

April 2023 to March 2024

# Complaints performance and service improvement

Annual report



L&Q

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Improving complaint handling is a major priority for L&Q.

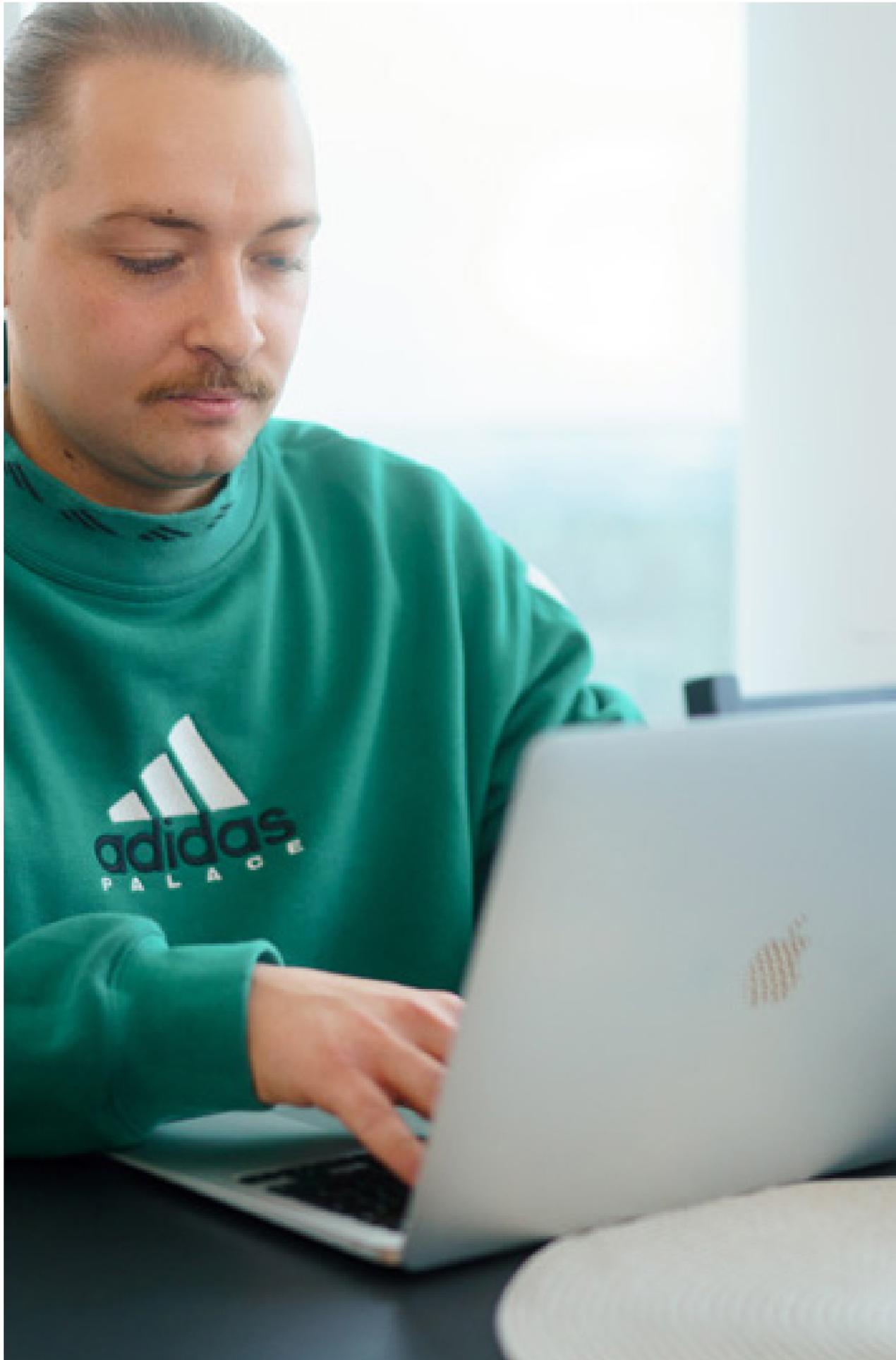
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## Contents

