

Complaints Handling: Learning Lessons, Identifying Trends, Improving Housing Services

Ian Marriott, Performance & Complaints Improvement Manager, Housing Services, Hackney Council

Hackney's Council Stock

<p>Tower Blocks: 10+ Storeys</p> <p>While high rise is typically defined as six storeys and over, in Hackney we have tower blocks going up to 23 storeys. We have 74 blocks 10 storeys and higher, of which 7 are 20 to 23 storeys.</p> <p>These tower blocks share a number of features relevant to asset management. They are usually lower cost per unit to maintain due to the high number of properties in them.</p> <p>While access for operatives to external facades is challenging, they need access less often as these buildings are usually designed with minimal external maintenance needs; they almost always have internal communal areas, internal drains and rarely have external painted finishes or brickwork.</p> <p>Typical maintenance challenges include fire safety, lifts and the internal drainage runs.</p> <p>They have usually been built in the 1960s and 1970s and careful attention needs to be given to the condition of the concrete and structure.</p>	<p>3,862 properties</p> 	<p>Low Rise: Up to 6 Storeys</p> <p>This is by far the most common typology. Construction is usually quite traditional with extensive use of brick facades, cavity construction and usually an inner concrete frame. Roofs are a mixture of flat and low pitch.</p> <p>They were originally built with quite basic mechanical and electrical services, and retrofitting or replacing these successfully remains a challenge.</p> <p>Unusually there is a very high proportion of maisonettes at over 50 per cent. Therefore while construction types have lower maintenance demands, larger unit sizes offset this.</p>	<p>14,317 properties</p> 	<p>Street Property Houses</p> <p>These were not built as social housing, but purchased. As such they are scattered around the borough, presenting logistical challenges in working on them.</p> <p>They are all pre-war properties, and many are Victorian. Many are in conservation areas or listed. Old foundations were not built with damp proof courses so dampness can be a problem.</p> <p>Traditional detailing and large properties contribute to very high unit costs.</p>	<p>596 properties</p> 
<p>High Rise: 6 to 9 Storeys</p> <p>These are six to nine storeys and could be flats or maisonettes. Often blocks will contain a mix. Unit costs tend to be higher than tower blocks, as they will more often need external maintenance with access for operatives.</p> <p>There are additional fire safety building regulations on buildings above six storeys including a limit on combustible materials on the external facade.</p> <p>Communal areas are usually internal though there are quite a few with open deck access. As with tower blocks, all will have at least one lift. Maintaining external concrete in good condition is a priority.</p>	<p>5,828 properties</p> 	<p>Estate Houses</p> <p>Estate houses are purpose-built houses, found on our estates, almost all have been constructed since 1945, usually using quite standard traditional construction techniques.</p> <p>There are no communal areas or services, and access is straightforward so maintenance costs are lower. Careful attention is required to ensure freehold properties are identified.</p>	<p>2,855 properties</p> 	<p>Sub-divided Street Property Houses</p> <p>These have the same challenges as standard street properties, as they are all pre-war houses converted into flats.</p> <p>This conversion brings additional challenges especially in ensuring fire compartmentation is adequate, or alarms are in place. Communal areas are an additional work area.</p> <p>Unit costs are very high, though not as high as single street properties.</p>	<p>942 properties</p> 
		<p>Pre-War Mansion Blocks: Up to 6 Storeys</p> <p>These are usually four to six storeys in height and warrant separate attention due to their traditional detailing, sash windows, and often having unusual flat layouts, and mansard roof floor levels.</p> <p>Access is usually open deck, and these blocks were not built with lifts, but some have later lift tower additions. They usually have no cavities to add wall insulation and can't have external wall insulation applied either due to decorative finishes and space limitations on open deck access balconies.</p>	<p>2,262 properties</p> 	<p>New Build: Since 2000</p> <p>Homes constructed since 2000 will have been built to high standards of energy-efficiency and accessibility.</p> <p>As a result they have more mechanical and electrical (M&E) equipment, often of a specialist nature, which requires maintenance, though the building fabric should require limited work for some years to come.</p> <p>This section contains a mix of 590 flats and 78 houses but building maintenance is limited and numbers are low, so there is no significant need to separate these as typologies.</p>	<p>668 properties</p> 

