdown did however, place considerable pressure on the service, with many more people working at home, home schooling or on furlough, meaning that the impact of any outstanding repairs had a much greater effect on the quality of life of our residents. Exacerbation of overcrowded conditions also placed additional pressure on issues related to damp, mould and condensation. As a result, the service introduced a dedicated team to focus on inspection, remedy and prevention of damp.
- 6.68 With regards to complaints, the Case Management team have made a significant positive impact on how cases are managed across property services. All cases are logged centrally and tracked using a live dashboard. Cover arrangements are in place to make sure cases are investigated consistently across service areas and this is reflected in the improved response times. This has improved the repairs service that residents receive, as their cases are managed in a simpler, easier process.
- 6.69 The Housing repairs call handling team also put in place a number of effective measures to address the increase in demand. These included introducing a live chat facility which is more convenient for many users and improving the Camden resident account to enable residents to use a self-service function to

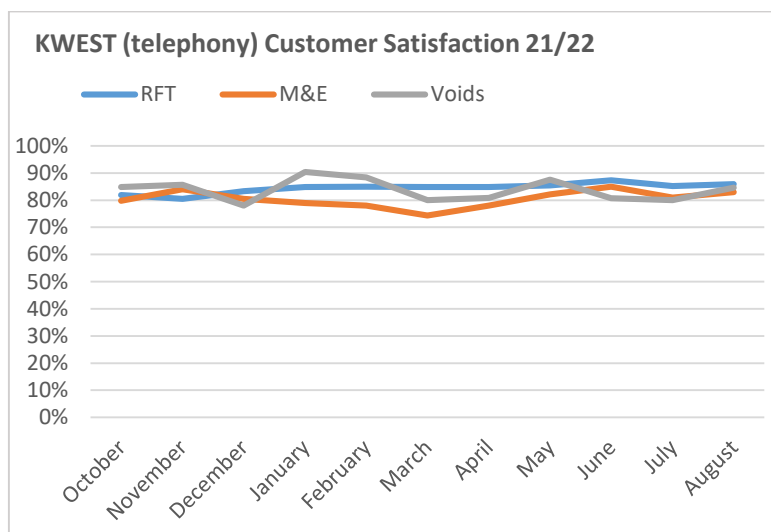
log their request. We have shifted the way citizens contact the Council by directing them online and freeing the telephony service for vulnerable residents and emergency enquiries.

6.70 Within this period, we have received 10,000 webchat interactions and 10,000 orders being raised by residents online. This was the beginning of the biggest channel shift within the Council. The volume of calls within the year due to the channel shift strategy saw a decrease of -48% compared to the same time previous year.

“As a deaf and proud Camden resident for over 70 years, I wanted to thank the Camden council for providing me with an avenue to interact with another person LIVE without the need to rely on interpreters or text talk. This new webchat function has given me a bit of freedom to do things for myself.”

6.71 Although the (post) pandemic period has placed demands on the service, satisfaction has remained strong with 58% rating the service as excellent (5 out of 5) and 21% rating the service as very good (4 out of 5), overall, just 10% of those surveyed were dissatisfied (our surveys are carried out independently by an accredited company).

“The person who came gave excellent customer service. He was patient, understanding, and able to communicate the issue and its resolve with me... 10 out of 10. Thank you.”



Customer Services

6.72 The number of complaints has remained similar to last year.

2020/2021	59
2021/2022	64

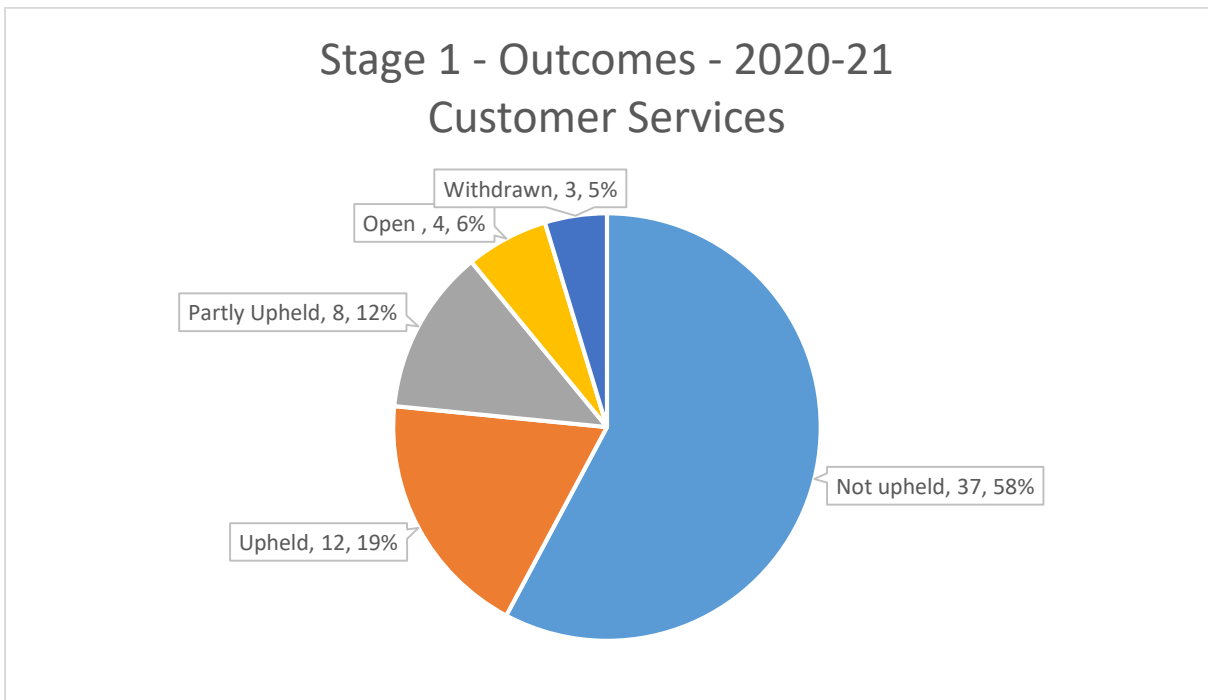
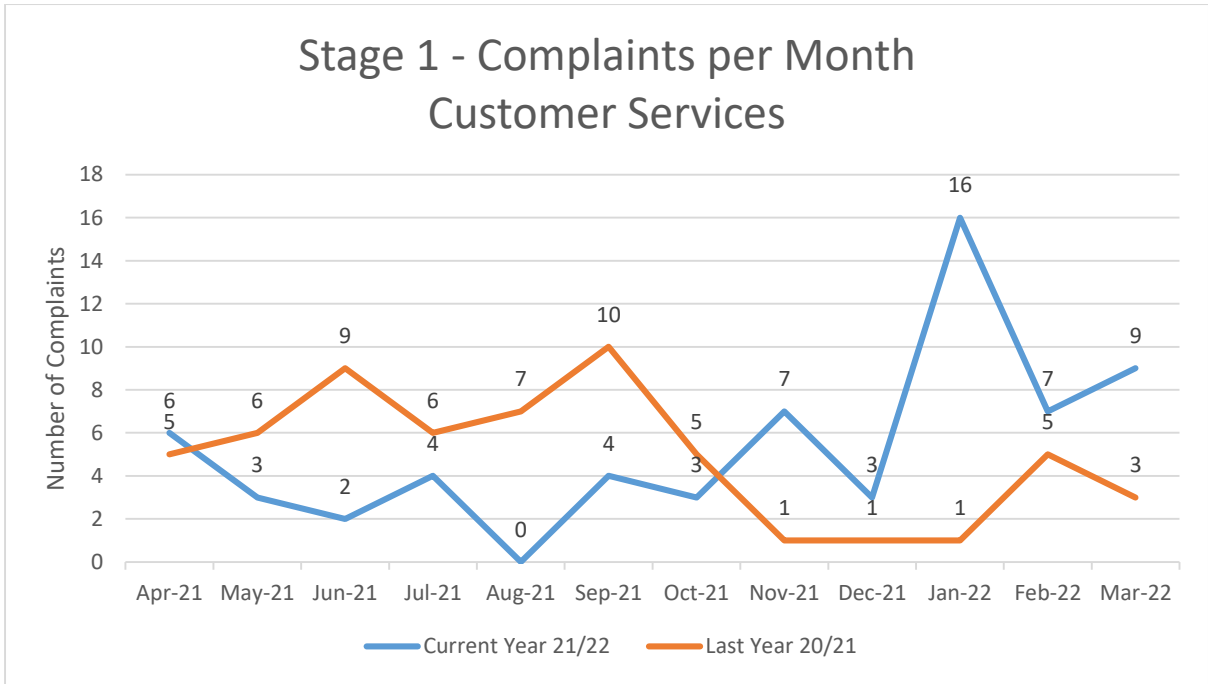
2020/2021 figures in brackets

Service Area	Number of complaints	percentage upheld	percentage within 10 w/days	percentage within 20 w/days	Average w/days
Benefits	7 (5)	14% (20%)	57% (40%)	57% (40%)	8.5 (8.5)
Council Tax & Business Rates	16 (9)	25% (33%)	44% (67%)	88% (78%)	13 (8.5)
Customer & Registration/Contact Camden	11 (26)	18% (35%)	36% (54%)	55% (65%)	7 (7)
Parking Operations	30 (19)	17% (21%)	63% (21%)	93% (58%)	12 (15)

6.73 The distribution of complaints across service areas has changed from last year. Council Tax and Business Rates saw an increase due to the COVID-19 Business Grants schemes and the challenges of applying these in a short space of time.

