

<b>LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN</b>	<b>WARDS:</b> All
<p><b>REPORT TITLE</b>  Housing Ombudsman Annual Complaint Handling and Service Improvement Report and Complaint Handling Code Self-assessment - London Borough of Camden 2024-25</p>	
<p><b>REPORT OF</b>  The Borough Solicitor</p>	
<p><b>FOR SUBMISSION TO</b>  Resources and Corporate Performance Scrutiny Committee</p> <p>Housing Scrutiny Committee</p>	<p><b>DATE</b>  8<sup>th</sup> December 2025</p> <p>9<sup>th</sup> December 2025</p>
<p><b>STRATEGIC CONTEXT</b></p> <p>We Make Camden is our joint vision for the borough, developed in partnership with our community. In the partner document The Way We Work which is how we will change as an organisation to deliver our shared priorities we have said that we are committed to connecting to our communities and listening and responding to make change to what we hear.</p> <p>This report contributes to the Council’s aspirations by acknowledging that complaints and formal enquiries provide a regular and rich source of feedback from our citizens that inform us when things have gone wrong. Learning from these gives the Council the opportunity to improve services to support our citizens. This report further acknowledges the Ombudsman Special Investigation, its outcome and how the Council plans to build on this in terms of its future performance.</p> <p>On the 27<sup>th</sup> November 2025 the Audit and Corporate Governance Committee agreed an amended corporate complaints procedure and in so doing incorporating the input from the Housing Ombudsman and ensuring that our policy remained consistent with their best practice. Prior to that on the 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2025, Audit and Corporate Governance Committee had agreed an amended Remedies Policy. This is part of the Council seeking to ensure its policies and procedures remain updated and fit for purpose.</p>	

## **SUMMARY OF REPORT**

The Housing Ombudsman requires all Landlords to produce a report annually. The report must contain the following key elements:

- Annual self-assessment
- Analysis of Housing complaints performance
- Any findings of non-compliance
- Service Improvements made
- Housing Ombudsman Annual Report on the Landlord
- Any other relevant reports.

It is a requirement to present this report to the relevant governing bodies and to publish the governing bodies' response alongside the report and self-assessment.

This report has considered the Housing Ombudsman's Paragraph 49 Investigation into the Councils handling of leaks, damp and mould complaints and repairs. This investigation concluded in July 2025 when the Housing Ombudsman confirmed that it was satisfied that all recommendations had been addressed. The results of the investigation and the action plan were reported to Housing Scrutiny Committee on the 15<sup>th</sup> September 2025. The agreed final action plan is attached at Appendix 4 together with the full report.

In Camden the governing bodies for this annual report have been agreed as the Resources and Corporate Performance Scrutiny Committee and Housing Scrutiny Committee. This is the second report following the new requirements and has been developed in an accessible and easy to understand format. Members are an important source of insight and intelligence on concerns raised by residents and communities and officers look forward to hearing their views and suggestions including on how best to present this information to Members.

### **Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information**

No previously unpublished documents that require listing have been used in the preparation of this report.

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## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Resources and Corporate Performance Scrutiny Committee and Housing Scrutiny Committee are asked to provide a response to the report, which the Housing Ombudsman requires the Council to publish alongside the self-assessment.

Signed: 