Hackney: A Changing Housing Complaints Environment

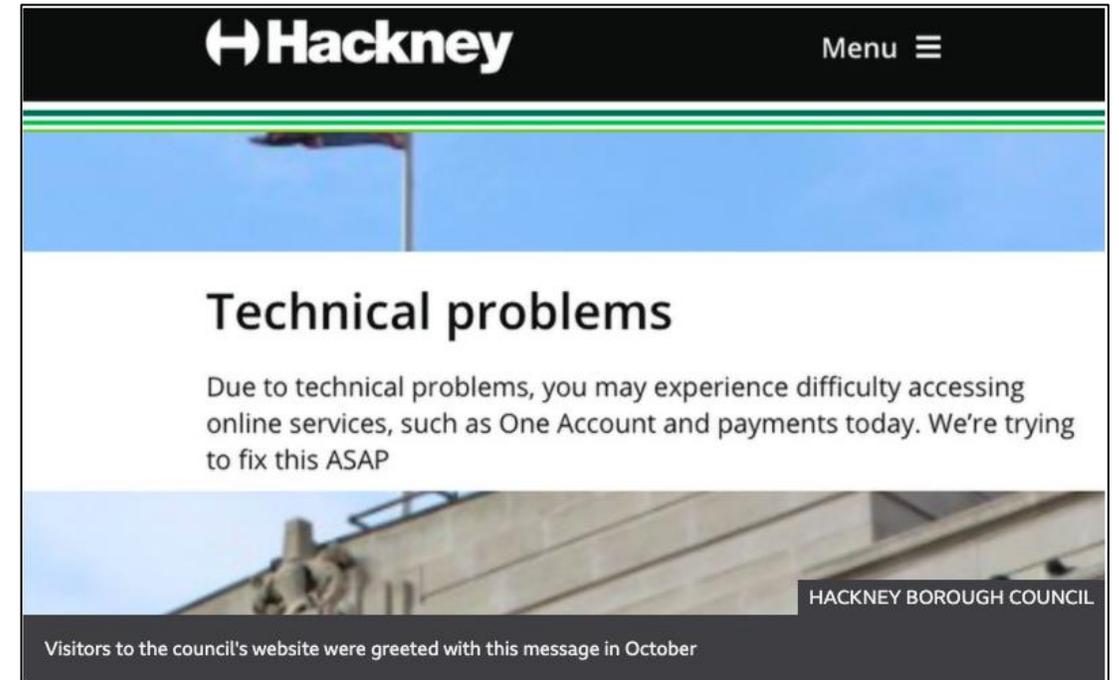
<p>September 2020:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of the new HOS Complaint Handling Code • New Housing Services complaint handling procedure 	<div data-bbox="825 376 1375 519" data-label="Image"> </div> <div data-bbox="810 586 1447 689" data-label="Text"> <p>Complaint Handling Code Our Complaint Handling Code sets out good practice that will allow landlords to respond to complaints effectively and fairly</p> </div> <div data-bbox="1533 408 2321 629" data-label="Table"> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>Procedure title</td> <td>Housing Service Complaint Handling Procedure</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Purpose</td> <td>Staff guidance on how to manage complaints.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Scope</td> <td>Applies to all Housing Services staff</td> </tr> </table> </div>	Procedure title	Housing Service Complaint Handling Procedure	Purpose	Staff guidance on how to manage complaints.	Scope	Applies to all Housing Services staff
Procedure title	Housing Service Complaint Handling Procedure						
Purpose	Staff guidance on how to manage complaints.						
Scope	Applies to all Housing Services staff						
<p>October 2020:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of new Central Housing Complaints team 	<div data-bbox="805 765 1600 1082" data-label="Diagram"> <p style="text-align: center;">Central Housing Complaints Team</p> <pre> graph TD A[Performance & Complaints Improvement Manager] --> B[Senior Complaints Officer] A --> C[Senior Complaints Officer] A --> D[Senior Complaints Officer] </pre> </div>						
<p>November 2020:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch of new complaints system - iCasework 	<div data-bbox="825 1119 1839 1239" data-label="Image"> </div>						

Housing Service Complaint Handling Procedure: Key Aims

Procedure title	Housing Service Complaint Handling Procedure
Purpose	Staff guidance on how to manage complaints.
Scope	Applies to all Housing Services staff

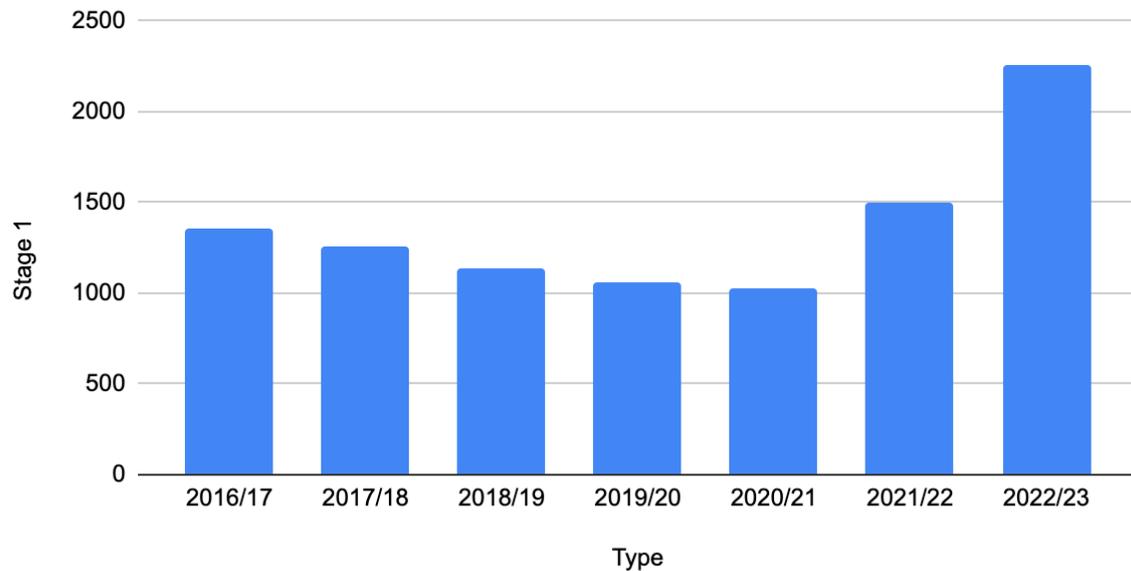
Section	Content
1	Housing Complaints - General Information
	What is a Complaint?
	What Can a Customer Complain About?
	What Isn't a Complaint?
	Who Can Make a Complaint?
	Who Can Help Customers With Their Complaint?
	How Can a Customer Make a Complaint?
2	Centralised Housing Complaints Team (CHCT) & Housing Services Procedure
	Receipt of Complaint
	Verification
	Logging & Allocation
	Table 1 - Complaints Handling Process Map
	Allocation to Service Areas
	Monitoring & Customer Updates
	Management Line Escalation
	Table 2 - Escalation of Delayed Cases Process Map
	Maintenance of Records
	Corporate Standards
	Performance Management & Lessons Learnt
	Awarding Compensation
	Logging of Compensation Offers
	Compensation Payments

