



Lewisham

Annual Complaints Report 2024

September 2024

Outline and recommendations

The purpose of this report is to set out complaints and casework performance in 2023/24 as well as the measures being put in place to improve complaint handling, performance and service delivery.

EMT are asked to note the contents of this report.

Timeline of engagement and decision-making

This report was reviewed by:

The Executive Management Team (18 September 2024)

Cabinet Briefing (15 October 2024)

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Term	Definition
S3A	Stage 3 Adjudicator
LGSCO	Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman
HO	Housing Ombudsman

Executive Summary

1. Overall Council Performance for 2023/24 was 77% of complaints answered within 10 days against a target of 90% and has improved by 3% compared to last year despite a significant increase of complaints by 60% with the addition of the former Lewisham Homes being brought back in house in November 2023. This has had a direct impact on complaint and casework performance. With the former Lewisham Homes complaints now being included this has resulted in a 109% increase in complaint volumes compared to the previous year and a 20% increase in casework volumes which includes Mayors, Councillors, MP's and Chief Executive enquiries.
2. Due to the changes in the legislation brought in by the Housing Ombudsman across the UK in April 2024 and the expected increase in the volume of cases being referred to the Housing Ombudsman, a proposal has been put forward to having a dedicated resource to deal with all incoming Housing Ombudsman queries which should sit within the Housing Directorate as this is not a Corporate role and for this we seek approval. This is also reflected and detailed in the Lewisham Council Housing Services Annual report which can be found in Appendix 3.

Volumes

Case_type (Lewisham council)	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	% increase / decrease from previous year
New Complaints (Stage 1 only)	1562	1923	2419	4887	▲ 109%
All Enquires *	4116	4662	5817	6980	▲ 20%
Total	5678	6585	8236	11,867**	▲ 47%

*All Enquiries – This included General Enquiries, MP, Member, Mayor and CEO.

** Now includes Lewisham Homes as they came back into Lewisham Council Oct 23

3. Our priorities for action are to work with partners to: improve the well-being of the people of Lewisham develop and engage local communities improve public sector performance and delivery
4. As an organisation with a learning culture, we welcome customer feedback about its services and staff from residents and service users.
5. This annual report sets out performance information on complaints and casework dealt with by Lewisham Council including former Lewisham Homes and its housing partners in 2023/24. The main report focuses on corporate complaints at all stages as well as enquiries to MPs, the Mayor, Councillors, and the Chief Executive and General Enquiries.
6. The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual Letter 2023/24 is attached as **Appendix 5**.
7. The Adult Social Care and Children’s Social Care complaints reports are attached in **Appendix 1 and 2**. These reports include an overview of statutory complaints in Adult Social Care and Children’s Social Care.
8. The detailed annual report from the Stage 3 Adjudicator can be found at **Appendix 4. This relates to cases up to February 2024 only**. Please note the headline figures and main points 9 – 11 below.
9. The Stage 3 Adjudicator dealt with 189 Stage 3 complaints on behalf of the Council, Regenter and Lewisham Homes in 2023-24. Stage 3 was discontinued from 1 April 2024, in order to comply with the Ombudsmen’s complaint-handling codes, so the S3A accepted no new stage 3 complaints after 1 February 2024.
 - 189 cases were received and 66% of these cases were regarding housing providers (Lewisham Homes and Regenter B3);

- The S3A determined 63 cases about the Council. The top themes for the Council were housing and homelessness. The top themes for housing providers were leaks, and damp and mould;
- Compensation was awarded in 89 cases totalling £63,667.90;
- The average compensation awarded was £715 in 2023-24, which is a 21% increase on the previous year (£590). The median payment was £300 and the most frequent £500.
- Two thirds of the complaints (127 out of 189, 67%) were upheld or partly upheld at stage 3.

Stage 3 Adjudicator Case Outcomes and Average Compensation Payment					
Year	Cases Determined	Cases Upheld / Partly Upheld	Cases Awarded Compensation	Total Compensation Awarded	Average Compensation Awarded
2021/22	109	57	50	£24,732	£494
2022/23	145	76	52	£30,699	£590
2023/24	189	127	89	£63,668	£715

- 10.** The S3A uses LGSCO and HOS guidance on remedies to arrive at compensation figures. The increase in compensation paid this year reflects the increased number of stage 3 complaints, and the increase in the proportion of upheld complaints. The largest compensation recommendations related to families living in unsuitable temporary accommodation, or housing affected by damp and mould.

Background and Main Issues

- 11.** The main issue is around compliance with the new LGSCO complaint handling code which came into force in February 2024. We have a duty to ensure compliance with this code from April 2025.
- 12.** We need to ensure that all staff are aware of the new complaints process and know how to pass details of a complaint to the appropriate person within Lewisham Council. We encourage staff to welcome complaints and support customers who make them. No customer should fear that making a complaint may affect the services we provide to them.
- 13.** Implementing the new 2 stage complaint procedure as per new complaint handling code
- 14.** Ensure we have sufficient resource to deal with the increase in complaints via the Housing Ombudsman due to the new complaint handling code.

