

# Annual complaints report for Enfield Council’s housing services

June 2024

## 1. Introduction

This document summarizes the council housing complaints for April 2023 to March 2024. It also outlines our complaints policy and how it aligns with the Ombudsman's standard, expectations and learning.

- Enfield had 722 complaints in the year 2023/24 which comprised of both first and second stage complaints)
- This was an increase of 350 complaints compared to the previous financial year.
- Enfield’s Council Housing service gave a timely response to 560 of the 722 complaints
- This was 2.7 times more than the previous year.

## 2. Increase in complaints

Like most other London boroughs, Enfield experienced a significant increase in the number of complaints at the beginning of the financial year, largely due to the ‘Make It Right’ campaign. The service responded swiftly and effectively to ensure better compliance with the complaints code, experiencing improvements in case compliance of approximately 20% from quarter 1 to quarter 4. The Council Housing service are continuing to review process, as detailed in the report.

## 3. Complaint Responses Summary

Breakdown of complaints for 2023-2024

<b>Complaint Stage</b>	<b>Leaseholders</b>	<b>Tenants</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Stage One</b>	121	467	588
<b>Stage Two</b>	41	93	134
<b>Total</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>560</b>	<b>722</b>

#### 4. Response Times

The Council responded to 505 complaints within the Housing Ombudsman Complaints deadline.

- 217 complaints didn't fully meet code compliance. 4 Complaints were acknowledged to the resident outside of the codes allocation (5 working days).
- 213 complaints were responded to the resident outside of the codes response deadlines (Maximum of 20 working days and a maximum of 30 working days\*)

#### Stage One Complaints

Code Compliance	Leaseholders	Tenants	Total
Within Code	76	326	402
Outside of Code	45	141	186

#### Stage Two Complaints

Code Compliance	Leaseholders	Tenants	Total
Within Code	35	68	103
Outside of Code	6	25	31

## 5. Complaint Themes

Most housing complaints received in the reporting period relate to our repairs service accounting for 52.6% of our first stage complaints and our housing management service, with 28.9% of complaints.

### Stage One complaints by service area

Community Spaces	0.3%
Building Safety	0.5%
Resident Engagement	0.7%
Vulnerable Persons Support	0.7%
Voids & Lettings	0.9%
Homeownership Rents & Service Charge	1.1%
Compliance	3.2%
Estate Services Operations	4.4%
Major Works	6.8%
Housing Management	28.9%
Repairs	52.6%

### Second Two

<b>Resident Engagement</b>	<b>1.5%</b>
<b>Vulnerable Persons Support</b>	<b>1.5%</b>
<b>Estate Services Operations</b>	<b>2%</b>
<b>Homeownership Rents &amp; Service Charge</b>	<b>3%</b>
<b>Major Works</b>	<b>3%</b>
<b>Housing Management</b>	<b>34%</b>
<b>Repairs and Estates</b>	<b>55%</b>

## **6. Complaints Not Accepted**

The council recognises the importance of addressing concerns raised by residents and has established a comprehensive process to handle complaints through various channels. Whether submitted online, via email, or over the phone, each complaint is meticulously reviewed by our dedicated Housing Complaints team. When an enquiry doesn't meet the criteria to be classified as a complaint, we update the resident and ensure it is processed through other necessary means. To ensure clarity and transparency, we provide a detailed breakdown of our process and criteria below, which helps in distinguishing between general inquiries and formal complaints.

- 67 enquiries via the complaints system were actioned as service requests
- 13 complaints were not captured as new complaints as existing complaints existed regarding these concerns, in these cases responses were sent out or escalated depending on the necessary stage.
- 11 enquiries were deemed to be 'invalid.' Further information (including a form of authority) was requested but not supplied.
- 6 cases that had been classified and allocated as complaints were withdrawn at the resident request as the matter has been resolved to the customers satisfaction
- 3 cases were not investigated as complaints as the matter was outside of the department's jurisdiction (for example private land)

## **7. Complaints Policy**

- A copy of Enfield Councils Corporate complaint Policy can be found on our website. [Make a formal complaint | Enfield Council](#)
- Enfield updated the Corporate Complaints Policy in March 2024 to ensure compliance with the new Housing Ombudsman Complaint Code. As referenced in 6.7 of the policy.

