



Wandsworth Council Complaint Handling Focus Group

Wednesday 25th March 2025



Aim of the Focus Group

We are committed to improving our complaint handling service, so as a first step we held a focus group with residents to look at areas of dissatisfaction.

The aim was to highlight areas that can be improved by listening to resident views and experiences and to then agree an action plan to improve our services to reduce complaints and to improve outcomes for residents.

Who was involved and how were participants chosen?

6 tenants and 5 leaseholders of Wandsworth Council

Residents had either shown dissatisfaction in the annual resident perception survey or had shown an interest in attending focus groups via the Council Participation Register.

Vice-Chair of the Borough Resident Forum

The Vice-Chair represents the views of tenants and leaseholders involved in the resident scrutiny panels.

3 members of Council staff

Assistant Director of Resident and Estate Services, Business Support Manager and a Policy and Performance Officer.

Each resident shared their views/experiences on:



Existing and previous complaints



Communication and information sharing



Contractor and staff performance



Transparency and fairness



Suggestions and actions to improve services



Response timeframes

Findings: four themes identified



Communication
and record
keeping



Accessible
information



Complaint
response times



Customer service
and care

Resident feedback: Communication, record keeping and accessible information

- A few residents had felt ignored during the complaint process and had stopped making complaints because they did not believe their complaint would be dealt with.
- Residents felt the complaint process was too repetitive, which caused frustration and delays throughout the process.
- Record keeping by Council staff was raised as an issue, with residents advising some staff did not understand the background of their complaint, especially during periods of staff turnover.
- There could be better information available for residents on the complaint process with clearer expectations of what the resident should expect, and for the Council to keep to these expectations.
- Improved communication between all parties involved in the complaint process is needed, such as when neighbours or contractors are involved in the complaint.

Resident feedback: response times and customer service/care

- At times there were very long delays in staff responding to the resident when raising an issue/complaint, with some not even receiving an acknowledgement.
- Leaks from properties was raised as a complaint by a few residents. With a repeated theme of the leak being from a property above theirs which lead to significant delays in receiving updates and resolution.
- Residents want to be provided with acknowledgement and clear updates during the complaint process if there are delays.
- Residents felt that the customer service delivered by staff was positive, however, residents were frustrated when being passed from one team/department to the next, and staff were at times unclear on who the resident should contact about their complaint/query.
- Council staff should be more mindful of residents who require adjustments or assistance when contacting the Council or when making a complaint.

Taking action!

Residents - we hear you. We acknowledge that improvements are needed to improve our service delivery to reduce complaints and to make the complaint process easier.

Following your feedback, a series of short, medium and long term actions were agreed with the following timeframes:

- **Short term:** by May 2025
- **Medium term:** by December 2025
- **Long term:** by April 2026

Short term actions

Action 1: Ensure that residents are regularly updated when their home is affected by a leak advising them of any delays and the reason for them.

Outcome: Keeping residents better informed and managing expectations.

Action 2: To better manage expectations, if a delay occurs during the complaint process, the resident will receive a response clearly outlining the reason for the delay, what action is being taken and estimated timescale for a resolution.

Outcome: Increasing the level of customer care and keeping residents better informed about the progress of their case.

Medium term actions

Action 3: Council staff have recently received training on Knowledge and Information Management and will shortly be receiving training on the new Vulnerable Residents Policy. Additional training will also be provided on managing resident complaints.

Outcome: Staff are better equipped to support residents when they raise a query. The Council can make any relevant adjustments in response to the needs of the resident.

Action 4: Where a complaint involves a third party (e.g. neighbour or a contractor), the Council will keep the resident updated in relation to the actions being taken, and contractors must also be kept informed about the complaint. Contractors will receive additional scrutiny regarding complaints and there will be further discussion around learning from complaints during the monthly contract monitoring meetings.

Outcome: Residents will be kept informed of the progress of their complaint, and contractors will be held to account in relation to complaints and the learning from them.

Long term actions

Action 5: Better promotion of and improved accessibility to the Council's complaints process with clearer information available to residents on what to expect during the process including key contacts for escalation.

Outcome: This will improve transparency and trust by placing more accountability on the Council when responding to resident complaints. A higher level of complaints will also increase the reflection and learning from them.

Action 6: Give residents the opportunity to meet their Estate Manager on their estate and raise concerns through periodic estate meetings.

Outcome: Residents will have the opportunity to meet and get to know their Estate Manager, learning more about Council services and being able to raise concerns on their estate.

What happens next?

A copy of the action plan tracker will be made available on the Council webpage with clear timeframes. This will be monitored and updated regularly.

A big thank you to all our residents who were involved in this. With your help, we will keep improving so you receive the service you deserve.