

Kensington and Chelsea Council Annual Complaints Report

1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026



THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF
KENSINGTON
AND CHELSEA

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Preface

On 24 November 2025, the Council suffered a significant cyber-attack. This resulted in all Council systems being taken offline for a period, with services being gradually reinstated.

In some areas such as planning, council tax and benefits the Council has been unable to deliver services for several months. No area of the Council has remained untouched.

Although service teams have worked proactively to reduce the impact on residents, there have been notable delays or breaks in service delivery and significant process changes. The case handling system for complaints was taken offline for a period of time.

Reporting issues, otherwise known as service requests, were seriously affected, with the most popular way of reporting via “report-it” forms being taken down from the website. The default route was to report to the corporate complaints team via email. The knock-on effect was a huge and longstanding spike in complaint submissions.

The Council has maintained contact with the two Ombudsman Services, the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and the Housing Ombudsman Service, since the cyber-attack took place.

Whilst our systems were offline, they did not deal with any cases about services provided by the Council. Once systems started to return, they started accepting cases, albeit on an extended timescale.

Service teams, including the Corporate Complaints, Learning and Improvement team have worked hard to adapt to the situation, and have developed different ways of working to maintain service provision as far as possible.

All complaints submitted during the offline period have been logged and are reflected in the figures. Since the cyber-attack, the corporate complaints team have been unable to log complaints within two working days as per the Corporate Complaints Policy.

The time for acknowledgement was increased to five working days and the time for response was extended for all Stage 1 complaints to 20 working days. However, even with the extended timescales, teams have struggled to respond in time due to volume, backlogs and lack of access to systems.

For consistency, the reporting in this report is against our standard of two working days to acknowledge a complaint and 10 working days to respond to complaints.

Complaints – headline figures

Council-wide 2025/2026

Submissions, timeliness, outcomes, LGSCO escalations and service improvements.



Indicator 1 – submissions

3,973

total submissions

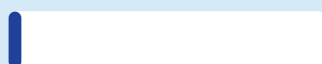
Accepted



Rejected

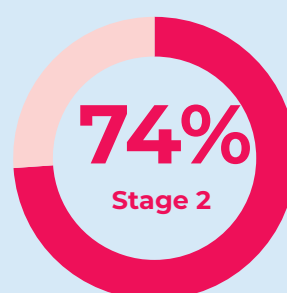
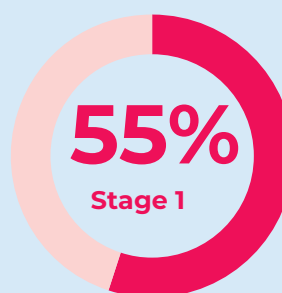


Withdrawn



Indicator 2 – timeliness

Cases dealt with on time



Indicator 3 – outcomes



Stage 1

Stage 2

Upheld 992 (46%)

Part upheld 392 (18%)

Not Upheld 622 (29%)

Resolved 22 (1%)

Escalations 545 (25%)

Upheld 217 (40%)

Part upheld 82 (16%)

Not Upheld 222 (41%)

In progress 19 (3%)

LGSCO escalations

171

cases escalated

144

decisions issued

121

closed after assessment

23

investigated

22

(96%) upheld

Indicator 4 – learning and service improvements



1,539

corrective actions



318

compliments



£94,182.74

paid in compensation

Key findings 2025/26

Indicators 1–2: complaint demand increased while timeliness, especially Stage 1, came under significant pressure.



+40%

submissions:
2,842 to 3,973



+22%

accepted
complaints:
~1,785 to 2,168



55%

Stage 1 on
time vs 90%
target



74%

Stage 2 on
time; still
below target

Indicator 1 — submissions

Volume: Submissions rose by 40%, mainly linked to central logging changes and the cyber-attack.

Formal demand: 2,168 accepted complaints - increased by 22%, showing more formal complaint demand across the Council.

Rejected cases: 1,705 cases were rejected in 2025/26 — 43% of submissions — mostly service requests or enquiries.

Main pressure area: Housing and Social Investment accounted for 1,357 accepted complaints, around 63% of the total.

Indicator 2 — timeliness

Stage 1 poor: 55% were responded to on time, well below the 90% target; performance fell from 84% in Q1 to 14% in Q4.

Drivers: Cyber-attack disruption, backlogs, service disruption and higher volumes had a major impact.

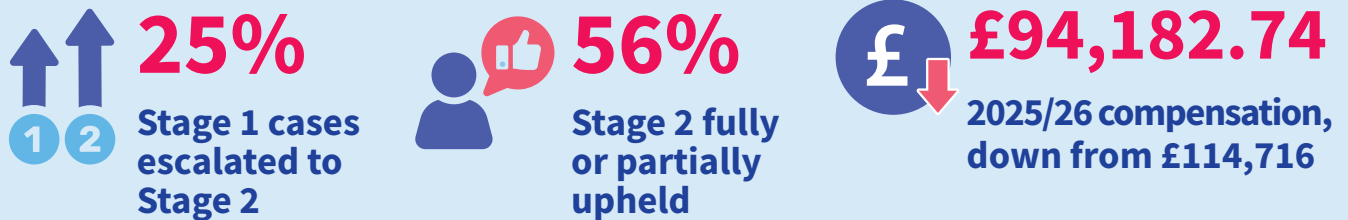
Weak spots: Housing 56%, Resources 46%, Environment 57% and Multi-service 21%; Adult Social Care met target at 93%, with only quarters three and four falling slightly below target.

Stage 2 mixed: Stronger than Stage 1 at 74% on time across 545 cases, but below target; strong in Resources 86%, Housing 80%, Housing Management 91%.

Stage 2 poor: Environment and Neighbourhoods 52% and Multi-service complaints 41%, pointing to capacity, coordination and ownership issues.

Key findings 2025/26

Indicators 3–4: some outcome improvement is evident, but escalation and service risk remain important.



Indicator 3 — outcomes and escalation

Improvement: The report notes a continued reduction over recent years in complaints with an upheld element, suggesting positive impact from service improvements and stronger complaint handling.

Escalation concern: 545 of 2,169 Stage 1 complaints escalated to Stage 2 — a 25% rate that has slowly increased over recent years.

Stage 2 service risk: 56% of Stage 2 complaints were fully or partially upheld, especially in Housing and Social Investment.

Indicator 4 — remedies and learning

Substantial learning: Corrective actions and practical remedies show active learning and service improvement work.

Financial redress reduced: Payments fell from £114,716.13 to £94,182.74; average payments reduced from £287.51 to £223.64.

Interpretation: The fall suggests greater use of practical remedies and revised redress guidance.



Overall finding

The strongest improvement story is in learning, practical remedies and reduced redress. The principal risk remains Stage 1 quality, service ownership and escalation into Stage 2.



Introduction

The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea serves approximately 144,000 residents across 93,000 households in one of the UK's smallest but most diverse boroughs, with around 80 languages spoken. There are 11 Green Flag award-winning parks in the borough and several world-renowned museums.

The Council is structured around six directorates, which manage and deliver the many services offered by the Council for its residents:

Adult Social Care	Adult Care Services
Chief Executive's Hub	Chief Executive's Office, Communications, Public Affairs, Leader's Office and Grenfell Partnership.
Children's Services	Education, Family Services, Libraries
Environment and Neighbourhoods	Environmental Health, Transport and Highways, Network Management, Parking, Building Control, Land Charges, Development Management, Community Safety, Leisure and Parks and Waste Contracts.
Housing and Social Investment	Housing Needs (homeless or threatened with homelessness), Housing Management (managing homes owned by the Council for tenants and leasehold services), Social Investment.
Resources	Audit, Risk and Insurance, Customer Delivery, Council Tax, Housing Benefits, Human Resources and Legal.

Housing, waste planning and public protection services reach tens of thousands of households and businesses. For example:

Housing support

19,871

social housing
households
supported

2,100

households
in temporary
accommodation

Waste and public realm

65,840

bi-weekly
kerbside bin
collections

24,407

households
using communal
bins

14,000

trees managed

Planning

5,500

planning applications and related approvals each year

2,000

planning enforcement reports investigated

Community protection

10,500

noise nuisance reports received each year

3,000+

visits to homes and businesses

969

food hygiene inspections carried out

Anyone who has received, is currently receiving, or is seeking a service from the Council or an external provider acting on behalf of the Council is eligible to submit a complaint.

There are four types of complaints that the Council handles and reports on. These are:

- **Adult Social Care**
- **Children's Social Care**
- **Corporate Complaints**
- **Housing Management Complaints**

This report covers Corporate Complaints and includes Housing Management complaints. For completeness, it gives an overview of social care complaints. In-depth reports for Adult Social Care and Children's Social Care are available and can be found on the RBKC website.

The timelines reported in this report are aligned with the corporate timelines adopted by RBKC. These were designed to give residents a consistent response timeline across all complaint types. The Council's corporate timeline is to acknowledge complaints within two working days and respond within 10 working days at Stage 1. Aside from Adult Social Care, guidance for all complaint types allows a Stage 1 response to be delivered within 10 working days, with an extension to 20 working days where necessary. The target for adherence to these timelines is 90%.

At Stage 2, there are marked differences between the different complaint types, and it is not possible to standardise the complaint response times across the different complaint types. Should a complaint escalate, the Council will respond as quickly as possible. The times for each process are outlined below:

Corporate Complaints	20 working days	Extendable to 30 working days
Adult Social Care	No escalation to Stage 2	
Children's Social Care	25 working days	Extendable to 65 working days
Housing Management	20 working days	Extendable to 40 working days

For Children's Social Care complaints, Stage 2 complaints are investigated by an independent team. For that reason, a longer period of up to 65 working days is allowed at Stage 2 and there is an option to escalate to Stage 3. Statutory arrangements allow these services more time to respond than the Council's corporate timescale.

The Council is answerable to two main Ombudsman services, the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and the Housing Ombudsman Service, both of which have introduced new complaint handling codes that are now live. In response, we have adapted this annual complaint report so that it aligns with their reporting requirements and provides a consistent framework for assessing performance. The report is therefore structured around four key performance indicators: the number of complaints received, timeliness, outcomes, and learning from complaints and remedies.

In the 2024/25 Annual Report, the Council committed to the following key activities to be carried out in 2025/26:

- **To conduct a full, end-to-end review of the council's complaints process.**
- **To improve support for tenants, leaseholders and residents in temporary accommodation to make complaints.**
- **To carry out the recommendations made as part of the internal audit of the complaints service.**
- **To review the iCasework case management system to ensure it is still fit for purpose.**

The end-to-end review is a co-design project being carried out with residents who have experienced the complaints service at first-hand. The project is being led by the Customer Access Programme and has started in earnest, with outcomes delivered in July 2026.

The internal audit into the Corporate Complaints Service was concluded in September 2025 and found the complaints service to be **satisfactory**. It said that:

“Controls in most areas were in place and operating effectively; however, weaknesses were identified in receipt, recording and allocation of complaints, review and issue of responses and monitoring and management information”

The internal audit made six recommendations, which included updating the complaints policy, ensuring officers respond in time to complaints, implementing a stronger audit trail on case handling, quality checks on responses and improving the Ombudsman process.

All of the recommendations have been implemented in full or in part. The cyber-attack and end-to-end complaints review have had an influence, and the recommendations have been fed into the end-to-end complaints review. This is not to say that there haven't been significant changes in the way complaints are handled to address the identified weaknesses.

Work has been carried out to clearly define the roles of the Corporate Complaints, Learning and Improvement teams and the officers from service teams in investigating and responding to complaints.

One of the major changes introduced is the way that complaints are received and acknowledged, thereby addressing weaknesses identified in the internal audit regarding the receipt, recording and allocation of complaints.

Now, all complaint submissions are directed to the Corporate Complaints team in the first instance, for assessment. The Corporate Complaints team will:

- **Log the submission**
- **Check whether a complaint may be a service request**
- **Check whether the person is someone who can complain**
- **Check whether it is a matter that can be complained about**
- **Check whether there are opportunities to resolve the complaint quickly**
- **Identify the complaint points**
- **Identify the most appropriate person to handle the complaint**

The outcome of the assessment is documented in a formal acknowledgement and sent to the complainant and the service team. Included in the acknowledgement is a reference number which can be used to track and monitor the complaint through to its conclusion. This exercise gives the complainant the opportunity to check and comment on the complaint points and ensures that there is independent oversight of complaints, away from the service teams, something residents asked for in the Grenfell Inquiry.

In cases where there is an opportunity to resolve the complaint quickly and without the need for a full investigation, a letter confirming the action agreed or taken is sent to the complainant. These complaints are categorised as “resolved” and are treated as upheld Stage 1 complaints with the same escalation rights as a Stage 1 complaint that has been fully investigated. Early resolution of complaints is something that the Council is continuing to promote and is in line with what many complainants have indicated they would prefer.

The new assessment process is also helpful to officers as it ensures that only eligible complaints are dealt with through the formal complaint process and that there is a clear understanding of what can and cannot be investigated. The complainant is advised of any matters that cannot be investigated and signposted accordingly.

