



Lewisham

Lewisham Council Housing Services Annual Complaints Report 2024

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Executive Summary

The London Borough of Lewisham is dedicated to ensuring that our complaint handling processes are transparent, efficient, and aligned with the highest standards. As an organisation our values are, ambitious, inclusive, collaborative, accountable, and trustworthy. This annual report provides an overview of our complaint handling performance for 2023/2024, including analyses of complaints, responses to Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) findings, and service improvements based on these learnings.

Regulatory Context

The Social Housing Regulation Act 2023 introduced new consumer standards and a proactive regulation regime, effective from 1st April 2024. The 2024 Complaint Handling Code mandates compliance in Scrutiny and Oversight, Policy, and Practice. Our self-assessment shows partial compliance, with plans to address gaps through the Housing Transformation Programme and the Council-wide Complaints Handling Improvement Project (CHIP), targeting significant improvements by March 2025.

Lewisham Context

Following the reintegration of Lewisham Homes into the Council in October 2023, a review revealed significant failings, especially in repairs, leading to increased complaints. In response, the Council launched the Housing Transformation Programme in November 2023, focusing on Repairs, Complaints, Reduction of Temporary Accommodation, and IT Transformation.

In December 2023, the Council made a self-referral to the Regulator of Social Housing, highlighting breaches in Consumer Standards, particularly in repairs and fire safety. The Regulator issued a Regulatory Notice on 26th March 2024, acknowledging Lewisham's proactive approach to co-regulation and will continue to monitor progress.

Themes and Trends in Complaint Casework

Key themes from 2023/2024 include:

- Repairs and Maintenance: Predominantly issues with leaks, damp, mould, and disrepair.
- Communication and Follow-Up: Delays in responses and poor record-keeping.
- Complaint Handling Process: Inconsistent policy application and poor-quality responses.
- Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB): Significant concerns over handling and resolution.
- Resident Feedback: Low satisfaction rates in surveys, with issues in resolution times and response quality.
- Housing Ombudsman Casework: High volume with frequent findings of maladministration in repairs and complaint handling.

Resident Engagement and Feedback

Resident feedback has been crucial in shaping our improvements. Engagement activities included surveys, workshops, and feedback from the Resident Scrutiny Panel, leading to

actionable recommendations such as improved training, quality assurance, and ways we can make our services more accessible.

Service Improvement Work

Lewisham Council has launched several initiatives to transform housing services and enhance complaint handling:

- Housing Transformation Programme: Focused on Repairs, Reduction of Temporary Accommodation, Complaints Handling, and IT.
- Complaints Transformation: Updating policies, improving reporting, enhancing training, and analysing feedback and Housing Ombudsman casework.
- Repairs Transformation Programme: Aims to improve communication, tenant satisfaction, better running operations, budget control and reduce the backlog of work.

Service Improvement Plan

We've developed a service improvement plan using learnings from:

- Resident feedback
- Complaints casework
- Housing Ombudsman casework
- Outputs from the Complaints Reset Action Plan
- Self-Assessment against the Complaints Handling Code 2024

The plan structured around 4 themes, governance and reporting, policies, people and systems. Each theme is intended to bring us into full compliance with the Code in governance, policy and practice. The improvements in systems and comprehensive training will help to embed the positive changes.

Activities include:

- Governance & Reporting: Enhance/improve our reporting and transparency to ensure Lewisham and its key stakeholders can scrutinise and challenge performance.
- Policies: Finalising key policies, updating procedure and guidance documents, reviewing key processes, and developing a Knowledge and Information Management strategy.
- People: Ensuring complaints handling teams are adequately resourced and staff training is delivered.
- Systems: Completing improvements to the complaints case management system

These initiatives reflect our commitment to improving services and ensuring residents receive the highest quality of service. Resident feedback has been vital in shaping our plans, and we will continue to engage with residents to meet their needs and expectations.

Introduction

The London Borough of Lewisham is dedicated to ensuring that our complaint handling processes are transparent, efficient, and aligned with the highest standards.

Our Values - In Lewisham Council, we are ambitious for the future of our borough. We are inclusive in working with our residents, partners, and colleagues, and collaborative in how we work with them. We are accountable for our actions, and trustworthy in all we do.

This annual report provides a comprehensive overview of our complaint handling performance for the year 2023/2024. It includes qualitative and quantitative analyses, summaries of types of complaints, and findings of non-compliance by the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS). The report also highlights the service improvements made based on learning from complaints, Ombudsman's reports and other relevant publications.

This report is to be read alongside the Self-Assessment and Service Improvement Report.