15. Timescales – These are new timescales that have been implemented by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and came into effect on 1 April 2024

Stage	Investigated by	Acknowledgement	Response
Stage 1	Service manager	Within 5 working days of receipt	Within a further 10 working days
Stage 2	Head of Service (Corporate Complaints team for multi-faceted complaints)	Within 5 working days of receipt	Within a further 20 working days

Policy Context

16. **Corporate Complaints** - The Council's Corporate Complaints Policy details how we handle the complaints and feedback that we receive. Corporate complaints are dealt with under a new two stage complaints process. Which is in line with the new Ombudsmen Complaint Handling code and have statutory powers to investigate complaints against councils.
17. **Housing Complaints** - Our complaints policy has been written in line with requirements within the Housing Ombudsman's statutory code. This is detailed in Appendix 3.
18. **Adult Social Care Statutory Complaints** - Since 1991, the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 has charged each local authority with maintaining a statutory complaints process for adult social care services. The current regulations, The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009, came into force on 1 April 2009. Statutorily, local provision of the regulations is the responsibility of each council's Chief Executive Officer. In Lewisham, that responsibility has been delegated to the Director of Operations for Adult Social Care. This is detailed in Appendix 1.
19. **Childrens Social Care Statutory Complaints** - The Children's Act 1989 Representation Procedure (England) Regulations 2006 requires local authorities have a formal complaint handling procedure in place for children and young people who wish to make a representation or complaint about social care. The regulations set out three stages: Stage One – Local Resolution; Stage Two – Independent Investigation, and Stage three – Review Panel. This is detailed in Appendix 2.
20. **Children's Act only Complaints** - The Council received a total of 98 cases of complaints in 2022/23 (99 cases at Stage 1 for 2023/24), which were categorised under the Children's Act. The Children's Act complaints procedure is a statutory procedure for children and young people to make complaints and any other representations about actions and decisions of

Children’s Social Care services; it is also open to any other person acting on their behalf, as well as to people with ‘sufficient interest’ in the child or young person, to make complaints in their own right.

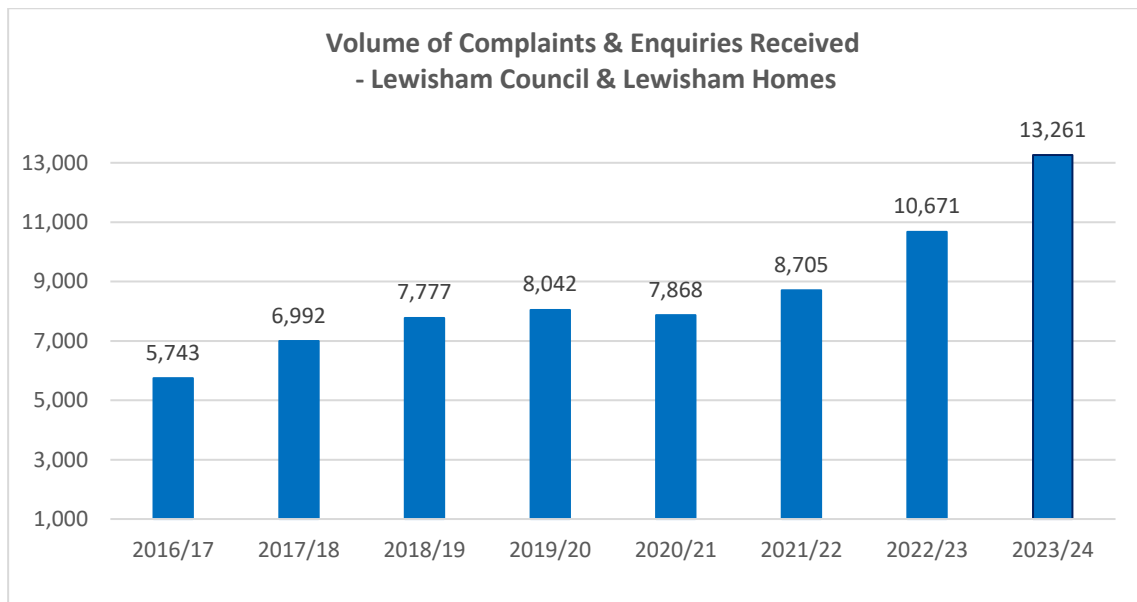
Council Wide Overall Performance

21. The total number of new complaints and enquiries received by Lewisham Council and Lewisham Homes in 2023/24 was 13,261 compared to 8,931 cases in 2022/23.
22. Of the 5,582 new Stage 1 complaints received in 2023/24, 590 complaints (10%) escalated to Stage 2; 135 complaints escalated to Stage 3; and 26 cases referred to the Ombudsmen.
23. The volume of overall complaints & Enquiries increased from the previous year with an increase of 48% (4,330) from 8,931 in 22/23 to 13,261 in 23/24.
24. New first stage complaints (5,882) accounted for just over 42% of all casework received in 2023/24.
25. There were 8,378 new enquiries received in 2023/24 Enquires cover Councillors, MP’s Mayor and Chief Executive enquiries. 22% of these cases were general enquiries, 27% were Member/Cllr enquiries and the remainder were MP / Mayor / CEO enquiries. The nature of general enquiries varies but can include a request for a service or advice and information.
26. **Volume of Enquiries for Lewisham Homes and Lewisham Council**