The new acknowledgements replace a short, generic email sent to residents on receipt of their complaint, providing the timeline for the Stage 1 response. All complainants receive an automated receipt of complaint submission whether the complaint is delivered by email or through the online form.

The process for investigating and responding to complaints has also been updated, with new template letters ensuring:

- **A clear overall response outcome**
- **An explanation and outcome for each complaint point**
- **Confirmation of steps to resolve the complaint and a timeline for completion**
- **An update on lessons learned from the complaint**
- **Escalation rights**
- **Information about organisations that can give free advice**

These measures ensure independent oversight of complaints, an improved customer experience and a resolution-based approach. As the new process is adopted, we would expect to see a reduction in complaints escalating and an increase in customer satisfaction.

To support these changes, the Corporate Complaints team arranged complaints handling training for 43 responding officers representing service teams from across the Council. This was provided by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. Written guidance has been shared with a wider group of officers. In addition, the Corporate Complaints team has introduced a daily surgery to support responding officers from service teams.

The Corporate Complaints team has been working with Civica, provider of the iCasework system used to manage complaints, and colleagues to update the system. The first tranche of updates has been completed and at the time of writing is in a testing stage. This work focuses on Housing Management complaints to allow for accurate monitoring as required by the Housing Ombudsman Service. A second tranche of updates to improve the way we receive complaints will be carried out in 2026/27.

Council-wide performance

This report gives an overview of the Council's performance in relation to complaints, comments and compliments, for the reporting year running from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026. It evaluates the performance of the various services across all directorates. The report has been designed in alignment with LGSCO guidance, focusing on four key performance indicators. These are:

- 1. Number of complaints received**
- 2. Timeliness**
- 3. Outcomes**
- 4. Learning from complaints and remedies**

The report also includes performance reports from the Ombudsman services.

For completeness, this report touches on the performance of all complaint types – Adult Social Care, Children's Social Care, Corporate and Housing Management Complaints. However, it is primarily concerned with Corporate Complaints and Housing Management performance. The statutory services produce more in-depth reports which are available on the Council's website.

Indicator one: number of complaints received

The number of complaints received refers to all submissions made to the complaints service, prior to assessment. It is an important parameter because it helps the Council to understand demand, identify pressure points in services, and monitor whether particular issues are increasing over time. A rise in complaint volumes may indicate declining service performance, barriers to access, wider system problems, or improved awareness of the complaints process.

When considered alongside assessment outcomes, timeliness and upheld rates, this measure provides useful context for assessing overall performance and identifying where improvement activity should be focused.

Not all submissions to the Council are taken to full investigation. An assessment of each submission is carried out by the Complaints team and will:

- **Check whether a complaint may be a service request**
- **Check whether the person is someone who can complain**
- **Check whether it is a matter that can be complained about**
- **Check whether there are opportunities to resolve the complaint quickly**
- **Identify the complaint points**
- **Identify the most appropriate person to handle the complaint**

For Adult Social Care, Children's Social Care and Housing Management this process is carried out by the respective teams.

Complaint submissions are most commonly rejected from the complaint process because they don't fit the definition of a complaint and are in fact service requests. The public will often resort to contacting complaints if the service area does not have adequate contact methods in place. This scenario played out following the cyber-attack, when online reporting forms were taken offline.

The Corporate Complaints team saw a sharp rise in the number of service requests submitted through the complaints mailbox. This was largely due to webforms being out of service on the Council's website. This led people to report issues such as missed bins, fly-tipping, and similar issues through the complaints service.

During 2025/26, complaint submissions across all complaint types increased from 2,842 in 2024/25 to 3,973 in 2025/26. This is an overall increase of 40%.

In the first half of the year, complaint submissions increased by 35%, from 1,370 in 2024/2025 to 1,854 in 2025/26. The increase is likely to be, at least in part, due to the Corporate Complaints team taking over the acknowledgement and logging of complaints from the start of quarter one. Other factors are the introduction of Awaab's Law in October 2025 and the growing use of artificial intelligence (AI) products such as ChatGPT and Claude.

In quarter four, there was a 56% increase in the number of complaint submissions. The additional submissions were a direct result of the cyber-attack. Submissions also leapt to 1,205 cases, with 584 (48%) cases being rejected as service requests. Rejected complaints are logged, and signposting information is sent to the complainant with details of how to resolve their issue in the most appropriate way.

The number of complaints that have been accepted has also increased when compared with the previous year. Of the 3,973 complaints submitted, 2,168 (55%) were accepted. The number of complaints accepted has increased by 22% when compared with 2024/25. The increase is not so pronounced as the number of complaint submissions, and again, the increase in accepted complaints is likely to have been influenced by the Corporate Complaints team taking over the logging of complaints.

It is worth noting that where AI tools are being more commonly used to draft complaint submissions it is changing the nature of complaint submissions. AI can be a helpful tool for residents, enabling people to articulate concerns more clearly and giving confidence to those who may otherwise find formal complaint processes difficult to navigate. This supports accessibility and may encourage greater use of the complaints process.

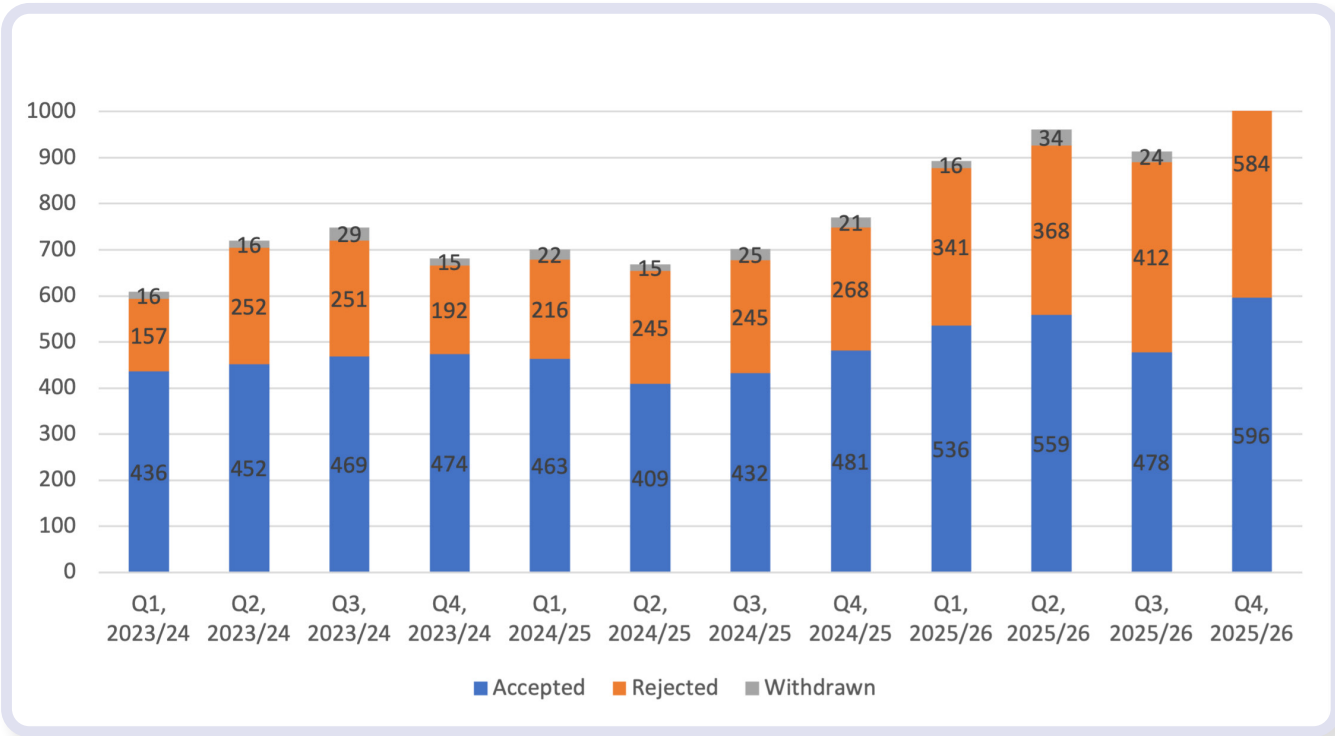
The Council's strengthened assessment and acknowledgement process is therefore increasingly important. By setting out the accepted complaint points, explaining what can and cannot

be investigated, and managing expectations at the outset, the Council can support fairness, transparency and customer confidence while ensuring complaints remain focused on the issues that require investigation.

Peers in other local authorities have made similar observations about the complexity of complaint submissions and increases in the demands for compensation and other remedies. The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman has also reported an increase in the number of cases received, with 27,625 complaints in 2025/26, a 33% rise compared to the previous year.

The Council currently has some limited AI capabilities using Copilot. However, in 2026/27, we will be looking to develop this further with Amazon Web Services. It is anticipated that this will help greatly with guiding residents to the correct services and finding immediate solutions, triaging, reporting, root cause analysis and tracking complaints through to resolution.

Figure 1 – Number of complaint submissions and assessment outcomes over the three years, including complaints accepted, rejected or withdrawn.



A total of 43% of the 3,973 complaints submitted in 2025/26 were rejected. The most common reason for rejecting a complaint is due to the request being a service request, rather than a complaint. The Ombudsman services say that organisations should have the opportunity to resolve matters to an individual’s satisfaction before they become a complaint. There are many reasons to reject a complaint. The table on the next page shows the full range of reasons that complaints were rejected from the complaints process.

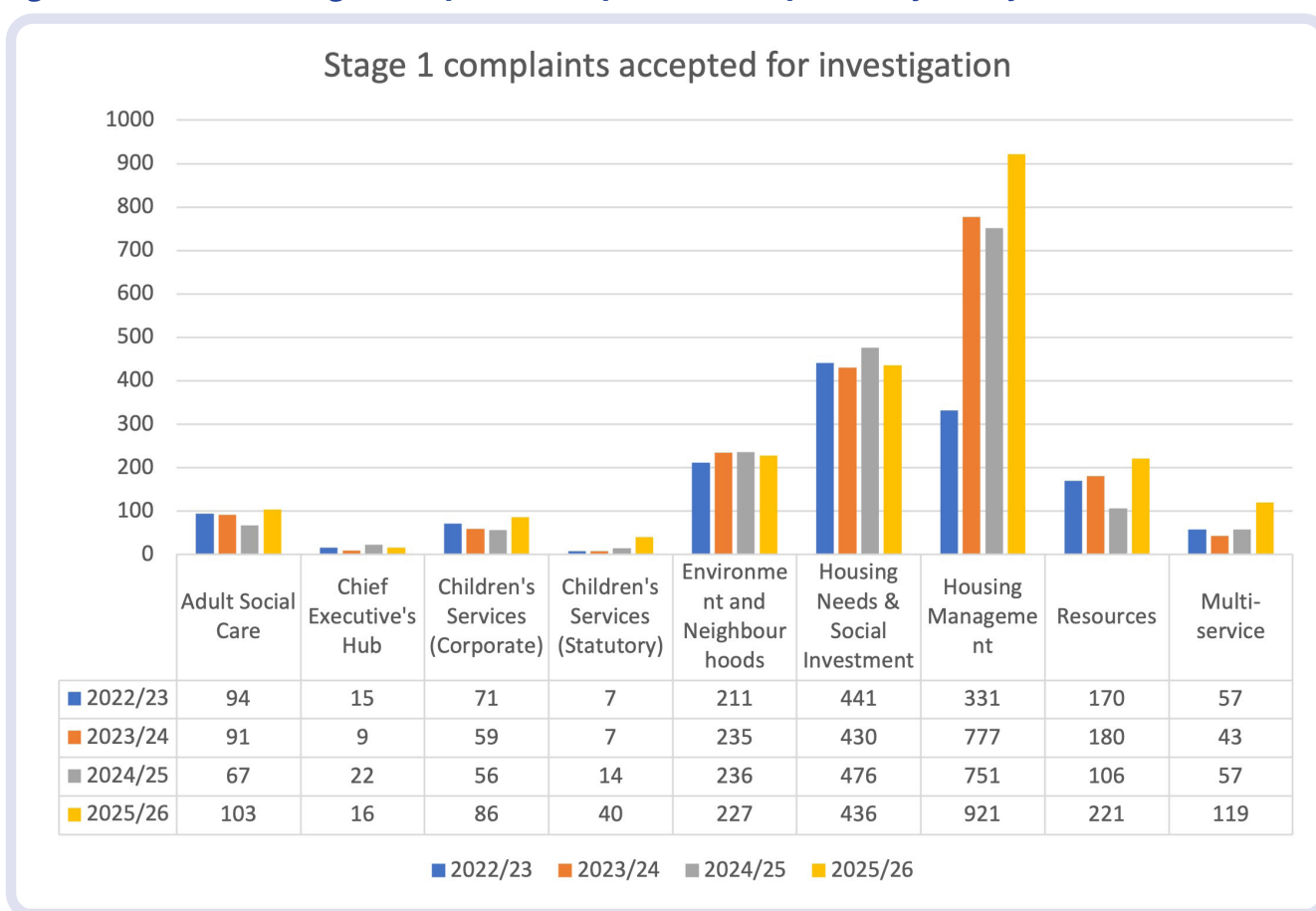
Figure 2 – Reasons for complaints to be rejected at Stage 1 2025/26

Returned reason	Stage 1 rejected	Average Stage 1 rejected per month
Service request/enquiry	894	75
Appeal	235	20
Duplicate complaint	145	12
Complaint not for this organisation	122	10
Customer not responded/not contactable	48	4
Customer refused to provide a name or address	44	4
Insurance claim	38	3
Resolved before complaint investigation	34	3
Complaint about a council policy	32	3
Complaint about an issue more than 12 months old	26	2
Data protection/FOI complaint	24	2
Complaint subject to legal proceedings	16	1
Complaint about personnel matters	13	1
Same complaint already dealt with at all stages of the procedure	13	1
Representative not authorised to act on behalf of the client	8	1
Same complaint already investigated by the Ombudsman	5	0
Ongoing court proceedings	3	0
Safeguarding referral	2	0
Complaint about a councillor	2	0

Returned reason	Stage 1 rejected	Average Stage 1 rejected per month
Complaint about Council's legal or professional opinion	1	0
Persistent	1	0
Other	0	0
Total	1,705	142

The year-on-year data shows a broadly consistent pattern over the past four years, with the Housing and Social Investment department remaining by far the largest source of accepted Stage 1 complaints.