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01	Foreword	05
02	Introduction	06
03	Summary of progress during 2023/24	07
04	Our focus for 2024/25	08
05	Complaint handling performance	09
06	Learning and service improvement	12
07	Next steps	16
08	Appendices	17
09	Translations and interpretation services	18



# 1 Foreword

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We're clear our residents are the top priority for L&Q. That's why our Future Shape Corporate Strategy for 2021-26 puts reliable, repeatable and consistent customer service at the front and centre of our plans, and why we see improving complaints performance as a key part of this.

We've been pleased to see significant steps taken this year to improve the speed and quality of complaint handling. This focus has led to real benefits for residents, including reducing the number of open complaints by 1,649 between April 2023 and March 2024. We're grateful to L&Q colleagues who've gone the extra mile, through Complaint Action Days and other initiatives, to ensure residents receive redress more quickly when we've got things wrong.

Ensuring we're learning from complaints is crucial. Good progress has been made this year to strengthen quality checking to make sure we're dealing with complaints well and are learning and improving from what residents are telling us. This will carry on through into 2024/25 and beyond, ensuring that we remain focused on continuous improvement.

We've also welcomed the focus on reducing the causes for residents to complain, through a new change project aiming to improve resident experience of repairs. In common with most social landlords, repairs are the biggest single cause of complaints, so this work is vital in improving resident satisfaction.

Our approach has been underpinned by new internal governance arrangements to provide stronger leadership, improved transparency and clearer accountability. Policies and procedures have been strengthened, and training improved.

While progress has been made this year, we're clear that there is important work still to do. We'll continue to provide strong oversight of resident experience of complaints, to ensure that getting this right remains a priority in the year ahead.

Finally, we'd like to share our thanks with all the residents, colleagues and others who have contributed to this important work during the year.



**Raj Kumar**  
L&Q Group Board Complaints  
Champion and Resident Services  
Board Member

## 2 Introduction

Improving complaint handling is a major priority for L&Q. During 2023/24 we've made several significant changes to provide a better service to residents raising complaints with us.

We've also made major investments to improve our day-to-day service delivery to help reduce the need for complaints.

We're guided by our 2021-26 Future Shape corporate strategy, which makes clear our residents are our top priority.

More recently, changes have considered the recommendations from the Housing Ombudsman's 2023 special report on L&Q. Throughout the year, we've worked closely with residents, our Resident Services Board, our complaints colleagues, and the Housing Ombudsman Service to shape our improvement journey.

We've made welcome progress in some key areas, but we still have important work to do.

We're committed to a sustained focus on complaint handling in 2024/25 to continue to improve the resident experience of our services and our complaints process.

In the coming year we'll be pushing further to improve the timeliness and quality of complaint handling, as well as tackling the root causes of service failure that can drive complaints.



## 3 Summary of progress during 2023/24

We've delivered a number of improvements, including:

- **Reducing the number of active complaints by 1,649**, following delivery of Complaint Action Days to provide additional colleague resources for complaint handling
- **A major reorganisation of complaint handling arrangements.** This has created a central complaints hub to coordinate the complaints system across the organisation, and dedicated complaints teams in specific business areas. We've invested around £600k in additional complaint handling roles to provide more valuable support to residents when they complain
- **Clearer leadership and oversight of complaint handling** through adoption of new complaints governance. This is delivered through a director-led Complaint Monitoring and Learning Group and a Complaint Operations Group, both of which meet monthly to consider performance and improvements needed. At Board level, we appointed a Board Complaints Champion and provide regular reports to our Resident Services Board, who hold us to account on our complaints handling performance and the delivery of our improvement plans
- **Comprehensive changes to training and support** including a new training package for all complaint handlers, with support across the full range of complaint handling skills, from record keeping, to awarding compensation and empathetic communication. Regular additional training sessions are also provided to meet emerging needs and drive continuous improvement
- **Improved quality checking of complaint responses**, through development reviews with complaint handlers. These monitor compliance with key processes and provide feedback that drives continuous improvement
- **Improved support for residents experiencing anti-social behaviour**, through additional training for colleagues and revised policies
- **Revised training for colleagues to better identify resident vulnerabilities** and provide improved support
- **Driving a strong performance culture on complaints** through a programme of internal communication led by executive directors and regular sharing of performance information to improve transparency and accountability.