Implementing Complaints Handling Changes: A Testing Environment

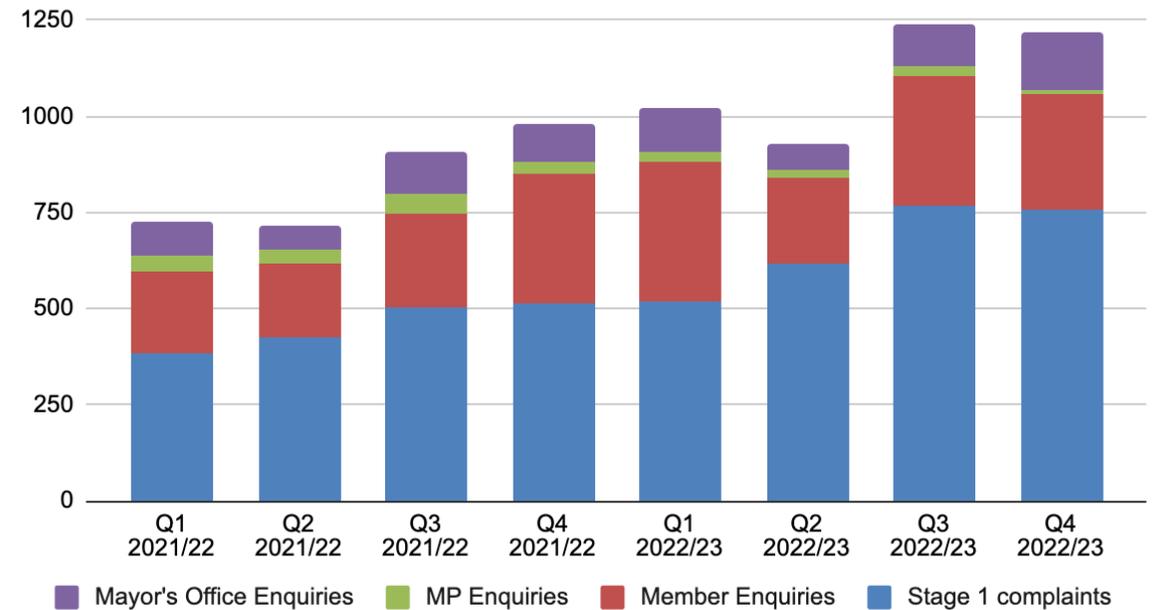


The Current Complaints Environment

Stage 1 Complaint Investigations Received, 2016/17-2022/23



Casework Volumes, 2021/22-2022/23



Learning Lessons, Identifying Trends, Improving Services – The Early Days (April 2021)

- First Monthly Complaints Performance Report to HSMT meetings.
- Basic volumes of cases received, closed.
- Manual calculation of response times via spreadsheet.
- High level summary of lessons learnt log spreadsheet.

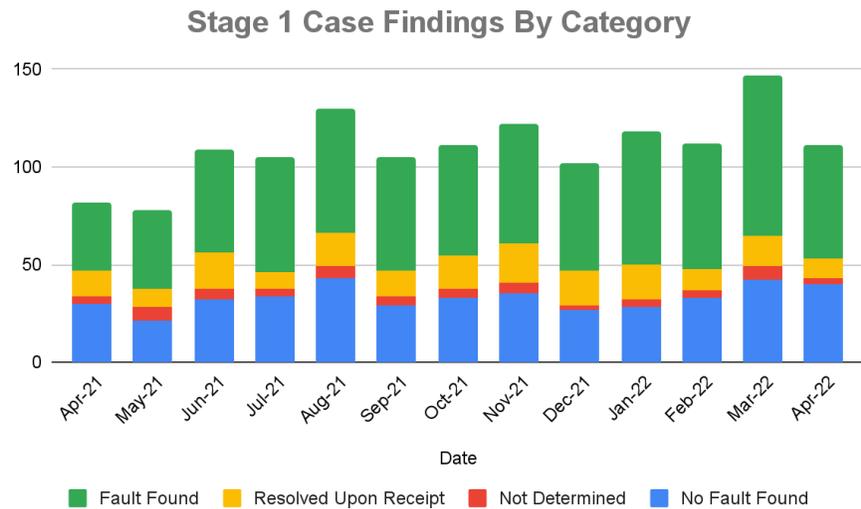
ROOT CAUSE ANALYSIS/LESSONS LEARNT

The Central Housing Complaints team have set up a Lessons Learnt log so that we can keep tabs on the types of complaints that we are receiving, identify common or arising themes and start addressing any operational or performance issues that may be generating such complaints. Some of the key issues that we have identified so far include:

- Complaints over what Contact Centre staff deem to be emergency jobs during the latest lockdown.
- Issues with repairs operatives attending appointments agreed in the aftermath of the cyber attack.
- Contractor performance in addressing heating and hot water issues for the properties that they look after.
- Communal boiler performance.
- Scale of energy bills in newbuild properties.
- Failure to process rehousing applications quickly enough.
- Leaseholders being unable to query arrears letters that they have received as they can't contact officers in the team.
- Lift breakdowns and the impact that they have on vulnerable people.
- Newbuild defects/regen documentation.

We have also set up an issues log in order to identify ways in which we can process complaints more efficiently going forward. Over the four months since the roll out of OneCase, we have identified both good and bad practice in terms of complaints handling and will be putting into place a number of initiatives to extend the good working practices across the whole of Housing Services.