Figure 3 – Number of Stage 1 complaints accepted over the past four years by directorate





Social Housing
and Allocating



Any views on Housing in RBKC?

Tell Us!



Key Worker Homes

Handwritten note: "I would like to see more social housing in the area"

Handwritten note: "I would like to see more social housing in the area"

Handwritten note: "I would like to see more social housing in the area"

In 2025/26, Housing and Social Investment accounted for 1,357 of the 2,168 accepted complaints, around 63% of the total. Almost all of these were concentrated in Housing Management (921) and Housing Needs (433). Outside Housing, the next highest volumes were in Environment and Neighbourhoods (227) and in Resources (222), with Customer Delivery, Environmental Health and Transport and Regulatory Services accounting for much of this activity. Multi-service complaints totalled 117.

Data shows, complaint volumes increased most noticeably in the largest resident-facing directorates. These increases are consistent with the impact of the cyber-attack and the disruption to normal service access and reporting routes.

By contrast, Children's Services recorded 126 complaints (corporate and statutory complaints combined), Adult Social Care 103 and the Chief Executive's Hub 16. Overall, complaint demand remains concentrated in high-volume, resident-facing services.

Indicator two: timeliness

Stage 1 complaints

Timeliness is an important measure because it shows how quickly the Council responds when residents raise concerns and whether services are meeting expected standards. Delays in acknowledging or responding to complaints can undermine confidence, cause frustration, and in some cases prolong the impact of service failure. Monitoring timeliness helps the Council to identify backlogs, understand capacity pressures, and assess whether complaint handling arrangements are effective and accessible.

The Council's Corporate Complaints Policy sets the target for all complaints, regardless of complaint type, to be acknowledged within two working days and to be responded to within ten working days of the acknowledgement date. It should be noted that this timescale is unique to RBKC, and the Ombudsman services and statutory guidance promote different timescales. For most processes, the time allowed to acknowledge a complaint is five working days and 10 working days to respond.

The data in this report measures performance against the corporate targets of two working days to acknowledge and 10 working days to respond at Stage 1. For Stage 2 complaints the timeline for response is 20 working days.

The table opposite shows the respond in time data across the Council's directorates and service areas.

Figure 4 – Number of Stage 1 complaints accepted and the percentage responded to on time by quarter and over the year 2025/26

Directorate/Service	Stage 1 complaints accepted	% responded to on time				Overall % responded to in time
		Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	
Adult Social Care	103	97	100	88	86	93
Arranging Social Care	67	100	100	82	81	93
ASC Finance	0	-	-	-	-	-
Commissioned and Provider Services	8	100	100	100	-	100
Customer Engagement	2	-	-	100	-	100
Finance	0	-	-	-	-	-
Integrated Services	8	100	-	100	100	100
Operational Services	3	-	-	100	100	100
Providing Social Care	15	80	100	80	100	87
Children's Services (Corporate)	86	88	86	61	41	69
Commissioning	4	50	100	0	-	50
Early Help	3	100	-	100	-	100
Education	40	100	89	78	46	75
Family and Care Resources	0	-	-	-	-	-
Fostering and Adoption	0	-	-	-	-	-
Libraries and archives	18	75	100	25	20	56
Multi-agency safeguarding	0	-	-	-	-	-
Operations and Programmes	3	100	100	-	0	67
Safeguarding Review and Quality Assurance	3	100	-	0	0	33
Social Work and Families	15	80	67	100	100	80

Directorate/Service	Stage 1 complaints accepted	% responded to on time				Overall % responded to in time
		Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	
Children's Services (Statutory)	40	82	100	62	63	75
Fostering and Adoption	1	100	-	-	-	100
Safeguarding Review and Quality Assurance	1	0	-	-	-	0
Social Work and Families	38	89	100	62	63	76
Environment and Neighbourhoods	227	89	72	47	11	57
Cleaner Greener and Cultural Services	47	100	75	46	25	64
Communities	1	-	-	0	-	0
Environmental Health	95	84	66	38	6	57
Planning	33	67	67	40	0	42
Transport and Regulatory Services	51	100	73	76	0	71
Chief Executive's Hub	16	83	33	33	0	44
Communities	4	100	-	0	0	50
Dedicated Service	6	50	0	50	-	33
Grenfell Partnerships	6	100	100	-	0	50
Housing and Social Investment	1,357	82	75	47	9	54
Housing Management	921	82	79	50	12	55
Housing Needs	433	82	70	38	0	52
Social Investment and Property	3	-	100	-	0	50
Resources	222	100	72	33	33	44
Audit, Fraud, Risk and Insurance	5	100	100	100	0	75
Corporate Finance	6	95	89	54	13	46
Customer Delivery	202	100	78	35	17	58

Directorate/Service	Stage 1 complaints accepted	% responded to on time				Overall % responded to in time
		Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	
Finance	0	-	-	-	-	-
Human Resources	0	-	-	-	-	-
IT	6	-	-	50	50	50
Legal Services	3	-	-	0	0	0
Multi-service	117	65	53	9	4	21
Whole Council	2168	84	77	47	14	55

**The dark pink line denotes the cyber-attack, illustrating the sharp drop in response times that followed*

Following the cyber-attack, for some weeks there was no access to the complaints case management system. Once this came back online, many services were still not able to access databases or respond to complaints. This led to a backlog and increasing number of complaints. It quickly became clear that complaints could not be addressed within the corporate timescales. The Complaints Handling Code says that if organisations cannot respond to complaints within the timescale, the complainant should be advised of the reasons for delay and given the Ombudsman's details.

The Complaints team advised complainants that the Council would aim to respond to their queries within 20 working days in the acknowledgement letters. This is the maximum time allowed by the Ombudsman services to respond to a complaint. This measure was taken to give residents realistic expectations and relieve pressure from staff. No changes were made to the Stage 2 complaint timelines.

Council-wide, the proportion of accepted Stage 1 complaints responded to within the corporate timescale fell from 84% in quarter 1 to 77% in quarter two, then dropped sharply to 47% in quarter three and just 14% in quarter four, giving an overall year-end performance of 55%.

A dip in performance in quarters one and two, in 2025/26 occurred as new ways of working were introduced. This was anticipated as the new style of acknowledgements are tailored to each complaint, providing individualised advice. The templates for responding officers were also updated, and as with any changes to working practices, these have taken a while to embed. However, the new-style templates offer residents:

- **A clear overall response outcome**
- **An explanation and outcome for each complaint point**
- **Confirmation of steps to resolve the complaint and a timeline for completion**
- **An update on lessons learned from the complaint**
- **Escalation rights**
- **Information about organisations that can give free advice**

This approach, along with the new style acknowledgements, gives a more customer-focused and resolution-based outcome.

The Stage 1 timeliness data shows a sharp deterioration across most directorates, after the cyber-attack in quarters three and four.

The largest resident-facing directorates followed this same pattern but with variation in severity. Housing and Social Investment, which handled the highest volume of complaints, fell from 82% in quarter one and 75% in quarter two to 47% in quarter three and 9% in quarter four, resulting in an overall rate of 54%. Within this directorate, Housing Management performed slightly better overall at 55%, but Housing Needs was lower at 52% and recorded no complaints responded to in time in quarter four.

Resources also saw a marked decline, falling from 100% in quarter one and 78% in quarter two to 35% in quarter three and 17% in quarter four, with an overall rate of 58%. Customer Delivery, which accounted for 202 complaints, reported an increase in demand on its services following the introduction of a new system to manage parking permit applications. Combined with the effect of the cyber-attack, these additional pressures have meant that staff have lacked the capacity to respond to complaints. Council Tax and Housing Benefits – services that also fall under Customer Delivery – were also hit particularly hard by the cyber-attack with no return to their systems within the 2025/26 reporting year.

Environment and Neighbourhoods showed a similar but slightly weaker pattern overall, falling from 89% in quarter one to just 11% in quarter four, with an overall performance of 55%; within this, Environmental Health recorded 57% overall and Planning 42%.

By contrast, Adult Social Care remained comparatively resilient, dropping from 97% in quarter one to 86% in quarter four. Overall, 93% of complaints were responded to in time.

Children's Services (combined corporate and statutory) finished at 71% overall after falling to 47% in quarter four.

Adults and Children's Social Care services were fortunate in that their case management systems were amongst the first to be reinstated after the cyber-attack. Their complaints are also logged by their own complaint teams. Therefore, they were not subject to the huge rise in complaint submissions seen by the Corporate Complaints, Learning and Improvement team.

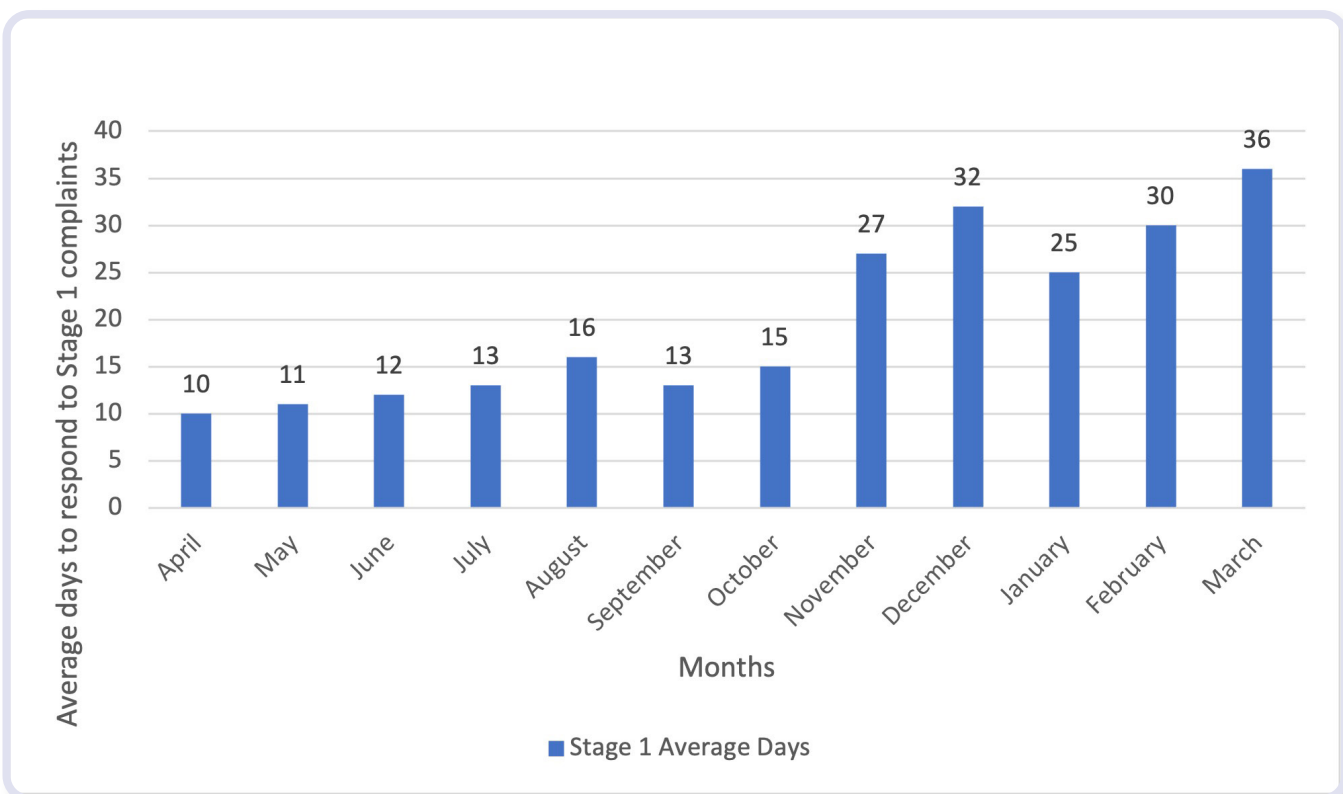
Smaller-volume services show more fluctuation and should be treated cautiously, but the overall trend is consistent: timeliness dropped significantly across the Council in the second half of the year, with the most pronounced deterioration in high-volume, resident-facing services handling the largest numbers of complaints.