Table 3 – Volume of New Enquiries by Lewisham Council & Lewisham Homes

Enquiries Received – Lewisham Council & Lewisham Homes					
Organisation	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	% increase / decrease from
Lewisham Council	4492	4,662	5,817	7,670	▲ 32%
Lewisham Homes	1069	1,376	1,241	699	▼ 43%
Total	5561	6,038	7,058	8,378	▲ 19%

The direction of travel shows a 19% increase of enquiries overall compared to last year.



Summary – Case Volumes

- 27.** Overall there is an increase in complaints and enquiries compared to last year. The direction of travel above for the Council shows a 20% increase overall for Stage 1 complaints when compared to last year and the former Lewisham Homes saw a significant increase in the number of complaints (75%). This increase has been seen across the social housing sector for this period. Overall across this equates to a 36% increase in Stage 1 complaints.

Stage 1 Corporate Complaints Received – Lewisham Council & Lewisham Homes (*Lewisham Homes data is for cases due up to 30 Nov 23)

Organisation	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	% increase / decrease from previous year
Lewisham Council	1926	1923	2421	4887	▲ 102%
Lewisham Homes	381	680	1192	*695	N/A
Total	2307	2667	3613	5852	▲ 54%

28. Children and Young People Directorate

52% of complaints responded to on time compared to 39% in 22/23
 70% of enquiries responded to on time compared to 57% in 22/23
 60% of requests responded on time compared to 57% in 22/23

29. Community Directorate

69% of complaints responded to on time compared to 78% in 22/23
 70% of enquiries responded to on time compared to 66% in 22/23
 84% of requests responded on time compared to 77% in 22/23

30. Corporate Resources Directorate

74% of complaints responded to on time compared to 91% in 22/23
 76% of enquiries responded to on time compared to 86% in 22/23
 88% of requests responded on time compared to 68% in 22/23

31. Housing (New Directorate)

70% of complaints responded to on time compared to N/A in 22/23
 69% of enquiries responded to on time compared to N/A in 22/23
 84% of requests responded on time compared to N/A in 22/23

32. Place (New Directorate)

91% of complaints responded to on time compared to N/A in 22/23
 60 % of enquiries responded to on time compared to N/A in 22/23

91% of requests responded on time compared to N/A in 22/23

33. Chief Executive Directorate

69% of complaints responded to on time compared to 75% in 22/23

70% of enquiries responded to on time compared to 80% in 22/23

84% of requests responded on time compared to 58% in 22/23

Root Cause of Complaints

34. See below for top 10 service areas which received the most complaints. The services are high volume contact areas for the council, for areas such as waste collection, council tax, Housing and Planning.

35. Revenues issue 130,000 Council tax notices to domestic properties. With 986 complaints for 23/24 this equates to less than 0.007% residents being dissatisfied with the service

36. It is worth noting that Environmental service collects 330,000 bins a week and 1,192 complaints equates to the service failing on 0.0001% of occasions

Table – 7.1 – Top Ten Complaints by Service Areas

Top 10	Service Areas	Cases	% upheld
1	Street Environmental Services	1192	3%
2	Revenues	986	14%
3	Commercial Operations and Development*	611	14%
4	Housing Needs & Refugee Services	366	11%
5	Housing Repairs	356	47%
6	Parks, Sport and Leisure	192	18%
7	Highways	181	8%
8	Strategic Transport	147	17%
9	Benefits	133	8%
10	Housing Compliance & Building Safety	84	29%

*Includes Abandoned Vehicles, Bulky Waste, Commercial Waste, Disabled Bays, Garden Waste

Table 7.2 – Top 10 Complaints – Street Services

Rank	Street Environmental Services	Case
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1	Refuse	373
2	Recycling	388
3	Food Waste	143
4	Missed Collection	137
5	Cleansing	109
6	Fly tipping Removal	61
7	Street Sweeping	33
8	Reuse and Recycling Centre	11
9	Clean Streets	7
10	Mattresse Collection	4

Table 7.3– Top 10 Complaints – Revenues

Rank	Revenues	Case
1	Account Query	653
2	Refunds	48
3	Liability Dispute	41
4	Summons	39
5	Discount & Exemptions	35
6	Customer Services	35
7	Payments	22
8	Notice Issued (Reminder/Final Notice)	22
9	On-Line	18
10	Telephone	15

