

Enfield Council

Corporate Complaints Annual Report 2022 - 2023

Contents

Executive Summary	p.3
1. Introduction	p.4
2. Complaints Procedure	p.4-5
2.1 Corporate Complaints	p.4
2.2 Ombudsman	p.4-5
3. Corporate Complaints Analysis – 2022/23	p.5-13
3.1 Overall Complaint Volume	p.5-6
3.2 Response Timescale Performance	p.6-7
3.3 Service Level Volumes & Themes	p.7-11
3.4 Complaints Upheld	p.11-13
4. Ombudsman Complaints	p.13-20
4.1 Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman	p.13-19
4.2 Housing Ombudsman	p.19-20
5. Learning from Complaints & Improvement Actions	p.20-25
5.1 Council Housing Repairs Service	p.20-21
5.2 Council Tax	p.21-23
5.3 Waste Services	p.23-24
5.4 Response Timescale Performance	p.24-25
6. Compliments	p.25
7. Conclusion	p.26

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Suitable for publication

Executive Summary

Introduction

During 2022/23, London Borough of Enfield received 1,999 corporate complaints. Adults & Children's Social Care complaints are not included in this figure as annual statutory reports are produced separately for those.

For corporate complaints, response time performance targets were not achieved and there was a decrease of 5 percentage points in performance (72% on time responses) compared to 21/22. However, the Council did halve its target response time for first stage complaints from 20 to 10 working days during 22/23.

Consequently, complainants generally received responses quicker than in previous years.

Findings

When comparing 4 year-trends, complaint volumes have remained steady, with a very fractional decrease year-on-year in both first and final stage complaints.

Complaint response performance time has decreased for 22/23 as a result of the change in response timeframe target described above.

In terms of complainant satisfaction with Enfield Council's handling of their initial complaint, there was a reduction in escalations from first to final stage complaints. Additionally, complainants escalated fewer complaints to the Ombudsman, although the proportion of upheld complaints by the Ombudsman did increase.

In terms of high-volume service area complaints, these remained broadly in line with last year's report: Waste Services, Council Housing Repairs, and Council Tax. However, compared to 21/22, there was also a significant reduction in the complaints received for these service areas attributed to the implementation of improvement actions over the past 12 months. It should also be noted that these represent high contact service areas (e.g. bin collections and council housing repairs) and experience significant demand.

Ombudsman upheld complaints identified development opportunities to reduce service delays and improve documentation processes.

Improvement Actions

A series of corporate and individual service improvements are underway to improve response times, quality and service delivery. At an organisational level, changes to resources, structures, processes and systems have been embedded throughout 22/23 to reduce initial complaint handling delays and provide better insight informing targeted service improvements. Following an initial drop with the halving of the corporate response target, performance has consistently improved across the third and fourth quarters of the year. Actions identified for implementation in 23/24 include staff training, enhanced action tracking, web page improvement and improved case management processes to enhance service delivery and reduce the initial complaints received.

1. Introduction

This is London Borough of Enfield's Annual Corporate Complaints report for the period of 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023. It focuses on the nature of complaints received by the Council, handling performance and the learning elicited to shape future service improvements.

In addition, the report includes a summary of performance, decisions and learning from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) and Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) complaints during the same period.

Complaints regarding Adult and Children's Social Care are processed and monitored under a specific statutory framework. Consequently, these annual reports are produced separately and not included in this report.

2. Complaints Procedures

2.1 Corporate Complaints

A complaint can be wide-ranging but is broadly defined as an expression of dissatisfaction with a service provided, or lack of action by the Council or its staff which requires a response. Generally, issues brought to the Council for the first time are dealt with as a service request and are not processed as a complaint. However, these are escalated to a formal complaint if the resident/customer remains unsatisfied.

London Borough of Enfield has a two-stage internal complaints process:

- **First Stage:** We aim to resolve the complaint as soon as possible and within 10 working days of acknowledgement. This is a decrease from the previous 20 working days.
- **Final Stage:** If a complainant is unsatisfied with the response, they can escalate their complaint to the final stage for further consideration. We aim to provide a response within 30 working days. If the complainant remains dissatisfied, they can escalate their complaint to the relevant Ombudsman.

2.2 Ombudsman

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) and the Housing Ombudsman (HO) are independent organisations providing impartial reviews of citizen complaints. Whilst most complaints come under the LGSCO's remit, HO deals with social housing related complaints. The Ombudsman decision is final, bringing the complaint to a close.

There are 2 stages for Ombudsman complaints:

- **Preliminary Enquiry:** Ombudsman requests original complaint and LBE responses (first and final stages). Depending on their findings they may decide to investigate the complaint further (see below).
- **Investigation Request:** Ombudsman conducts investigation (often escalation from Preliminary Enquiry stage) resulting in Ombudsman final decision, actions for Local Authority etc.

3. Corporate Complaints Analysis – 2022/23

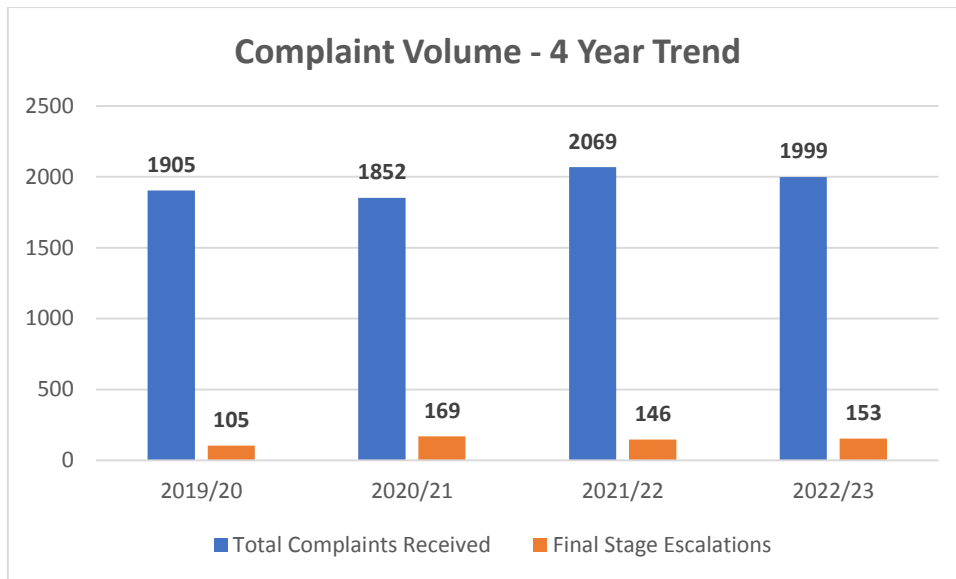
Customer Contact Context

Serving circa 330,000 residents (6th highest in London) initial customer contact volumes alone are significant. During 2022/23, the organisation received nearly 530,000 calls, handled over 62,000 web chats and supported 41,000 customers face-to-face. Over 8.5 million webpages were viewed and over 169,000 online service request and payment forms submitted by customers.

In addition, the organisation collected approximately 840,000 bins of all waste streams (refuse, recycling, food & Garden) per month; managed 10,044 social housing properties; processed 84,000 Housing Benefit changes and 196,000 Council Tax Support changes; supported 7,750 households regarding benefit and debt assistance; and processed 3,470 homelessness applications.