Andrew Maughan  
Borough Solicitor  
Corporate Services

Date: 26 November 2026

## **1. Purpose of the report**

- 1.1 We are committed to being a listening and learning Council and The Way We Work is our Council call to action to address complex issues and work with our communities to make them better. We are continuing to adapt how we work and how we respond to issues and concerns to ensure we are working in an open and human-centred way. An effective complaints process enables the Council to learn from the issues that arise for residents and to take steps to improve the services it provides. Complaint handling performs an important strategic role for the Council, providing vital intelligence on its performance, culture and reputation.
- 1.2 The Complaints Handling Code was introduced as part of the Ombudsman's new powers in the revised Housing Ombudsman Scheme in 2022. It was updated and became a joint Code with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024. Compliance with the Code is mandatory for landlords who are members of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme; compliance is not mandatory but is recommended for LGSCO complaints handling.
- 1.3 Since the Code was introduced, the Council has used it as the basis for effective complaint handling for all departments, not just Housing .
- 1.4 This report only deals with Housing complaints that are of relevance to the Housing Ombudsman and the Social Housing Regulator. Therefore, the complaints highlighted relate to services provided by the Housing and Property Divisions within the Supporting Communities Directorate.
- 1.5 This report focuses not only on volumes and timeliness of responses but also identifies key themes and lessons learnt that result in service improvements. There is further detailed analysis of the complaints performance of our housing services as part of the wider council wide complaints report.
- 1.6 The relevant Heads of Service have contributed to the report and the report has been considered by senior managers. They have added their comments and feedback as well as having had the opportunity to consider how the report and details concerning their service could influence future service delivery and practice generally.
- 1.7 The purpose of the Code is to enable the Council to resolve complaints relating to Housing and Property Services raised by its residents effectively and to use the data and learning from complaints to drive service improvements. It supports the regulatory approach to complaints ensuring that a landlord's approach to complaints is clear, simple and accessible and ensures that complaints are resolved promptly, politely and fairly.
- 1.8 The Code acts as a guide for residents setting out what they can and should expect from the Council when they complain. The requirements in the Code also provide residents with information about how to make a complaint and how to progress it through the Council's complaints procedure.

- 1.9 In October 2022 it became mandatory for landlords to complete a self-assessment demonstrating that their policies and procedures were compliant. From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 the Code made it mandatory to also produce an annual complaint handling and service improvement report alongside the self-assessment.
- 1.10 The data used in the self-assessment and annual housing complaints handling report is taken from the Tenant Satisfaction Measures Annual Data Return 2024/2025 that is submitted to the Social Housing Regulator in June each year.
- 1.11 Therefore, the above only relates to Housing complaints handling data and are supplementary reports that will be incorporated into the wider and more comprehensive Corporate Annual Complaints Report which is due to go to Audit and Cabinet in December.
- 1.12 This year the Housing Ombudsman Paragraph 49 report and subsequently agreed action plan does cut across our requirement to produce and Improvement report. To a very large extent the action plan is an improvement plan. However, the Ombudsman have confirmed that the fact of the Paragraph 49 investigation does not remove the necessity to complete and lodge the action plan. Therefore, we look to build on those agreed actions and put them into the wider Council context in our complaint handling report.

## **2. The Improvement Report**

- 2.1 The Annual Complaint Handling and Service Improvement Report for 2024-25 (Appendix 1) contains the following:
- Analysis of Housing complaints performance
  - Any findings of non-compliance
  - Service Improvements made and contained within the agreed action plan.
- 2.2 The Housing Ombudsman Landlord Report for Camden Council 2024-25 (Appendix 2) is the annual report produced by the Housing Ombudsman containing data, feedback and recommendations, based on Camden Council's performance.
- 2.3 As can be seen from the Improvement Report, the Council accepts its failings which led to the Special Investigation Report. It did however proactively work with the Ombudsman (from November 2023 to November 2024) providing full disclosure of all relevant material. Once the report was published officers met with the Ombudsman three times to work through and address the recommendations in their report. The final meeting in July 2025 led to the Ombudsman confirming they were completely satisfied that all recommendations had been met. This was a time-consuming exercise for all involved but has led to a set of recommendations which are on point, ambitious and should produce real and sustained improvement. There are

three main themes; complaint handling, property condition and repair and how we deal with vulnerable residents. Members will note how the recommendations meet these three areas of concern.