Table 7.4– Top 10 Complaints – Commercial Operations and Development

Rank	Commercial Operations and Development	Case
1	PCNs	189
2	Parking Permits	143
3	Garden Waste Subscription	83
4	Parking Enforcement	53
5	Parking Design	25
6	Enviro-enforcement (Fly tipping etc)	17
7	Parking signs and lines (Existing)	14
8	Pay & Display	10
9	Commercial Waste	9
10	Moving Traffic Enforcement	8

Table 7.5– Top 10 Complaints – Housing Needs & Refugee Services

Rank	Housing Needs & Refugee Services	Case
1	Housing Option Centre services (Front line)	72
2	Temporary Accommodation (PSL)	61
3	Suitability accommodation	60
4	Homeless/ Part 7 application	43

5	Housing register /Part 6 application	29
6	Lewisham Find Your Home	22
7	Eviction	18
8	Temporary accommodation (hostel)	13
9	Temporary Accommodation	9
10	Suitability of accommodation	9

Table 7.6 – Top 10 Complaints – HOU Repairs

Rank	HOU Repairs	Case
1	Plumbing	117
2	Damp	60
3	Appointments	38
4	Roof repair/Renewal	27
5	Plastering	20
6	Window Repair/Replacement	19
7	Repairs Contact Centre	17
8	Electrical	16
9	Communal Areas Maintenance	9
10	Carpentry Repair	6

37. See below for further information on each of the top 5 Services, which show specific areas within the service that customer have made a complaint about.

Table 7.7 – Top 5 Complaint Issues & Outcomes

Outcome of Top 5 Complaint Issues in 2023/24					
Lewisham Council					
Complaints Issue	No. of Cases	Resolved upon Receipt	Not Upheld	Partly Upheld	Upheld (%)
Account Query (Revenues)	654	35	476	54	98 (15%)
Refuse (Waste)	373	358	8	4	3 (1%)
Recycling (Waste)	288	272	6	4	6 (2%)
PCN's (Parking General Services)	190	5	151	5	28 (15%)

Parking Permits (Parking General Services)	143	2	111	2	27 (19%)
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Table 7.8 – Additional information supplied by Lewisham Homes.

Outcome	2023/24
Upheld	39%
Not upheld	26%
Partly upheld	35%

Performance (Cases Due and Timelines)

38. Please see below for summary of Lewisham council performance in Table 8.1, please see table 8.2 for more granular information including Lewisham homes.

Table 8.1 – Lewisham council overall complaints and Enquiries performance.

LEWISHAM Timeliness of Corporate Complaints & All Enquiries					
Organisation	Year / Variance	Stage 1 & 2 Complaints		All Enquiries	
		Cases Due	% On Time	Cases Due	% On Time
Lewisham Council	2020/21	1612	77%	4116	86%
	2021/22	1976	73%	4662	78%
	2022/23	2496	74%	5817	64%
	2023/24	4887	77%	6980	66%

Table 8.2 - Timeliness of Stage 1 & Stage 2 Corporate Complaints and General Enquiries –Lewisham Council & Lewisham Homes, exc. Statutory complaints for children’s and adult’s social care

Timeliness of Corporate Complaints and General Enquiries – Council Directorates & Lewisham Homes							
Organisation	Year Variance /	Stage 1 Complaints		Stage 2 Complaints		General Enquiries	
		Cases Due	% On Time	Cases Due	% On Time	Cases Due	% On Time
Lewisham Council	2020/21	1562	79%	50	28%	2422	98%
	2021/22	1923	73%	53	72%	4662	78%
	2022/23	2419	75%	77	44%	5817	63%
	2023/24	4887	78%	230	56%	6980	66%

Timeliness of Corporate Complaints and General Enquiries – Council Directorates & Lewisham Homes							
Organisation	Year / Variance	Stage 1 Complaints		Stage 2 Complaints		General Enquiries	
		Cases Due	% On Time	Cases Due	% On Time	Cases Due	% On Time
	Variance	2468	↑2%	↑153	↑12%	↑1,163	↑3%
Lewisham Homes (*Apr to Nov 23)	2020/21	331	91%	90	92%	274	84%
	2021/22	680	76%	174	69%	215	78%
	2022/23	1192	83%	331	79%	1254	75%
	2023/24*	695	94%	200	81%	699	94%
	Variance	N/A	↑11%	N/A	↑2%	N/A	↑19%
Total	2020/21	1893	81%	140	69%	2696	97%
	2021/22	2603	74%	227	70%	2210	96%
	2022/23	3611	77%	414	71%	7071	65%
	2023/24	5582	80%	430	68%	7679	68%
	Variance	↑1971	↑3%	↑16	↓3%	↑608	↑3%

39. The number of Stage 1 complaints saw an increase this year of 1,971 from 2022/23. Despite this significant increase in volumes, performance has increased by 3% on previous year.

40. General enquiries performance has increased by 3% despite the increase of cases logged by 608 compared to the previous year.

41. Completion rates of all casework is extremely high with 97% of all complaints being answered within 10.3 days and 97% of all enquiries being answered within 14.8 days.