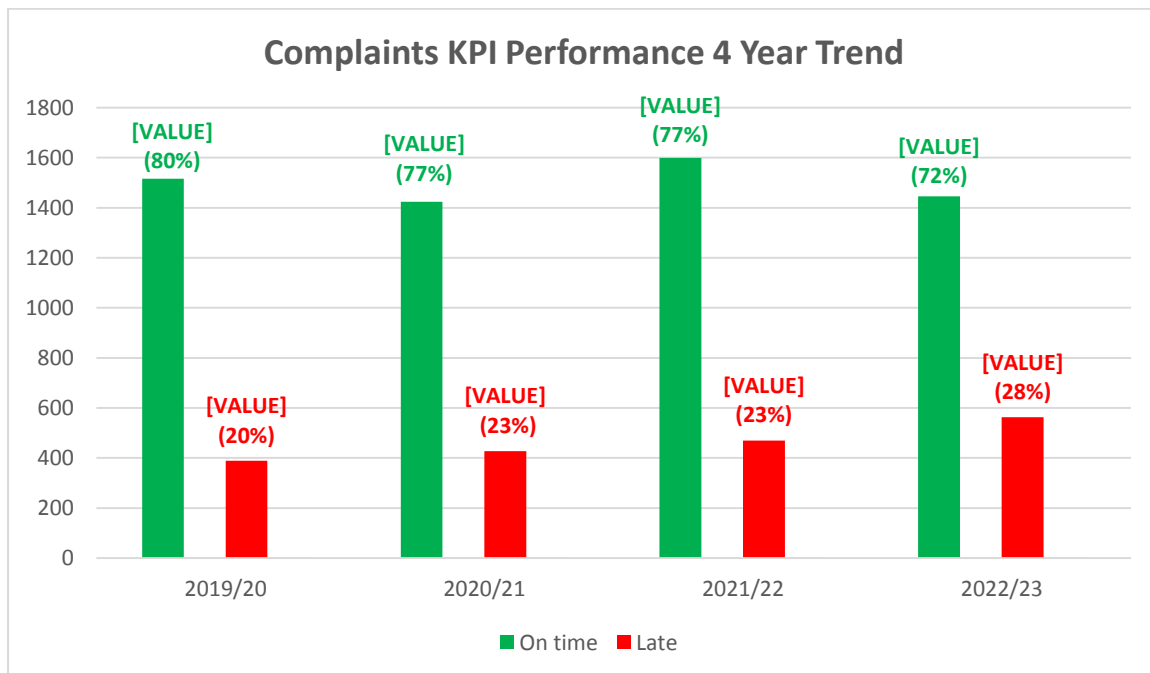
3.1 Overall Complaint Volume

In 2022/23, the Council received a total of 1,999 complaints. This included 1,846 first stage complaints, of which 153 progressed to final stage. Compared to previous years, first stage complaint volumes have decreased to the lowest figure in four years, returning to a fractionally lower level than 2020-21 from a high of 2,069 in 2021-22. Final stage escalations, however, have increased by a small amount; although they remain below the high of 169 in 2020-21.



3.2 Response Timescale Performance

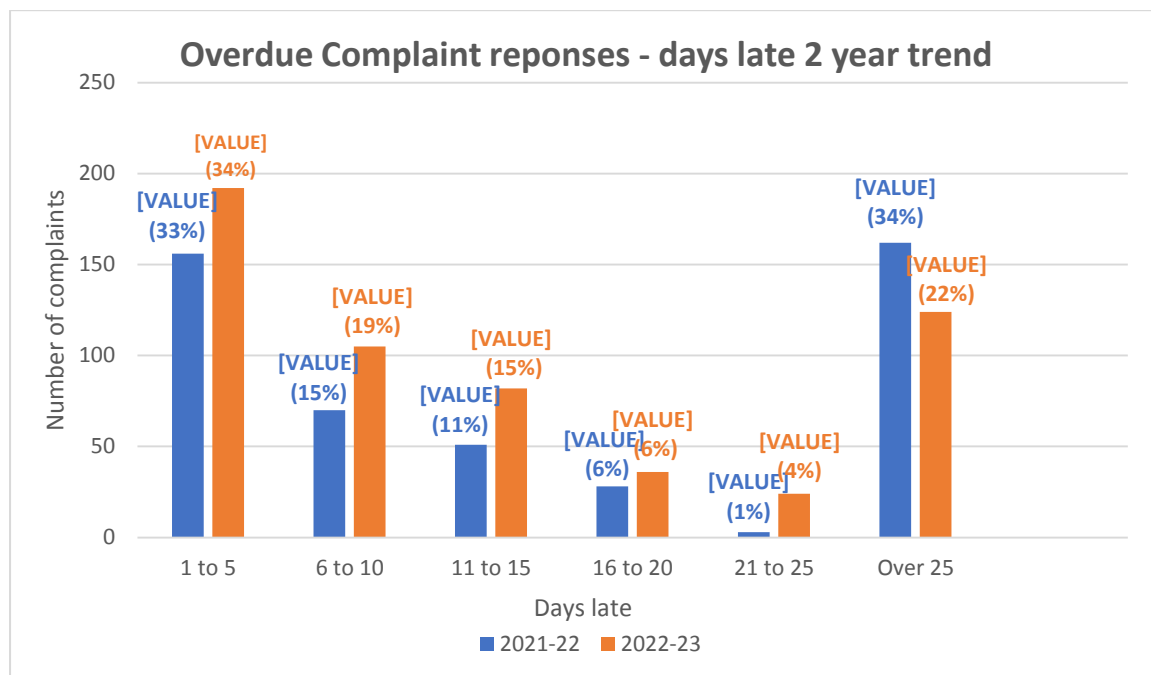
The Council aims to answer 95% of complaints on time.



72% of complaints were responded to on time which is below the performance target (95%) and represents a decrease on three previous years (all 77-79%).

However, during 2022/23, the Council halved its first stage response time from 20 working days to 10 working days. This marked the return to best practice following a temporary target time which had been enacted due to Covid-19. This change in KPI target limits meaningful comparison between 2022/23 and the previous two years. However, performance remains below 2019-20.