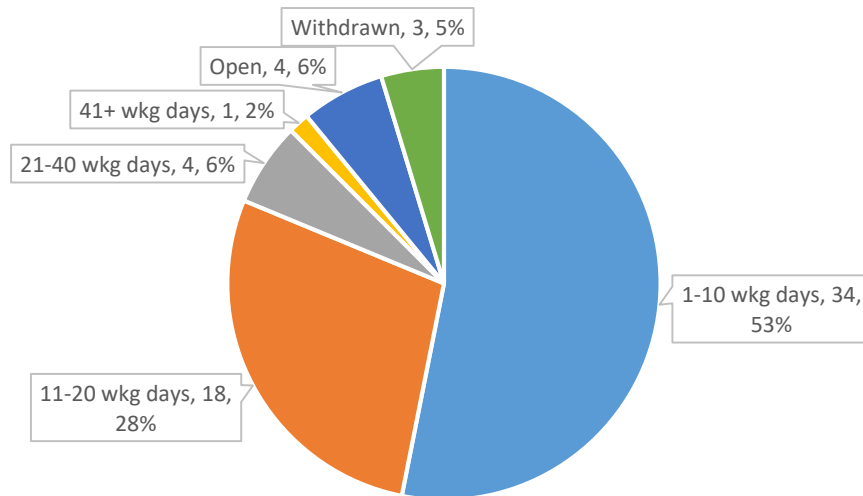
6.74 Parking Operations saw a year-on-year increase which is related to lifting of pandemic restrictions as well as the rollout of a new parking permit system. Parking's figures include complaints made against the Council's enforcement contractor.

6.75 The division saw a peak in complaints in the 4th quarter, coinciding with the implementation of the new complaints system with some delays in allocation and accurately logging completed responses. At the same time, there was a vacancy and absences in the customer and registration services management team.



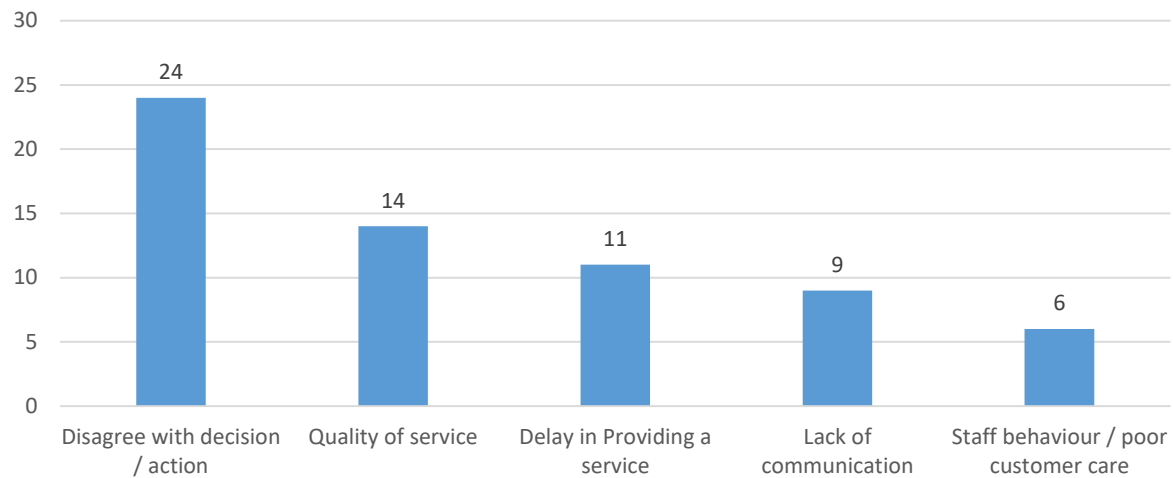
6.76 A smaller proportion of complaints were upheld (19%) compared to last year (29%) with over half not upheld, indicating that a higher proportion of services complained about were found to be satisfactory.

Stage 1 - Performance - 2021-22 Customer Services



- 6.77 The average time to respond to a complaint is 11 working days which is just outside the target timescale.
- 6.78 In Parking Operations performance on responding within 10 working days has significantly improved from 21% last year to 63% this year. Performance in the same service has also significantly improved for responding within 20 working days from 58% last year to 93% this year.
- 6.79 In Council Tax and Business rates, performance on responding within 10 working days has dropped from 67% last year to 44% this year. However, performance has significantly improved for responding within 20 working days from 78% last year to 88% this year.
- 6.80 In Customer Services & Registration, performance on responding within 10 working days has dropped from 54% last year to 36% this year despite having fewer complaints. Performance has also dropped for responding within 20 working days has dropped slightly from 65% last year **to 55%** this year. This is down to the gaps in leadership capacity during a critical time and has now been addressed.
- 6.81 Benefits has improved in both 10 working days and 20 working days from 40% last year to 57% this year.

Stage 1 - Types of Complaints - 2021-22 Customer Services



6.82 Over half of the complaints were related to a delay in providing a service or a disagreement with a decision or action. This is to be expected within both Parking Operations and Council Tax and Business Rates as for the period both services were extremely busy due to ongoing COVID-19 and delays were inevitable and citizens were more likely to challenge decisions around parking enforcement and Business Grant payments.

6.83 Customer Services - Compliments

<i>Thank you so much – we appreciate your help with this. We are going through SO much bureaucracy with all of the insurance involved, so the fact that you have handled this so quickly and efficiently for us feels like a blessing!</i>
<i>I just wanted to say a heartfelt thank you for your help with my hardship/exceptional circumstance. It has truly been a horrendous time for me during and post pandemic and your help has been received with utmost gratitude</i>
<i>I would like to express my thanks and gratitude to you and Camden's council tax team for the way you have handled my recent enquiry. I have held senior positions in some of the world's largest companies and I can genuinely say that the level of customer service, efficiency and good nature of Camden's Council tax team is unsurpassed. And all of this during a pandemic ...I appreciate fully that the Council Tax team has a thankless task so I wanted to thank you and relay my experience to you.</i>
<i>Thank you so much for responding – I've been very worried. Once again, I thank you so much for all your time and help.</i>
<i>Many thanks for your help with this and for replying so quickly, we really appreciate it.</i>
<i>Thank you so very much! We are grateful for your help. I appreciate you working on this at such a late hour.</i>
<i>I was overwhelmed with her friendly support and cooperation. It was such a warm welcome from the Council that I felt like saying thank you to each one of the Camden Council staff.</i>
<i>She has managed to sort out, very promptly and efficiently, some issues I've had ... and took the time and consideration to smooth it all out'. She's got a nice, positive, friendly manner with a great 'no problem' can-do attitude ... that goes a long way these days</i>
<i>If everyone at Camden was like Officer E it would be a pleasure to deal with them. She's an absolute treasure and I wish you had more like her.</i>
<i>Dealt with her query in a very professional and caring manner</i>

<i>Officer F was more than helpful, and thoughtful and concerned and patient and understanding'. This speaks volumes of a well run, well organised, well led team.</i>
<i>Camden, in fact the whole country, needs more people like her. She clearly cares about her work and about the people she helps. She is a lovely woman who should be commended. If she's ever in Frognal Lane she should pop in for a cup of tea or coffee and will be warmly welcomed.</i>
<i>Officer G dealt with this call perfectly. He was calm, articulate, asking for clarification and able to get a clear understanding of the situation.</i>
<i>The Coronavirus Support Line received a letter from a customer who wanted to thank them for 'their extraordinary kindness and diligence in making contact with us by phone during our recent illness with the virus. It was the humanity and warmth shown by each of the callers that so impressed us and we are thankful to them for doing their job with such compassion at such a difficult time'.</i>
<i>They did an excellent job and that they both are a credit to Camden as a service provider</i>

Detailed Performance Comment

- 6.84 As a division we are striving to improve people's experiences and learn from every complaint. Services have seen a slight increase in complaints and have responded to complaints in an average of 11 days. Across the division, 12 complaints were upheld, most of which related to delays in service or communication reflecting the pressures on the services and staff. Considering the number of interactions the services have been involved in over the year, a very small percentage result in an upheld complaint.
- 6.85 Nevertheless, the services continue to focus on learning from complaints and improving performance. Projects to improve Council Tax, Business Rates and Parking permit processes have now been completed and are being used by our customers. These projects are aimed at simplifying the process for both customers and staff to deliver a better self-service experience and provide a greater insight into demand. Performance is being closely monitored to improve timeliness of response and additional resources brought in where necessary to respond to any growing backlogs.
- 6.86 Council Tax are looking at ways of improving self service for customers and online signposting to reduce demand via phone and email which affects turnaround time for those needing help and caused complaints to be partially upheld due to time and delay. Increasing the use of digital self-service is vital to ensuring that limited resources for taking telephone calls can assist those most in need and those unable to use digital means to interact with the Council.
- 6.87 In customer and registration services, complaints are now a standing item on management team meetings and performance is monitored closely with staff training updated and delivered to all staff to reflect any learning. Customer services are receiving high levels of positive feedback via the new satisfaction survey. [Section 6.83].
- 6.88 The Council is no longer providing business grants and the benefits service has now been merged with Council Tax and Business Rates under a single head of service.

6.89 Issues with accurate allocation and logging of complaints in the new complaints system are being resolved and further training provided as required to embed the new system.

Housing Support Services

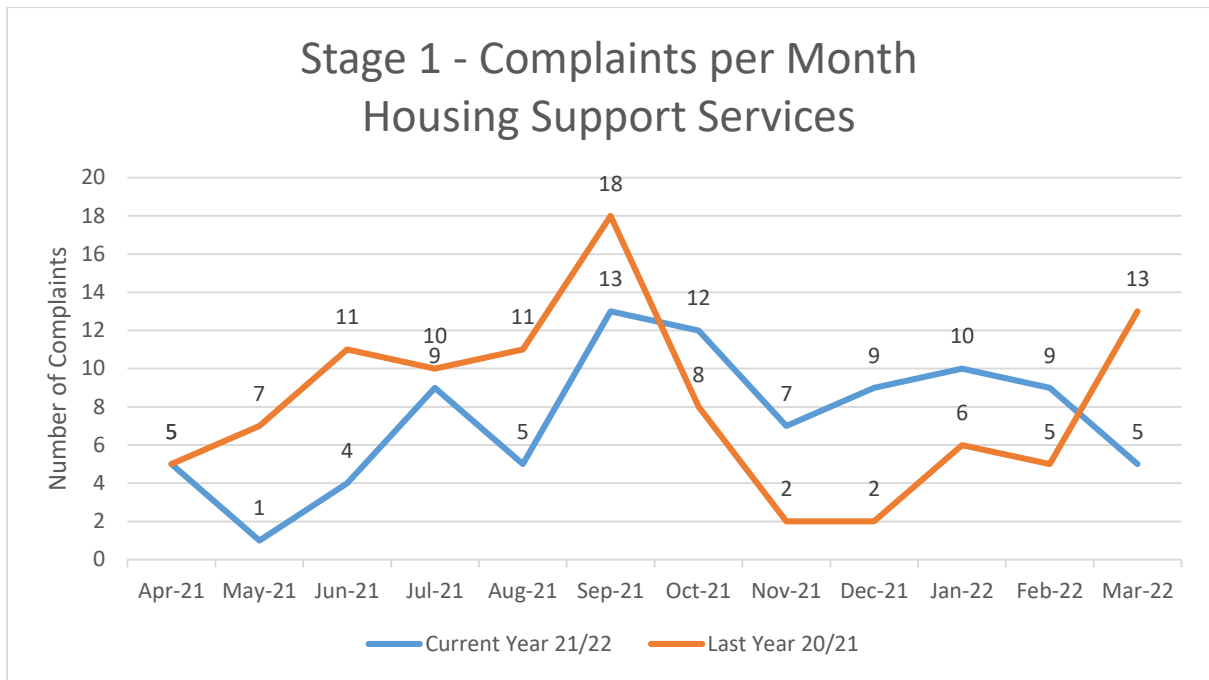
6.90 There has been nearly a 10% decrease in the number of complaints compared to the previous year which is attributable to the large decrease in complaints relating to the Camden Accessible Travel Solutions service. The changes to blue badge criteria in 2020/21 generated a high number of complaints and this has now been resolved in 2021/22.