Performance

42. An improvement in performance of 3% has been made over the last 2 years across Stage 1 Complaints and General Enquiries despite receiving an extra 2,000 cases. There has been a decrease in performance of 3% on Stage 2 Enquiries.

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

See Appendix 5 for LGSCO Annual letter

Complaints and enquiries by ward

Number of case records: 6,965

Of these:

- Number of records where postcodes are in Lewisham: 5,473
- Number of records where postcode is missing: 910

- Number of records where postcode is incomplete: 63
- Number of records where postcode is outside Lewisham: 519

Summary tables

Note: in this analysis, all cases where the Case Type is “Complaint” are considered complaints, and all other cases are considered enquiries.

By number of cases:

Ward	Complaint	Enquiry	Total
Brockley	142	778	920
Ladywell	106	631	737
Rushey Green	124	317	441
Deptford	168	173	341
Evelyn	163	136	299
Sydenham	155	141	296
Telegraph Hill	146	133	279
Crofton Park	98	180	278
Perry Vale	142	106	248
Blackheath	153	87	240
Hither Green	126	112	238
Forest Hill	124	113	237
New Cross Gate	80	75	155
Catford South	77	76	153
Downham	77	75	152
Lee Green	78	59	137
Bellingham	61	71	132
Grove Park	51	49	100
Lewisham Central	56	34	90

Number of cases per 1,000 residents:

Ward	Complaint	Enquiry	Total
Brockley	8.12	44.46	52.58
Ladywell	6.81	40.51	47.32
Rushey Green	6.52	16.67	23.19
Deptford	9.88	10.18	20.06
Evelyn	11.29	9.42	20.71
Sydenham	9.13	8.31	17.44
Telegraph Hill	8.63	7.86	16.49
Crofton Park	6.35	11.67	18.02
Perry Vale	7.61	5.68	13.29
Blackheath	9.31	5.30	14.61
Hither Green	6.25	5.56	11.81
Forest Hill	8.17	7.45	15.62
New Cross Gate	7.22	6.77	13.99
Catford South	4.46	4.40	8.87
Downham	4.19	4.08	8.28
Lee Green	5.19	3.93	9.12
Bellingham	5.23	6.09	11.32
Grove Park	3.24	3.11	6.36

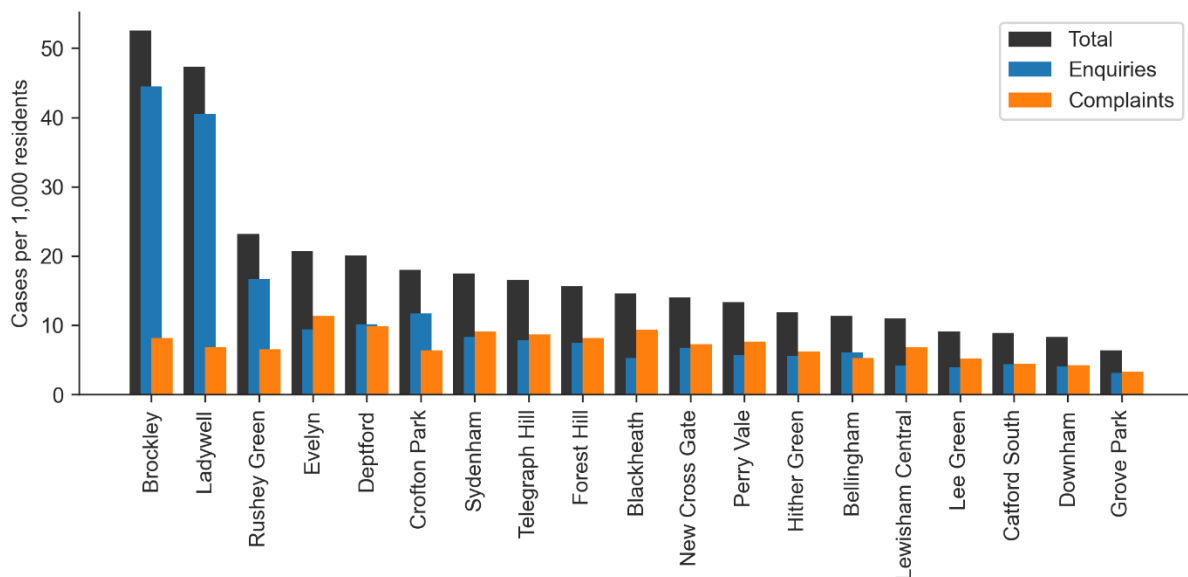
Analysis

The distribution of complaints and enquiries received by ward per 1,000 residents in 2023/24 is shown below.

The below information is based on available postcode data. In 2023/24 6,965 complaints and enquiries were recorded (compared with 1,563 in 2022/23 and 8,006 in 2021/22) and ward information was available for 5,473 of these (compared with 844 in 2022/23 and 6,597 in 2021/22). 910 records did not have a postcode recorded and 63 records had incomplete postcodes.