- 2.4 The Improvement Report repeats and adopts those recommendations in full. Given the time, thought and input from the Ombudsman into their creation they are worth highlighting and repeating. However, the report does emphasise areas where further improvement work is planned. This includes the wider corporate approach and the further prioritising of complaints in Camden.
- 2.5 The Committees are asked to provide a response including reflections on the Council's performance, service improvements and overall themes noting the comments from Housing Scrutiny when it met on the 15<sup>th</sup> September 2025 to discuss the action plan following the special investigation.
- 2.6 Minutes from the Housing Scrutiny meeting on the 15<sup>th</sup> September 2025

*Minute Extract Scot Reid, Head of Housing and Property Engagement and Customer Services, took the meeting through the report and he along with Councillor Sagal Abdi-Wali, Cabinet Member Better Homes, and Gavin Haynes, Director of Property Management, gave the following key responses to questions:*

- *Making it easy for tenants and residents to report repairs and keeping them informed about what would happen next was one of the key issues raised by the Housing Ombudsman. The Council had already recognised this and had been on a journey over the last 6 years to deliver on this commitment. The Council now had in place many ways tenants and residents could report repairs that included WhatsApp and SMS, and Madetech which saw nearly 20% of residents use this service last month.*
- *Madetech Service allowed residents to report and track repairs easily. If the repair was handled by the Council's in-house team, residents could follow its progress online. The system avoided duplication, as information only needed to be entered once.*
- *Officers had worked closely with the Residents' Panel, who tested the Madetech system and gave feedback leading to further improvements. From next month, residents would be able to report heating and hot water emergencies during business hours without needing to call and wait in a queue. This service would also be used to keep tenants and residents informed about when contractors would be on site to undertake works in future.*
- *Officers worked with Neighbourhood Housing Officers to reach residents who hadn't been in touch for a while, through tenancy visits and door-knocking, to understand what might be going on in their homes.*
- *The Council now kept residents updated—for example, if a lift broke down, by sending out texts explaining what had happened, what was being done, and when it would be fixed. This kind of proactive communication was something both the Ombudsman and the Council's tenants and residents expected.*

- *The launch of a new repair system called ROCC in December 2024, which streamlined the handling of repairs by integrating multiple functions, including repair management and appointment scheduling. A key feature of ROCC was its ability to support self-service options for residents. ROCC also allowed the repairs team to track appointments and manage work in real-time, ensuring that jobs are completed more efficiently and accurately, all which would improve the service provided and avoid the need for repeated appointments.*
- *The capital works team had sought to make improvements to its early engagement mechanisms and part of that was making sure each project had clerk of works. The Council also carried out independent surveys at the end of each scheme, and project managers worked together to identify common themes and lessons across different contracts.*
- *Tenant satisfaction data showed that generally tenants and residents were very satisfied with both the service and the repairs.*
- *The Council had completely changed the way it handled complaints. Previously, when a formal complaint was submitted through the central complaints team, it was passed to the relevant service, which would then acknowledge it within a set number of days. Now as soon as a complaint is allocated, someone from the team would call the resident straight away to confirm it had been received, provide the reference number, and check if anything had been missed. The officer handling the complaint would then follow up with another call to confirm the details and ask if there was anything else that could help with the investigation. The Council still aimed to send a full response within 10 working days. But it has now introduced a new step: if the complaint involved a follow-on repair, the new completion team made sure the job was booked in and kept the resident informed. Once the work was done, they would call again to confirm it had been completed and send a follow-up letter, significantly improving the engagement experience for the tenant or resident.*
- *Officers from the Council had set up a complaint's forum for London boroughs, and at one of the meetings, the Housing Ombudsman shared that a complaint was being logged with them every three minutes. August 2025 had seen the highest number of complaints they had ever recorded for that month, and they were working to clear a small backlog.*
- *The Council had identified three key areas where it still needed to improve: reducing wait times, keeping residents updated about what was happening next and clarifying tenant responsibilities—especially where certain repairs were the tenant's responsibility and could lead to areas of challenge.*
- *Regular updates were provided to councillors through monthly ward briefings. These included the number of complaints received, common themes, trends and customer satisfaction data, which showed that 85% of residents were satisfied with the service after a job was completed—highlighting that most complaints were not about the quality of the actual repairs.*
- *Officers advised that with Awaabs Law coming into effect from October 27th, the Council's whole approach to supporting with emergencies and tackling hazards will be changing. Officers would provide further information on this to ensure emergencies were addressed swiftly and efficiently; where there were any checks and balances to ensure repairs were not lost; and was an analysis carried out as a matter of course of what the lesson's learned from repair's that did not go to plan.*