6.91 Housing Needs continued to experience unprecedented levels of demand for services as they had in the previous year and combined with the ongoing impact of the pandemic this has meant a further increase in complaints of 35%.

2020/2021	98
2021/2022	89

2020/2021 figures in brackets

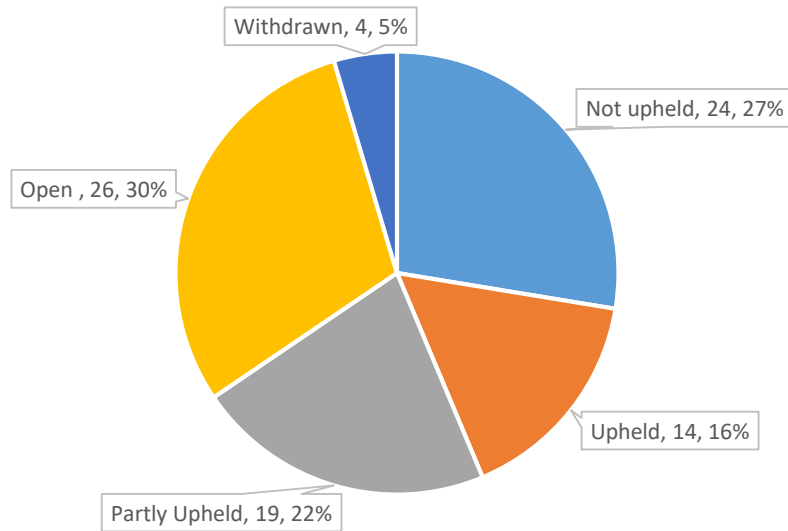
Service Area	Number of complaints	percentage upheld	percentage within 10 w/days	percentage within 20 w/days	Average w/days
Camden Accessible Travel Solutions	1 (26)	0% (31%)	0% (4%)	0% (4%)	N/A (62)
Housing Needs	87 (62)	16% (27%)	39% (19%)	61% (48%)	15 (22)
Housing Commissioning & Partnerships	1 (2)	0% (0%)	100% (50%)	100% (50%)	10 (10)
Private Sector Housing	0 (1)	0% (0%)	0% (0%)	0% (100%)	N/A (11)
Temporary Accommodation	0 (7)	0% (29%)	0% (29%)	0% (57%)	N/A (11.5)



Housing Needs

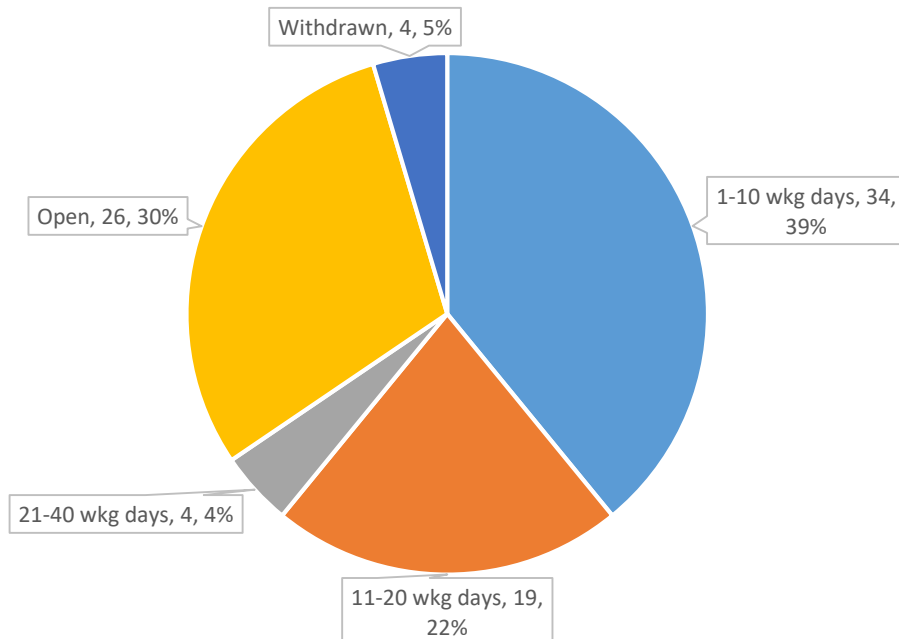
- 6.92 For the first half of the year complaints were well below 2020/21 levels but this reversed in the second half of the year. It is unclear why but the ongoing impacts of the covid pandemic have made long term improvement challenging with homelessness increasing and the supply of temporary and private rented sector housing slumping London-wide from around the end of 2021. This led to challenges in being able to provide an excellent service.
- 6.93 The increase in demand, coupled with ongoing covid pandemic pressures on staff resources due to increased turnover and staff absences, has caused delays in dealing with homeless applications, verifications, reviews, enquiries, mutual exchanges, and complaints. As a result of these delays, complaints and dissatisfaction with the service unfortunately increased.

Stage 1 - Outcomes - 2021-22 Housing Needs Group

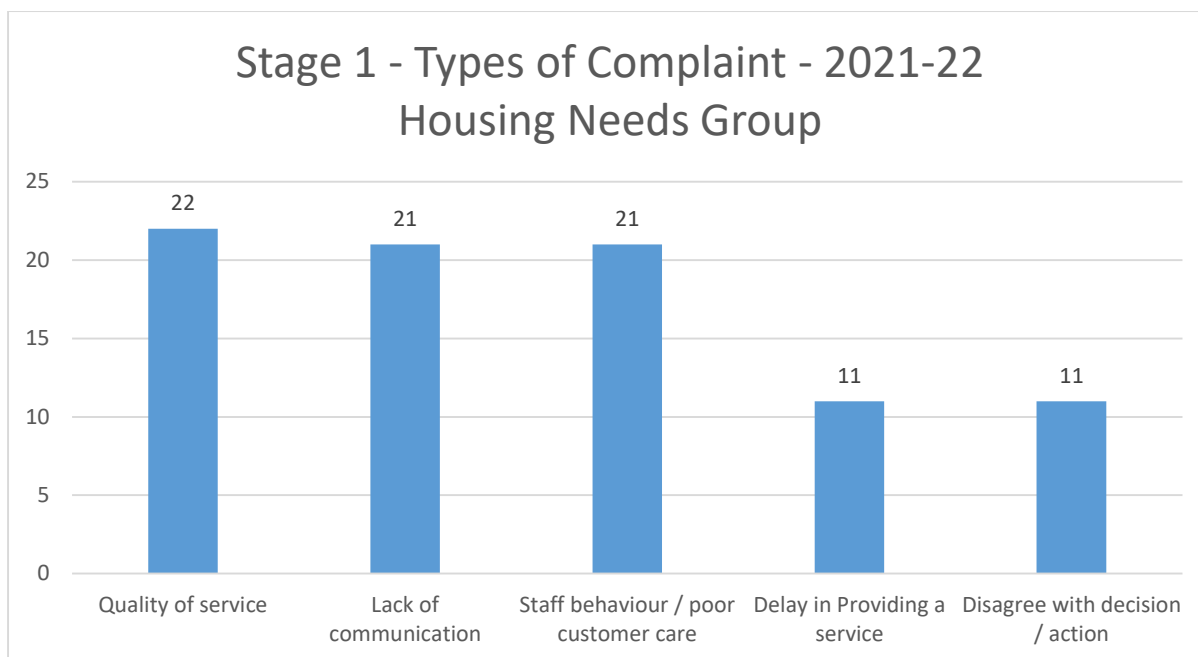


6.94 In 2020/21 Housing Needs saw significantly more complaints upheld (27%) but in 2021/22 this has gone down to 16% which is a positive trend. This could in part be because some of the necessary changes to the provision of services such as the suspension of Choice Based Lettings and the slowdown in mutual exchange work in the first period of the covid19 pandemic meant that more complaints were justified and therefore upheld, whereas in 2021/22 when services began to return to normal, fewer complaints were found to be justified and so fewer were upheld.

Stage 1 - Performance - 2021-22 Housing Needs



- 6.95 In Housing Needs, despite there being a higher number of complaints, the average time to respond to a complaint has significantly improved to 15 working days compared to 24 working days in the previous year. Whilst this is still outside the target timescale, it is a positive trend and was an area for improvement identified last year which has been achieved.
- 6.96 Similarly, the proportion of complaints responded to within 10 working days has significantly improved from 19% last year to 39% this year. Performance on responding within 20 working days has also risen from 48% last year to 61% this year.