Regulatory Context

The Social Housing Regulation Act 2023 introduced new consumer standards and a proactive consumer regulation regime. This Act has enhanced the powers of the Housing Ombudsman, including the statutory Complaint Handling Code, a compliance framework, and a duty to monitor. The Statutory Code came into effect on 1st April 2024.

We have scrutinised and challenged our performance, looking at compliance in both policy and practice when carrying out the self-assessment. Our approach to this self-assessment is guided by the principles of compliance as outlined in the Code Compliance Framework.

According to the 2024 Code Compliance Framework published by the Housing Ombudsman, landlord compliance with the Code is assessed in three areas, and the requirements in all three areas must be met:

Compliance in Scrutiny and Oversight: Ensuring that the landlord has produced an annual complaints performance and service improvement report, which must include the annual self-assessment against the Code to ensure their complaint handling policy remains in line with its requirements.

The annual complaints performance and service improvement report must be reported to the landlord's governing body (or equivalent) and published on the section of its website relating to complaints. The governing body's response to the report must be published alongside this.

Compliance in Policy: Ensuring that the landlord's complaints policy meets the expectations of the Code contained in all other provisions.

Compliance in Practice: Ensuring that the landlord's complaints handling meets the expectations of the Code in practice. This assessment is based on the landlord's own reported performance, data, and insights from the Ombudsman's casework and information from external data sources.

Self-Assessment against the Complaint Handling Code

Our self-assessment indicates that Lewisham is partially compliant with the 2024 Complaint Handling Code.

Our Scrutiny and Oversight: We have carried out a self-assessment, produced an annual complaints performance and service improvement report, though there are challenges in obtaining the appropriate amount of scrutiny due to the pre-election timetable. The draft reports have been shared with the Member Responsible for Complaints and will be reviewed in full at the next available Cabinet meeting in September 2024.

Our Compliance in Policy: While most of our policies are up to date, the Compensation, Reimbursement, and Remedies policy requires finalisation along with comprehensive staff training on the updated procedures. This is scheduled for completion by September 2024.

Compliance in Practice: Complaints and Housing Ombudsman casework show that we are not consistently meeting our targets for complaints handling. In 2023/24 we received 23 determinations from the Housing Ombudsman of service failure and maladministration, 17 of which were for failures in complaint handling. Further, we received four Complaint Handling Failure Orders for failure to progress a complaint, and failure to provide evidence to the Ombudsman of compliance with an order.

Results from surveys and resident engagement shows that resident satisfaction with complaints handling is low at 19%. Lastly, poor record keeping has been a recurring theme in Ombudsman casework.

Improving complaints handling has been prioritised in the Housing Services Transformation Programme, and the Council-wide Complaints Handling Improvement Project (CHIP), with significant improvements planned by March 2025.

Background

The Council's Arm's Length Management Organisation (ALMO), Lewisham Homes, fully transitioned back into the Council on 1st October 2023. Following this transition, the Council's new housing leadership team conducted a comprehensive review of housing management service delivery and performance.

The review revealed several failings that have led to an increase in complaints, particularly related to repairs, leaks, damp and mould, and disrepair. Other complaint categories include anti-social behaviour (ASB), rehousing queries, and pest control.

In November 2023, the Council launched a Housing Transformation Programme with four key workstreams: Repairs, Complaints, Reduction of Temporary Accommodation, and IT Transformation. This programme aims to address the significant issues identified during the review and improve overall service delivery.

Due to the issues identified during the review, the Council made a self-referral to the Regulator of Social Housing in December 2023. The self-referral highlighted breaches of the Consumer Standards in the following areas:

- Management of Decent Homes
- Failure of the Repairs Service: There were 18,000 works in progress repairs, with delays in completing both emergency and non-emergency repairs, significant call waiting times for tenants, and a high rate of abandoned calls.
- Fire Safety Performance

The Regulator is also reviewing the works in progress (WIP) and the complaints improvement work.

The Regulator issued a Regulatory Notice on 26th March 2024 and has decided not to take statutory action at this stage, as it has assurance that the issues are being remedied. They will continue to work with Lewisham Council, maintaining regular engagement and reviewing progress.

The Regulatory Notice is expected to be in place for 12-24 months, during which time the Council will work closely with the Regulator under co-regulation arrangements. This includes:

- Monthly meetings between the Regulator and the Council to oversee progress, attended by senior management, the Lead Member, and key officers.
- Reviewing improvements made and ongoing action plans to ensure the Council understands the issues it faces, why these occurred, and demonstrates that the issues can be resolved sustainably.