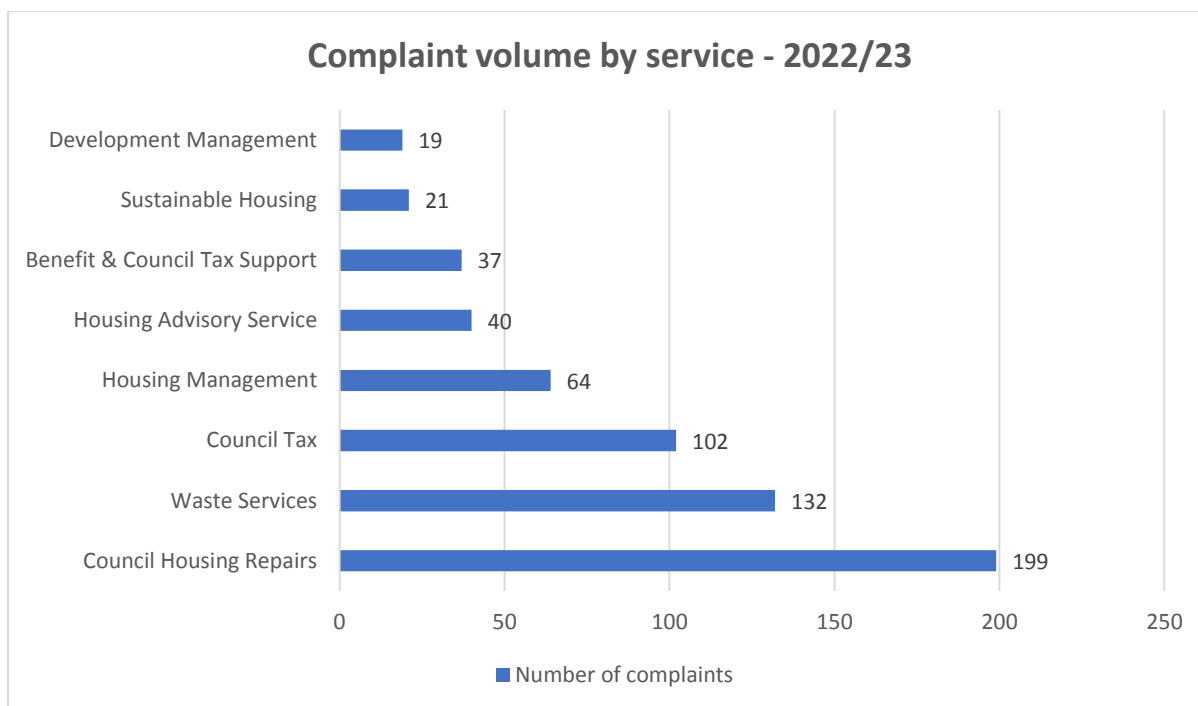
The below graph provides further analysis regarding the extent of late responses.



Overall, during 2022/23, responses were mostly either 1-5 days late (34% of late responses), 6-10 days late (19%) or over 25 days late (22%). Comparison between the two years is difficult due to the change in target responses time; a customer whose complaint was 5 days late in 2021-22 would have received a response in 25 days, whereas in 2022-23 it would be received in 15 days due to the reduction to a 10-day target. Consequently, although there were more complaint responses between 1-5 days late, there were fewer complaint responses over 25 days late. Those taking longer were more complicated or detailed cases such as co-ordinated complaints, or complaints with complex issues.

3.3 Service Level Complaint Volumes & Themes

The below graph shows services which received at least 1% of total complaints. Any other services had very few complaints individually and are therefore not included in the graph.



There are three service areas that have a high volume (over 100) of complaints: Waste Services, Council Housing Repairs, and Council Tax. These three service areas also experience high volumes of service usage:

- Council Tax administers 127,000 live accounts
- Waste Services collects the refuse of a similar number of households
- Council Housing Repairs covers 10,000 social properties as well as leaseholders in some instances.

All of these three categories were also high volume services in the previous year (2021-22). It is also important to note that complaints in all three service areas have decreased from the previous year, due to the effect of improvement actions identified and implemented through the previous year’s annual report. Notably, Waste Services complaint volumes have decreased from 661 in 21/22 to 132 in 22/23; Council Housing Repairs has decreased from 264 in 21/22 to 199 in 22/23.

The below table shows the complaint themes of all the services which received at least 1% of total complaints:

Area	Theme	Proportion	Number
Council Housing Repairs	Delays to repair	61.8%	123
	Unsatisfactory repair	16.7%	33
	Delay in compensation	2.0%	4
	Staff Conduct	7.8%	16

	Major Works	2.4%	5
	Other	9.3%	18
Council Tax	Delay updating liability	32.3%	33
	Refund delay	6.9%	7
	Error updating account	4.9%	5
	Charging/liability dispute	26.5%	27
	Other	29.4%	30
Waste Services	Repeated missed collection	65.2%	86
	Bulky Waste service	2.3%	3
	Replacement bin	4.5%	6
	Staff conduct	10.6%	14
	Timing of collections	5.3%	7
	Other	12.1%	16
Housing Management	Anti-Social Behaviour	12.5%	8
	Cheshire House	3.1%	2
	Communal Access	4.7%	3
	Major Works	12.5%	8
	Compensation delay	3.1%	2
	Overgrown trees	3.1%	2
	Housing Suitability	6.3%	4
	Staff Conduct	14.1%	9
	Neighbour dispute	7.8%	5
	Other	32.8%	21
Housing Advisory Service	Condition of temporary accommodation	57.5%	23
	Housing applications &	20%	8

	register		
	Other	22.5%	9
Development Management	Trees	10.5%	2
	Planning Enforcement	42.2%	8
	Planning Application process	36.8%	7
	Other	10.5%	2
Sustainable Housing	Evictions	14.3%	3
	Staff Conduct	33.3%	7
	Housing Suitability	14.3%	3
	Temporary Accommodation	23.8%	5
	Other	14.3%	3
Benefit & Council Tax Support	Assessment delay	27.0%	10
	Delay updating account	5.4%	2
	Incorrect account update	5.4%	2
	Disputed assessment	27.0%	10
	Staff Conduct	8.1%	3
	Other	27.0%	10

Except for Housing Management and Sustainable Housing, analysis shows clear central issues in each category:

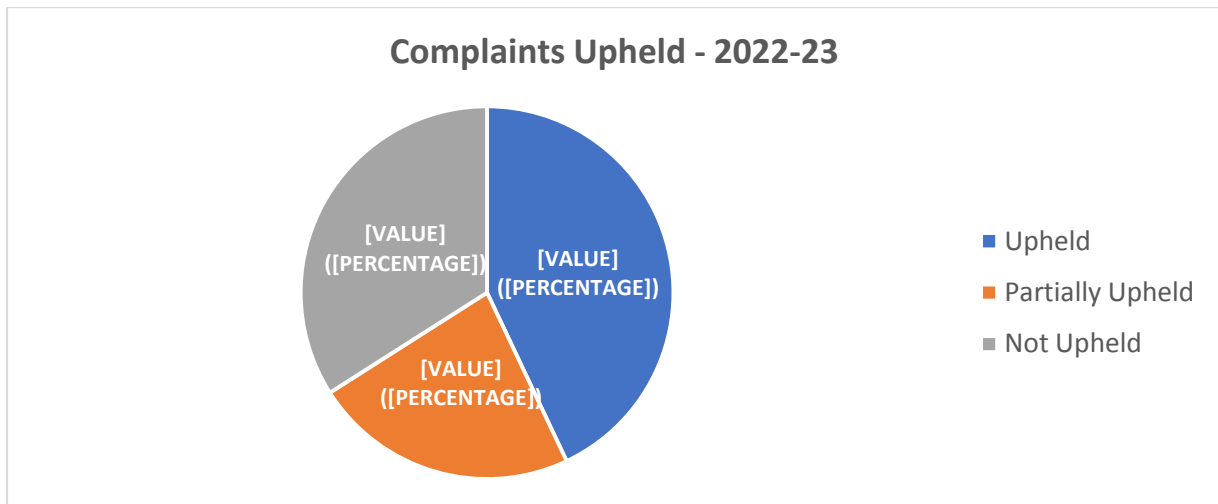
- Council Housing Repairs: delays to the completion of repairs
- Waste Services: repeated missed collections
- Council Tax: liability issues, either disputes or delays updating liability
- Housing Advisory Service: condition of temporary accommodation
- Development Management: applications for and enforcement of planning permission processes
- Benefit and Council Tax Support: assessments, either via delays to completion or disputed outcomes.