6.97 There are over 7,000 households currently on the housing register seeking housing, including those seeking sheltered housing. Of the 88 complaints received, a quarter related to the quality of the service provided, a quarter related to lack of communication and a quarter related to staff behaviour/poor customer care. These included things like failure to provide correct information, lack of clarity over applications, not being able to contact the service, and not receiving replies to queries. We want to significantly improve the way that staff work with residents, to reduce the number of complaints relating to customer experience with our services. The service prioritises work to become even more customer-focused and having commissioned an external consultant to review the system for allocating social housing the service is now working to transform the system for allocating social housing using service design methodology, which includes seeking the voice of the customers and the staff to inform the changes. The service is also involved in a Homelessness System Transformation Programme, which will also create a more person-centred service.

6.98 Housing Needs Group - Compliments

Just to say that I had a great conversation with Officer H which was enormously helpful. Thank you

I would like to thank everyone for helping me move to my new home. I have moved to a better place with my children and finally they have their own space now. All wouldn't have been possible without you all helping me.

I am writing to express our gratitude to the fantastic and professional work of Officer J she's been very helpful and kind when I contacted her last weekend to help my vulnerable parents with their hotel booking. My parents have been placed at a premier Inn hotel, they are extremely clinically vulnerable, Officer J kindly managed to book them a meal and thanks to her, they had a nice meal last Sunday. I am also very grateful for Officer J for taking her valuable time to call us frequently and check that my parents are OK and fed and she went out of her way to get in touch on Monday morning to make sure that my parents booking was extended. It's wonderful to be able to have the opportunity to meet professional and kind people like Officer J. Officer J is definitely the right person in the right place.

I Would just like to say a huge thank you, firstly for helping to making this move go ahead, and secondly for being very understandable and also all your support. I am truly grateful and just want you to know that I appreciate everything.

From MPs Office: Thank you so much for your work and for the full explanation below. I have telephoned our constituent and left her a message to say we will now leave them in the capable hands of your teams to conclude this situation. I am very grateful to you and your colleagues for turning this around so quickly and for such comprehensive communication back to our office. I wish all of our casework was so efficiently dealt with!

I have been in recent contact with a few of your team members - what a fantastic team they have been. It's very rare to come across a team so dedicated, communicative and helpful. A really big thank you once again for the amazing work and relief that you bring to the most vulnerable.

I just wanted to say a big thank you for offering the X family a property, they have now moved and we are able to confidently close the case. Thank you so much for taking the concerns seriously and ensuring there was a solution found, it was much appreciated.

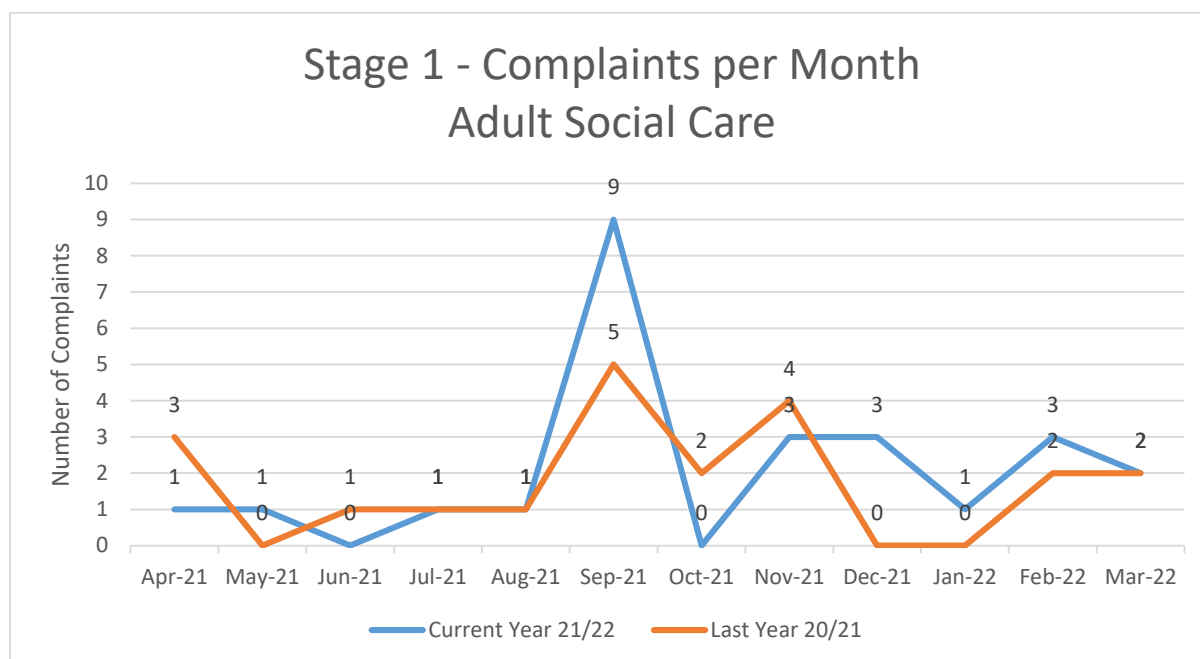
We absolutely love our new home, couldn't have wished for a better one, We very much feel part of our community - we love the area and people around us - we know old friends and have made new ones here - such a lovely Borough and we hope to stay longer. Huge thanks to all involved who worked tirelessly to ensure our needs were met and suited to us both.

I would like to begin by saying you are a phenomenal soul with a big heart and an extraordinary exceptional person and I am shouting a 100th million thank you to you for not only handling my case but you've kept calm and had a lot of patience even when they didn't cooperate. You are truly a God sent honestly, I'm super thrilled and sincerely happy and I know for a fact I wouldn't have reached this point if not for your consistent persistence perseverance and pushing expertise and professionalism along with your timely intervention.

Detailed Performance Comment 2021/22

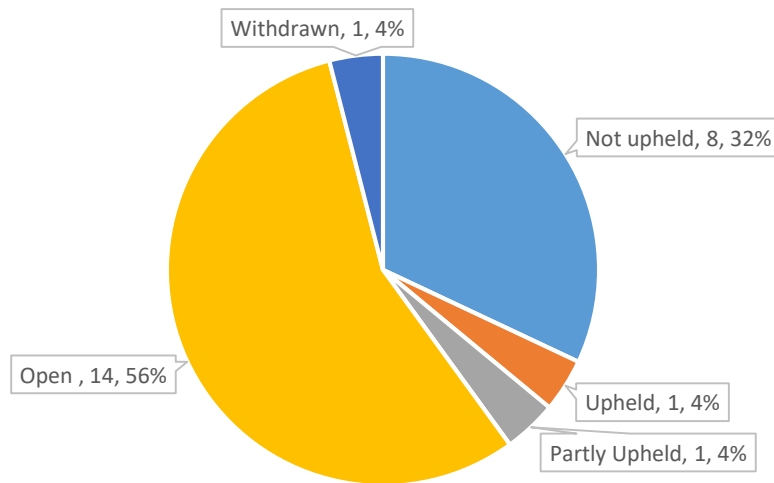
- 6.99 In 2021/22 the HNG services focussed on recovery from the initial phases of the pandemic. As part of this there was a significant increase in the number of void council homes allocated as part of the Voids Improvement Programme reducing the number of complaints about delays in allocations. However, the homelessness service started to be affected by increases in homelessness and decreases in housing supply and both services were affected by ongoing staff resource issues. Further transformation was identified as being required and this will happen chiefly through the redesign of the housing allocations system and the Homelessness System Transformation Programme.

Adult Social Care Services



- 6.100 Complaints have increased slightly by 19% (4 complaints) compared to 2020/21 which is still comparatively low. The highest number of complaints was received in September 2021 which corresponded to the lifting of COVID 19 restrictions. Whilst the complaint volume appears low, it should be noted that many more issues are dealt with before reaching the formal complaint stage.
- 6.101 The majority of complaints are in the front facing service Support and Safeguarding. The reason that the other areas in ASC have few complaints is because the complaints for frontline services often contain aspects that cover the more back-office services such as financial assessment and direct payments without being the predominant element of the complaint. Any complaints primarily about a back-office service are usually dealt with informally before they reach the formal stage.
- 6.102 Integrated Commissioning Mental Health & Learning Disabilities services have not logged any complaints as they have not come under the Adult Social Care division before so the process is not so widely known to their providers so any complaints have been logged outside the Council's process. Future reports will include any received from integrated commissioning's providers.

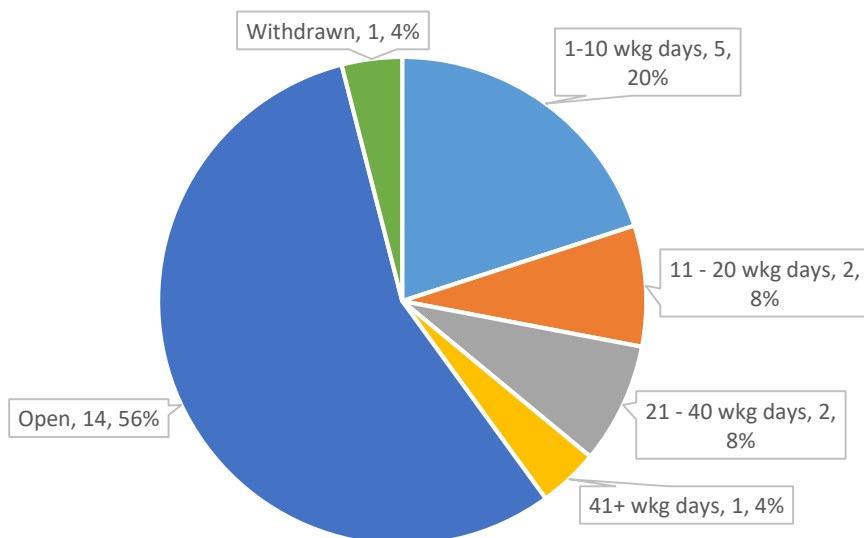
Stage 1 - Outcomes 2020-21 Adult Social Care



6.103 In 2021/22 only 2 complaints were upheld or partly upheld compared to a total of 12 upheld or partly upheld last year. This is a positive trend indicating that service provision was found to be satisfactory. However, a significant proportion of complaints remain showing with status as 'Open' meaning they have no outcome. This indicates that the service is not dealing with complaints in a timely way.

6.104 ASC will review outstanding complaints at SMT monthly to ensure that the performance improves in this area over the next year.