## 4 Our focus for 2024/25

### Areas for further improvement:

- Continue working hard to **drive reliable, repeatable and consistent customer service**, to ensure we prevent complaints by getting more things right first time
- **Reduce active complaints** further to ensure quicker redress for residents and free-up more capacity to focus on improving the quality of complaint handling
- **Reduce repairs complaints** by increasing repairs satisfaction through our Repairs Change Project and Major Works Investment Programme
- **Increase our work with residents** to further understand the drivers of dissatisfaction with complaints handling and address these
- Continue to review and drive continuous improvement in our approach to **supporting residents with vulnerabilities**
- Improve **the quality of our complaint handling and service delivery** to improve the resident experience of making a complaint and reduce the number of complaints requiring escalation
- Speed up our **response times to residents**, ensuring that we are able to respond quicker to complaints.

## 5 Complaint handling performance

During 2023/24 we've delivered real improvements in driving complaint handling performance, ending the year with significant reductions in the number of active complaints at Stage 1 and Stage 2. Improving the timeliness of complaint handling continues to be a focus.

### a. All active complaints

The number of active complaints - complaints which have been opened and a decision not yet issued - fell from **3,738** in April 2023 to **2,089** by the end of March 2024. This is a reduction of **1,649** active complaints.

The significant reduction is the result of a cross-organisational effort, including focus months in 2023 and 2024 to involve more colleagues in complaint resolution.

Our complaint handling performance for the year is set out below:

**Complaints relative to the size of the landlord.** As the average number of new complaints opened in 2023/24 per 1,000 homes managed

Stage 1 complaints per 1,000 homes	151.3*
Stage 2 complaints per 1,000 homes	24.4*

\* These figures are taken from L&Qs 2024/23 Tenant Satisfaction Measure results, as reported by to the Regulator of Social Housing in June 2024. The figures apply to social and affordable rented, and shared ownership homes only.

### b. Complaints by business area

We deliver around 20,000 repairs every month. This is the area which generates the highest number of complaints overall. To address this we have a change project in place to improve satisfaction with repairs and reduce the need for residents to raise complaints.

The three business areas receiving the highest proportion of overall new complaints created were:



## c. Stage 1 complaints

The number of active Stage 1 complaints reduced from 1,981 in April 2023 to 1,410 at the end of March 2024, a reduction of 571.

**1,981** → **1,410**

## d. Stage 2 complaints

The number of active Stage 2 complaints reduced from 1,757 at the start of the year to 679 by the end of March 2024, a reduction of 1,078.

**1,757** → **679**

## e. Acknowledging complaints

Our corporate target is that 90% of complaints should be acknowledged by the end of the next working day. Throughout 2023/24 we achieved this 76% of the time, with 83% being acknowledged within 5 working days.

Work is underway to simplify and speed up our acknowledgment of complaints, so that residents know what we are looking into and when they should hear back from us.

## f. Complaint decisions

The corporate target is that 90% of complaint decisions will be issued within the agreed timescales for both Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints. This means that a case has been investigated, concluded and a complaint handler has sent the resident a formal written decision setting out whether the complaint is being upheld, alongside details of actions, remedy and compensation.

Throughout the year, we responded to complaints within the agreed timescales 77% of the time. We were able to respond to Stage 1 complaints much quicker than those at Stage 2 of the complaints process.