The remaining 519 complaints and enquiries were made by residents outside of Lewisham. The majority of records with no postcode information recorded were enquiries (691 of 4,304 enquiries, 16% of enquiries) rather than complaints (219 of 2,661 complaints, 8% of complaints).

Complaints and enquiries per 1,000 by ward received in 2023/24

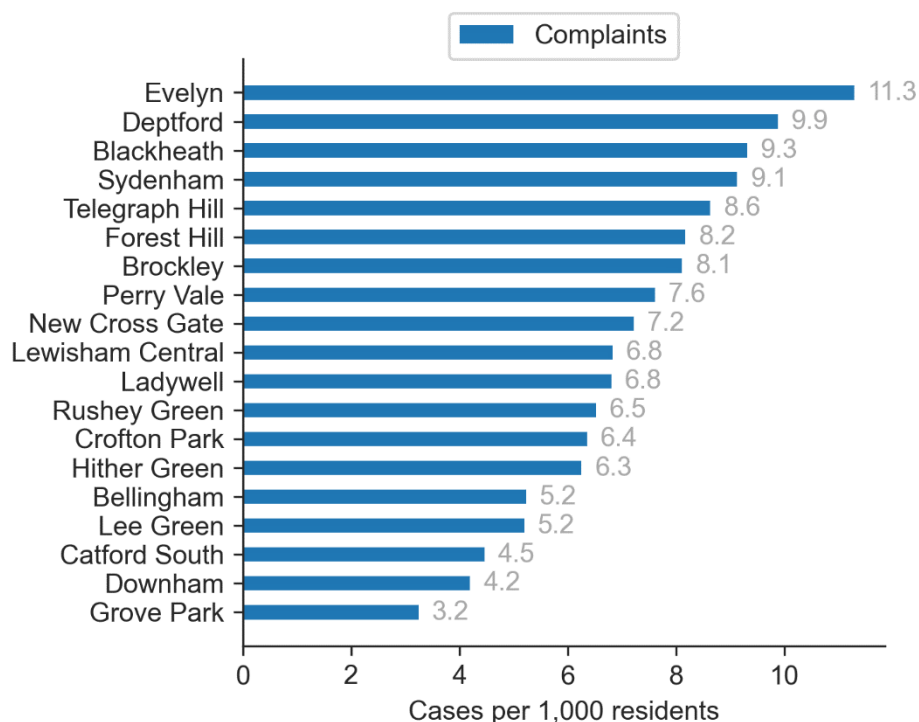


In 2023/24, the highest number of complaints received per 1,000 residents were from residents in Evelyn (11.29 complaints per 1,000). By comparison, in 2022/23 the highest number of complaints were from residents in Rushey Green (1.6 complaints per 1,000), and in 2021/22 in Evelyn (9.9 complaints per 1,000).

In 2023/24, the lowest number of complaints per 1,000 residents were from residents in Grove Park (3.24 complaints per 1,000). In 2022/23, the lowest number of complaints received per 1,000 residents were from residents in Grove Park (0.2 complaints per 1,000), and in 2021/22 in Rushey Green and Whitefoot (with 4.1 complaints per 1,000 residents in both wards). In 2023/24, there were an average of 7.1 complaints per 1,000 compared to 0.6 complaints in 2022/23 and 6.9 complaints in 2021/22; this is partly driven by the integration

of Lewisham Homes, as the largest number of complaints and enquiries are associated with Housing issues.

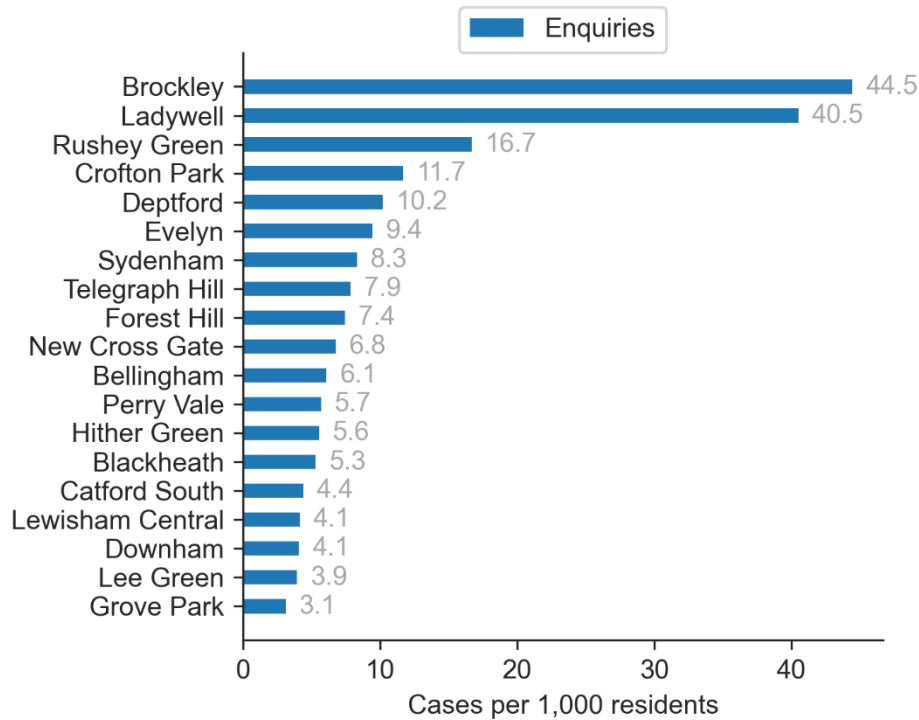
Number of cases per 1,000 residents, Complaints only:



The highest number of enquiries received per 1,000 residents were from residents in Brockley (8.12 enquiries per 1,000 residents), compared to 2022/23 where the largest number of enquiries were in Rushey Green (9.3 enquiries per 1,000), and in 2021/22 in Brockley (45.3 complaints per 1,000).

In 2023/24, the lowest number of enquiries per 1,000 residents was from Grove Park (3.1 residents per 1,000), in 2022/23 from Evelyn (0.7 enquiries per 1,000 in 2022/23) and in 2021/22 from Downham (5.9 enquiries per 1,000 in 2021/22). The average number of enquiries per 1,000 residents in each ward was 10.8 in 2023/24 (compared with 2.2 in 2022/23 and 14.5 in 2021/22).

Number of cases per 1,000 residents, Enquiries only:



Of the 163 complaints made by residents of Evelyn in 2023/24, Housing Responsive Repairs was the most complained about service (59 complaints), followed by Council Tax (40 complaints) and Housing Heating (13 complaints). In the ward with the second most complaints per 1,000 residents, Deptford, the most commonly complained about services were Housing Responsive Repairs (66 complaints of 168 total) and “Council Tax (38 complaints).

In Brockley, the ward with the most enquiries per 1,000 residents in 2023/24, 667 of 778 enquiries related to “Regenter B3”. The second most common service to be the subject of an enquiry from a resident was the Homelessness Prevention & Assessment Service, with 24 enquiries in Brockley. In Ladywell, the ward with the second most enquiries per 1,000 residents, the majority related to “Regenter B3” (480 of 631 enquiries) followed by Mayor and Cabinet Office (49 enquiries).

Finally, residents in Grove Park made the fewest complaints in 2023/24 (3.1 per 1,000) and the largest proportion of these related to Council Tax (37 of 51 complaints) followed by “Special Educational Needs Team 1”, Homelessness Prevention & Assessment Service, Housing Benefit, and “Supply & Resettlement- Temporary Accommodation and Procurement of Properties” (each receiving 2 complaints, respectively).

Equalities implications

The Council has the ability to collect equalities monitoring information on the iCasework system. This information is not mandatory but it can help the Council

to review the complaints process and to ensure that it remains accessible and to everyone.

The equalities data presented below is based on 10,077 contact records. In most of these contact records the equalities information was not disclosed. Therefore the equalities breakdown provided in the tables below gives us an indication of the diverse characteristics of complainants or service users in 2023/24. However, we cannot assume that this is an equalized profile of all complainants and service users during this period of time.

Almost 42% of contacts did not provide gender information. Of those who did respond, there were nearly twice as many female persons compared to male persons. This may be disproportionately higher because of the way case contacts are recorded on the system.

Table 1 – Equalities Data – Gender

Total for Gender is 10,077 for 01/04/2022 – 31/03/2023 (does not include Lewisham Homes)

Equality Category	Equality Characteristics	As % of Total Contacts	01/04/2023 to 31/03/2024
Gender	Did not disclose	39%	57%
	Female	36%	28%
	Male	22%	14%
	Prefer not to say	3%	1%
	Transgender	0%	0%
	Total	100%	100%

98% of contacts did not disclose whether they had a disability or not. The remaining 2% of contacts disclosed details of the type of disability or impairment affecting them.

Table 2 – Equalities Data – Disability

Total for Disabilities is 10,077 for 01/04/2022 – 31/03/2023 (does not include Lewisham Homes)

Equality Category	Equality Characteristics	As % of Total Contacts	01/04/2023 to 31/03/2024
Disability	Did not disclose or No Disability	98%	97%
	Disability / Any Other Disability or Impairment	2%	3%
	Physical Impairment	0%	0%
	Mobility Issues	0%	0%
	Mental Health Condition	0%	0%

	Social or Communication Impairment	0%	0%
	Long Standing Illness	0%	0%
	Total	100%	100%

Although 77% of contacts did not disclose their sexual orientation, of the remaining 23% of contact, 939 of the respondents preferred not to say (9%) and almost 1,356 disclosed a heterosexual orientation (13%).