Learning Lessons, Identifying Trends, Improving Services – Increasing Use Of System Data



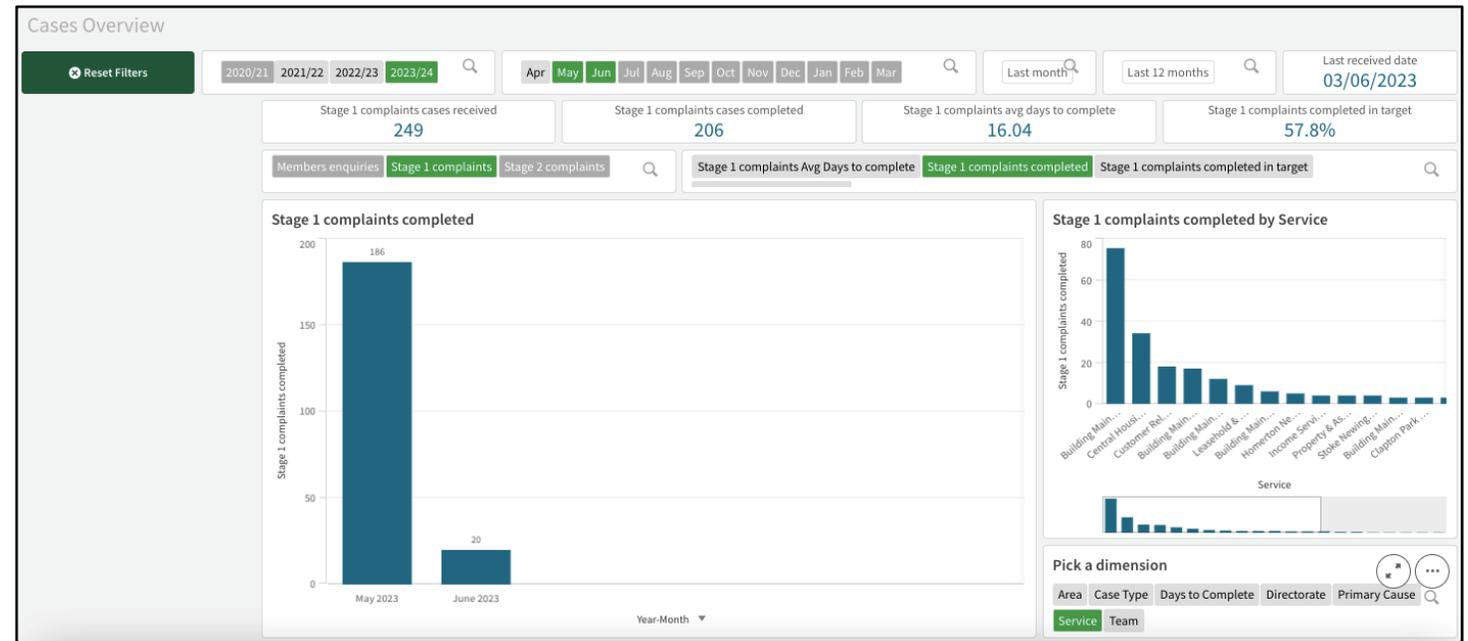
BACT - Stage 2 Cases received - BACT - Stage 2 Cases received View data grid All Hackney Council emails and attachments are priva...	13 Feb
Tasks created - Housing Ombudsman Prem - Housing - You have been subscribed to the following report: Tasks created - Housing Omb...	13 Feb
Cases received resolved upon receipt (Housing) - Cases received resolved upon receipt (Housing) View data grid All Hackney Council e...	13 Feb
Housing Ombudsman - Live Formal Enquiries - Housing Ombudsman - Live Formal Enquiries View data grid All Hackney Council emails ...	13 Feb
Corrective actions for closed cases (Housing Services) - Corrective actions for closed cases (Housing Services) View dat...	
Housing Services - Overdue Mayor's Office Enquiries - Housing Services - Overdue Mayor's Office Enquiries View data grid All Hackney ...	13 Feb
Housing - Daily corrective actions for closed cases - Housing - Daily corrective actions for closed cases View data grid All Hackney ...	13 Feb
Housing Services - Open Mayor's Office Enquiries - Housing Services - Open Mayor's Office Enquiries Status Total % Answered 12%...	13 Feb
NH HH - Housing Ombudsman - Open cases to date summary version JHM - NH HH - Housing Ombudsman - Open cases to date s...	13 Feb
BACT - Corrective actions for Ombudsman cases JHM - BACT - Corrective actions for Ombudsman cases JHM View data grid All Ha...	13 Feb