In view of the unusual circumstances experienced by the Council and the borough's residents in 2025/26, it is useful to view the performance measured in average days to respond to the complaint. This is outlined in Figure 5 opposite.

Council-wide, the average response time rose from 11 days in quarter one and 14 days in quarter two to 23 days in quarter three and 30 days in quarter four, resulting in an overall average of 19 days. Whilst 19 days falls short of the Council's published timescale of 10 working days, it is within the Ombudsman's extended timeline for responding to a Stage 1 complaint of 20 working days.

The longest average response times were recorded for multi-service cases where the average increased from 14 days in quarter one to 45 days in quarter four and 32 days overall.

Figure 5 – Average days taken to respond to Stage 1 complaints.



In Housing and Social Investment, the average response time rose from 11 days in quarter one to 31 days in quarter four. Housing Management cases were responded to in an average of 27 working days in quarter four. The average response time for Housing Needs cases increased to 46 working days in quarter four. The overall average response time was 25 working days.

Resources saw a rise from eight days in quarter one to 36 days in quarter four with an overall average of 22 days.

Environment and Neighbourhoods also deteriorated significantly, increasing from nine days to 27 days by quarter four and averaging 15 days overall.

By contrast, Adult Social Care remained comparatively stable, averaging seven days overall, while Children’s Services (Corporate) averaged 12 days. Taken together, the average-days data confirms that complaints took substantially longer to resolve in the second half of the year, with the most significant deterioration again concentrated in high-volume, resident-facing services.

This pattern indicates that the heaviest complaint demand was concentrated in the same resident-facing services where response times came under the greatest strain, particularly following the cyber-attack and the resulting backlog pressures.

Stage 2 complaints

At Stage 2, the corporate target is to acknowledge the escalation request in two working days and to respond in 20 working days.

These timelines stayed in place throughout the cyber-attack. Of the 2,169 complaints accepted at Stage 1, the number of cases that escalated to Stage 2 was 545 across all services. This is an escalation rate of 25%.

The volume of Stage 2 cases and the timeline meant that there was no need to change the timeline.

Figure 6 – Number of Stage 2 complaints accepted and the percentage responded to on time by quarter and over the year 2025/26

Directorate/Service	Stage 2 complaints	% responded to on time				Overall % responded to in time
		Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	
Adult Social Care	There is no Stage 2 escalation for ASC cases.					
Children’s Services (Corporate)	28	83	100	75	20	75
Commissioning	1	100	-	-	-	100
Early Help	1	-	-	0	-	0
Education	15	100	100	100	20	73
Family and Care Resources	-	-	-	-	-	-
Fostering and Adoption	-	-	-	-	-	-
Libraries and archives	2	0	100	-	-	50
Multi-agency safeguarding	-	-	-	-	-	-
Operations and Programmes	1	-	100	-	-	100
Safeguarding Review and Quality Assurance	-	-	-	-	-	-
Social Work and Families	8	100	100	0	-	88

Directorate/Service	Stage 2 complaints	% responded to on time				Overall % responded to in time
		Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	
Children's Services (Statutory)	13	Different rules apply to Stage 2 escalations under the statutory process. Therefore, they are not included in the Stage 2 respond in time data.				
Safeguarding Review and Quality Assurance	1	-	-	-	-	-
Social Work and Families	12	-	-	-	-	-
Environment and Neighbourhoods	41	75	50	38	0	46
Cleaner Greener and Cultural Services	6	100	-	20	-	33
Environmental Health	17	80	50	25	0	47
Planning	7	100	100	100	0	47
Transport and Regulatory Services	11	60	33	67	-	55
Chief Executive's Hub	3	100	-	-	100	100
Communities	3	100	-	-	100	100
Dedicated Service	-	-	-	-	-	-
Grenfell Partnerships	-	-	-	-	-	-
Housing and Social Investment	405	87	83	72	76	80
Housing Management	281	94	96	88	85	91
Housing Needs	124	73	64	29	0	55
Social Investment and Property	-	-	-	-	-	-
Resources	26	100	100	100	57	88
Audit, Fraud, Risk and Insurance	-	-	-	-	-	-
Corporate Finance	-	-	-	-	-	-
Customer Delivery	24	100	100	100	60	92
Finance	-	-	-	-	-	-

Directorate/Service	Stage 2 complaints	% responded to on time				Overall % responded to in time
		Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	
Human Resources	-	-	-	-	-	-
IT	1	-	-	-	100	100
Legal Services	1	-	-	-	0	0
Multi-service	29	55	71	17	0	41
Whole Council	545	82	82	65	61	74

**The dark pink line denotes the cyber-attack, illustrating the sharp drop in response times that followed*

The Stage 2 respond-in-time data shows a mixed but generally stronger picture than Stage 1, with whole-council performance at 74%. The strongest performance was recorded in the Chief Executive's Hub with all complaints being responded to on time at Stage 2. Resources did well achieving 86% overall and Housing and Social Investment at 80%, despite these being among the largest users of the Stage 2 process.

Within those directorates, Customer Delivery performed particularly well at 92% and Housing Management at 91%, while Chief Executive's Hub achieved 100%, although from a very small number of cases.

By contrast, poorer performance was seen in Environment and Neighbourhoods, which achieved 46% overall. Within Environment and Neighbourhoods, Cleaner, Greener and Cultural Services recorded 33%, while Environmental Health and Planning each recorded 47%.

Children's Services (Corporate) achieved 75% overall, in line with the whole-council position, although performance fell to 20% in quarter 4.

The data suggests greater difficulty in coordinating timely responses where cases are cross-cutting or involve complex operational issues. A total of 41% of multi-service complaints were responded to in time over the year.

In conclusion, while stronger oversight at Stage 2 can improve timeliness, sustained improvement will depend on addressing capacity, ownership and coordination issues earlier in the process, particularly in high-volume and cross-service areas.

Indicator three: outcomes

Stage 1

Outcomes are an important parameter because they show whether investigations have identified fault, whether complaints were resolved early, and how often the Council's actions were found to be appropriate. Reviewing outcomes helps the Council to understand the nature and seriousness of service failings, monitor trends over time, and identify areas where the quality of services or complaint responses may need to improve. This KPI also provides important context for assessing whether complaint handling is fair, proportionate and effective.

Once accepted as a Stage 1 complaint, following investigation, there are four possible outcomes:

Upheld: The Council has accepted it was at fault in all or most areas raised by the complainant or it only identified a small number of errors or technical faults, but these had a significant adverse impact on the complainant or the wider public.

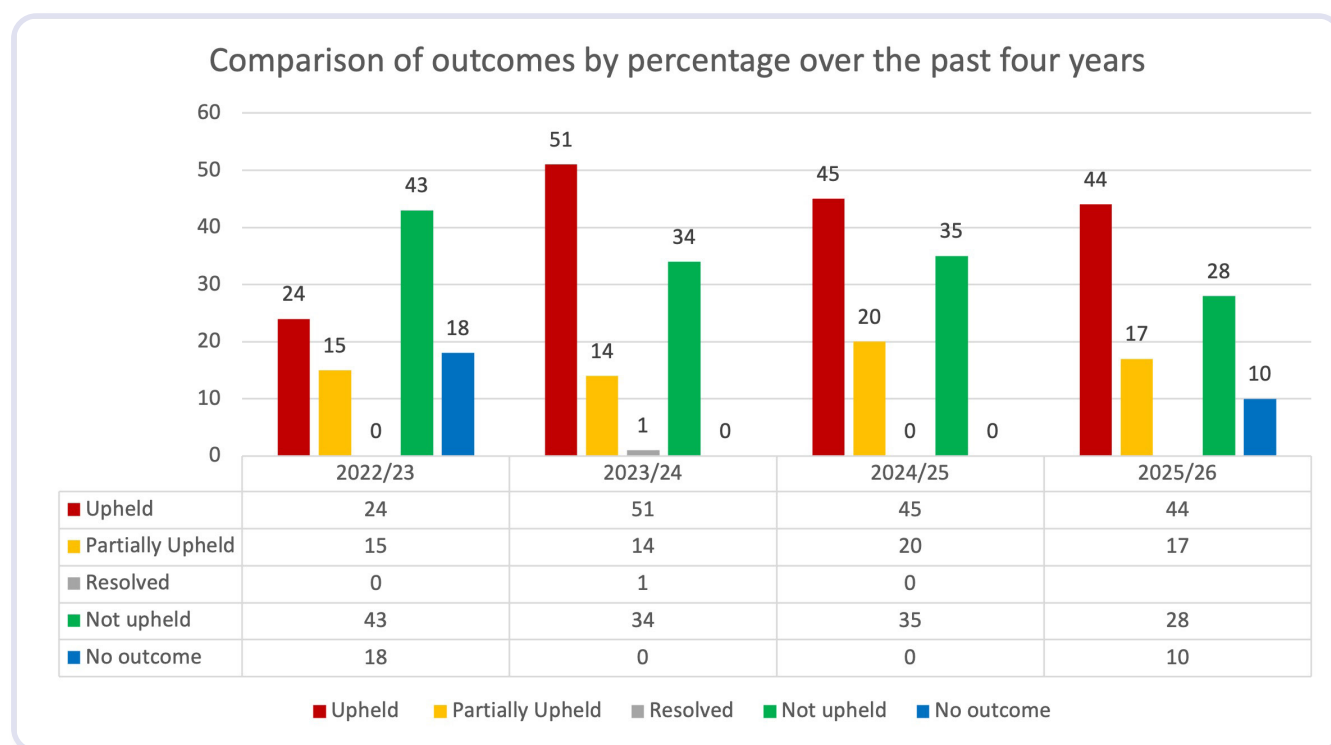
Partially upheld: The Council found it acted without fault in most areas raised by the complainant. However, it identified a small number of errors or technical faults, and these had very little impact on the complainant or the wider public.

Not upheld: The Council found it acted without fault in all areas raised by the complainant.

Resolved: The Council was able to agree action it should take with the complainant to resolve the complaint and did not have to investigate further to decide whether it acted with fault. The graph overleaf shows a notable and continued reduction in the proportion of accepted complaints with an upheld element over the past four years. The percentage of complaints that were fully upheld has fallen. Further, when upheld and partially upheld cases are considered together, the data also indicates a reduction in the overall share of complaints where fault was identified. This may suggest that service improvements and stronger complaint handling have had a positive impact over time.

Still in progress: At the time of writing, the Council is still working through a number of complaints received during and after the cyber-attack. This is due to the exceptional disruption caused by systems being taken offline and the phased restoration of access across services. Additional resources have been brought in to support teams to progress and resolve these complaints as quickly as possible. The remaining cases are concentrated in service areas where system access has only recently been reinstated, meaning officers have only recently been able to retrieve the information needed to investigate and respond fully. These figures are included as a reporting status rather than an outcome.

Figure 7 - Complaint outcomes over past three years by percentage



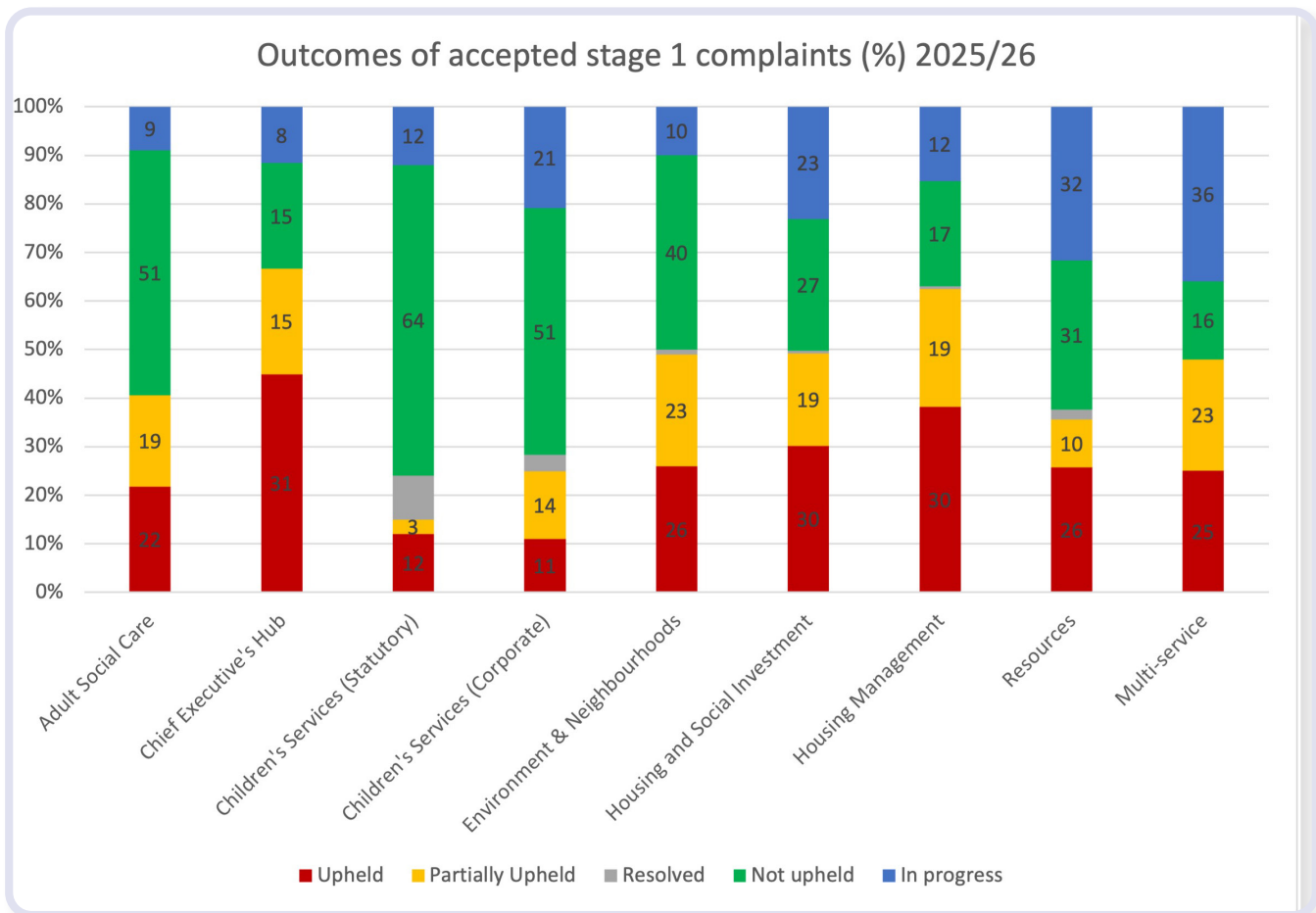
The spread of upheld complaints is not even across the Council. Some service areas show a noticeably higher proportion of complaints being upheld or partially upheld, indicating that findings of fault are concentrated in particular parts of the organisation.