All complaint levels are taken very seriously however Section 5 outlines learning and improvement actions addressing the three highest volume categories which are currently under way and scheduled for implementation during 2023/24.

3.4 Complaints Upheld

Data and case management software improvements have permitted the Council to report on the number of complaints upheld for the first time, an enhancement over previous years. However, this does mean there is no previous data to measure progress against.

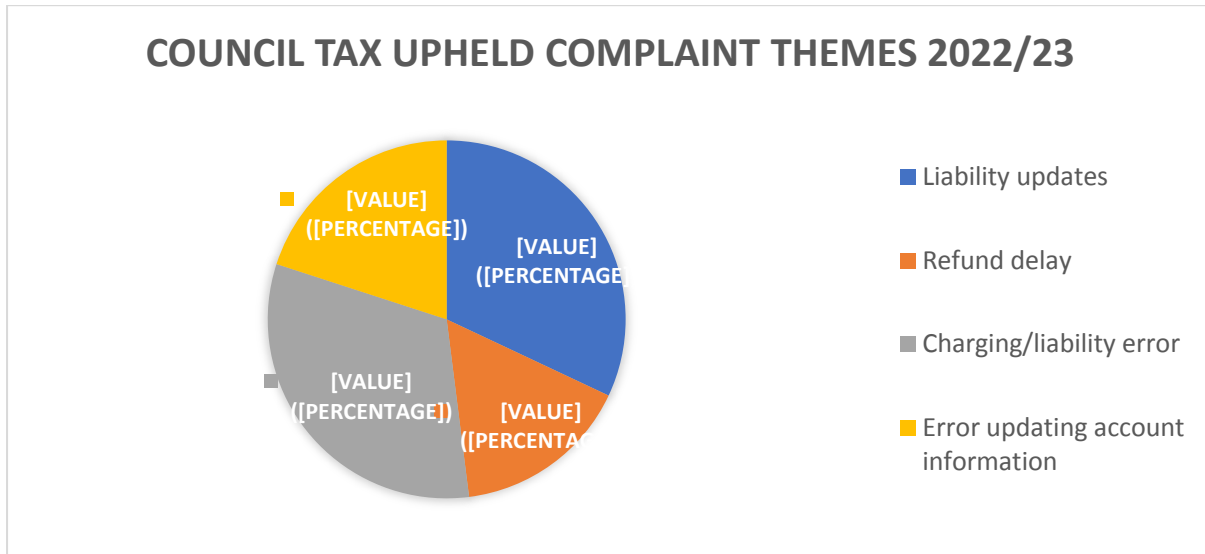
Measuring upheld complaints allows the Council to be more focused and targeted in directing improvement actions where service faults have been identified, enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of actions identified to provide better quality customer experience.



The highest fully upheld complaint areas were Council Tax, Waste Services and Council Housing Repairs. The following charts show the reasons for upheld complaints in the relevant areas:

Council Tax

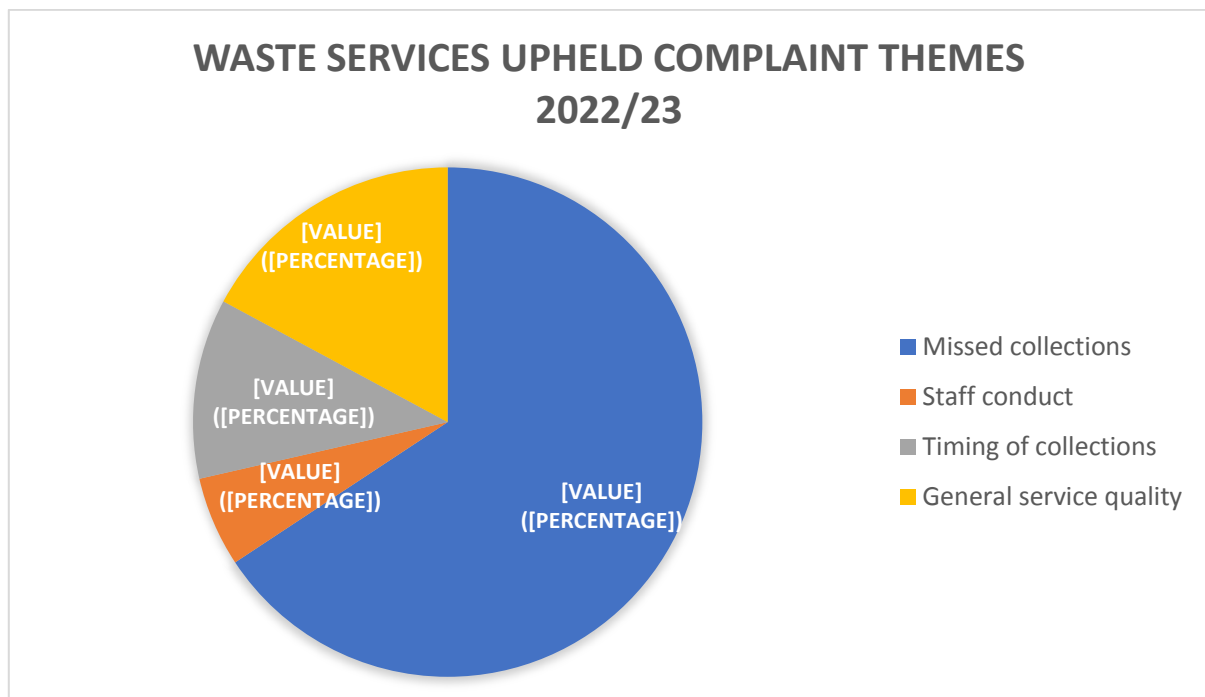
In absolute numbers, 25 complaints were upheld as follows:



This is within the context of the Council currently administering 127,678 live council tax accounts within the borough (Similar to last years). Although these volumes are relatively small compared to the total received, Enfield Council recognises that such errors can cause individuals significant stress and inconvenience, and section 6 details proposed improvement actions to address the above areas.

Waste Services

In absolute numbers, 35 complaints were upheld as follows:

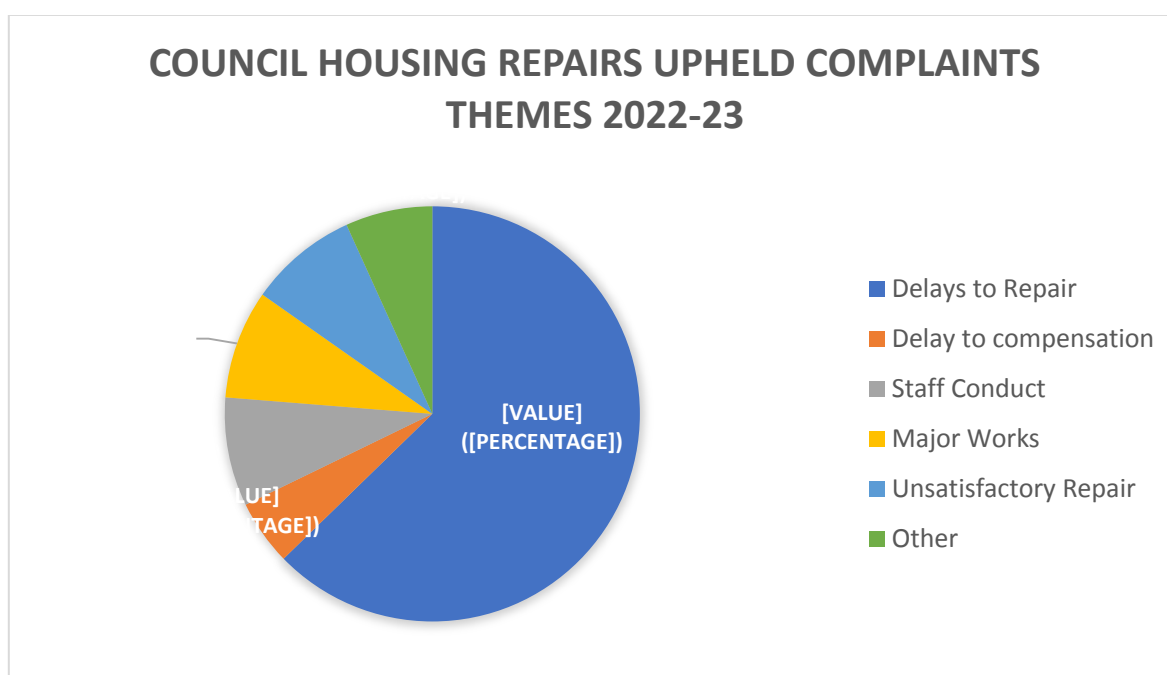


*Missed Collections may include both repeated missed collections, or individual missed collections which were reported and still not collected.

There is a clear identifiable main issue of missed collections. Section 6 details proposed improvement actions to address this.

Council Housing Repairs

In absolute numbers, 59 complaints were upheld as follows:



Similar to Waste Services, there is a clear lead issue accounting for around two thirds of upheld complaints, relating to delays. Section 5 details proposed improvement actions to address this.

4. Ombudsman Complaints

4.1 Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

The following table summarises the data available on Enfield Council’s LGSCO complaints received and decided in 22/23 compared to 21/22.

It should be noted that LGSCO complaints may run across multiple years depending on the time taken by LGSCO for assessment and (where relevant) investigation of the complaint. Therefore, the number decided may not equal the number received. This is consistent with LGSCO’s published figures.

	Received		Decided		Upheld		Compliance	
	21-22	22-23	21-22	22-23	21-22	22-23	21-22	22-23
Enfield	137	129	144	132	27 (73%)	22 (79%)	100%	100%
London average	117	112	118	114	19 (71%)	23 (77%)	99.4%	99%
National average	44	43	46	44	7.5 (66%)	8.5 (74%)	99.7%	99.3%

4.1.1 Complaints Received

During 2022/23, there was a small decrease of 8% in complaints referred by complainants to the LGSCO compared to the previous year. This is at least in part due to a return to more ‘normal’ service levels following a Covid-19 LGSCO case backlog which caused a sharp increase in volume in 2021-22., This is consistent with average reductions in complaints across the board. However, the reduction for Enfield is higher than the average London decrease of 4%, meaning that some of the decrease is likely due to improved service and complaint handling by the Council.

Enfield Council receives a high rate of absolute LGSCO enquiries compared to both national and London averages. However, this is mostly due to the Borough’s high population. Indeed, Enfield had the eighth highest number of Ombudsman complaints in London, which is consistent with what would be expected according to population.

Complaints received by LGSCO are not always referred to the Council for input. LGSCO may issue a decision without the need to request any further information from the Council, depending on the information provided to them by the complainant. The number of complaints referred to Enfield Council for officer input in 2022-23 was 77. This is consistent with the previous year’s figure of 72.

Of the 77 complaints referred to Enfield for action, the Ombudsman elected to further investigate 28 (the remaining the Ombudsman decided not to investigate). Out of these, the Ombudsman upheld 22 complaints (73%). The previous year, 72% were upheld. However, the Ombudsman has commented in his annual letter to Enfield Council (dated 19th July 2023) that:

“Over the past two years, we have reviewed our processes to ensure we do the most we can with the resources we have. One outcome is that we are more selective about the complaints we look at in detail, prioritising where it is in the public interest to investigate. While providing a more sustainable way for us to work, it has meant that changes in uphold rates this year are not

solely down to the nature of the cases coming to us. We are less likely to carry out investigations on ‘borderline’ issues, so we are naturally finding a higher proportion of fault overall.”

This is consistent with Enfield Council’s analysis of LGSCO complaints. The number of investigations is significantly lower than the previous year’s figure of 37. 22 complaints were not investigated by the Ombudsman, because based on assessment of initial information, they were determined to contain insufficient evidence of possible fault by the Council to warrant full investigation.

The table below identifies complaints received by directorate, as per the Ombudsman’s classifications.

Dept.	Area	Complaints			Percentage		
		20-21	21-22	22-23	20-21	21-22	22-23
Chief Executive	Corporate Services	7	9	4	6.6%	6.6%	3.1%
People	Adult Care Services	11	17	14	10.4 %	22.6%	22.5%
	Education & Children’s Services	9	14	15			
Place	Highways & Transport	14	19	8	59.4 %	62.0%	62.0%
	Environmental Services	13	24	10			
	Housing*	27	29	39			
	Planning & Development	9	13	23			
Resources	Benefits & Tax	10	12	13	9.4%	8.6%	10.1%
Unknown – listed null or other		6	0	3	5.6%	0%	2.3%
TOTAL		106	137	129	100%	100%	100%

**Relates to Temporary Accommodation, Housing Allocations and Private Sector Housing. Tenancy related complaints are addressed by the Housing Ombudsman Service.*

This mix by directorate has remained extremely consistent, with the percentage divide remaining similar to the previous year. However, within the Place department, Environmental Health and Highways complaints have decreased while Housing and Planning have substantially increased; this may relate to increased service demand.

4.1.2 Complaints Decided and Upheld

The following complaints were decided by the LGSCO within 2022-23 compared to the previous year:

Decision	Number			Percentage		
	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Advice Given	9	7	7	8.9%	4.9%	5.3%
Closed following preliminary enquiries	35	40	45	34.3%	27.7%	34.1%
Incomplete/Invalid	7	4	5	6.9%	2.8%	3.8%
Referred back to LBE (premature complaint to Ombudsman)	31	56	47	30.4%	38.9%	35.6%
Not Upheld	3	10	6	2.9%	6.9%	4.5%
Upheld	17	27	22	16.7%	18.8%	16.7%
TOTAL	102	144	132	100%	100%	100%

LGSCO decided on 8.3% fewer complaints compared to 2021-22, consistent with the similar decrease in complaints received. Again, this was consistent with a national average decrease, although Enfield's decrease was higher than the national average of 4%.

The rate of complaints decided per capita is consistent with Enfield's population, having the ninth highest number of complaints decided amongst London boroughs. However, for complaints upheld, Enfield Council placed fourteenth among London boroughs, indicating that a smaller proportion of Enfield complaints were upheld compared to some other boroughs.

This is supported by the improved figure in complaints closed before investigation, of which 22 were closed due to insufficient evidence of any fault by the Council. This is an improvement compared to previous year's figure of 16.