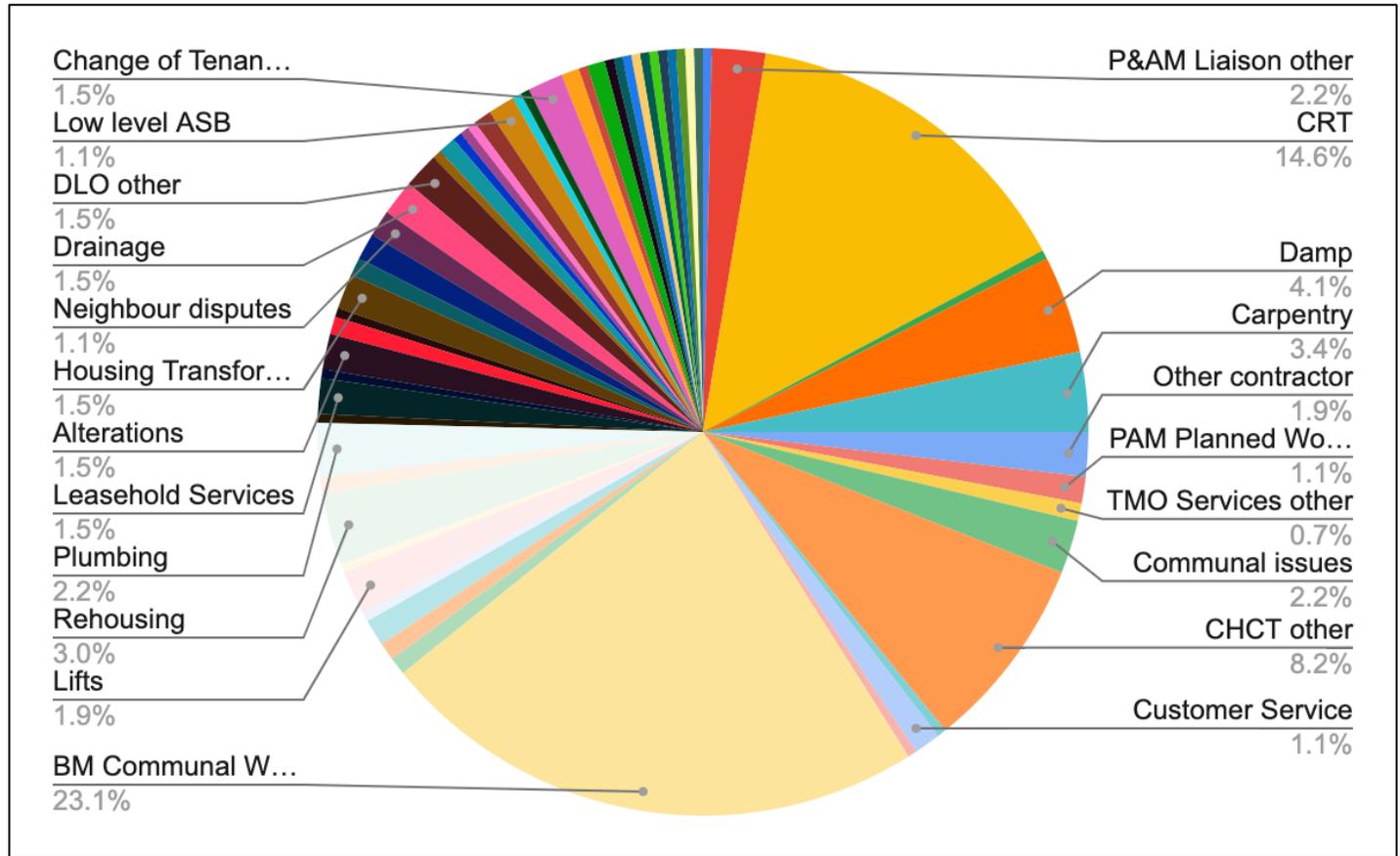
- Team dashboard - Report library -
- Case management reports
 - Quarterly cross-tabular reports
 - Monthly cross-tabular reports
 - Quarterly analysis - Corporate
 - Quarterly analysis - Directorate
 - Monthly analysis - Corporate
 - Monthly analysis - Directorate
 - Customer profile analysis
 - Administrative reports
 - Member enquiry analysis

Learning Lessons, Identifying Trends, Improving Services – QlikSense Transformation (autumn 2022)

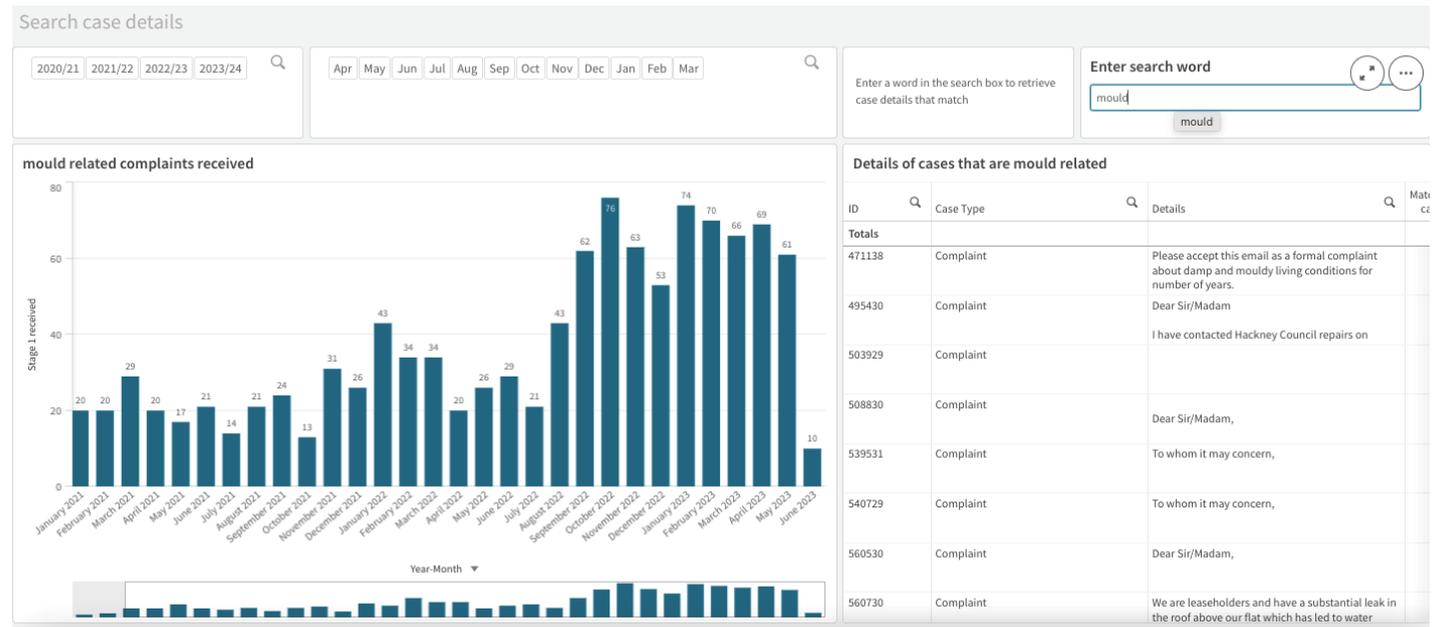
- Migration of OneCase data to QlikSense BI tool.
- Key metrics (e.g. case volumes, response times/rates, satisfaction survey results) available in real time.
- Monthly complaints report development time slashed.
- More time to focus on trends, analysis and lessons.