In general, communication-related issues were responsible for nearly half of all accepted cases, and a third of all submitted complaints across the Council. In 69% of 620 cases that reported that timescales were not clear or expectations were not managed, the outcome was fully or partially upheld making these the most complained about issues. In 253 complaints, an insufficient response or update was cited as the reason for complaint with 66% of complaints being either fully or partially upheld.

This report is a reminder that services should regularly review their letter templates, publicity materials and website content to ensure information is clear, accessible and easy to find. Communications should explain what residents can expect, how to access services, what timescales apply, and where to go for help or further information. Keeping public-facing information accurate, consistent and available in accessible formats helps residents understand the correct route for enquiries, service requests and complaints, reducing avoidable confusion, frustration and unnecessary escalation through the complaints process.

The areas with the highest rates of fault are within Housing and Social Investment, particularly Housing Management where 81% of complaints were upheld or partially upheld.

Figure 8 – Complaint outcomes by service area 2025/26



Some 484 of accepted Stage 1 complaints were related to repairs, and 90% of cases under this case type were upheld or partially upheld. Although repairs represent the single most complained about Council service, this should be measured against the number of repairs requested and carried out. The table below shows the repairs data for the past three years. The ratio of complaints to logged repairs is 1.66%.

Figure 9 - Annual repairs data for RBKC managed homes across past three years

Parameter	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Number of repairs logged	32,433	29,602	29,156
Number of jobs cancelled	5091	4988	3908
Number of repairs completed	28,090	24,762	24,602
Average number of jobs per working day	112	97	95

The top reasons for complaints being upheld were where actions were not taken or not completed, and timescales were not made clear.

Of 396 cases which reported “action not taken or incomplete” as the root cause of the complaint, 69% were fully upheld and 16% were partially upheld. A total of 340 of these cases were recorded in Housing Management and are associated with repair actions, including those for leaks, heating and damp.

The table below shows the outcomes of the 484 Housing Management cases where the complaint classification was recorded as repairs, repairs contract management or repairs surveyors. Other root causes under this classification are listed as:

- 1. Action not taken or incomplete (256 cases)**
- 2. Timescales not clear/expectations not managed (157 cases)**
- 3. Contractor/third-party – poor standard of service (20 cases)**
- 4. Internal communication failure/delay (11 cases)**

Figure 10 - Stage 1 outcomes for Housing Management repairs by complaint classification

Classification	Stage 1 accepted case number	Stage 1 Upheld (%)	Stage 1 Partially upheld(%)	Stage 1 Not upheld(%)
Leaks	88	84%	16%	0%
Heating (individual)	84	81%	12%	7%
Damp	69	88%	10%	1%
Other (recorded as)	30	73%	10%	17%
Lifts	27	100%	0%	0%
Contractor	20	90%	0%	10%
Windows	19	84%	11%	5%
Communal repairs	13	62%	31%	8%
Gas	10	60%	30%	10%
Room – bathroom toilet	10	50%	40%	10%
Other (less than 10 cases recorded)	114			
Total	484	82%	13%	6%

*This table shows concluded cases only, cases in progress will not count in percentage outcomes.

In Housing Needs, where a larger share of complaints, 61%, were upheld or partially upheld, communication was a major factor. This suggests that residents using these services are more likely to experience service failings that lead to findings against the Council.

Figure 11 - Stage 1 outcomes for housing needs by complaint classification

Classification	Stage 1 accepted	Stage 1 Upheld (%)	Stage 1 Partially upheld(%)	Stage 1 Not upheld(%)
Extent of assistance	78	33	26	33
Service Standards	62	58	18	21
Time taken to make a decision	61	49	30	21
Handling of case	54	37	31	31
Corporate Complaints backlog	34	47	21	12
Staff conduct	25	32	24	40
Lack of communication	21	52	14	24
Type of temporary accommodation	13	31	8	62
Current repair/ maintenance in TA	12	42	8	50
Housing Solutions	11	0	9	0
Other (less than 10 cases)	62			
Total	433	39%	22%	30%

*This table shows concluded cases only, cases in progress will not count in percentage outcomes.

The three root causes with the largest volume of cases were recorded as:

- 1. Timescales not clear/expectations not managed (181 cases – 46% upheld/24% partially upheld/30% not upheld).**
- 2. Insufficient response/update (158 cases – 42% upheld/23% partially upheld/35% not upheld).**
- 3. Request for information unclear or inaccurate (16 cases – 31% upheld/6% partially upheld/ 63% not upheld).**

By contrast, other service areas show a lower proportion of upheld complaints, suggesting either fewer service failures or that complaints in those areas are less likely to result in findings of fault.

Figure 12 – Complaint outcomes by directorate and service in case numbers

Directorate / Service	Stage 1 complaints accepted	Outcomes in case numbers				In progress
		Upheld	Partially upheld	Resolved	Not upheld	
Adult Social Care	103	26	21	0	55	1
Outcomes (%)	103	25%	20%	0%	53%	
Arranging Social Care	67	14	12	0	40	1
ASC Finance	0	-	-	-	-	-
Commissioned and Provider Services	8	3	2	0	3	0
Customer Engagement	2	0	0	0	2	0
Finance	0	-	-	-	-	-
Integrated Services	8	0	3	0	5	0
Operational Services	3	0	1	0	2	0
Providing Social Care	15	9	3	0	3	0
Total	103	25%	20%	-	53%	
Children's Services (Corporate)	86	11	15	3	56	1
Commissioning	4	0	1	0	3	0

Directorate / Service	Stage 1 complaints accepted	Outcomes in case numbers				
		Upheld	Partially upheld	Resolved	Not upheld	In progress
Early Help	3	0	1	0	2	0
Education	40	5	7	2	26	0
Family and Care Resources	0	-	-	-	-	-
Fostering and Adoption	0	-	-	-	-	-
Libraries and archives	18	6	6	0	5	1
Multi-agency safeguarding	0	-	-	-	-	-
Operations and Programmes	3	0	0	0	3	0
Safeguarding Review and Quality Assurance	3	0	0	0	3	0
Social Work and Families	15	0	0	1	14	1
Children's Services (Statutory)	40	5	1	7	27	0
Fostering and Adoption	1	1	0	0	0	0
Safeguarding Review and Quality Assurance	1	0	0	0	1	0
Social Work and Families	38	4	1	7	26	0
Environment and Neighbourhoods	227	66	55	4	94	8
Cleaner Greener and Cultural Services	47	18	14	0	13	2
Communities	1	0	0	0	1	0
Environmental Health	95	21	23	1	46	4
Planning	33	13	8	0	11	1

Directorate / Service	Stage 1 complaints accepted	Outcomes in case numbers				
		Upheld	Partially upheld	Resolved	Not upheld	In progress
Transport and Regulatory Services	51	14	10	3	23	1
Chief Executive's Hub	16	6	2	0	7	1
Communities	4	2	1	0	1	0
Dedicated Service	6	0	1	0	4	1
Grenfell Partnerships	6	4	0	0	2	0
Housing and Social Investment	1357	770	245	4	296	42
Housing Management	921	601	149	2	166	3
Housing Needs	433	169	95	2	130	37
Social Investment and Property	3	0	1	0	0	2
Resources	222	100	72	33	33	58
Audit, Fraud, Risk and Insurance	5	3	1	0	0	1
Corporate Finance	6	1	1	0	3	1
Customer Delivery	202	69	16	4	60	53
Finance	0	-	-	-	-	-
Human Resources	0	-	-	-	-	-
IT	6	5	0	0	0	1
Legal Services	3	1	1	0	0	1
Multi-service	117	29	36	0	25	27
Whole Council	2168	992	394	22	623	137

Stage 2

Following the issue of the Stage 1 outcome, complainants can escalate their complaint to Stage 2 for most complaint processes. This is usually a review stage – ensuring that the Stage 1 complaint was adequately dealt with through robust investigation and a clear, evidence-based outcome. Sometimes new evidence may have come to light which requires further investigation. The other common reason for escalation is a promised action not being carried out, being delayed or inadequate.

For children’s statutory complaints the process is different and is in effect a re-investigation carried out by an independent investigator and independent person. There is no Stage 2 for Adult Social Care cases.

In 2025/26, 545 of 2,168 Stage 1 complaints escalated to Stage 2, an escalation rate of 25%. There has been a slow but steady increase in the overall number of complaints escalating in the past few years.

It is accepted that some complaints will escalate. However, it is expected that the majority of cases will be resolved during the Stage 1 complaint process. The overall escalation rates are an indication of the quality of Stage 1 responses. High numbers of escalations indicate that the Stage 1 investigation and response were not robust. They can also indicate that resolutions failed to meet expectations.

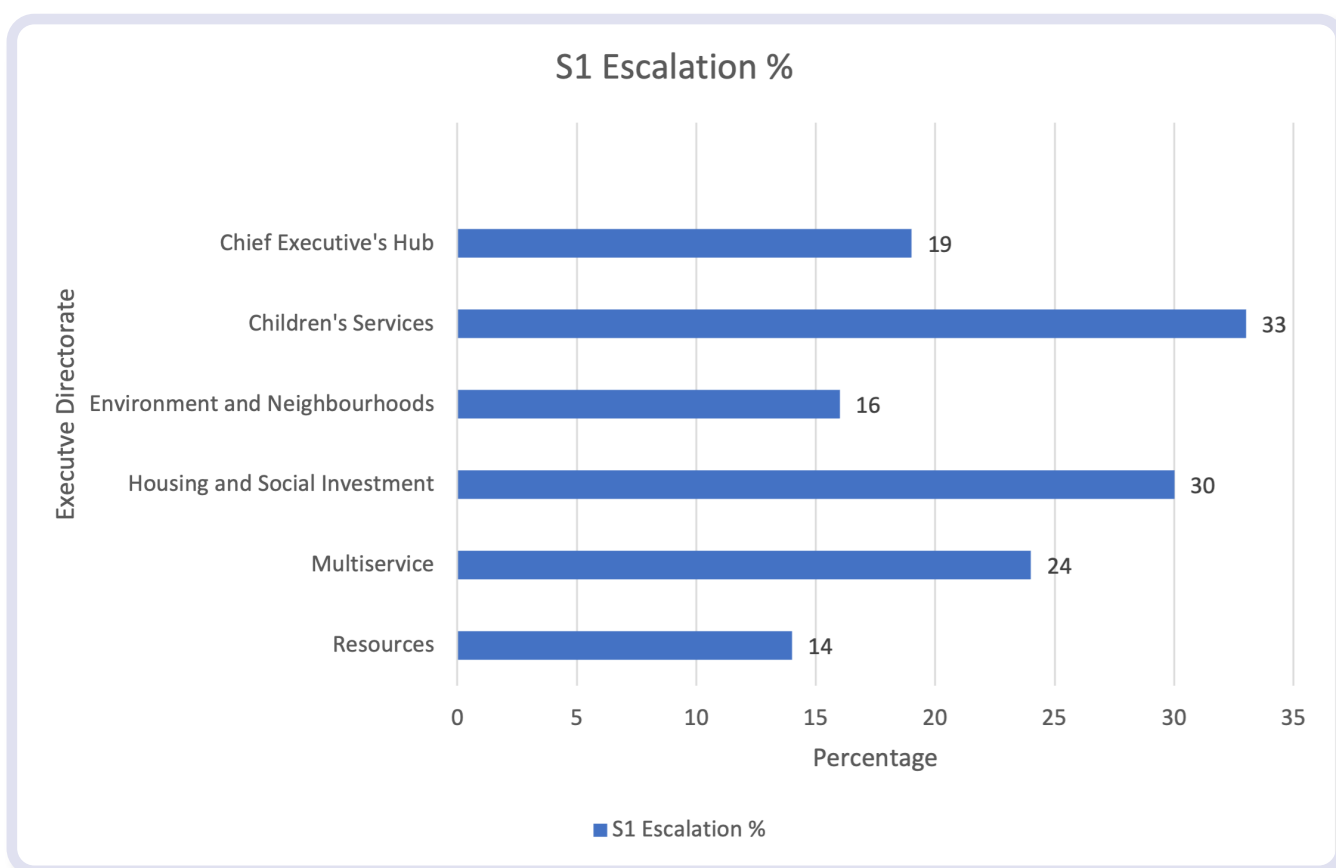
Many complaint handlers feel that AI has contributed to the number of complaints escalating. However, it is not currently possible to isolate the effect of AI on the number of complaints escalating to Stage 2, as escalation rates in 2025/26 were also affected by wider factors, including increased complaint volumes, service disruption following the cyber-attack, delays in response times, backlogs, and changes to the Council’s assessment and acknowledgement process.