This table further identifies that the largest single reason for refusal was complaints referred back to Enfield Council as premature, i.e. the complainant had not completed the Council's internal complaints process before referring their complaint

to the Ombudsman. This represented almost a third of complaints decided. This is a continuing feature from previous years. Improvements to the Council’s complaint response templates have been made to increase the number of complainants completing the Council’s internal process before referring their complaint to the Ombudsman should they still wish to do so. Further enhancement work will be undertaken this year.

The Ombudsman records 22 complaints as investigated and upheld, with 6 not upheld. This gives an upheld percentage of 79%, slightly above the comparable average of 77%. It is also an increase over the previous year’s result of 72% however this is due in part to the LGSCO targeting investigation work more narrowly, as per the Ombudsman’s letter¹.

The LGSCO reports that satisfactory remedy has now been made in all 22 cases where actions were required by 31st March 2023.

The 22 upheld cases related to the following services:

Service	Number	Percentage
Housing	8	36.4%
Adult Social Care	3	13.6%
Education	4	18.2%
Environmental Services	3	13.6%
Corporate & Other Services	1	4.5%
Council Tax & Benefits	1	4.5%
Planning & Development	2	9.1%

Agreed remedies occurred across the 22 complaints as follows (some complaints may have more than one remedy type):

Remedy Type	Number	Percentage
Apology	19	86.5%
Compensation	19	86.5%
Review Case	6	27.3%
Provide services	5	22.7%

¹ Available at: <https://www.lgo.org.uk/your-councils-performance/london-borough-of-enfield/annualletters/>

Agreed service improvement recommendations were as follows:

Improvement	Number
Review policy or procedure	7
Provide training and guidance to staff	6

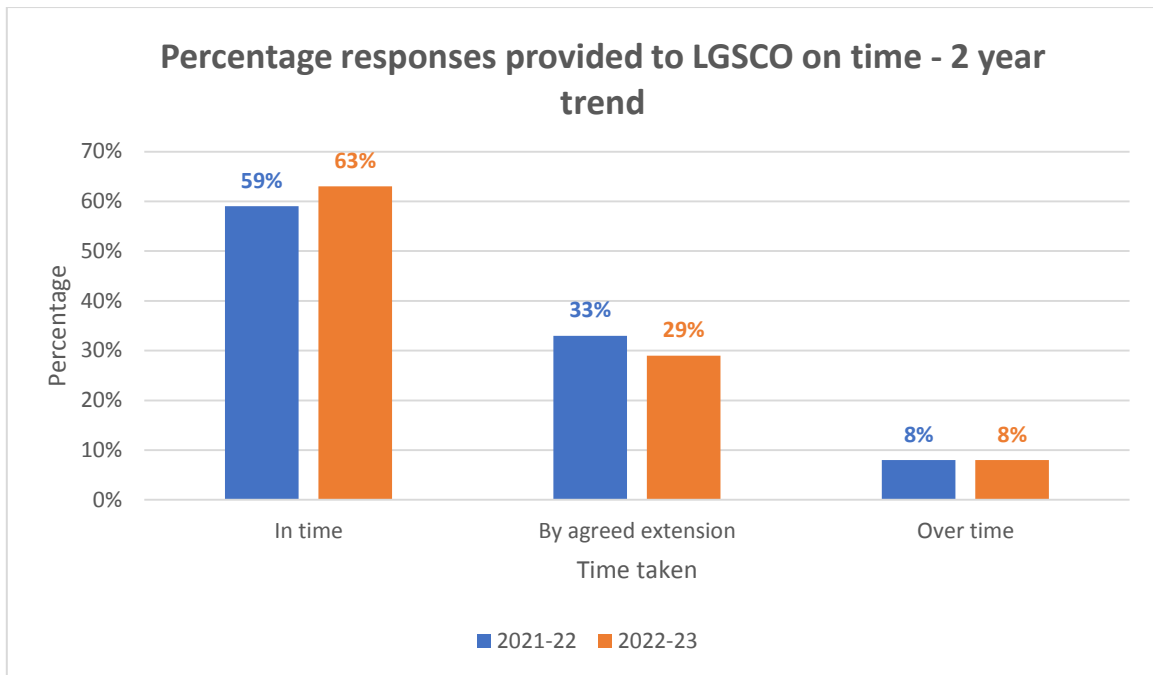
By service area these were broken down as follows:

	Adult Social Care	Tax & Benefits	Corporate Services	Education	Housing	Environment	Planning
Apology	3	1	1	3	6	1	1
Compensation	4	1	1	2	6	1	1
Training for staff	2		1	2	1		
Policy or procedure review	2	1	1	1	2		
Provide services	1	1	1	1		1	1
Review case	1			2	2		

In the LGSCO's annual performance letter, it noted 100% satisfaction that Enfield Council had implemented the Ombudsman's recommendations.

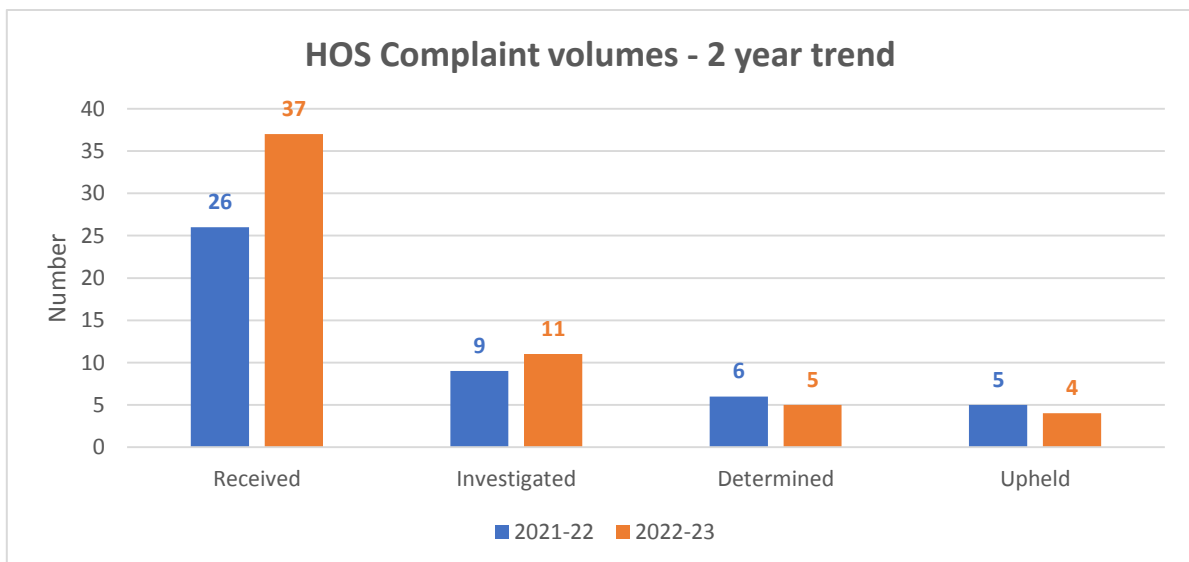
4.1.3 Response Time Performance

Response time performance has continued to improve from previous years. Although very few responses remain late, there were a number of deadline extensions agreed with the Ombudsman indicating complexity of cases and staff capacity. The Ombudsman acknowledged improvement in Enfield's response times within his annual letter, however, in line with his comments the Council's Complaints and Information team will continue to work with services over the coming year to avoid requesting extensions in timelines.