Learning Lessons, Identifying Trends, Improving Services – Data Challenges



Learning Lessons, Identifying Trends, Improving Services – Data Challenges



Learning Lessons, Identifying Trends, Improving Services – Embedding Learning Across Housing Services

Currently

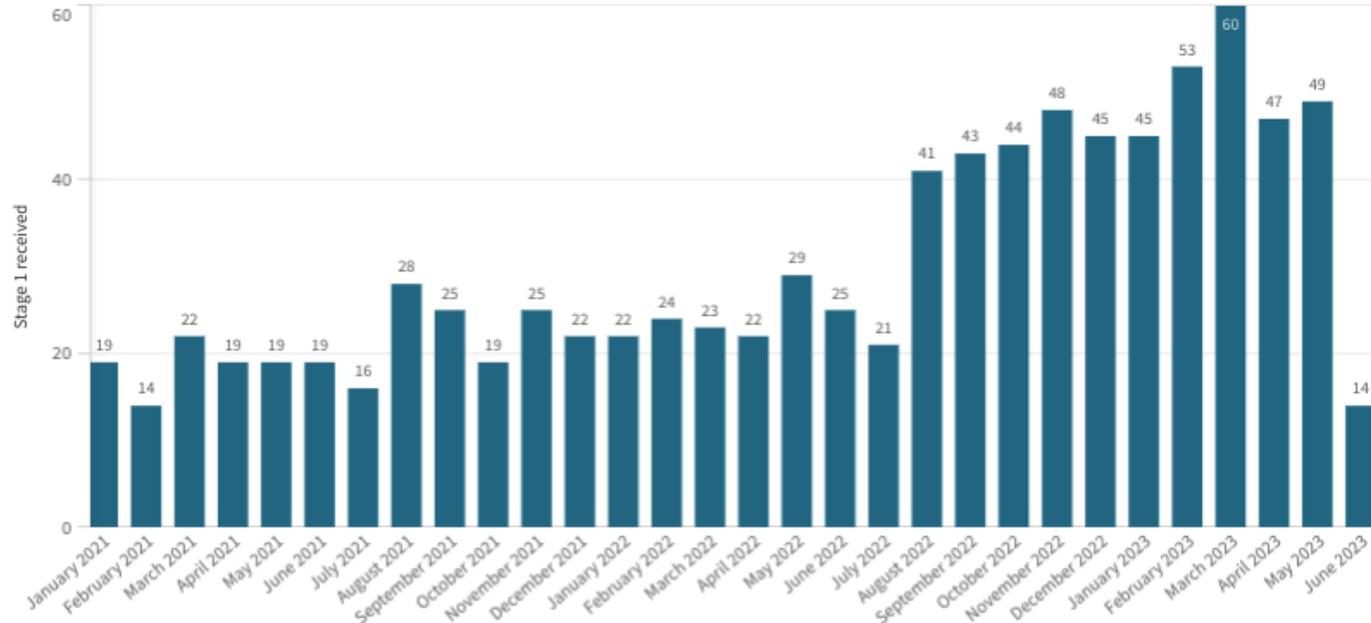
- Monthly complaint report to senior management team each month.
- Increasingly data rich report – e.g. appendices containing all cases where fault found, breakdown by service areas/root cause analysis, free text on service failures.
- Report circulated to managers to review lessons learnt.
- HOS case tracker standing item on senior management team agenda each fortnight.

In Progress

- Dedicated service failure/lessons learnt reports circulated to managers each month.
- Service failure improvement action plans owned by Heads of Service with detailed monitoring of progress.
- Monthly lessons learnt meetings with Housing Transformation to review progress and identify improvement initiatives.
- Roll out of training on OneCase corrective actions functionality to ensure that actions promised in complaint responses are delivered on.
- Training on better root cause analysis classifications.
- Internal storytelling.

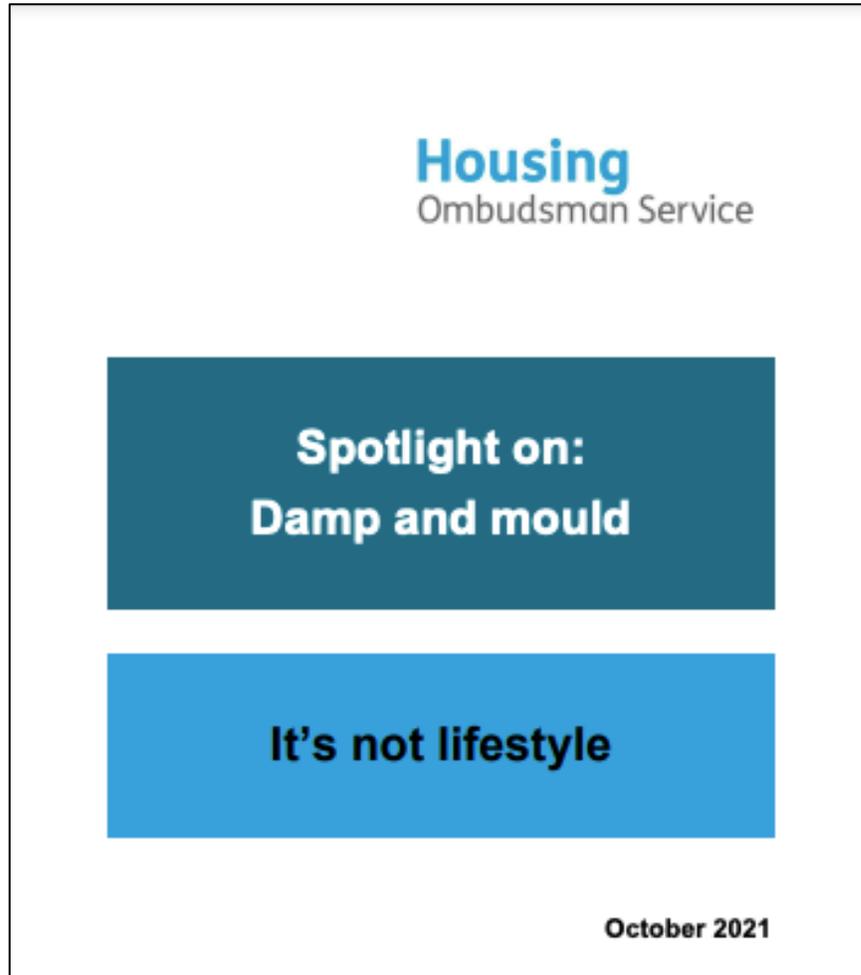
Learning Lessons, Identifying Trends, Improving Services: Surveyor Inspections