Themes and Trends in Complaint Casework

Throughout 2023/2024, several recurring themes and trends emerged from the analysis of our complaint casework, resident feedback, and Housing Ombudsman casework. These insights have been crucial in identifying areas for improvement and shaping our service transformation initiatives.

Repairs and Maintenance

- **Leaks, Damp, and Mould:** The majority of complaints centred around issues related to leaks, damp, and mould. Residents frequently reported dissatisfaction with the handling of these issues, including delays in repairs and inadequate responses to their complaints.
- **Disrepair:** Complaints regarding property disrepair have been significant. Issues such as structural problems and persistent maintenance failures have been commonly reported.

Communication and Follow-Up

- **Delayed Responses:** A notable trend in the complaints was the delay in responding to and resolving issues. Residents highlighted long waiting times for initial responses and subsequent actions.
- **Poor Record Keeping:** Investigations revealed that inadequate record-keeping practices hampered effective complaint resolution. This was a recurring theme in the Ombudsman's findings of maladministration.

Complaint Handling Process

- **Inconsistent Application of Policies:** The analysis showed that complaint handling policies were not consistently applied. This inconsistency led to varying resident experiences and outcomes.
- **Quality of Complaint Responses:** Feedback from residents pointed out the need for improvement in the quality of written communication. Residents reported that responses were often unclear or did not address their concerns comprehensively.
- **Ombudsman Casework:** In 2023/24 there were 24 determinations with 23 findings of service failure or maladministration. 17 of which were for failings in respect to complaint handling. A total of £65,461.86 in total was awarded in compensation payments.
- **Complaint Handling Failure Orders:** We received four Complaint Handling Failure Orders, two for failure to provide evidence to the Ombudsman and two for unreasonable delays in accepting or progressing a complaint.

Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)

- Handling of ASB Complaints: While not as prevalent as repair issues, complaints regarding anti-social behaviour were significant. Residents expressed concerns over the handling and resolution of ASB cases.

Resident Feedback

- Low Satisfaction Rates: Surveys indicated low levels of satisfaction across various aspects of complaint handling. Specific areas of concern included the resolution of complaints, clarity of responses, and the overall handling process.
- Resident Scrutiny Panel: Feedback from the Resident Scrutiny Panel highlighted issues such as the backlog of repairs, failure to meet commitments, and the need for better IT systems integration.

Housing Ombudsman Casework

- High Volume of Casework: The Housing Ombudsman received a high volume of casework related to Lewisham Council, reflecting both the accessibility of the complaints process and underlying service issues.
- Findings of Maladministration: The Ombudsman's determinations frequently found service failures and maladministration, particularly in the handling of repair and related complaint handling.

Stage 3 Complaints

Lewisham Council maintained a third stage to its complaint's procedure until February 2023, when it was removed to comply with the statutory Code. No new stage 3 complaints were accepted after 1 February 2023. A total of 123 complaints about the Council in its landlord function went to stage 3 during this period, of which roughly 80% were upheld or partly upheld, with compensation recommendations totalling £46,621.

The stage 3 adjudicator made 74 service improvement recommendations. Note that figures for Stage 3 reflect a 10-month period rather than a full year.

The work of the independent adjudicator has formed the basis of the council-wide Complaints Handling Improvement Project (CHIP).

Resident Engagement and Feedback

Resident feedback is pivotal to our service delivery, and we have actively engaged with our residents to understand their concerns and expectations. This year, our feedback channels included surveys, Resident Scrutiny, focus groups, and direct communication via our contact centre and online platforms. Residents have highlighted issues such as delays in repairs, communication gaps, and the handling of damp and mould cases. Their input has guided our service improvement initiatives and helped us shape a more responsive and accountable complaints handling process.

Resident Engagement Activities: Complaints Workshops

April 2023:

Themes Discussed: Resolution of complaints, outcome satisfaction, handling of complaints, keeping residents informed, ease of dealing with complaints, and effective communication.

March 2024:

Discussion Points: Resident Scrutiny Panel shared findings and feedback on repairs complaints. Residents' experiences with the complaints process.

Resident Scrutiny Panel (RSP)

The Lewisham Council Housing Service (LCHS) Resident Scrutiny Panel assessed our approach to complaints handled by the repairs team. Their performance review was published in a report in October 2023. The recommendations from this report were agreed upon and formed the basis of an action plan, with progress regularly reported by Lewisham.

Key Recommendations from the Review:

- Training and Development: Emphasis on staff training and IT systems training.
- Quality Assurance: Implementing quality checks and involving residents in the process.
- Resident Feedback and Engagement: Incorporating feedback mechanisms and engaging residents in discussions about sub-contractors.
- Policy and Process Review: Updating policies and mapping complaints processes.
- Operational Improvements: Recruitment and setting expectations.
- Transparency and Accountability: Ensuring clear communication and learning from complaints.