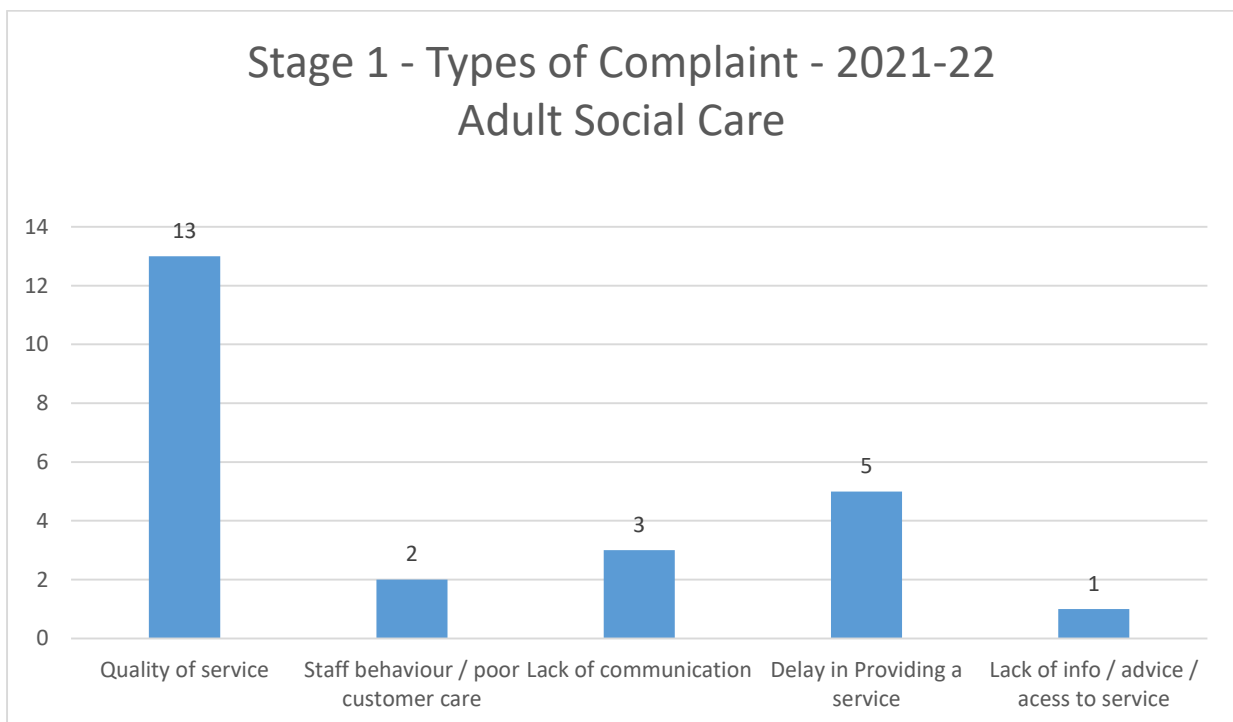
Stage 1 - Performance - 2021-22 Adult Social Care



6.105 Five complaints (20%) were responded to within 10 working days which is the same number of complaints but a proportional decrease from 2020/21 (24%). Statutory timescales state that Adult Social Care (ASC) complaints should be responded to within 20 working days. The service responded to 2 further complaints within 20 working days which is 28% which is a proportional decrease from 2020/21 (43%) when a further 4 complaints were responded to within 20 working days.

6.106 The average time to respond is 14 working days which is better than last year (23 days) but 56% of the complaints logged remain open with no response recorded so cannot be counted in the average response time data.

6.107 Whilst the data shows some improvement in response times, ASC remains committed to improving this further. ASC SMT will review complaints monthly by utilising the Qlik complaints dashboard. All complaints data will also form part of the quarterly ASC Insight, Activity and Finance meeting.



6.108 Over half (52%) the complaints relate to the quality of service provided. This includes things like the level of support provided and the types of adaptations that can be provided which relate to the level of expectation of the citizen against what is available within the funding available. ASC have developed a renewed approach to Quality Assurance and as part of this will ensure that all complaints will be reviewed to develop insights into any quality issues that emerge.

6.109 Adult Social Care - Compliments

<p><i>I am writing to you today to compliment Officer K for her professional approach she showed me today during my consultation. She was attentive and sensitive towards all my needs. I felt like she listened to me and was helpful at all times. I felt I should let you know what a brilliant employee you have working for you.</i></p>
<p><i>I would like to express my sincere gratitude for all the time and attention you gave to my father, his situation and all the assistance you gave to me. I have waxed lyrical about Officer M, yourself, and the Camden Social Services/Adult care, to anyone I've told about my dad's situation. It is very comforting to know that my father is safe and cared for, and difficulties resolved for him. I could not have hoped to get this sorted out without your considerable help.</i></p>
<p><i>I had the pleasure of being assigned to Officer N who has been very helpful in listening and providing me with all the assistance that I need. I will like to take this opportunity to ask you to thank him on my behalf for his professionalism and patience during the time he spent helping me with my case. I will also like to stress how lucky you are to have such professionals working for you.</i></p>
<p><i>Officer P is wonderful and she thoroughly cared all the way and I felt warmth from her commitment.</i></p>
<p><i>I would also like to thank you for working so hard, acting quickly and really supporting E and family. I work with many families in London and across the country, on a voluntary basis, and we can honestly say you are one of the most supportive social workers we have met. It has been so reassuring to work with you and we appreciate your professional knowledge – sadly not always forthcoming with some other social workers we have worked with. Social work is a massively tough job and we want you to know that your commitment, time and professionalism is much appreciated.</i></p>
<p><i>I would like to compliment the team at Camden I have been working alongside. They are formidable, every single one of them. I can honestly say that I have never worked with such an incredible team in the public sector and I have worked with a few! The empathy they show, the drive they have sustained, the strength and challenge that they have asserted and their belief and values around ordinary life outcomes is simply immense. It has been a pleasure to work with Camden and I look forward to working together again in the future.</i></p>
<p><i>I do have Officer W my super angel very kindly helping me</i></p>
<p><i>Really great stuff - not often I am inspired by a form but I am really conscious that if the rhetoric is not reflected in the day to day reality of frontline staff it will not make a positive difference to citizens - your forms are a really great example of what we should be aiming for.</i></p>
<p><i>I just wanted to message you, to say how happy I was with the support offered by Officer W, when finding a care home for my mother. Officer W, was very helpful, kind, and informative during our search. She was constantly in touch with us to answer any questions, and to help us find a suitable home. She was very empathetic when we had concerns. All of this resulted in a very easy transition, and a wonderful care home for my mother. Mum is very happy there so far and has even said she should have gone sooner.</i></p> <p><i>If all social workers in Camden are like Officer W,, Camden should be very proud of their service.</i></p>
<p><i>I'm writing to commend the excellent assistance I received from two members of your team. They have made a tremendous and significant difference for the better for two elderly people, in need of help living in Camden.</i></p>
<p><i>Thanks for going the extra mile for us here at Wellesley and we cannot thank you enough.</i></p>
<p><i>At the Centre on Friday I was delighted to find Spanish omelette (tortilla) on the menu. Please thank J and the kitchen staff for this innovation in the menu.</i></p>
<p><i>Just a quick note to thank you and the entire amazing staff at Kingsgate. I am still so impressed by the professionalism, caring and genuine love that EVERY staff member showed to EVERY attendee. I need to give a shout out to the lunch crew - what a knock out 3 course meal I had - amazing. I leave soon with the knowledge in my head and comfort in my heart that my dad will be well looked after. Please do thank everyone there on my behalf - I am proud to originally be from this area and so proud that you lot represent Camden/London/UK so well.</i></p>

I just wanted to feedback the tremendous work that the team have done with one of my patients. In what seemed like an impossible situation, they worked as a team over several years to organise respite admission and weight loss. The family situation is not straightforward at all so this has taken a remarkable amount of work and patience.

Please tell (care worker) that we are very grateful for her hard work. she is nothing but outstanding.

I just wanted to let you know how impressed I have been with your organisation since (service user) started receiving care. Yesterday I had a number of phone calls with (care coordinator) whose care and attention to detail was second-to-none.

your team are brilliant. I remember your team were wonderful when you supported me the last time thank you.

Regeneration and Planning – Development Management

Service Area	Stage 1	Stage 1 Upheld	% Upheld	Stage 1 responded to within 10 w/days	Stage 1 responded to within 20 w/days	Average Time to respond w/days*
Development Management	31 (13)	6 (0)	19% (0%)	16% (23%)	35% (38%)	18 (N/A)

6.110 While there were a relatively small number of complaints proportionately, there was a significant increase of 138% compared to last year.

6.111 Nearly half of the complaints were disagreeing with a decision or action taken, a quarter were complaining about the quality of service and a further quarter about lack of communication.

6.112 In addition, nearly two thirds of the complaints were submitted in the last quarter of the year. (January 2022 to March 2022) with nearly half of the complaints showing a status of “Open” with no outcome.

6.113 Complaints about quality of service and lack of communication have increased this year as applicants have become increasingly dissatisfied with delays as the pandemic has ended, as well as the week on week increase in construction costs.

6.114 The volume of emails submitted by applicants and objectors complaining about the outcome of an application has increased since the start of the pandemic. Residents are generally more likely to pursue complaints at this time, perhaps linked to more working from home and more home improvement works being undertaken. Planning also has a much higher profile nationally than it did even a few years ago, with an increase in residents challenging the position of the local planning authority.

Service Comments – 2021/22

6.115 The Development Management service was consulting on a restructure at the time the pandemic hit to deliver an MTFs saving of £300,000 in staff costs. Due to the pandemic the restructure was halted meaning that posts which were being held vacant could not be recruited to for many months. This was compounded by a number of case officers leaving the Applications Teams. The service was given the green light to proceed with the restructure towards

the end of 2020 with the entire process taking place online. The recruitment process was time consuming and involved going externally to fill posts. It wasn't until March 2022 that the last role was filled. This meant that for 12 months the service was understaffed and a backlog of applications built up with officers managing caseloads as high as 100. The management team continues to focus on managing and reducing the backlog and ensuring staff improve communication with applicants both of which are common themes in the complaints. Despite the rise in complaints, customer survey responses show an increase in customer satisfaction in January 2022 – June 2022 compared to June 2021 – December 2021, with the overall level of satisfaction increasing from 74% to 85%. It is also important to note that 90% of planning applications in Camden are approved against a London average of 81%.