However, the growing use of AI appears to be changing the nature of some complaints that escalate. AI-generated submissions can be longer, more detailed and more assertive in tone. They may include requests for compensation, references to legal or Ombudsman principles, or arguments that go beyond the original complaint. This can make Stage 1 responses harder to scope and may increase the likelihood that residents remain dissatisfied if expectations are not clearly managed at the outset.

While AI cannot be identified as a standalone cause of this escalation rate, it may be a contributing factor where complainants use AI to challenge responses, reframe issues, or pursue remedies that are not available through the complaints process.

The following graph shows the distribution of escalations across the Council’s directorates.

Figure 13 – Percentage escalation rate across the Council 2025/26



Escalation figures reflect the quality of our initial responses to complaints, and uphold rates offer further confirmation. Departments with a high number of complaints upheld at Stage 2 are encouraged to review their complaint processes, ensuring that issues can be fully addressed at Stage 1 wherever possible. This would provide a better experience for the complainants and reduce workload and bottlenecks for all. Across the Council, 56% of Stage 2 complaints were either fully or partially upheld.

Cases involving multiple service areas demonstrate a notably high proportion of complaints being upheld. Feedback from officers indicates that such cases are often hampered by unclear accountability and ownership, which can result in persistent delays. Additionally, because outcomes are not consistently recorded against individual service areas, it can be more challenging to track and resolve issues efficiently. The prevalence of partially upheld complaints further reinforces this observation, suggesting a need for improved coordination and clearer responsibility across services.

Based on the chart opposite, the spread of upheld complaints is not even across the Council.

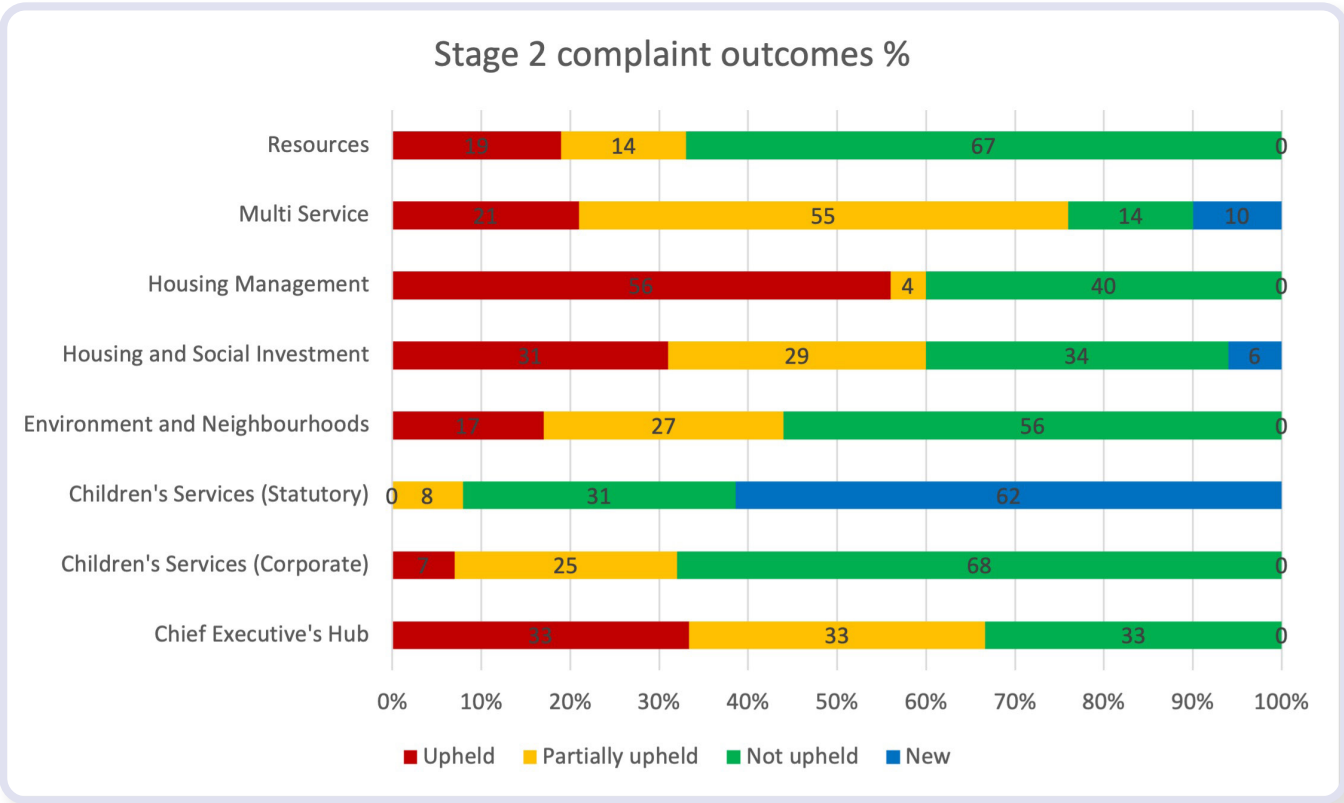
Of the complaints assigned to individual services, the Chief Executive's Hub records the highest combined upheld and partially upheld rate at 66%, the figure is based on only three escalated cases, so it should be treated with caution and not regarded as statistically significant.

By volume, the data shows that the highest proportion of combined upheld and partially upheld complaints is within Housing and Social Investment. Both Housing Needs and Housing Management have combined totals of upheld and partially upheld complaints of 60%.

In Housing Management, 56% of complaints were fully upheld. This is significantly higher than all other directorates and indicates that, in more than half of Housing Management cases, the complaint was found to be justified. Leaks, damp and heating issues are at the heart of the most frequently escalated complaint types.

This suggests that Housing Management remains a key area for service learning, particularly around the quality, timeliness and consistency of service delivery.

Figure 14 - Outcomes of Stage 2 reviews across all directorates.



Housing Needs also has a high number of upheld and partially upheld cases. The extent of assistance and time taken to make a decision were the most frequent reasons for complaint. While these upheld rates are lower than Housing Management, they still show that around a third of complaints in these areas identified fault or service failure. Homelessness appears to have a comparatively high number of upheld Stage 2 complaints, and there are also upheld outcomes in allocations and domestic abuse. This suggests that, as at Stage 1, housing-related services continue to present a higher risk of fault being identified when cases are reviewed.

When upheld and partially upheld complaints are considered together, the greatest proportion is seen in multi service complaints, where 76% of complaints were either upheld or partially upheld. This is the highest combined rate across all areas and suggests that complaints involving multiple services are more likely to identify some level of fault, even where the complaint is not upheld in full. This points to the importance of clear accountability, coordination, communication and follow-through where more than one service is involved.

By contrast, the lowest combined upheld and partially upheld rates are in Children’s Services statutory complaints at 8%, Children’s Services corporate complaints at 32%, and Resources at 33%.

Overall, the data indicates that the greatest levels of upheld complaints are in Housing Management, while the greatest combined level of upheld and partially upheld complaints is in multi service complaints. These areas should be prioritised for further analysis to understand recurring causes of dissatisfaction, strengthen early resolution, improve communication with residents and ensure that learning from complaints is translated into service improvement.

Escalations to ombudsman services

Whenever a complaint is closed, the complainant has the right to refer their case to the Ombudsman. This might be when a complaint is rejected at the initial assessment stage or following the final response. For Corporate and Housing Management cases this would be the issue of the Stage 2 response. Complainants can also refer cases to the Ombudsman if timelines are breached. It is expected that organisations will complete the complaints process within 12 weeks of submission.

In the immediate aftermath of the cyber-attack, the ombudsman services placed a freeze on accepting complaints about RBKC (and neighbouring Westminster City Council). This was due to the fact neither they nor the Councils could investigate the cases. The freeze was lifted over a phased period in January/February.

Complaints escalated to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

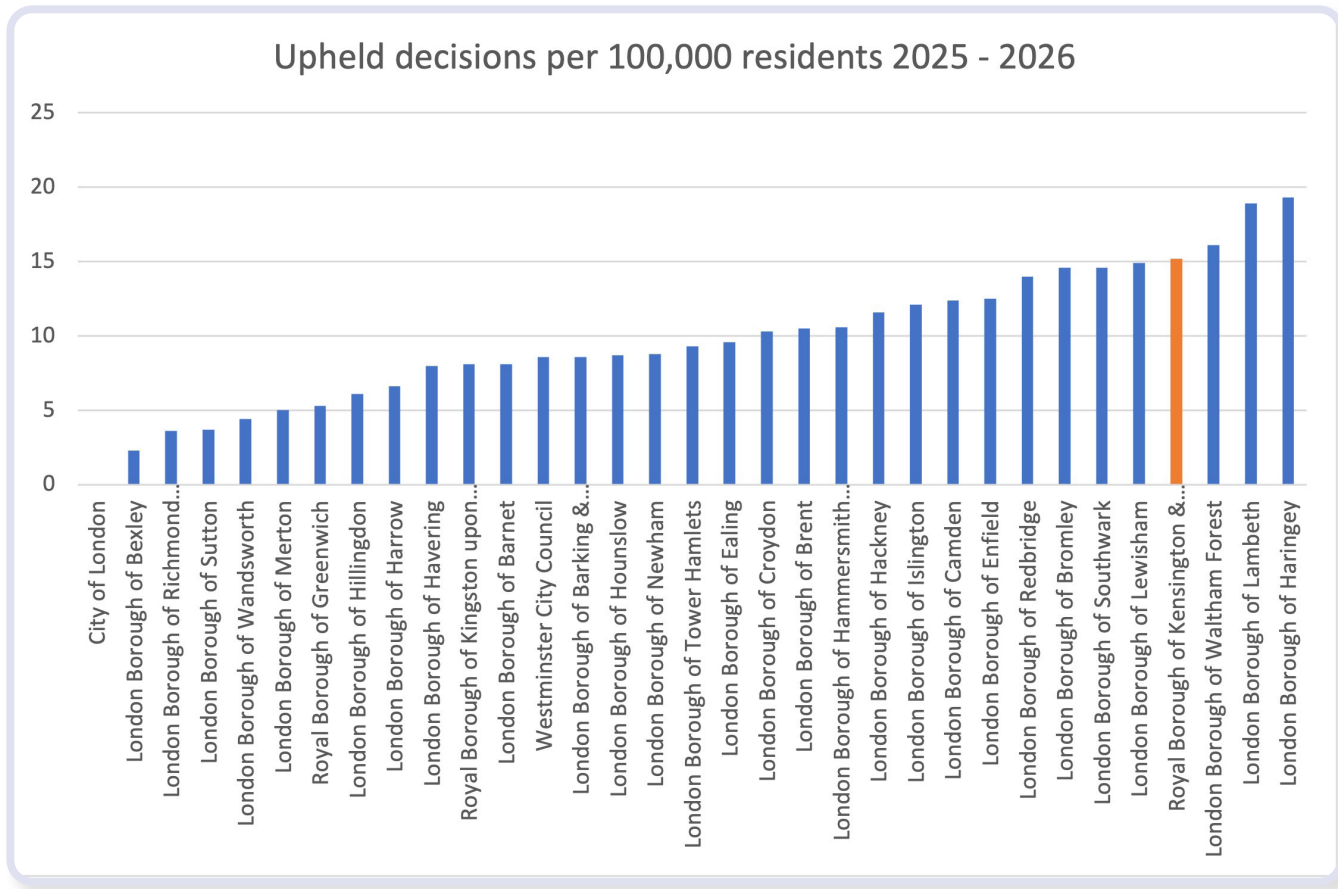
The types of complaints that can be escalated to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman are:

- **Corporate Complaints including Housing Needs**
- **Adult Social Care**
- **Children and Family services including children's statutory complaints**

During 2025/26, the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) reported that it received 171 complaints about the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. Decisions have been issued on 144 cases against RBKC. Upon assessment, advice was given for five cases, 75 cases were closed after initial enquiries were carried out, 44 cases were found not to be for them, 75 cases were assessed and closed, seven were found to be incomplete or invalid, 34 were sent back to be determined under the Council's complaints processes and 23 were investigated.