## **8. Housing Ombudsman**

### **8.1. Self Assessment**

- The council “self assessment” was completed in April 2024 and signed off by the Cabinet Member for Housing. The self assessment has been published on the councils website - [Make a formal complaint | Enfield Council](#). The Council remains compliant with the code and will conduct a further review following a restructure, merger or change of procedure.

### **8.2. Determination Reports 2023-2024**

- During 2023-2024 The Housing Ombudsman investigated and issued 20 determination reports for residents.
- Enfield received 2 Service Failure findings & 14 Maladministration findings in regards the Council’s complaint handling.
- Enfield received 0 Complaint Handling Failure orders and has shown compliance with all orders made during 2023-2024. In addition, Enfield continues to review the recommendations and implement these into policy where applicable.
- London Borough of Enfield await the publishing of the 2023-2024 ‘Landlord Performance Report’ and will ensure this is shared on our website.

### **8.3. Non-Compliance of the code**

- Due to the current Purdah period the Council has not been able to get a comment from the full Cabinet. The report will be noted for comments at the next full council meeting on the 11<sup>th</sup> September 2024.

### **8.4. Published Documents**

- The Housing Ombudsman published the Landlord Performance Report in Autumn of 2023 for 2022-2023. This can be found on the Ombudsman Website [Landlords Archive - Housing Ombudsman \(housing-ombudsman.org.uk\)](#)
- Decisions from the Ombudsman can also be found on their website, please ensure you add ‘London Borough of Enfield’ to assist in filtering the search [Decisions Archive - Housing Ombudsman \(housing-ombudsman.org.uk\)](#)

## 9. Lessons Learnt

- Earlier engagement and personal contact with all parties involved in the complaint is key to ensure timely response
- Calling residents to discuss cases is key to getting a better view of what resolution is required therefore improved process for.
- Improved record keeping is key for complaints and ombudsman cases to be responded to on time
- Staff development – Understanding the process to improve investigation, communication, decision making and negotiation skills.
- We are developing a skills audit to assess competencies and identify where training is required.
- Senior complaints officers offer will support to staff in the investigation, decision making and remediation stages of the process
- Tracking actions to ensure works are completed is a key area for improvement – currently seems there is scope to improve oversight of repairs being completed, follow up on missed or rearranged appointments or satisfaction with the repairs
- Keeping residents informed of progress of works or actions to resolve issues
- Responding to correspondence within published timescales
- All staff involved in complaints are asked to complete training available on the Housing Ombudsman Centre for Learning.

## 10. Service Improvement Plan

- The [Service Improvement Plan for Council Housing](#) was approved by the Cabinet on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2024. [The Key Decision 5720](#) asks for approval on the service improvement work plan “Approve the Work Plan for 2024/25 for the Council Housing service to drive forward improvement in services and resident satisfaction” The Service plan was based of learning form the service, including the handling of complaints (and the lessons learnt), tenant satisfaction measures and Housing Ombudsman determinations.

### **10.1. Complaint Improvements**

- Enfield Housing continues to make changes to better handle complaints, including plans to launch a new Council Housing Complaints & Resolution Team. The team will join resources to focus on dispute resolution and improving the resident experience.
- The Place Complaints Team & Customer Service Team has already seen significant improvements with code compliance close to 90%
- Visible leadership on the importance of complaints to embed a culture that recognises the value they bring to the organisation. Service Directors and senior managers attend weekly case conferences to review complex cases, coordinate actions to resolve issues and encourage collaboration across services with a focus on finding solutions. The dedicated investigating officers now call all residents to introduce themselves, explain the process and clarify the issues and remedy the problem. The focus is to create solutions and resolve complaints without escalations.
- Cases are risk assessed at an early stage and we hold a case conference or resolution strategy meeting to agree actions.
- We have also reviewed complaints handling through the year to streamline the process, align teams and provide a more efficient service, cutting down on processes and increasing time available to resolve complaints.

### **11. Conclusion**

- Considering the progress made this year, Enfield Council Housing service are confident that Enfield residents and leaseholders will experience a significantly enhanced complaint management through, the implementation of planned changes and the continuation of existing efforts in 2024-2025.