Resident Satisfaction Surveys

We carry out two types of surveys on complaint handling: transactional surveys, which gather feedback immediately after a complaint is resolved, and perception surveys, which measure overall satisfaction with the complaint handling process over time.

Transactional:

Complaints Handling Monthly Survey Performance: Transaction surveys to understand their experience of a recent complaint. Results indicated low levels of satisfaction, with the highest being 52% for "Complaint response clear and easy to understand," and the lowest being 11% for "Being kept informed about complaint progress."

Perception:

Complaints Quarterly Perception Surveys: Results showed low levels of satisfaction, with only 19% satisfied with the landlord's approach to complaints.

The figure for tenant satisfaction with the landlord's approach to complaints handling is 22% in the 2023/24 Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) submission.

Themes and Trends from Resident Feedback

Feedback from residents throughout these engagement activities highlighted several key issues and areas for improvement:

Communication Issues:

- Lack of Updates: Residents felt uninformed about the status of their complaints.
- Response Time: Long delays in responses to emails and calls.
- Unclear Communication: Residents were not informed about scheduled visits or repair actions.

Inefficiency and Poor Service:

- Repeated Contacts: Multiple attempts were needed to get action.
- Prolonged Resolution Times: Issues took months or years to resolve.
- Poor Process Management: Described as cumbersome and unprofessional.

Accountability and Professionalism:

- Lack of Responsibility: Residents felt the council did not take ownership of issues.
- Unprofessional Behaviour: Reports of rude interactions and accusations.
- Follow-Up: Lack of follow-up on reported issues.

Repair and Maintenance Issues:

- Incomplete Repairs: Repairs were not completed satisfactorily or at all.
- Quality of Work: Ongoing issues even after repairs.

Accessibility and Support:

- **Difficult Reporting:** Residents were concerned about difficulties contacting the service, specifically long waiting times when ringing the call centre.
- **Vulnerable Residents:** Need for better support for elderly and disabled residents. Ability to identify vulnerable residents, record that and use that information to tailor how we provide a service to them.

Health and Safety Concerns:

- **Impact on Well-being:** Significant impact on residents' mental and physical well-being.
- **Damp and Mould:** Poor handling reports of damp and mould, leading to poor health outcomes.

Conclusions

We have carefully considered all the feedback provided by our residents and have integrated their insights into our Service Improvement Plan. The Service Improvement Plan outlines specific actions to address the issues identified in the self-assessment and through resident feedback. Key areas of focus include:

- Updating complaints and compensation policies
- Improving reporting and monitoring systems
- Enhancing staff training and resource allocation
- Developing better communication and information management strategies.

By addressing the concerns and suggestions raised by our residents, we aim to build a more effective, responsive, and resident-focused housing service.

Housing Ombudsman

Analysis of Determinations

Throughout 2023/2024, the failings in the repairs service have led to a significant rise in complaints, member enquiries, and Housing Ombudsman enquiries. The total number of determinations, findings, and orders made by the Housing Ombudsman has shown substantial increases compared to previous years. Specifically, findings of maladministration have risen sharply, reflecting persistent issues in our complaint handling and service delivery.

The majority of the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) casework pertains to repairs, particularly leaks, damp, mould, and disrepair. These cases often involve delays in carrying out repairs and failures to follow up on actions from complaint responses. Investigations and determinations indicate that poor record-keeping has been a recurring problem, hindering effective complaint resolution. Other categories of complaints include anti-social behaviour (ASB), rehousing queries, and pest control. Issues related to knowledge and information management, as well as the need for better complaints handling training, are frequently highlighted in the Ombudsman's determinations.

High Volume of Casework

The Housing Ombudsman received a high volume of casework related to Lewisham Council, reflecting both the accessibility of the complaints process and underlying service issues. Lewisham Council had over 40 residents out of every 1,000 residents who brought a formal investigation to the Housing Ombudsman, a comparatively high rate. This has resulted in a significant number of determinations, with an expectation of even more in 2024/25 due to our current maladministration rate.

In response, we met with the Housing Ombudsman in May and will continue to work closely together towards compliance. Our expanded efforts include enhancing our complaint handling processes, increasing staff training, and implementing more robust systems for tracking and resolving complaints efficiently.

Determinations and Findings:

In 2023/2024, there were 24 determinations with 23 findings of service failure or maladministration, and 17 included failures in complaint handling.

£65,461.86 was awarded in compensation payments.

See Annex A for a case list.