- 6.116 In Development Management, enquiries are often sent directly to named managers and officers and these are dealt with at a local level as business as usual (BAU) to get the matters addressed informally and therefore do not go through formal complaints processes.
- 6.117 The new case management system is very flexible and is subject to continuous improvements as users provide feedback on its functionality for specific service areas. Development Management have highlighted where complaints are being assigned to them but are for another service area thus causing delays in responding to the complaint. The complaints team have made adjustments to the system to improve assigning complaints correctly and working with development management to ensure complaints are assigned correctly.

7. Stage 2 (review/investigation)

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

7.5 Stage 2 complaints recorded by directorate and division

2020/2021 figures in brackets

Service Area	Stage 2	Stage 2 Upheld
Corporate Services	8 (5)	0% (0%)
Law & Governance	1 (0)	0% (0%)
Customer Services	7 (5)	0% (0%)
Supporting Communities	126 (86)	22% (12%)
Community Services	1 (0)	0% (0%)
Property Management	71 (46)	32% (13%)
Regeneration and Planning	7 (6)	0% (17%)
Housing Management	28 (24)	7% (8%)
Housing Support Services	17 (10)	18% (10%)
Supporting People	4 (9)	0% (0%)
Children's Safeguarding & Social Work	2 (9)	0% (0%)
Adult Social Care	1 (0)	0% (0%)
Early Intervention & Prevention	1 (0)	0% (0%)
Total	138 (100)	20% (12%)

Analysis of Stage 2 Complaints

Volumes

- 7.6 The proportion of stage 1 complaints that progressed to stage 2 has remained stable compared to the previous year. 11% of stage 1 complaints were escalated to stage 2 compared to 10.5% in 2020/2021.
- 7.7 However, the increase in the number of stage 2 reviews mirrors the increase in stage 1 in both the Repairs service and Housing Needs services where it is inevitable that the combination of high demand and the backlog due to restrictions on service delivery due to the pandemic, will have led to a rise in complaints and escalation of those complaints.

Timescales

- 7.8 The complaints policy states that stage 2 reviews aim to be responded to within 25 working days. The complaints team are responsible for carrying out the reviews and liaising with the relevant service area as required. Stage 2 reviews of statutory children's services are carried out by independent investigators.
- 7.9 62% of stage 2 complaints were responded to within the required timescales compared to 57% in the previous year which is improved performance despite there being an increase in the number of Stage 2 reviews.
- 7.10 The improvement in the time taken to respond to complaints is likely to be a combination of:
- An increase in staff resources, to better manage the increase in volume of complaints.
 - The introduction of a new case management system from Quarter 4 to improve efficiency.
 - The reduced impact of the pandemic.

Upheld/Not Upheld

- 7.11 The proportion of stage 2 reviews that were upheld has increased to 20% (from 12%) which corresponds to the increase in the proportion of Stage 1 complaints that are upheld compared to last year. This trend will be monitored to identify reasons for this as it indicates that a higher proportion of responses at Stage 1 have been found to be unsatisfactory.

Reasons recorded for complaints

- 7.12 The reasons recorded for stage 2 complaints across all service areas are:
1. Disagrees with Stage 1 response
 2. Quality of investigation at Stage 1
 3. Agreed actions/outcomes from stage 1 still outstanding
 4. No response to Stage 1 complaint /delay with stage 1 response
- 7.13 As is expected, a large proportion of complaints went to stage 2 as the complainant disagreed with the outcome from stage 1.

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

Introduction

- 8.1 This section of the report provides information on cases that the Ombudsman has made decisions on in the period.

LGSCO and HO investigations and decisions 2021/2022

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

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)

LGSCO – National Picture

- 8.5 The LGSCO publishes an annual review of Local Government Complaints. The 2021/2022 report highlights that the LGSCO work has returned to pre-pandemic volumes across the Country.
- 8.6 At a national level the LGSCO continues to uphold around two thirds of complaints it investigates with the highest uphold rate (77%) in Education and Children’s Services sector. The LGSCO are recommending more service improvements than ever before (1,848) with a focus on improving policies, procedures and staff training.
- 8.7 The LGSCO issued overall 43 public interest reports about local authorities, three quarters of which were about Education and Children’s Services and Adult Care Services.

LGSCO – Camden Local Picture

[Data from the LGSCO Annual Review Letter 2021/2022]

- 8.8 In 2021/2022 the LGSCO formally investigated 25 cases, of which 17 were upheld. and 8 were not upheld. Our upheld figures are comparative with other similar councils and the overall National picture.

- 8.9 76% of the Camden complaints received by the LGSCO did not reach the formal investigation stage as complaints officers work with the investigators at an early stage to ensure that only valid cases go to formal investigation.
- 8.10 In terms of service improvement recommendations issued to Camden they mainly related to improving policies and procedures and providing staff training. This reflects the national picture.
- 8.11 Camden's compliance with the recommendations was 100%. In 2020/21 LGSCO highlighted an area for improvement as completing remedies within the agreed timescales. In 2021/22 Camden has improved in this area with 4 cases having remedies not completed within timescales compared to 6 in 2020/21.
- 8.12 The new case management system will allow for further service improvement in this area as it provides better tracking and monitoring on outstanding remedies. The complaints team keeps the LGSCO updated on progress of these remedies and informs them if they are going to take longer than the timescales set. Services have been reminded of the importance of ensuring remedies are actioned in a timely manner.

LGSCO Public Interest Reports 2021/22

- 8.13 The Council was issued with one Public interest report covering two cases relating to the payments of Covid-19 Business Grants. This report was presented to the Resources and Corporate Performance Scrutiny Committee on 6th September 2022.
- 8.14 The cases related to two businesses where the Council refused their businesses grants under the schemes set up in March 2020 to support businesses impacted by the COVID-19 Pandemic. This was publicly reported on in January 2022. In summary LGSCO suggested the Council had failed to follow government guidance whereas we considered the guidance to be confusing and contradictory.
- 8.15 By the time the LGSCO decision was published the original scheme had been closed and the Council was processing the subsequent schemes as a result of the second wave of Covid in November 2020. Camden had already learnt lessons from the first scheme by creating a dedicated business grant team with a clear escalation process in place for cases where customers disputed any refusals, including enabling applicants to use the Council's formal complaints process if they wished to challenge decisions, which was actively promoted. Camden led with other authorities on feeding back to the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) on the issues with their guidance and how their conflicting responses to questions had impacted businesses. BEIS looked to address them in subsequent schemes which seems to have had a positive impact not just for Camden but nationally. There are several authorities around the country who have had LGSCO complaint outcomes go against them on the original schemes but there is limited information on any complaints being upheld by the LGSCO against the

decisions made on the numerous other schemes implemented from November 2020 onwards.

- 8.16 A third similar case was investigated by the LGSCO where it initially decided against the Council but following submission of further evidence and strong legislative arguments, the LGSCO's final decision found no fault by the Council in refusing the grant.
- 8.17 More data and details of Camden's cases can be found in Appendix 5 and a link to the report can be found here:
[London Borough of Camden - Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman](#)

Housing Ombudsman

- 8.18 The Housing Ombudsman Service is set up by law to look at complaints about the housing organisations that are registered with them. They resolve disputes involving the tenants and leaseholders of social landlords (housing associations and local authorities) and voluntary members (private landlords and letting agents who are committed to good service for their tenants).
- 8.19 Camden Council's landlord responsibilities fall across two divisions – Housing Management and Property Management.
- 8.20 *Please note the following change to the Housing Ombudsman scheme which came into effect from the 1st October 2022. The removal of the 'democratic filter'. This means residents will no longer have to contact a designated person or wait eight weeks before referring their complaint to us if they remain dissatisfied at the end of their landlord's complaint process. This change in law is seen as a positive step in making it easier for residents to access the Ombudsman service].*

Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code

- 8.21 In March 2022 the Housing Ombudsman (HO) published its revised Complaint Handling Code which was first introduced in June 2020. This sets out requirements for member landlords that will allow them to respond to complaints effectively and fairly.
- 8.22 The Code ensures complaint handling data is being used consistently across landlord members, promotes engagement at different levels within a landlord and sets out expectations for boards or equivalent governance, senior executives and frontline staff.
- 8.23 Compliance with the Code forms part of the membership obligations. Members are obliged to complete the self-assessment to measure the level of compliance.
- 8.24 When carrying out a complaint investigation the Ombudsman will consider whether the landlord dealt with the complaint in accordance with the Code. Any failure identified could result in a finding of service failure,

maladministration or severe maladministration for complaint handling and orders and recommendations will be made to put matters right and ensure compliance with the Code.

- 8.25 The HO's Complaint Handling Code and the Council's self-assessment for 2021/22 can be found at: [Complaints - Camden Council](#)
- 8.26 The Council was issued with three Complaint Handling Failure Orders (CHFO) in 2021/2022 which is about average for those London boroughs that still have Landlord responsibilities. One London borough received six CHFO in 2021/22. [See Appendix 6 for details]

Housing Ombudsman Decisions

- 8.27 The Housing Ombudsman has not yet published its Landlord Reports for 2021/2022 so all data presented below is from the Council's systems.
- 8.28 The Housing Ombudsman made a decision on 70 cases in 2021/2022 which is an increase of 15 cases (27%) compared to last year. This reflects the Ombudsman's comments on the increase in demand for its services nationally.
- 8.29 There were no cases where the HO found maladministration with injustice. There were 17 cases where the HO found there to have been a service failure.
- 8.30 In nearly three quarters (50) of the cases the HO considered that the case had been referred to them prematurely, in that the cases had not been through the Council's complaints procedures so, advised that they go through the two local stages before they would consider it. This is double the number of cases referred back to local procedures compared to the previous year. This increase may be attributed to the impact of the pandemic causing delays in the Council's local processes, prompting complainants to approach the Ombudsman to complain about these delays rather than wait for the local stages to be completed.
- 8.31 28 of the cases were related to Housing Management services. The majority of these are related to either anti-social behaviour/neighbour disputes or the quality of the services provided by Caretaker services.
- 8.32 42 were related to Repairs and Operations in Property Management. These enquiries related to the delay or the quality of repairs.