*Table 3 – Equalities Data – Sexual Orientation
Total for Sexual Orientation is 10,077 for 01/04/2022 – 31/03/2023 (does not include Lewisham Homes)*

Equality Category	Equality Characteristics	As % of Total Contacts	01/04/2023 to 31/03/2024
Sexual Orientation	Did not Disclose	77%	70%
	Prefer not to say	9%	19%
	Heterosexual	13%	10%
	Gay / Lesbian	1%	1%
	Bisexual	0%	0%
	Total	100%	100%

Our ethnicity data indicate 70% of those contacting us did not provide ethnicity details and of the remaining 30%, a large proportion of the responses were from the Bangladeshi community. We looked into this anomaly as our 2021 census data tells us that this community only make up 1% of Lewisham’s population and have identified a recording error on our system. This issue has subsequently been reported to our software provider and a fix has been applied. Unfortunately we cannot retrospectively capture the ethnicity data.

*Table 4 - Equalities Data – Ethnicity
Total for Ethnicity is 10,077 for 01/04/2022 – 31/03/2023 (does not include Lewisham Homes)*

Equality Category	Equality Characteristics	As % of Total Contacts	01/04/2023 to 31/03/2024
Ethnicity	Did not disclose	70%	79%
	Bangladeshi	10%	7%
	Prefer not to say	3%	7%
	White Other	2%	2%
	Caribbean	2%	2%
	African	1%	1%
	Black or Black British Other	1%	1%
	Other	<1%	1%

Equality Category	Equality Characteristics	As % of Total Contacts	01/04/2023 to 31/03/2024
	White and Black Caribbean	<1%	0%
	Any other mixed background	<1%	0%
	Indian	<1%	0%
	Asian or Asian British Other	<1%	0%
	White and Black African	<1%	0%
	Chinese	<1%	0%
	Turkish	<1%	0%
	Any other groups	<1%	0%
	Pakistani	<1%	0%
	White and Asian	<1%	0%
	Eastern European	0%	0%
	Traveller or Roma	0%	0%
	Total	100%	100%

75% of contacts did not provide their age data. Of the remaining 25%, more than half of the contacts were from people aged 25 – 54 years (62%).

*Table 5 – Equalities Data – Age Band
Total for Age Group is 10,077 for 01/04/2022 – 31/03/2023 (does not include Lewisham Homes)*

Equality Category	Equality Characteristics	As % of Total Contacts	01/04/2023 to 31/03/2024
Age Band	Did not Disclose	75%	80%
	0 – 14 years old	<1%	<1%
	15 – 24 years old	1%	<1%
	25 – 54 years old	16%	13%
	55 – 64 years old	4%	3%
	65+ years old	3%	3%
	Total	100%	100%

Financial Implications

43. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. The Council has no specific budgets for compensation payments so the costs are absorbed by the relevant service as awarded.

Legal Implications

44. There is now a specific legal implication arising from this report in relation to the Housing Ombudsman complaint handling code which came into effect on 1st April 2024. [Complaint Handling Code 2024 | Housing Ombudsman Service \(housing-ombudsman.org.uk\)](https://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk/complaint-handling-code-2024)

45. Given the subject and nature of this report, it is relevant here to note that the Equality Act 2010 (the Act) introduced a new public sector equality duty (the equality duty or the duty). It covers the following nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

46. In summary, the Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act;

advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not;

Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The duty continues to be a “have regard duty”, and the weight to be attached to it is a matter for the Mayor, bearing in mind the issues of relevance and proportionality. It is not an absolute requirement to eliminate unlawful discrimination, advance equality of opportunity or foster good relations.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission has recently issued Technical Guidance on the Public Sector Equality Duty and statutory guidance entitled “Equality Act 2010 Services, Public Functions & Associations Statutory Code of Practice”. The Council must have regard to the statutory code in so far as it relates to the duty and attention is drawn to Chapter 11 which deals particularly with the equality duty. The Technical Guidance also covers what public authorities should do to meet the duty. This includes steps that are legally required, as well as recommended actions. The guidance does not have statutory force but nonetheless regard should be had to it, as failure to do so without compelling reason would be of evidential value. The statutory code and the technical guidance can be found at:

<http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/legal-and-policy/equality-act/equality-act-codes-of-practice-and-technical-guidance/> The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has previously issued five guides

The essential guide to the public sector equality duty

Meeting the equality duty in policy and decision-making

Engagement and the equality duty

Equality objectives and the equality duty

Equality information and the equality duty

The essential guide provides an overview of the equality duty requirements including the general equality duty, the specific duties and whom they apply to. It covers what public authorities should do to meet the duty including steps that are legally required, as well as recommended actions. The other four documents provide more detailed guidance on key areas and advice on good practice. Further information/resources are available at:

<http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/advice-and-guidance/public-sector-equality-duty/guidance-on-the-equality-duty/>

Appendices

Appendix 1.

Adult Social Care Annual Complaints Report (2023/24) Mark Watson Gray

Appendix 2.

Children' Social Care Annual Complaints Report (2023/24) Tizara Norman

Appendix 3.

Lewisham Council Housing Services Annual Report (2023/24) Dewbien Plummer

Appendix 4.

Stage 3 Adjudicator Annual Report (2023/24) Molly Lofas

Appendix 5.

LGSCO Annual Letter 2024

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for and on behalf of the Executive Director for Corporate Resources David Austin