surveyor related complaints received



- Learnings Identified
 - Post cyber attack workaround systems had broken the flow of intelligence on the progress of jobs and their latest position.
- Actions
 - Use of QlikSense BI tool to build a new monitoring regime.
 - Live performance dashboards for management of surveyors (e.g. producing reports, raising work orders).
 - Contractor site visits
 - Dedicated surveyor resource for progressing lapsed cases.

Using Data To Deliver Service Improvements - Damp & Mould



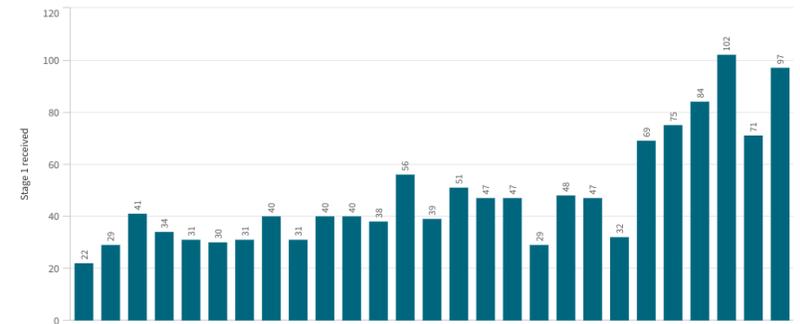
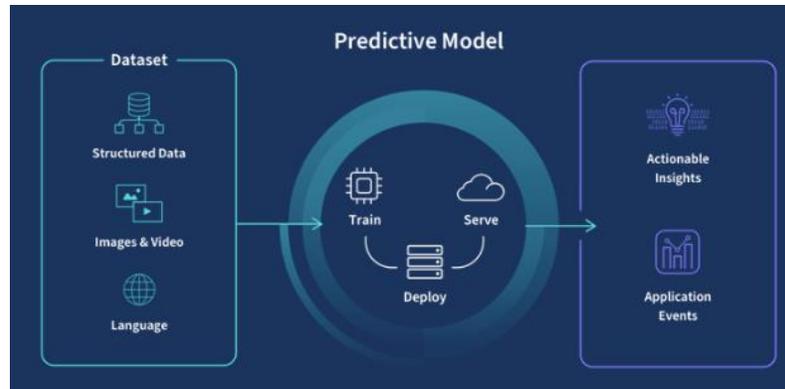
- ***Recommendation 5:** Landlords should implement a data driven, risk-based approach with respect to damp and mould. This will reduce over reliance on residents to report issues, help landlords identify hidden issues and support landlords to anticipate and prioritise interventions before a complaint or disrepair claim is made.*
- ***Recommendation 12:** Landlords should consider their current approach to record keeping and satisfy themselves it is sufficiently accurate and robust. We would encourage landlords to go further and consider whether their record keeping systems and processes support a risk-based approach to damp and mould.*

- Aim: Use all relevant data in our data warehouse (of which complaint/enquiry data is a key component) and increasingly advanced analytical techniques to achieve the above.
- Apply the same principles across other areas of housing to deliver service improvements to residents.

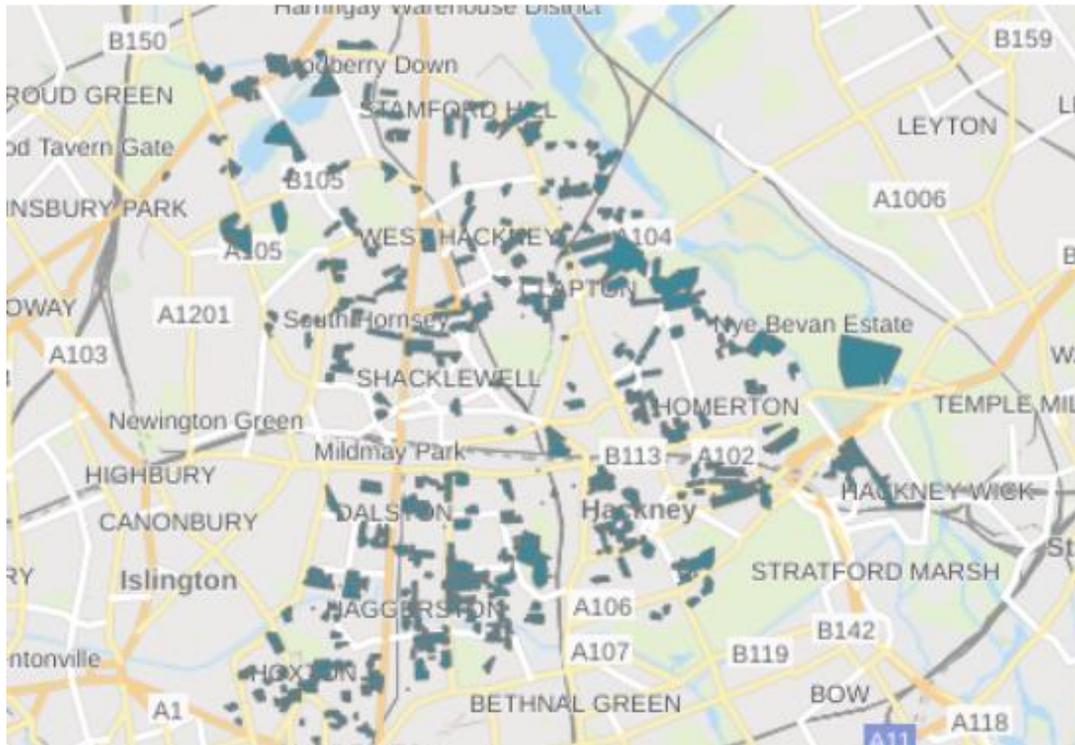
Using Data To Deliver Service Improvements - Damp & Mould