9 Financial Remedies awarded

9.1 Stages 1 & 2

(2020/2021 figures in brackets)

Stage	Financial remedy
Stage 1 (Local Resolution)	£8,942 (£11,144)
Stage 2 (Review/Investigation)	£4,830 (£6,161)
Total	£13,772 (£17,305)

9.2 Ombudsman-awarded financial remedies 2020/2021

(2020/2021 figures in brackets)

Housing Ombudsman and LGSCO orders	£11,950 (£14,385)
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9.3 This is the total amount ordered by the Ombudsman to be paid as redress for delays and service failures. It does not include the amounts paid as refunds for amounts complainants have paid out due to the service failure (e.g. in rents, service charges, replacement items).

10 Member Enquiries

10.1 Member Enquiry data is included in the annual formal enquiries report as it is acknowledged that there is great similarity between the types of complaints submitted and the types of Member enquiries received. It is not uncommon for a resident to make a complaint and then contact their Councillor about the same issue.

10.2 The Member Enquiry module of the case management system has been live for 18 months and therefore all the data for the period has been taken from this.

10.3 For the period 1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022 the total number of Member Enquiries received was 3,530, compared with 2,050 in the previous period. This is a 70% increase in the number of Member Enquiries (MEs) compared with the previous year's figures. Reasons for this increase are a combination of:

- 2020/21 may have been atypical due to the pandemic with fewer MEs
- The lead up to the local elections in May 2022 attracted greater resident contact with councillors which led to an increase in MEs.
- The introduction of a new case management system has led to improved recording of MEs which would otherwise have been responded to but not formally logged.

10.4 Member Enquiries by Quarter – Whole Council

(2020/2021 figures in brackets)

Qtr 1 (Apr-Jun 2021)	Qtr 2 (Jul-Sep 2021)	Qtr 3 (Oct-Dec 2021)	Qtr 4 (Jan-Mar 2022)	TOTAL
797 (336)	826 (656)	784 (454)	1123 (604)	3530

10.5 The quarterly totals as seen above begin relatively moderately with 797 MEs submitted from April to June rising to 1123 from January to March of this year. There are many potential reasons for the steady increase which includes, the relaxation of Covid rules and services and Councillors returning to more normal service provision and the build-up of the pre-election period.

10.6 Member Enquiries by Directorate

Member Enquiries by Directorate	
Directorate	No of Enquiries
Supporting Communities	3166
Corporate Services	265
Supporting People	99
Total	3530

10.7 As in previous years, the largest volume (**90%**) of MEs is found to relate to the Supporting Communities Directorate. Corporate Services make up **8%** of the total with Supporting People accounting for **2%**. Supporting People has the lowest number of MEs but these tend to be the most complex cases involving multiple agencies and so take time to investigate and resolve.

Member Enquiries by Service Area

10.8 Supporting Communities

(2020/2021 figures in brackets)

Supporting Communities Directorate by division	Totals	% responded to within 10 working days
Housing Support Services	796 (376)	68%
Property Management	755 (276)	79%
Economy, Regeneration & Investment	544 (419)	54%
Community Services	425 (183)	55%
Environment & Sustainability	292 (209)	81%
Housing Management	268 (363)	44%
Development	75 (3)	47%
Resident Safety	11 (4)	55%
TOTAL	3166 (1825)	61%

- 10.9 Housing Support Services had the highest number of cases in this division and 64% of these related to Housing Needs. These enquiries related to:
- queries about allocation of points
 - length of time to be housed or re-housed.
 - overcrowding and the effects of this
 - enquiries about perceived vacant properties
- 10.10 Property Management received the second largest number of MEs in this directorate with 94% of these relating to Housing Repairs. Housing Repairs had to prioritise work during the pandemic and this led to a backlog of routine repairs so as restrictions began to be lifted, residents referred their on-going repair issues to their local councillor to resolve.
- 10.11 Economy, Regeneration and Investment services saw a 23% increase in MEs. Most of these cases fell within the Inclusive Economy, Regeneration and Planning (361) and Development Management (175) divisions. Traffic Control and Transport picked up a large number of MEs (175) with many asking for increased or decreased traffic calming measures. There were also suggestions that increasing traffic calming measures in one area was increasing traffic in another. There were also requests for the Council to liaise with Transport for London requesting more time to cross at some major intersections.
- 10.12 Community Services saw a 130% increase in MEs compared to the previous year. Roughly two-thirds of the cases in this area were logged for Public Protection (138) and Community Safety (134), closely followed by Green Spaces (118).
- 10.13 Environment and Sustainability services saw a 40% increase compared to the previous year. Areas with relatively high volumes of MEs included waste and rubbish collections (63), missed waste/rubbish collections (50), environmental enforcement (41) and waste cleanliness enforcement (35). Other notable areas included fly tipping (22), recycling (18) environmental enforcement (16), air pollution and dog fouling (10).
- 10.14 Development, although not high volume, has seen a large increase from 3 enquiries in 2020/2021 to 75 in 2021/2022. Neighbourhoods accounted for the bulk of the large increase (67). 45 MEs related to street lighting enquiries and the remainder (21), residents raised issues around grounds maintenance.
- 10.15 Housing Management saw a 25% decrease in MEs compared to last year. This may be because in the previous year at the height of the pandemic, residents were confined to their homes so made more enquiries to their councillors around Antisocial Behaviour and Noise etc. whereas this year 2021/2022 as restrictions lifted there are fewer estate issues.

10.16 Corporate Services

(2020/2021 figures in brackets)

Corporate Services by division	Totals	% responded to within 10 working days
Customer Services	230 (117)	80%
Digital and Information Office	11	64%
Finance	14 (6)	38%
Law & Governance	3 (22)	33%
Participation and Partnerships	1 (1)	0%
People & Inclusion	6	50%
TOTAL	265 (146)	73%

10.17 Corporate Services had 8% of the total of MEs in the period. This is an 80% increase compared to the previous year.

10.18 Customer Services had the largest number of MEs the majority being residents petitioning members to query parking operations and fixed penalty notices. The ME process is not the best way for dealing with these queries given the fixed penalty procedure is a statutory process. Residents should be encouraged to engage with the statutory process in the first instance. The service should review its communications so that residents are clearer on the process for querying or appealing a penalty notice.

Other high-volume areas in Customer Services are:

- Parking permit enquiries
- Parking – Lack of Enforcement,
- Council Tax and Business Rates (specifically around COVID-related grants)

10.19 Supporting People

(2020/2021 figures in brackets)

Supporting People by division	Totals	% responded to within 10 working days
Adult Social Care	74 (68)	28%
Children's Safeguarding & Social Work	4 (7)	0%
Early Intervention & Prevention	9 (3)	33%
Education & Integrated Commissioning	12 (1)	42%
TOTAL	99 (79)	29%

10.20 Supporting People has the lowest number of MEs with 2% of the total for the year which is a 25% increase from the previous year.
The majority of MEs are in Adult Social Care specifically:
Provider services (23%),
Aids and adaptations (14%)
Care assessments and funding (14%).

10.21 These are often some of the most complex cases to resolve due to the nature of the enquiry and the number of agencies required to engage to successfully respond to and resolve a matter. This is reflected in the response times too as they require a longer time to provide a full response.

Performance – Member Enquiries

Whole Council

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

10.23 We aim to respond to a member enquiry within 10 working days (extending it to 20 working days for complex cases). The below figures relate performance across the whole Council for the full year April 2021 to March 2022.

(2020/2021 figures in brackets)

Measure	Number	Percentage
Responses sent within 10 working days	2164	61% (68%)
Responses sent more than 10 working days	1366	39% (32%)
Average Days to Respond	16 (13)	
Number of extensions requested	151	6%
Average length of extension	9.1 days	

Analysis of performance

10.24 From the table above we can see that as a Council we achieved 61% of all cases responded to within the 10-day target window. This is slightly lower than the 68% achieved last year. However, it is noted that a much higher number of the MEs received have been answered on time this year (2,123) compared with last year (1,825). It is recognised that there is still a lot of work to do to improve the turnaround time of MEs by looking at the following causes and resolving the issues:

- A number of cases remain open for a significant time (in excess of 50 days) after they have been responded to. This can be due to the officer responding directly to the Member via email and not uploading the response to the system, or the officer uploading the response but failing to close the case. Member Support are working with colleagues across the organisation to address both issues and provide more training on the system when required.

- Cases that fall between two or more teams are particularly problematic and it can take a significant amount of time agreeing which team should lead on the case.
- Cases incorrectly assigned initially and therefore not progressed to the next step in a timely way to the correct service officer. This means that when the correct team does receive it, the deadline for a response has almost been reached. Member Support colleagues are working more closely with heads of service across the Council to ascertain which team and individual is best placed to respond to the query in the first instance and provide further training where required.
- Cases that involve external agencies or external partners are often outside council officers' control but subject to the turnaround times of the external partners.

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

10.26 Member Support are further flagging up overdue cases with Heads of Service and directors and visiting Divisional Management Team meetings to discuss MEs and help services across the board. They are also aiming to improve their knowledge across the board on who is best placed to respond to the complex and multi-disciplinary cases.

10.27 Team Managers are also being encouraged to view all the data and select their own parameters for filtering data using the QlikSense dashboard to track their team's performance and identify any issues impacting on performance.

Analysis of performance – Service Areas

10.28 The tables below show the services that have a high volume of enquiries and a higher proportion responded to within 10 working days and those that have a lower proportion.

Service Area	No of Enquiries	Responses Sent on Time	Percentage
Parking Operations	167	146	87%
Housing Needs	510	414	81%
Housing Repairs	707	564	80%

Service Area	No of Enquiries	Responses Sent on Time	Percentage
Estate management	88	35	39.8%
Camden accessible travel solutions (CATS)	16	6	37.5%
Community investment & regeneration programme	16	6	37.5%
Support and safeguarding adults	36	12	33.3%
Facilities management	12	3	25.0%
Provider services	23	5	21.7%

10.29 Member Enquiry Type (Top 10)

Enquiry Type	No. of Enquiries
Outstanding repairs	413
Traffic control & Transport Strategy	174
Housing Needs - Reviews (Disagree with decision)	90
Road works	90
Noise Pollution - Regulatory services	81
Community Safety – Antisocial Behaviour	76
Trees (Public spaces and Streets)	75
Housing Partnerships - Reactive repairs	75
Housing Needs - Housing register (Allocations process)	72
Planning/Building Enforcement	65
Waste/Rubbish collections	63

Learning outcomes – Member Enquiries

10.30 The case management system contains a section on learning outcomes where Service Officers are asked to explain what has been learnt from the Member enquiry to improve service provision. Below is a sample of the types of learning outcomes that have been recorded. These outcomes will then form part of the learning for the Council, helping it to improve performance going forward.