We are committed to improving our response times on complaints and this is a key focus in our improvement and training plan for 2024/25.

### Complaints responded to within the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code timescales

% of Stage 1 complaints responded to within 10 working days	<b>83.90%*</b>
% of Stage 2 complaints responded to within 20 working days	<b>35.80%*</b>

\* These figures are taken from L&Qs 2024/23 Tenant Satisfaction Measure results, as reported by to the Regulator of Social Housing in June 2024. The figures apply to social and affordable rented, and shared ownership homes only.

## g. Satisfaction with approach to handling complaints

As part of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures introduced by the Regulator of Social Housing, an independent company has gathered resident feedback on resident satisfaction with L&Q's complaint handling.

This is the first year we've collected this data, so we don't have a baseline for previous years, but we're clear these satisfaction levels are not where we want them to be.

We will be undertaking further work to understand what's driving low levels of satisfaction with complaint handling and continuing our complaints improvement project to improve the resident experience of our complaints process throughout 2024/25.

### Satisfaction with L&Q's approach to handling complaints - by tenure type

Low cost rented accommodation	<b>27%</b>
Low cost home ownership	<b>10%</b>

## h. Complaint Handling Failure Orders

In the 2023/24 year, we received **10** Complaint Handling Failure Orders. Overall, these related to basic issues which we've addressed through training, feedback and internal communications to reiterate our key complaints processes.

Of the Complaint Handling Failure Orders received, the main themes include delay to works, the need for improved communication with residents and ensuring complaint cases and decision letters are generated in accordance with policy.

## i. Determinations received from the Ombudsman

We received **296** initial determinations from the Housing Ombudsman Service during the 2023/24 year. **19** of these cases were subject to a revised determination, for example where we appealed an initial determination.

Determinations	
Severe Maladministration	<b>17</b>
Maladministration	<b>149</b>
Partial maladministration	<b>92</b>
Service failure	<b>3</b>
Redress	<b>22</b>
No maladministration	<b>6</b>
Out of jurisdiction	<b>7</b>
	<b>296</b>

# 6 Learning and service improvement

## Our approach to service improvement

During 2023/24 we revised the way we draw learning from the complaints we receive. This is a work in progress, but we are making important steps forward in embedding a strong learning culture. We have designed an approach which aims to capture lessons learned from individual cases and review wider issues which require organisation-wide attention.

### How we capture and review lessons learned

<b>Learning from individual complaints</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our Complaint Standard Operating Procedure requires all complaint handlers to consider the lessons that could be learned from a case, what could have been done by L&amp;Q to prevent the issue happening again and what service improvements might be needed to tackle the issues uncovered by their investigation</li> <li>• Our Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system is configured to make the capturing of this learning a mandatory step in the case handling process</li> <li>• We review the quality of individual complaint cases through our Coaching Development Reviews. Each month we aim to review two of the cases completed by each handler and provide feedback on how they could improve the service they are providing to residents.</li> </ul>
<b>Learning from complaint handlers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We held two full day reviews of our complaints process with complaint handlers from teams across the organisation. This included reviewing each step of our complaints process to consider how to improve the resident experience. It also included reviewing common issues and areas where we can simplify our procedures for colleagues and residents.</li> </ul>
<b>Learning from complaints data and trends</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monthly complaints data, including complaint volumes, trends and results from quality checking are reviewed by:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Complaint Operations Group, made up of the heads of complaints teams across the organisation, focused on improving the overall management of complaints</li> <li>– Complaint Monitoring and Learning Group, a director-led group of senior colleagues which reviews progress and unblocks strategic issues</li> </ul> </li> <li>• A summary of complaints performance and improvement is reported to our Resident Services Board each quarter.</li> </ul>
<b>Learning from the Housing Ombudsman Service</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All findings and orders from the Ombudsman are reviewed by a central team and allocated to relevant service areas. Teams review the issues identified by the Ombudsman and revise training, policies and procedures as necessary to improve our services.</li> </ul>

## Learning from the Housing Ombudsman's special report

We have worked very closely with the Ombudsman service since the publication of their special report into L&Q in July 2023. This has included regular meetings to report on the progress we're making to drive improvements to complaint handling and performance.