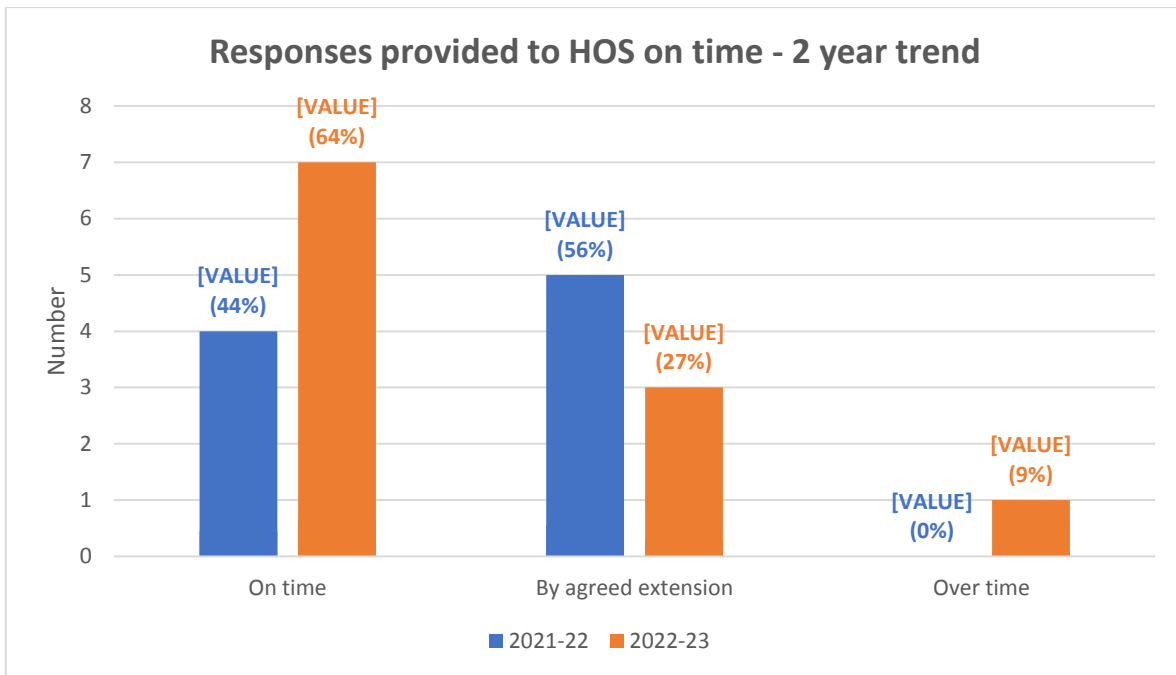


4.2 Housing Ombudsman

During 22/23, complainants escalated 37 complaints to the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS), a substantial increase on the year before. This is likely to be due to a previous backlog at the HOS, which it appears is now being resolved. The below graph only shows a 2-year trend due to the availability of HOS data.



Of the 37 complaints received by the Ombudsman, they chose to investigate 11 of these which resulted in 5 determinations. In total 4 of these were upheld by the Ombudsman, a rate of 80%, consistent with the 21-22 rate of 83%.



There has been an overall response time improvement compared to the previous year. More requests were responded to within the initial time frame and fewer time extension requests were made by Enfield Council to HOS. However, it should be noted that one case did overrun, compared to 2021/22 where there were no such cases.

Regarding the investigations, eight related to Council Housing Repairs, two related to anti-social behaviour and one to a tenancy issue.

5. Learning from Complaints & Improvement Actions

This next section combines learning from complaints received by both Enfield Council and those investigated by the Ombudsmen in order to improve future service provision. Focusing on the three highest complaint volume service areas, it details further context and ongoing improvement actions. It concludes with improvements taking place throughout 23/24 designed to improve corporate response time performance.

5.1 Council Housing Repairs Service

The Council Housing Repairs Service has updated their repair response times and are now responding to emergencies within a period between 4 hours and 24 hours, depending on the priority and completing routine repairs within 30 days. In the last year, a webform has been introduced enabling customers to report routine repairs online, increasing both ease and speed of repair reporting to improve customer

experience. Additionally, the website has been updated with more information about repairs responsibilities to improve expectations and improve speed of resolutions.

Improvement Actions

- The complaints process is continuously being reviewed and updated with improvements. Recent developments include: calling the customer when the complaint is received to understand the resolution sought; full background checks to understand the history of the complaint and the whole issue, thereby ensuring a holistic approach across multiple teams when resolving the issue). The process has been updated to include an action timeline to ensure that our responses are sent to the customer in time. This has resulted in an increase in the number of complaints responded to on time.
- Case conference meetings have been introduced to discuss complex complaints with Supervisors and to agree next steps to resolve the issues. Working closely with the Housing Management Team ensures that we are providing additional support to our vulnerable residents.
- Weekly meetings between Housing the Corporate Complaints Team are held to discuss co-ordinated complaints and agree joint responses to complex issues.
- Our complaints letter templates have been updated so that we have a consistent and customer friendly response.
- The team have completed the Housing Ombudsman complaints training on resolving complaints. They have also received training on assessing requests for compensation and offering compensation in line with Enfield Council's corporate policy.
- Learning is being identified and shared with the wider team to ensure that we are continuously improving our service for residents.
- Progressed from the previous annual report:
 - o Follow on actions and progress are now tracked to ensure that the repair is completed. This has assisted with a reduction in the number of complaints escalated to Enfield Council's final stage and ultimately to the Housing Ombudsman. Over 90% of first stage complaints have been resolved.
 - o Repairs Operations Team are continuing to carry out post inspections to check the quality of the works and address issues thereby improving repair quality and reducing number of complaints.

5.2 Council Tax

This has been a complex year for the Council Tax services, as cost of living pressures have increased the number of changes and households facing financial difficulties. The Council Tax team administers approximately 127,000 live accounts, while reducing complaints from the previous year. However, given the challenges

faced by many households, the Council continues to work to minimise complaints further through the following actions.

Last year the service administered a large number of Energy Rebates for individual households. As a result, the website required a higher frequency of updates. As well as this, further clarity on the support available to residents and businesses during the cost of living crisis was constantly updated on the website. This impacted communication and transparency to residents reflected in the complaints received in this area. The service saw increased demand from customers getting into debt for the first time due to the current economic situation.

Regarding council tax payment complaints, a greater understanding is essential for residents and businesses regarding the processes we have to follow to recover arrears and the legislation to support this. The service has been making longer payment arrangement with residents according to their ability to pay after we have awarded all benefits, discounts, or reliefs available to maximise their income.

2022-23 was particularly challenging. The Government offered Energy Rebates and grants which were delivered by the team during this year in addition to the normal service delivery. Although the Service tried to adapt processes and bring in more staff, recruitment and training takes time. Some complaints were therefore due to customers needing to chase and having to wait too long for a response. More staff were recruited with new and existing staff extensively trained in new procedures designed to increase agility when responding to changes and as a result the backlog of correspondence was cleared, and the Team are now more up to date position. Enforcement agents work on the Service's behalf advising of any issues raised at the doorstep. Regarding Benefits, some complaints are due to resident dissatisfaction with the decision, or the criteria applied. This may result in a reassessment or further explanation about the assessment criteria or advice about discretionary support that the resident can access even if they do not meet the criteria of the benefit they had applied for.