Of the 23 cases investigated, 22 were upheld. To allow for benchmarking against other local authorities, the LGSCO adjusts figures to reflect the rate of upheld decisions per 100,000 residents. When adjusted for the borough's population this equates to a rate of 15.2 upheld decisions per 100,000 residents for Kensington and Chelsea. Whilst this is an improvement from 2024/25 when the uphold rate was 18.3, it is well above the average of 10.2 upheld decisions per 100,000 residents for authorities of a similar type. This places Kensington and Chelsea's performance in the bottom five London boroughs.

Figure 15 – LGSCO Upheld decisions adjusted to per 100,000 residents for comparison with other London boroughs 2025/26



In the annual letter issued in 2024/25, the LGSCO highlighted its concerns about the Council’s handling of cases referred to it. In 2025/26, the LGSCO has again raised concerns about “personal remedies such as apologies and payments, resulting in unnecessary waiting and added frustration for complainants, as well as service improvement actions”.

It have also raised concerns again about Council’s responses to our investigation enquiries, with seven housing cases affected. While extensions were sometimes sought, this remains a concern that was also raised last year.

In response to this feedback, the following steps have been taken:

- **Working with the provider of our complaints case management system to better manage and record Ombudsman cases**
- **Use of a dedicated email mailbox for Ombudsman cases**
- **Training for those dealing with cases**
- **Increased visibility of LGSCO cases for heads of service and directors – particularly for those in Housing Needs - where the majority of cases sit**

A summary of the cases submitted against each directorate and the outcomes are shown in the table overleaf.

Figure 16 - Outcomes LGSCO escalations across all directorates

	Total referrals	Decided	Incomplete	Advice given	Closed after initial enquiries	Referred back for local resolution	Not upheld	Upheld
Adult Social Care	13	7	0	0	5	1	0	1
Assessment	3	2	0	0	1	0	0	1
Disabled Facilities Grant	2	1	0	0	1	0	0	0
Domiciliary Care	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Residential Care	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Safeguarding	4	3	0	0	2	1	0	0
Other	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0
Children's Services	22	19	1	1	10	7	0	0
Care of looked after child	1	1	0	0	0	1	N/A	N/A
Child in Need	1	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
Child Protection	8	8	0	1	5	2	N/A	N/A
Family and Friends Carers	1	1	0	0	0	1	N/A	N/A
Fostering	1	1	0	0	0	1	N/A	N/A
Statutory complaints procedure	1	1	0	0	0	1	N/A	N/A
SEN	1	1	0	0	0	1	N/A	N/A
SEN Assessments and reviews	1	1	0	0	1	0	N/A	N/A
SEN Provision and EHC Plans	5	3	1	0	2	0	N/A	N/A
Transport	1	1	0	0	1	0	N/A	N/A
Other	1	1	0	0	1	0	N/A	N/A
Environment and Neighbourhoods	24	22	1	0	18	1	1	1

	Total referrals	Decided	Incomplete	Advice given	Closed after initial enquiries	Referred back for local resolution	Not upheld	Upheld
Environmental Services and Public Protection	10	8	1	0	5	1	1	0
Highways and Transport	7	7	0	0	7	0	N/A	N/A
Leisure and Culture	3	3	0	0	3	0	N/A	N/A
Markets	1	1	0	0	1	0	N/A	N/A
Planning and Development	3	3	0	0	2	0	0	1
Housing and Social Investment	96	82	5	4	31	24	0	18
Allocations	35	25	2	0	11	8	0	4
Council House Sales	1	1	0	0	1	0	N/A	N/A
Domestic Abuse	1	4	0	0	1	0	0	3
Homelessness	48	42	3	0	14	14	0	11
Managing Council Tenancies	3	3	0	2	1	0	N/A	N/A
Private Landlord/Tenant issues	2	1	0	0	1	0	N/A	N/A
Other	6	6	0	2	2	2	N/A	N/A
Resources	16	14	0	0	11	1	0	2
Business Rates	1	0	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
Corporate and Other services	7	7	0	0	5	0	0	2

	Total referrals	Decided	Incomplete	Advice given	Closed after initial enquiries	Referred back for local resolution	Not upheld	Upheld
Council Tax	7	6	0	0	5	1	N/A	N/A
Standards Committees	1	1	0	0	1	0	N/A	N/A
Totals	171	144	7	5	75	34	1	22

**Housing Management cases escalate to the Housing Ombudsman Service. The service is therefore not included in this table, but escalated cases are covered in the next section.*

*** Decided figures can be higher than cases received as they will include cases submitted in the previous year but worked in the reporting year.*

Housing Management Complaints Escalated to the Housing Ombudsman Service

For tenants of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, complaints can be directed to the Housing Ombudsman Service. The Housing Ombudsman Service had not issued its report at the time of writing. From our own data, we can advise that the number of cases determined (decided upon) was 33. This includes cases that were found to be out of jurisdiction and were later withdrawn. Excluding those cases that were out of jurisdiction or withdrawn, 28 cases were determined by the Housing Ombudsman Service.

Figure 17 – Housing Ombudsman Service data comparison with previous years

	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Determinations	22	22	19	28
Findings			41	58
Maladministration findings			22	34
Orders made			61	70
Recommendations			19	23
Compensation			£25,752	£20,214.00
Maladministration rate	33%	54%	58%	58.6%

The data shows that the number of Housing Management complaints reaching determination by the Housing Ombudsman Service has remained relatively consistent over the years but has increased in 2025/26.



The number of findings has also increased. In 2024/25, the Housing Ombudsman made 41 findings, compared with 58 in 2025/26. Of these, maladministration findings increased from 22 to 34. This shows that not only were more findings made overall, but a larger number related to service failure or maladministration. The maladministration rate has remained broadly static, increasing only slightly from 58% in 2024/25 to 58.6% in 2025/26. However, this remains higher than in earlier years, particularly when compared with 33% in 2022/23 and 54% in 2023/24.

The increase in orders and recommendations also points to a greater level of required remedial action. Orders made increased from 61 in 2024/25 to 70 in 2025/26, while recommendations increased from 19 to 23. This suggests that the Ombudsman is identifying more cases where specific action is needed to put things right for residents and to improve service delivery. Compensation ordered or agreed through Ombudsman cases fell from £25,752 in 2024/25 to £20,214 in 2025/26, despite the increase in findings and orders. This suggests that the remedies required in 2025/26 were not solely financial and may have included practical actions, service improvements, apologies, reviews, or changes to process.

Figure 18 – Findings for 2025/26 assigned to categories

Category	Count
Responsive repairs/activity	22
Managing relations	19
ASB/Abuse/Nuisance	4
Financial	4
Planned works	4
Estate management	3
Health and safety (inc. Building safety)	2
Total	58

**Findings exclude withdrawn and outside jurisdiction.*

The category breakdown for 2025/26 shows that the largest proportion of findings related to responsive repairs and related activity, with 22 findings. This represents the most significant theme and indicates that repairs continue to be the main area of Housing Management complaint escalation to the Ombudsman. Managing relations was the second largest category, with 19 findings. Together, responsive repairs/activity and managing relations account for 41 of the 58 findings, or around 71% of the total. This suggests that the main drivers of Ombudsman involvement are not only the substantive housing issue, such as repairs, but also how cases are managed, communicated and followed through.

Other categories were much smaller in volume. ASB/abuse/nuisance, financial matters and planned works each accounted for four findings, while estate management accounted for three and health and safety, including building safety, accounted for two. Although these areas represent lower volumes, they remain important because they can involve significant resident impact, risk, vulnerability or prolonged dissatisfaction.

Overall, the data indicates that Housing Management complaints escalated to the Housing Ombudsman continue to be concentrated in core landlord functions, particularly repairs and case management.

The increase in findings, maladministration findings, orders and recommendations in 2025/26 points to the need for continued focus on early resolution, quality of communication, clear ownership of issues, evidence-based complaint responses and completion of agreed actions. The data also reinforces the importance of using Ombudsman findings to identify recurring service weaknesses and ensure that learning is translated into practical service improvement.



Indicator four: learning from complaints and remedies

Learning from complaints and remedies is an important measure because it shows whether the Council is taking meaningful action when things go wrong and using complaints to improve services. Remedies help to put matters right for the individual complainant, while learning actions such as service changes, staff guidance or process improvements help to prevent similar issues from happening again. Monitoring this KPI provides assurance that complaints are not only being responded to, but are also leading to accountability, redress and continuous improvement.

Complaints data is available across the Council to assist services in drilling down into areas for improvement.

During 2025/26, 1,405 complaints were fully or partially upheld leading to 1,539 corrective actions being carried out. The aim of the corrective action is always to put the complainant back into the position they would have been in had the fault not occurred. In most cases this will be by reviewing a decision or providing a service. Where we cannot achieve this, a financial remedy may be appropriate.

Across the Council's directorates, corrective actions were distributed across the services as follows:

Figure 19 - Corrective actions broken down by directorate 2025/26

Executive directorate	Corrective actions	Average corrective actions per month
Adult Social Care	52	4
Children's Services	40	3
Environment and Neighbourhoods	147	12
Chief Executive's Hub	8	1
Housing and Social Investment	1,101	92
Resources	85	7
Multi-Service	106	9
Total	1,539	128

Complaints and learning should be a regular feature of departmental meetings. The above table can be used to indicate the frequency that complaints learning should feature on agendas. For services where there are a high number of upheld complaints and corrective actions, such as in Housing, weekly monitoring would be advised. Where upheld complaints are less frequent, quarterly monitoring might be more appropriate.

Examples of how complaints can be remedied and learning applied:

You said: you were upset by the lack of knowledge of staff when trying to obtain a refund for a parking permit on behalf of your late husband.

We: listened and investigated the issue and found that staff had not been given guidance about how to deal with a situation whereby a refund needs to be repaid to a different account than that the payment originated from. A process has now been written, and staff have been advised of what to do in similar situations.

We: investigated the issue and found several issues with a newly implemented digital parking permit system. We made some adjustments to the system and updated staff training. Your parking permit was approved.

You said: your application for a parking permit was unfairly rejected.

You said: The tone of your email was unfairly accusatory and suggested fraud.

We: made enquiries and found that procedures had been followed, but circumstances had not been fully taken into account, nor had a full explanation been given. It was found that a single-person discount could be applied and backdated. The Council apologised and applied a single person discount.

Figure 20 - Corrective actions across all directorates 2025/26

Corrective action	S1	S2	Total
Arrange inspection or assessment	165	60	225
Arrange staff training/coaching or discuss at team meeting	170	35	205
Change or review equipment	2		2
Change or review process, policy or procedure	93	18	111
Change or review service literature/web content	16	2	18
Provide additional information or service	735	189	924
Review contract or partner arrangements	14	5	19
Take actions against contractor or partner	30	5	35
Total	1225	314	1539

Housing Needs, and in particular Housing Solutions (homelessness services), has faced challenges as demand on the service far outstrips supply. In addition to increased demand, Housing Needs has faced resourcing challenges. The inability to recruit officers on fixed-term or permanent contracts has meant a reliance on agency recruitment and, therefore, a high turnover of staff and an unstable, inexperienced workforce.

The following key lessons have been learned:

- **The importance of “back to basics” training and support** to ensure we are delivering on our core duties and responsibilities in a timely way. This has become more important, though more challenging to deliver, due to the retirement or voluntary redundancy of experienced staff, high staff turnover and undesirable reliance on agency staff, and the responsibilities for retaining staff in a challenging area of local authority service delivery.
- **Reducing repeat contact** from residents and getting things right the first time.
- **The importance of resident engagement and support**, especially where we are delivering unpopular outcomes such as negative homelessness decisions or rehousing into private rented accommodation rather than providing a pathway to social housing; placing households in temporary accommodation outside of the borough; having to transfer households from one temporary accommodation placement to another due to high cost or due to factors beyond the Council’s control.
- **The importance of ongoing service improvement initiatives (both IT and non-IT)** to improve our internal processes – removing administrative burden, improving statutory compliance, and improving record keeping.

- **The ongoing development of staff guidance and advice resources** to ensure consistency and accuracy of service delivery and record keeping, and ongoing training to embed improved processes.
- **Considerable commitment to improving the usability of the Housing Needs IT architecture**, and producing detailed service performance reports based on accurate data to identify insufficient performance or service improvement.
- **Development of better, more accessible information and guidance for service users** so residents have a greater understanding of our services and potential solutions, and are better able to make informed decisions. Unfortunately, the cyber-attack had a significant impact upon these initiatives.