Caretaking manager to monitor closer inspections of the block, to see if deeper cleaning is required and whether appropriate time can be allocated to the task.
Community Enforcement Officers (CEO) reminded of expected standards of professionalism
Conducted a site visit and found the trees missed the 2020-21 pollard cycle. Chasing contractor to find a solution to get the works completed
Contacted Operations to arrange increased CEO patrols of these locations.
Enforcement by street trading and CEOs explained. Increased CEO patrols requested.
Flat identified as a possible source for attracting anti-social behaviour. This information has been passed to Community Safety and local Safer Neighbourhoods Team.
Further hammer testing to be carried out to identify the damp
Further intervention with support of specialist agencies
Grant case reassessed based on BEIS advice.
HS2 enquiry - points awarded in error have been removed – Valuer Registration Scheme (VRS). Enquiries made to HS2 team
Improve heating circulation, fit new cylinder and carry out riser upgrade works before next heating season
Increased enforcement along Heath Street
Met customer on site and delivered a new caddy. Discussed collection issues with management and asked Veolia to monitor
Planned works contractor Mulalley cleared the guttering, however, the Planned Works Team identified further works to be carried out by the Repairs and Operations Team. These works have been passed to their contractor Rope Access to carry out
Process the online form until paper form comes in. Review the process with audit - is there really a need for the paper form?
Protocol update to re-instate Film Officer presence on location for larger film sets. Protocol update to ensure security employed by Film Fixer and not the Production only to act as on-site communicators for residents and to ensure Production companies adhere to their contracted license.
Veolia have been instructed that if they have a spillage while collecting, they must clear up afterwards

11 MP Enquiries

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

11.2 For the period April 2021 to March 2022 the total number of MP enquiries received was 745.

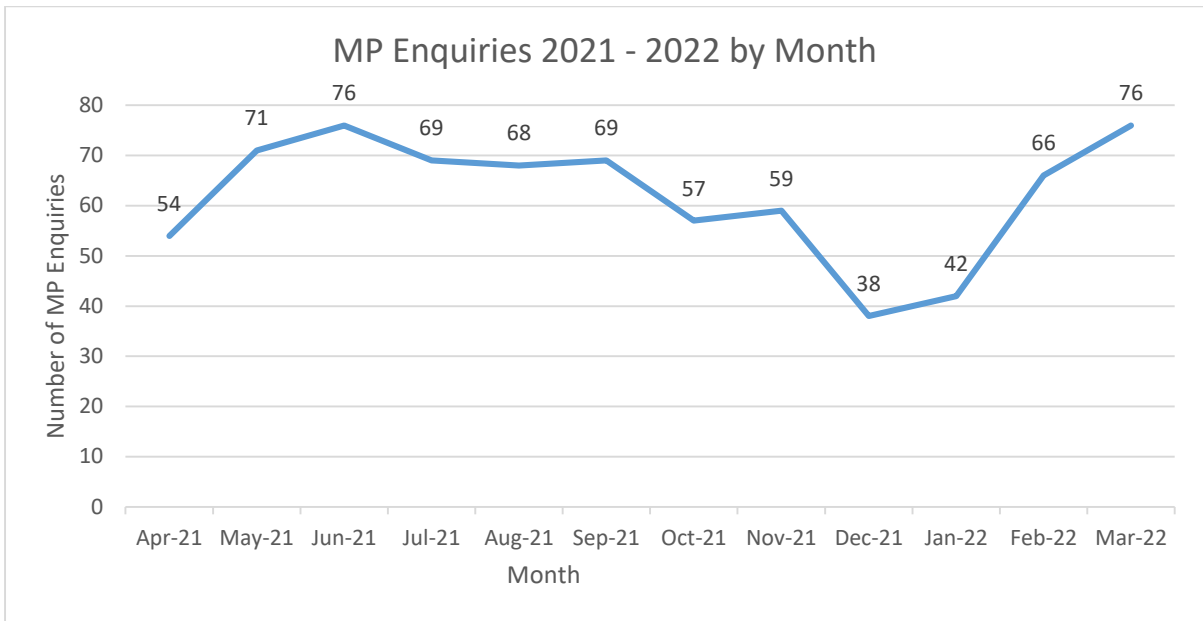
11.3 MP Enquiries by directorate and division

(2020/2021 figures in brackets)

Service Area	Number
Corporate Services	66 (122)
Law & Governance	5 (0)
Finance	2 (0)
Customer Services	59 (122)
Supporting Communities	655 (836)
Community Services	26 (19)
Property Management	147 (151)
Regeneration and Planning	110 (206)
Housing Management	99 (135)
Housing Support Services	249 (318)
Development	23 (3)
Resident Safety	1 (4)
Supporting People	24 (64)
Adult Social Care	11 (26)
Children's Safeguarding & Social Work	8 (15)
Early Intervention & Prevention	4 (7)
Education & Integrated Commissioning	1 (3)

Total	745 (1022)
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11.4 MP Enquiries received by month



Analysis of MP Enquiries

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

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

12.1 FOI requests are requests for recorded information held by the Council and handled under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA). EIR requests are the equivalent for environmental information which comes under the Environmental Information Regulations 2007 (EIR).

12.2 Requests must be responded to within 20 working days of receipt. There are only limited occasions when the timescale can be extended. The Council's average time to respond is around 14 working days which is far shorter than the statutory maximum.

12.3 Requests are not usually service-specific and cross over several different service areas so they are not logged by service area.

2020/2021 figures in brackets

	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	Full Year
Number of FOI/EIRs requests received	316 (284)	311 (365)	373 (389)	388 (342)	1388 (1380)
Percentage of FOI/EIR requests responded to within the time period within 20 working days of receipt	99.7% (97%)	99.4% (99%)	100% (99%)	99.7% (99%)	99.6% (99%)
Number of enquiries treated as Business As Usual	162 (124)	145 (139)	155 (141)	186 (162)	648 (566)

12.4 The Council continues to be one of the top performing London boroughs for FOI/EIR and our good practice is well recognised nationally. Camden is often asked to share its expertise with other councils. Despite the difficulties presented by the Covid pandemic, the Council has maintained its excellent performance. We have achieved such high performance by a combination of factors:

- A dedicated expert team that works closely with services to ensure information is collated quickly and responses are drafted to a high standard to not only meet the deadlines but provide good quality responses to requesters.
- The Council has a strong corporate commitment to FOI/EIR and this positive approach enables services to give the work the necessary priority to meet the legal requirements and provide an excellent service to requesters.
- Overdue requests are considered a serious problem and raised at Senior Management level to ensure that any issues do not recur, which has reduced considerably the numbers becoming overdue.
- The case management system is now established and effective in tracking requests, monitoring their status and providing detailed performance data.
- Responding to simple, routine and straightforward requests informally as Business-as-Usual requests (BAUs) has enabled us to give the requester what they have asked for without the cumbersome red tape of a formal FOI response.

- Seeking to proactively publish more FAQs and datasets on the Open Data Portal in response to hot topics, and signposting requesters to this to provide the information they have requested.

Types of FOI received

- 12.5 To illustrate the many different types of FOI/ EIRs requested, a sample of a two-week period was taken between 24/01/22 and 04/02/22. In this two-week period a total of 51 information requests was received.
- 12.6 Below are examples of the types of requests received in the above period that show the wide-ranging types of information requested.

Request Summary

All information about land between Gordon House Road and the railway line

new tree pit in Carriage Way

Personal Budgets for Education

The number of safeguarding investigations (section 47 investigations) or LADO investigations

trading of puppies

Number of bus lane penalty charge notices for 2020/21 and revenue generated

Air Quality Management Areas

Various questions on Decent Homes

The provision of home care and residential social care services

Is yellow sign in St Pancras Way enforceable - not painted on street

The provision of home care and residential social care services

How many individuals and families are on your register for housing

procurement of highway maintenance and road markings services

Number of legal disrepair cases brought, settled out of court, faced in court, won and lost

Impact of high gas and electricity prices on finances and services

The number of serious incidents notifications for each provider of children's homes

Nature of roadworks at various sites

IT Disaster Recovery & Incident Response plans, clean desk & access control policies

The weekly price for residential care, nursing care and nursing care with dementia

The number of safeguarding S42 investigations related to exploitation of adults

How many children were referred to your Children's Services department five or more times in total

Various queries about allotment sites

13 Judicial Reviews (JRs)

13.1 Number per year

2020/2021 figures in brackets

Description	Qtr 1	Qtr 2	Qtr 3	Qtr 4	2021/22
No. JRs issued	4	7	8	3	22 (8)
No. of Pre-action protocol letters	59	87	17	17	180 (88)

13.2 The data above gives a valuable insight into the work of the Legal Department and gives a wider indication of the level of scrutiny the Council can come under and the times when our decision making is formally challenged or in the case of pre-action letters is questioned.

13.3 There has been a considerable increase in JR claims issued from the previous year which means that Legal Services and the other departments have been placed under increasing pressure to deal with these claims.

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

13.5 The Council receives a significantly greater number of such challenges than other Councils due to several reasons, including our geography and the value of land in the Borough.

14 Legal Implications - Comments from the Borough Solicitor

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

15 Resource Implications

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

16 Environmental Implications

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

17 Appendices

Appendix 1: Complaints by Month 2021/22

Appendix 2: Complaints Performance 2021/22

Appendix 3: Complaints Outcomes 2021/22

Appendix 4: Complaints Type 2021/22

Appendix 5: LGSCO Data 2021/22

Appendix 6: Housing Ombudsman Data 2021/22

REPORT ENDS