Improvement Actions:

- Communication & transparency: website updates have increased in frequency and new initiatives are being updated in a timely manner. The service has learned to ensure the information on new schemes such as the Household Support Fund is on various social media platforms, website etc. A review of correspondence is underway with the focus on clearer messages and details of the processes in practice (which are also published on the website to improve transparency).
- Council tax payments: The Service is working with residents to assist with longer payment arrangements and support with multiple debts. Comprehensive training provided for new Council Tax Officer recruited at the beginning of 2022/23 has been completed with on-going refreshers given as needed. A review of systems technology is on-going with Digital Services and a customer Portal will be introduced shortly which will assist customers in being able to self-serve where possible and give customers

more ownership of their accounts. Customers self-serving will also free up staff time to work on other collection initiatives.

- Service Quality: The Team are supported by external CIVICA on Demand resource which assists in maintaining a good service. An additional 2 Enforcement companies are now collecting and we are now in a position to recycle debt that could not be collected by one enforcement agent to another.

5.3 Waste Services

Improvement Actions

A customer experience transformation project has been underway for the past 12 months designing and delivering solutions to reduce the number of repeated missed collections received. Intensive shadowing of our waste crews has taken place which has allowed us to understand the crucial dependencies including resident communications, back-office operations, policy, supervision, technology, and other resources and how all these factors are required to deliver an excellent service. Various engagement methods with residents and internal users has taken place in order to understand pain points and how we can improve our waste services has occurred.

Rounds have been route optimised (replanned and balanced). This has required additional extra crews to stabilise and manage increased waste and recycling volumes. This increase is due to changes in resident behaviour and increased home working resulting from cultural shifts post Covid-19. This has caused a financial pressure to the service.

This work has led to a positive impact on the reduction of missed collections, these include:

- Removal of 4pm missed collection reporting constraint making it easier for customers to report missed collections (any time on the collection day rather than only after 4pm). This has reduced customer contact failure demand for reporting missed bin collections.
- Better customer experience as residents receive real time information at first point of contact. For example, reason why a bin was not collected such as contamination, or bin not left out.
- Reduced missed collections for bulky waste as crews now receive correct and complete list of requested collections daily.
- Increased supervisor availability to investigate customer complaints, carry out sites visits and support crews during their rounds.
- Better data accuracy for clinical waste collection ultimately improving services to customers. By cleansing the data we eliminate the risk of visiting a property that no longer requires the service and avoids any unnecessary distress to residents if their loved ones have passed away. In addition, this is saving both service time and reducing fuel consumption.

- Customers are better assisted when calling the Council regarding a waste collection issue as Customer Service Agents have improved access to back-office systems and real time reporting from refuse vehicles.
- Improvements to data synchronization between website and back office systems ensure residents always access the correct collection data for their property using 'Find my collection day'.
- Camera integration into the back-office enables faster access of video replay footage. This enables a quicker resolution to complaints investigations, where clear footage is available, and going forward this tool will help us reinforce the policy.
- Better understanding of pain points and opportunities to improve customer experience across the different ways residents communicate with the Council (telephone, webchat and online self-serve). This is being used to improve our website and an online policy documentation.
- Resolution of technology issues also supports the reduction of missed collections.
- Reviewed service areas and rationalised service provision. In line with these findings, recruitment is currently underway to reduce dependency on agency staff which will support improved service delivery.

5.6 Response Timescale Performance

In addition to specific service complaints, timeliness response performance across the organisation requires further improvement. As referenced in the previous annual report, Enfield Council installed a new case management system in July 22 to reduce manual processes and provide greater data and performance insight on complaint handling. Post installation, there were a number of software issues affecting the processing and data quality of case monitoring, meaning that complaints were more likely to go overdue. These have now been rectified. Additionally, as referred to in section 3.2, the first stage response timescales reverting from 20 to 10 working days post Covid-19 have contributed towards a temporary decrease in on time responses. Across the year, this has improved as services have adjusted to the new target.

Improvement Actions:

The following actions will be implemented during 2023/24:

- Enhancements and developments to the case management IT system to further extend the effectiveness of data analysis and monitoring is on-going;
- Reviewing and improving procedures for co-ordinating responses to complex, cross-departmental complaints
- As advised in the previous report, new resources structures were implemented to improve performance. However, further corporate restructures have since taken place and learning from the previous resourcing changes regarding complaints are informing further resource refinements during 23/24. These changes are designed to improve resilience and

ownership of service development and increase performance through further targeted improvements in specific service areas.

6. Compliments

In 22/23, the Council logged 257 compliments centrally, a decrease of 30 compared to the previous year, though still significantly higher than 142 recorded in 2020-21.

Some of these compliments are provided below.

"I would like to thank him for going above and beyond to help my mum. I really appreciate this as he didn't have to, but treated us with compassion and like individuals and not just a problem."

"A huge thank you to the dustmen who came round this morning in Norfolk Avenue. I put out the wrong dustbin last night (blue, not black) and someone from the crew came into my drive, took the correct bin to be emptied and even put it back. I am so grateful, as I am unwell at the moment and I got really confused about what bin day it was. Such a small act of kindness made such a big difference."

"There are 3 guys blowing and sweeping leaves outside our flat in the Dickens Estate. They are doing a really mad good job. Working hard and very efficient."

"Just wanted to thank you for the swift response to my request on Friday 02/06/23. A mattress has been dumped at the junction. The mattress was collected by your staff at 6.09am then next day. Thank you!"

"Now my loneliness has diminished and my depression has all but disappeared. Since attending Park Avenue Resource Centre Ground Floor sessions, my health has improved, not cured, but improved because I now have a reason to get up in the morning. My day is now brighter, I not only have a reason to get up, I now get a proper night's sleep (Almost!)"

"I just wanted to say thank you SO much X for ALL your work on this study. It is really, really appreciated. You have been absolutely amazing! Without you, it would have been impossible."

"I recently had cause to contact Customer Services to book an appointment to register a death. I wanted to feed back the excellent manner that X dealt with the enquiry. I fed back to him a compliment and advised I would let the team leaders know. He clearly is passionate about his job which came across professionally in a friendly caring manner. He is definitely the right person taking calls of that nature representing excellent customer service."

7. Conclusion

2022/23 saw a slight decrease in the volume of Complaints compared to the previous three years, and challenges regarding on time response performance primarily due to the change in response time target of 20 to 10 working days. Although this change has decreased performance, complainants are mostly receiving a quicker response time to their initial complaint compared to the previous two years. The number of complaints referred to the Ombudsman have also reduced in the period. However, further improvements are needed to reduce time extensions and respond to the Ombudsman within the initially requested timeframe.

From a customer perspective, there were high complaint volumes regarding waste management, housing repairs, and Council Tax. These are broadly the same highest three service areas compared to 21/22. However, the volumes of complaints in these areas have decreased significantly since the previous year, particularly waste services. This is a result of the improvement actions identified in the 21/22 report.

Informed by complaints learning during 22/23, a number of actions plans are underway at an individual service level designed to continue with these service improvements. These include enhanced staff training and induction programmes, service redesigns, recruitment drives and improved customer communication processes to improve service delivery and reduce the initial complaints received.