- **ACTION BY: Director of Property Management**
- *Camden has a clear system for handling complaints and service requests. When a tenant or resident contact's the independent complaints team, they assess whether it was a new repair request or a formal complaint. If it was a repair request, it would then be passed to the team to action the same day. If the resident expressed dissatisfaction and there was a history behind the issue, it was usually be treated as a formal complaint, and a record was provided to the resident. Stage two complaints were reviewed independently, and the Council has a robust process for identifying dissatisfaction and complaints. The Housing Ombudsman had looked into this and hadn't raised any concerns.*
- *The Neighbourhood Action Days had been very well received with over 1,000 face-to-face conversations with tenants and residents taking place many of which expressed a preference for this type of interaction over a digital based one. Based on this feedback, the service planned to run more events next year and over the winter, including sessions in libraries and other venues, to reach more people in person. Members of the committee were invited to indicate venues that could be used for these events.*

**ACTION BY: Members of the committee**

- *The Council's Vulnerable Residents Policy, which had been reviewed by the Disability Oversight Panel, had now been published. Over the next year, there would be a review of the Enhanced Repairs Policy, especially in light of Awaab's Law, which would come into effect from 27 October and required a new approach to tracking repairs.*
- *Officers regularly reviewed lessons learned from complaints and reported trends to the board. Residents could give feedback through post-repair surveys and independent phone calls. Repairs managers were expected to inspect major works, and the authority collected over 1,000 pieces of customer satisfaction data each month. This made the service one of the most informed parts of the Council.*
- *Officers used this data to make improvements, and the lessons learned lead played a key role in driving changes. A new lessons learned officer was in place whose role it was to ensure service improvements were addressed when necessary. All of this was made transparent through the Council's website and resident microsite, where updates were shared with residents and members.*

*The scrutiny committee welcomed the work of the Council in addressing the recommendations arising from the Housing Ombudsman's report and the progress made leading to the investigation being closed. The scrutiny committee noted the proposed service improvements arising from this work that had been undertaken and would be considering how it wished to monitor the progress in future as part of the discussion on the work programme item.*

**RESOLVED –**

*THAT the report be noted*



### **3. Annual Self-Assessment**

- 3.1 The Councils Housing Ombudsman (HO) Self-Assessment submission is attached as Appendix 3 to this report. The purpose of the HO self-assessment is to set out how landlords demonstrate their complaint handling service complies with the provisions of the Code. In addition, the self-assessment also supports landlords to inform residents about service provision. Members comments are sought

### **4. Finance Comments of the Director of Finance**

- 4.1 The Complaints service is funded from existing general fund resources. Financial remedies are paid from directorate services' budgets. There are no specific financial implications arising from this report.
- 4.2 The Director of Finance has been consulted and has no comments to add.

### **5. Legal Comments of the Borough Solicitor**

- 5.1 The Housing Ombudsman requires all members who are social housing landlords to comply with its Complaints Handling Code (2022) and to provide a self-assessment evidencing compliance. Failure to follow the Code may result in the Ombudsman issuing a Complaint Handling Failure Order.

### **6. Environmental Implications**

- 6.1 The information and data presented in this report have no environmental implications.

### **7. Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Housing Ombudsman Annual Complaint Handling and Service Improvement Report LBC 24~25

Appendix 2 – Housing Ombudsman ~Landlord Report~Camden Council 2024~2025

Appendix 3 – LB Camden Housing Ombudsman Self Assessment November 2025

Appendix 4 – Report to Housing Scrutiny Committee 15<sup>th</sup> November 2025

**REPORT ENDS**