Table 1: Volumes and type of findings for Lewisham Council 2023/24 compared to 2022/23 and 2021/22

| | 2023-2024* | 2022-2023 | 2021-2022 |
|---|------------|------------|-----------|
| Determinations | 24 | 10 | 6 |
| Findings | 64 | 12 | |
| Orders made | 96 | 16 | 12 |
| Service Failure Findings (23/24) | 8 | | |
| Severe Maladministration Findings (23/24) | 10 | | |
| Maladministration Findings | 40 | 8 | |
| Appropriate redress/outside jurisdiction findings 23/24 | 6 | | |
| Recommendations | 27 | 11 | |
| CHFOs | 4 | 3 | |
| Maladministration Rate | 83% | 67% | 57% |
| Compensation Awards | £65,461.86 | £31,658.00 | £1,250.00 |

*These figures are based on available data.

Table 2: Breakdown of complaint categories for determinations for Lewisham issued in 2023/24

| Complaint Category | No. |
|-----------------------|-----------|
| Property Condition | 20 |
| Anti-Social Behaviour | 3 |
| Planned works | 1 |
| Total | 24 |

Table 3: Breakdown of findings for complaint handling issued as part of determinations in 2023/24

| Determinations with complaints handling findings | No. |
|--|-----------|
| Service failure | 5 |
| Maladministration | 9 |
| Severe maladministration | 3 |
| Total | 17 |

Figure 1: Orders received from the Housing Ombudsman:

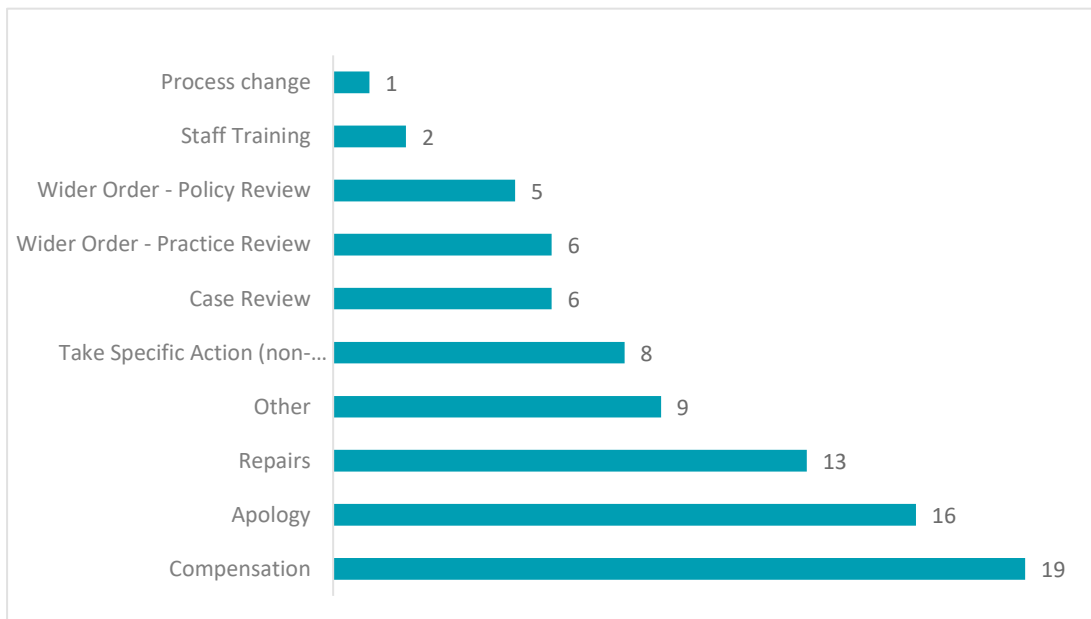
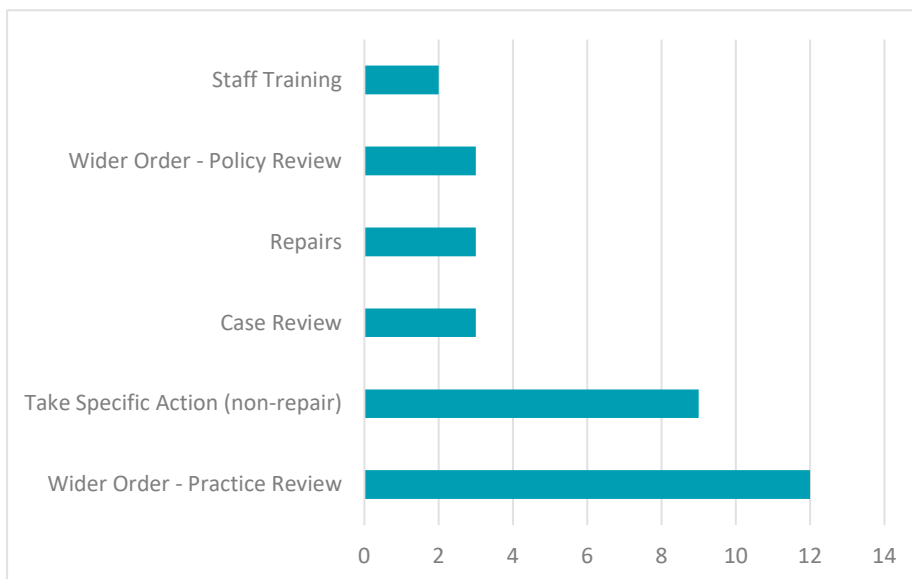