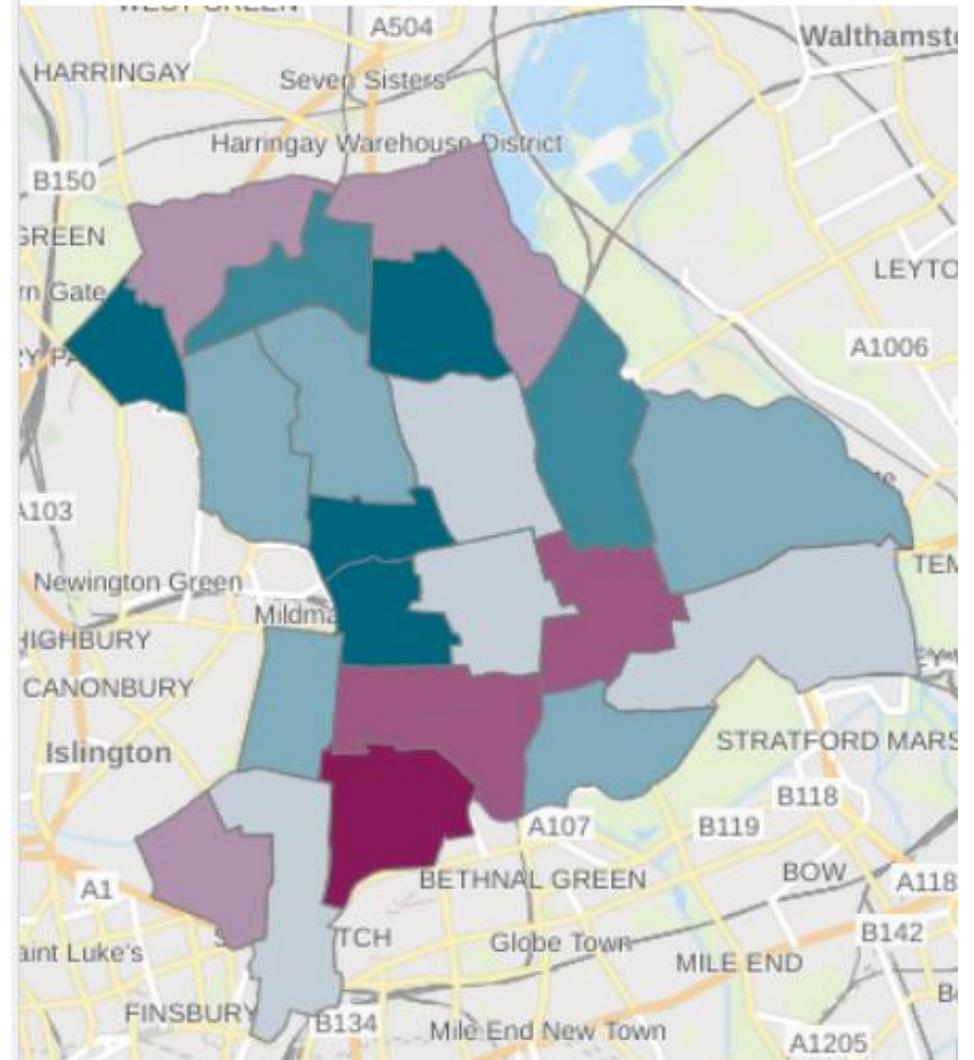
Building Maintenance Surveyors	Members enquiry	Damp
Building Maintenance Contractors	Members enquiry	Damp
Customer Relationship Team	Members enquiry	Damp
Building Maintenance Surveyors	Members enquiry	Damp
Customer Relationship Team	Members enquiry	Damp
Building Maintenance Surveyors	Members enquiry	Damp
Building Maintenance Surveyors	Members enquiry	Damp
Building Maintenance Surveyors	Complaint	Damp
Central Housing Complaints Team	Complaint	Damp
Legal Disrepair	Members enquiry	Damp
Building Maintenance DLO	Members enquiry	Damp
Customer Relationship Team	Members enquiry	Damp



Cases by postcode



Cases by Ward



Using Data To Deliver Service Improvements - Damp & Mould

Improvement Action Plan

- Clear the backlog of responsive repairs built up as a result of limiting the service to emergency / urgent repairs only for 12 months. QlikSense dashboard established to monitor overdue repairs and manage progress in carrying them out.
- Increase the operational capacity of the repairs team through recruitment of additional trade operatives and appointment of external contractors.
- Reduce the number of Legal Disrepair cases via use of a data led case management tool to prioritise the workload.
- Undertake a sample borough wide stock condition survey which will include specific assessments of damp and mould and prioritising blocks more likely to suffer from damp and mould.
- Create a Property MOT which looks at the general condition of properties. Predictive data model in development to aid the prioritisation of blocks and properties most at risk.
- Design a proactive service for the 10% of tenants that generate the least contact, including developing a proactive service for vulnerable tenants.
- Design a proactive service for the tenants that generate most contact to reduce complaints and manage demand.