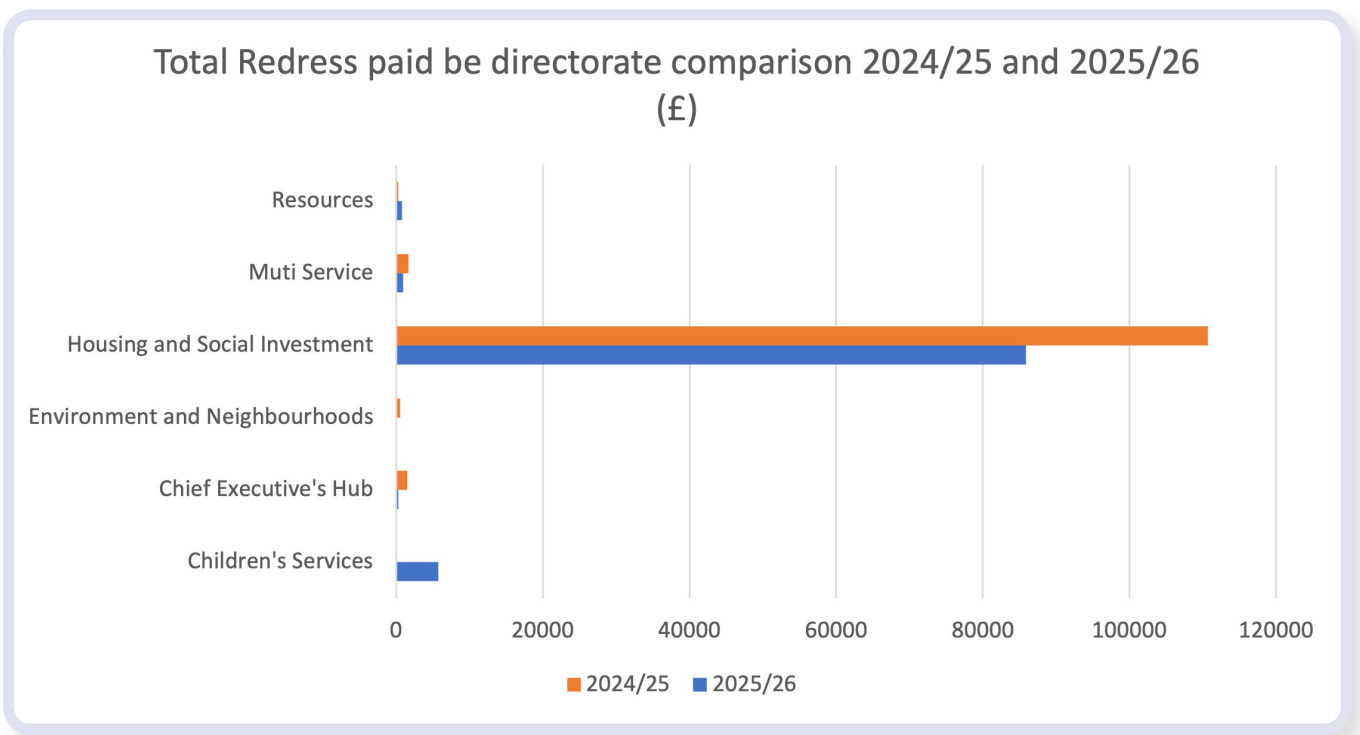
In Housing Management, the repairs service has been identified as the most frequent cause of complaints. It has introduced an annual planned preventative maintenance programme for gutters, stacks and gullies. This preventative approach is designed to identify and address potential defects before they lead to water ingress, helping to prevent leaks into buildings and properties and, in turn, reduce future complaints relating to leaks and associated damage.

Compensation payments

In addition to the corrective actions outlined above, a total of £94,182.74 was paid out in redress payments, with the average payment being £224.24 per case across all Council departments. This is a significant decrease in the amount of redress paid out in 2024/25 when the average per case was £287.51 and a total of £114,716.13 was paid out.

This reduction may have been the result of a well-publicised campaign to reduce Council spending. Therefore, more creative ways to resolve complaints may be being used, rather than relying on redress payments to appease service users.

Figure 21 - Total redress paid - broken down by directorate comparison 2024/25 and 2025/26



Housing and Social Investment is responsible for 91% of the total compensation paid out. The area identified as having the highest compensation outlay is the repairs service, which paid £59,234.00, or 63% of the total compensation paid in 2025/26. This is a significant reduction of £18,986.03 from the £78,220.03 paid out in 2024/25. The decrease is due to a reduction in the average amount paid out from £329.43 in 2024/25 to £212.51 in 2025/26. The number of complaints upheld in full or part actually increased by 14%.

In Children's Services, most of the £5,700 paid out in compensation related to a single case which accounted for £4,750. All compensation was in respect of special educational needs and disabilities.

For all other directorates, there has been a combined total of 10 compensatory actions with an average payment of £191.70 totalling £1,917.00.

Feedback from complainants and officers

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman advised that organisations should seek feedback from complainants about their experiences of raising a complaint.

In 2025/26, we added a QR code to complaints correspondence so that complainants could complete a survey about the handling of their complaints. The response rate has been poor, and there has been little to no uptake on the intended purpose. A few complainants have used the survey to contact the Council about other matters.

The use of a QR code was flawed. It was difficult to ensure that the QR code was applied to all response letters as sometimes the letters are sent from individual services teams rather than from a single mailbox. Additionally, the Stage 1 response is often sent before a promised action is completed. So, at the time of the response the complainant might not consider the matter resolved if the case is unresolved.

As recognised by the Ombudsman, complainants' views of the complaints process will be influenced by the outcome of their complaint. Where a complaint has not been upheld or the complainant has not had the outcome they were hoping for, they are likely to escalate their complaint through the Stage 2 review process where it is applicable, rather than complete the survey.

As part of the end-to-end complaints review, a survey was sent to 2,477 email addresses from complaints cases submitted in the 12-month period leading up to 17 November 2025. The Council received a relatively good response from this exercise, with 122 surveys being completed between 17 November 2025 and 16 December 2025.

The survey asked the following questions:

- 1. Overall, how was your experience of making a complaint?**
- 2. Overall, what was your experience of the staff who dealt with your complaint?**
- 3. Can you tell us why you gave your answers?**
- 4. Is there anything we could have done better?**
- 5. What was the final stage your complaint reached?**
- 6. Would you like to be part of the co-design group, working with us to design and deliver the end-to-end review of the Complaints Service? If so, please provide your name, contact preference, and contact details.**
- 7. Demographic data: sex, gender identity, age group, ethnicity, religion, physical or mental health conditions, postcode.**

The survey found:

- 67% of respondents rated their experience of making a complaint as poor or very poor.
- 61% of respondents rated their experience of interacting with staff as poor or very poor.
- Data analysis found that the further a complaint progressed through the stages, the higher the percentage of complainants who rated both their general experience and the experience of the staff who dealt with their complaint as 'very poor', suggesting that the escalation of a complaint drives poor resident experience. For example, if a complaint ended at Stage 1, 33% of respondents rated their general experience of making a complaint as 'very poor'. However, if the complaint escalated to the Ombudsman, 73% rated the experience as 'very poor'.
- How respondents rate staff interaction is the biggest predictor of their overall complaint experience.
- When staff interactions are rated as 'good' or 'very good', three quarters of respondents also rate the overall experience as 'good' or 'very good'. Conversely, negative experiences with staff coincide with a negative overall experience in the vast majority of cases (91% of respondents who rated their experience of staff as 'poor' or 'very poor' also rated their experience as 'poor' or 'very poor').

This information is incredibly important to how we deliver services in the future. In view of the learning obtained from this survey, we will continue to email complainants in future years and explore other ways of collecting feedback from them.

In addition to the customer survey, an initial staff survey was sent out to complement the complaints review. A total of 28 officers replied and, along with the views of residents, their thoughts will feed into the final recommendations from the end-to-end complaints review.

Indicator four: compliments

The Council received 318 compliments during 2025/26, an average of 27 compliments per month. This provides an important balance to the complaints data elsewhere in the report, showing that residents and service users also take time to recognise positive service, good communication, helpful staff and effective support.

Figure 22 – Compliments received across the Council and monthly averages 2025/26

Executive directorate and directorate	Compliments	Average compliments per month
Adult Social Care	44	4
Customer Engagement team	13	1
Operational Services	12	1
Arranging Social Care	11	1
Integrated Services	6	1
Providing Social Care	2	0
Children's Services	53	4
Social Work and Families	25	2
Education	12	1
Early Help	9	1
Commissioning	2	0
Operations and Programmes	2	0
Libraries and Archives	1	0
Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub	1	0
Safeguarding and Quality Assurance	1	0
Environment and Neighbourhoods	38	3
Planning	14	1
Transport and Regulatory	14	1
Environmental Health	7	1
Cleaner, Greener and Cultural Services	3	0

Executive directorate and directorate	Compliments	Average compliments per month
Chief Executive's Hub	3	0
Communities	2	0
Dedicated	1	0
Housing and Social Investment	85	7
Housing Needs	50	4
Housing Management	35	3
Resources	94	8
Customer Delivery	92	8
Legal Services	2	0
Human Resources	1	0
Total	318	27

- **The highest number of compliments was received by Resources**, with 94 compliments, almost all of which related to Customer Delivery. Customer Delivery received 92 compliments, averaging eight per month. This is notable because Customer Delivery is also a high-volume, resident-facing service area and appears elsewhere in the report in relation to complaint demand. The volume of compliments suggests that, despite pressure on access routes and contact channels during the year, residents continued to report positive experiences where officers were able to provide helpful, responsive and effective support.
- **Housing and Social Investment received the second highest number of compliments**, with 85 compliments, averaging seven per month. Within this, Housing Needs received 50 compliments and Housing Management received 35. This is important context when read alongside other areas of the report, where housing-related services account for the largest volume of accepted complaints, complaint escalation and Ombudsman involvement. The compliments data shows that, although housing services are under significant demand and feature prominently in complaints performance, residents are also recognising positive outcomes and good individual service within these areas.
- **Children's Services received 53 compliments, averaging four per month**, with the highest number recorded in Social Work and Families at 25 compliments. Given the sensitive and complex nature of children's services work, these compliments are particularly valuable evidence of positive practice, effective support and the impact of professional relationships with families. Adult Social Care also received a strong number of compliments, with 44 in total, most notably within the Customer Engagement team, Operational Services and Arranging Social Care. As with Children's Services, this reflects the importance of recognising positive feedback in services that often support residents in complex or vulnerable circumstances.

- **Environment and Neighbourhoods received 38 compliments**, with the highest numbers in Planning and Transport and Regulatory Services, each receiving 14 compliments. This is relevant because Environment and Neighbourhoods also appears in the complaints data as one of the larger non-housing areas for complaint demand, particularly following the cyber-attack and disruption to online reporting routes. The compliments suggest that, while residents experienced frustration in some areas, there were also examples of positive service delivery and helpful intervention.

Overall, the compliments data reinforces the importance of looking at resident feedback in the round.

The areas receiving the highest number of complaints are often the same areas that receive the highest number of compliments, reflecting the scale, complexity and visibility of those services. Housing, Customer Delivery, Adult Social Care and Children's Services are all high-contact services where residents are more likely to experience both dissatisfaction and positive support. This means compliments should be considered alongside complaints, upheld outcomes, timeliness and Ombudsman findings to provide a fuller picture of service performance and resident experience.

The data also shows the value of continuing to capture and share compliments as part of learning from feedback. Compliments can help identify what works well, highlight effective behaviours and service approaches, and provide practical examples of good practice that can be shared across teams. This is particularly important in the context of the wider improvement work described in the report, including strengthening complaint handling, improving communication, and using feedback to support service improvement.



Below are a few examples of the positive feedback we've received from service users and their families, reflecting their appreciation for the support they have received when contacting the Council.

From a service user about a CSC staff member:

"The staff member is an absolutely exemplary and exceptional member of customer services. There is no-one quite like him. I was utterly taken aback by how dedicated, compassionate and caring he was. He embodies going 'above and beyond' and with such a sincere and impressively polite and genuine manner it's remarkable. He was extremely reliable, swift to act and respond, true to his word and the type of person so rare nowadays in their authenticity. Knowing people like him exist quite literally restores my faith in humanity. The fact he is so humble and polite despite his outstanding talents and gift for his role is incredible. He is a true brand ambassador to RBKC."

From the daughter of a service user regarding a blue badge application:

"The staff member was fantastic, she supported me with my mother's blue badge postal order enquiry, she supported me with posting it via the digital portal now and it will help with the process of receiving the badge."

From a service user:

"I called your council tax department yesterday, and I am not sure of the person I spoke to, but she was so wonderful and so efficient. My situation was a little bit complex, but she dealt with it so effectively. I had had issues sorting out my online login as well as a house move, and she was just brilliant. You have a great team."

Priorities identified for 2026/27

- Review the Council's compensation policy
- Introduce a customer satisfaction rating and surveys
- Update the complaints pages on the Council's website
- Post monthly complaints performance data on the Council's website, including lessons learned

Corporate Complaints, Learning and Improvement team contact details

The Corporate Complaints, Learning and Improvement team can be contacted using the details below if there are any questions or suggestions about this report.

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