Figure 2: Recommendations received from the Housing Ombudsman:



Themes and Trends from Orders and Recommendations in 2023/2024

In 2023/2024, Lewisham Council received several orders and recommendations from the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS). These directives highlight recurring issues and areas for improvement within our complaint handling and service delivery. Below, we outline the primary themes and trends identified from these orders and recommendations.

Themes and Trends

Responsive Repairs – Leaks, Damp, and Mould:

- Recurring Issues: The majority of determinations and orders relate to persistent problems with leaks, damp, and mould. Cases frequently cited severe maladministration due to delayed repairs and poor handling of these issues.
- Orders: Compensation payments, requirement for comprehensive property surveys, and detailed action plans to address identified problems.
- Recommendations: Regular inspections, better record-keeping, and improved communication regarding repair timelines and actions.

Poor Record Keeping:

- Impact: Poor record-keeping has been a significant factor in many findings of maladministration. It hampers effective complaint resolution and leads to repeated service failures.
- Orders: Detailed reviews of record-keeping practices, self-assessments against Ombudsman's spotlight reports, and implementation of knowledge and information management strategies.
- Recommendations: Regular audits and updates to record-keeping policies to ensure accuracy and accessibility of information.

Complaint Handling:

- Failures Identified: Numerous cases highlighted failures in the complaint handling process, including unreasonable delays, lack of follow-up, and poor communication.
- Orders: Staff training focused on complaint handling, revision of complaint policies, and clear communication of escalation processes to residents.
- Recommendations: Development of comprehensive training programmes, review and update of complaint response templates, and regular self-assessments against the Complaint Handling Code.

Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB):

- Issues: Maladministration in handling ASB cases was noted, including delays and poor communication with affected residents.
- Orders: Apologies from senior management, compensation payments, and engagement of specialists for security surveys and action plans.
- Recommendations: Review of ASB handling processes, better coordination between departments, and improved communication with residents regarding actions taken.

Knowledge and Information Management:

- Challenges: Failures in knowledge and information management have led to significant

service delivery issues.

- Orders: Reviews of knowledge management practices, self-assessments against spotlight reports, and integration of learnings into operational procedures.
- Recommendations: Implementation of a knowledge and information management strategy, staff training on information handling, and regular reviews to ensure ongoing compliance.

Relevant Publications

On 14th March 2024, the Housing Ombudsman published an article titled “Ombudsman awards £40,000 in compensation to residents after Lewisham Council’s failings in damp and mould complaints.” This article highlighted three significant cases where severe maladministration was found due to the Council’s failure to adequately address damp and mould issues:

- Case A: Nearly £20,000 awarded after significant failings left a family in unsuitable conditions, with mould affecting their health and well-being.
- Case B: £1,700 awarded due to prolonged unresolved leak issues that led to damp and mould, damaging the resident’s belongings and causing distress.
- Case C: £19,500 awarded after the Council failed to address a window repair for six years, leading to severe damp and mould, exacerbating the resident’s vulnerabilities.

These cases underline the importance of using complaints to identify and address service failures, reflecting the issues highlighted in the self-referral to the Regulator of Social Housing.

Learning from Ombudsman Casework

The findings from the Housing Ombudsman casework have been instrumental in shaping our service improvement initiatives. The identified issues, particularly in repairs and complaint handling, have guided the development of our Housing Transformation Programme and the Complaints Handling Improvement Project (CHIP). The Service Improvement Plan has been developed by incorporating these learnings to address the root causes of complaints, enhance communication, improve processes, and ensure accountability.

Service Improvement Work

Lewisham Council is committed to learning from complaints to drive meaningful service improvements. By analysing our self-assessment against the Complaint Handling Code, feedback from residents, and determinations from the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS), we have developed a comprehensive Service Improvement Plan. This plan focuses on enhancing our governance, policies, and practices to ensure we meet the highest standards in complaint handling. Our commitment to listening to residents and engaging with the HOS is central to these efforts. By adhering to our core values of being ambitious, inclusive, collaborative, accountable, and trustworthy, we aim to transform our services and provide better outcomes for our residents.

Housing Transformation Programme

The Housing Transformation Programme launched in November 2023 is aimed at addressing the issues identified in our housing services. The four workstreams are

- Complaints Handling: Improving our complaints process to be more responsive and transparent.
- Repairs: Streamlining processes, improving response times, and ensuring quality repairs with a focus on reducing the backlog of outstanding jobs, damp and mould and disrepair.
- Reduction of Temporary Accommodation: Implementing strategies to reduce reliance on temporary housing solutions.
- IT Transformation: Upgrading our IT systems to support better service delivery and communication.

Complaints Transformation (Housing Services)

As part of the Housing Transformation Programme, a short-term transformation project, the Complaints Reset Action Plan was started. Running from November 2023 to April 2024, the project was set up to address the findings of the Resident Scrutiny Panel.

Actions completed to date include:

- Updated Complaints Policy.
- Engagement with PFI (Private Finance Initiative) and TMO (Tenant Management Organisation) partners responsible for managing residents.
- New weekly reporting to directors on complaints casework.
- Development of monthly dashboards and reports.
- Training delivered on quality letter writing.
- Analysis of resident feedback on complaints handling, including transactional and perception surveys.
- Analysis of Housing Ombudsman casework and complaints performance.

Phase two of the project was agreed upon, and the scope was expanded by the Programme Board in May 2024, taking into consideration learnings from the initial phase. The Service Improvement Action Plan will now form that programme.

Complaints Handling Improvement Project (CHIP)

Lewisham Council now has a complaint-handling improvement project underway. This project aims to embed compliance with the complaint-handling code within the culture and practice of the Council. It involves revision of policies, changes to software and templates, creation of clear operating instructions, and an extensive programme of staff training. The project is due to complete before the end of the 2024-25 financial year.

Repairs Transformation Programme (Housing Services)

The Repairs Transformation Programme is a key initiative within the Housing Transformation Programme, designed to address the significant issues identified in our repair services. The programme focuses on enhancing the efficiency, responsiveness, and overall quality of the repairs service to better meet the needs and expectations of our residents. There is a focus on leaks, damp, mould, and disrepair.

Intended Outcomes

The Repairs Transformation Programme aims to address significant issues in our repair services, focusing on efficiency, responsiveness, and quality. The programme's intended outcomes include:

- **Improved Communication:** Establish reliable and efficient communication systems, applications, and technology to keep residents informed about the status of their repair requests.
- **Enhanced Satisfaction:** Increase tenant satisfaction by making it easier to communicate with the Council, completing repairs more quickly, and ensuring staff are more visible on estates.
- **Efficient Operations:** Achieve faster complaints handling aligned with updated policies and procedures, leading to a reduction in the number of complaints and related costs.
- **Structured Team:** Build a well-structured, engaged, and informed team that works collaboratively to provide the best possible repairs service.
- **Budget Control:** Maintain strict budget control to ensure the financial sustainability of the repairs service while delivering high-quality outcomes for residents.

Service Improvement Plan

Our Service Improvement Plan has been developed based on learnings from resident feedback, complaints casework, Housing Ombudsman casework, and outputs from the Complaints Reset Action Plan and self-assessment against the Complaint Handling Code 2024. The plan focuses on four key themes: governance and reporting, policies, people and systems.

- **Governance & Reporting:** Enhancing reporting and transparency for better scrutiny and performance monitoring.

- Policies: Finalising key policies, updating procedure and guidance documents, and developing a Knowledge and Information Management strategy.
- People: Ensuring adequate resourcing and comprehensive staff training.
- Systems: Completing improvements to the complaints case management system.

These themes align with the Code Compliance Framework, ensuring compliance in Scrutiny and Oversight, Policy, and Practice. Our initiatives reflect our commitment to improving services and ensuring that residents receive the highest quality of service. Resident feedback has been instrumental in shaping our plans, and we will continue to engage with residents to meet their needs and expectations. The improvements in systems and training, developed in collaboration with the Complaints Handling Improvement Project (CHIP), underpin these efforts and ensure sustainable and effective service delivery.

Annex A Housing Ombudsman Case List 2023/2024

| Reference | Category | Determination Info | £ Award |
|-----------|---|--|------------|
| 202114764 | Responsive repairs – leaks / damp / mould, poor record keeping | Severe maladministration damp & mould, maladministration record-keeping | £19,907.86 |
| 202128403 | ASB | Maladministration in handling of ASB | £250.00 |
| 202008607 | Responsive repairs – leaks / damp / mould, Other poor handling of complaint | Maladministration handling reports of leak & service failure complaints handling | £2,200.00 |
| 202217254 | Repairs - damp and mould, Access to housing register, Complaint handling | Maladministration in handling of damp and mould and complaint handling | £700.00 |
| 202118554 | Repairs - leak to internal communal pathway Recharge for leak repairs | Maladministration in handling of repairs No maladministration in decision to recharge for repairs | £250.00 |
| 202202999 | Repairs - boiler and bathroom taps Complaint handling and record keeping | Maladministration in boiler and tap repairs and complaint and record keeping | £1,000.00 |
| 202217011 | Responsive repairs – leaks / damp / mould, Engagement on the complaint | Severe maladministration damp & mould, maladministration complaints | £1,700.00 |
| 202209977 | Voids/Repairs - condition of property when let and various repairs | The offer of redress prior to HO investigation resolves the complaint satisfactorily | none |
| 202205928 | Responsive repairs – leaks / damp / mould, decants (temp. or permanent), Delay in escalating or responding to complaint | Maladministration leak & subsequent repairs & complaint handling. No maladministration for decant | £500.00 |
| 202002376 | Personal (e.g., harassment / discrimination), Transfer Application, Other poor handling of complaint | Maladministration ASB, transfer request & complaints handling | £900.00 |

| Reference | Category | Determination Info | £ Award |
|-----------|---|--|------------|
| 202002817 | Repairs - noise from a communal boiler in the basement beneath her home and theft of her electricity supply | Maladministration in complaint handling, no maladministration in other aspects | £500.00 |
| 202124577 | Responsive repairs – leaks / damp / mould, Engagement on the complaint | outside jurisdiction (repairs), as arose in 2016, severe maladministration damp & mould & maladministration record-keeping & complaints handling | £19,500.00 |
| 202209215 | Responsive repairs - general, Major, or planned works, Other poor handling of complaint | Maladministration response to reports of cracks, service failure response to resident concerns structural integrity, maladministration complaints handling | £1,000.00 |
| 202220394 | Responsive repairs – leaks / damp / mould, record keeping | Maladministration damp & mould and record keeping | £1,000.00 |
| 202222057 | Major or planned works kitchen & bathroom | Maladministration in the landlord's handling of planned maintenance and improvement works to the resident's kitchen and bathroom. | £300.00 |
| 202217650 | Responsive repairs - roof, complaint handling and knowledge & information management | Severe maladministration in handling of roof repairs, communication, and complaint handling and in knowledge and information handling. | £2,200.00 |
| 202008088 | Responsive repairs - general, Other ASB, Engagement on the complaint | maladministration handling reports ASB, leak resulting in damp & mould, overhanging tree, pests & maladministration complaints handling | £1,800.00 |
| 202231881 | Responsive repairs – leaks / damp / mould, Other poor handling of complaint | Maladministration handling repairs including damp & mould. Service failure with complaint handling | £850.00 |
| 202204031 | Other ASB, Delay in escalating or responding to complaint, Transfer Application, Information held on file | severe maladministration in relation to the landlord's handling of the resident's reports of threatening behaviour, harassment, and ASB. Maladministration complaints handling, service failure for KIM, outside jurisdiction for priority management transfer decision. | £2,100.00 |

| Reference | Category | Determination Info | £ Award |
|-----------|---|---|-----------|
| 202315336 | Responsive repairs – leaks / damp / mould, Responsive repairs - general, Responsive repairs - general, Responsive repairs - general, Delay in escalating or responding to complaint | Maladministration damp & mould, replacement windows, emergency leak, outstanding repairs. Service failure in complaint handling | £1,300.00 |
| 202205810 | Gas inspections and safety, Responsive repairs – heating and hot water, Other poor handling of complaint | Maladministration response to CO alarms, handling of reports of boiler repair, service failure complaints handling | £1,300.00 |
| 202224026 | Responsive repairs – leaks / damp / mould, Other poor handling of complaint | Severe maladministration damp & mould & complaints handling | £4,654.00 |
| 202107480 | Responsive repairs – leaks / damp / mould, Transfer Application, Other poor handling of complaint | Maladministration repairs, transfer, complaint | £850.00 |
| 202306207 | Responsive repairs – leaks / damp / mould, Transfer Application, Other poor handling of complaint, Refusal to consider complaint | Maladministration damp & mould, landlord's record keeping. Service failure in request to be medically assessed & complaint handling | £700.00 |