We continue to work collaboratively with the Ombudsman service as we make further improvements to our approach. During the year we have made proactive use of Spotlight reports on a variety of sector-wide issues to conduct gap analysis of our services and agree further actions to deliver Ombudsman recommendations.

[Click here](#) To read the Ombudsman's report.



## Service improvements delivered during 2023/24

Both our internal action plan and recommendations from the Housing Ombudsman's special report highlighted important lessons from our complaint handling approach. We've worked hard to deliver service improvements to tackle areas identified for attention.

### Complaints



- Established a corporate change project on complaints to provide robust governance and assurance on our improvement work in this area
- Implemented a new complaints operating model, with a new structure, improved training and improved policies
- Updated our website to make it easier for residents to access complaints information
- Recruited additional colleagues to help resolve complaints
- Revised our compensation policy and standard operating procedure
- Created an internal Complaints Hub to enable colleagues to find complaints policies and advice more easily and drive consistency
- Improved quality checking for complaints handlers
- Implemented a new system to close complaints and more clearly record and monitor actions.

### Repairs



- Established a corporate change project on repairs to provide robust governance and assurance on our improvement work in this area
- Revised our damp and mould policy and standard operating procedure and communicated arrangements to residents through our 'Homelife' e-newsletter
- As part of our Repairs Change Project, we reviewed existing surveyor roles and introduced additional technical surveyors to support the delivery of an improved service to residents
- Created a new minor works team to help deliver complex but smaller repairs
- Reviewed our Repairs Policy to improve assurance arrangements.

### Vulnerability



- Conducted an assurance review of our Vulnerable Residents Policy
- Delivered training to colleagues on the use of vulnerability flags to record and identify vulnerability in our system
- Introduced a new translation service
- Consulted our L&Q community on our approach to reasonable adjustments to inform future changes.

### Anti-social behaviour



- Designed training on our new Anti-Social Behaviour Policy and standard operating procedure and begun delivery across key teams.
- Created a network of colleagues trained as Domestic Abuse Champions by a Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) provider, to improve the support we can give residents facing domestic abuse
- Created a Good Neighbourhood Policy to enable us to deal better with noise related nuisance and other issues.

### Staff learning and development



- Delivered a comprehensive shift in the training we provide to complaint handlers. This includes training on empathetic communication with residents, record keeping, awarding compensation and the wider range of effective complaint handling skills
- Improved staff training for all colleagues, through a revised mandatory training module for all customer-facing staff, to better equip colleagues to provide residents with excellent service on complaints
- Implemented an improved system of quality checks and feedback on complaint handling and responses
- Delivered workshops with over 30 residents focussing on complaints regarding repairs, gas, and anti-social behaviour, as well as our written responses in general. As a result we've improved the tone of voice in our letters and the way we communicate with residents during the complaints process to keep them informed of progress.

We will be working with our resident involvement team to develop more ways to secure resident input on how we can improve their experience of our complaints process.

## 7 Next steps

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Building on the progress we've made this year, our focus for 2024/25 will be:

- 1** Undertaking further intensive action to reduce active complaints numbers to enable colleagues to better support residents
- 2** Driving improvements in the handling of complex complaints to deliver a better resident experience and increase achievement of our targets on complaint acknowledgment and decisions
- 3** Continuing to develop and embed our new approach to learning from complaints
- 4** Delivery of our Repairs Change Project and Major Works Investment Programme to get more things right first time and reduce the need for residents to raise complaints
- 5** Working across the organisation to improve resident satisfaction with complaint handling by continuing embedding a strong culture of reliable, empathetic customer service.

## 8 Appendices

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**Appendix 1** L&Q annual self-assessment against the Complaint Handling Code

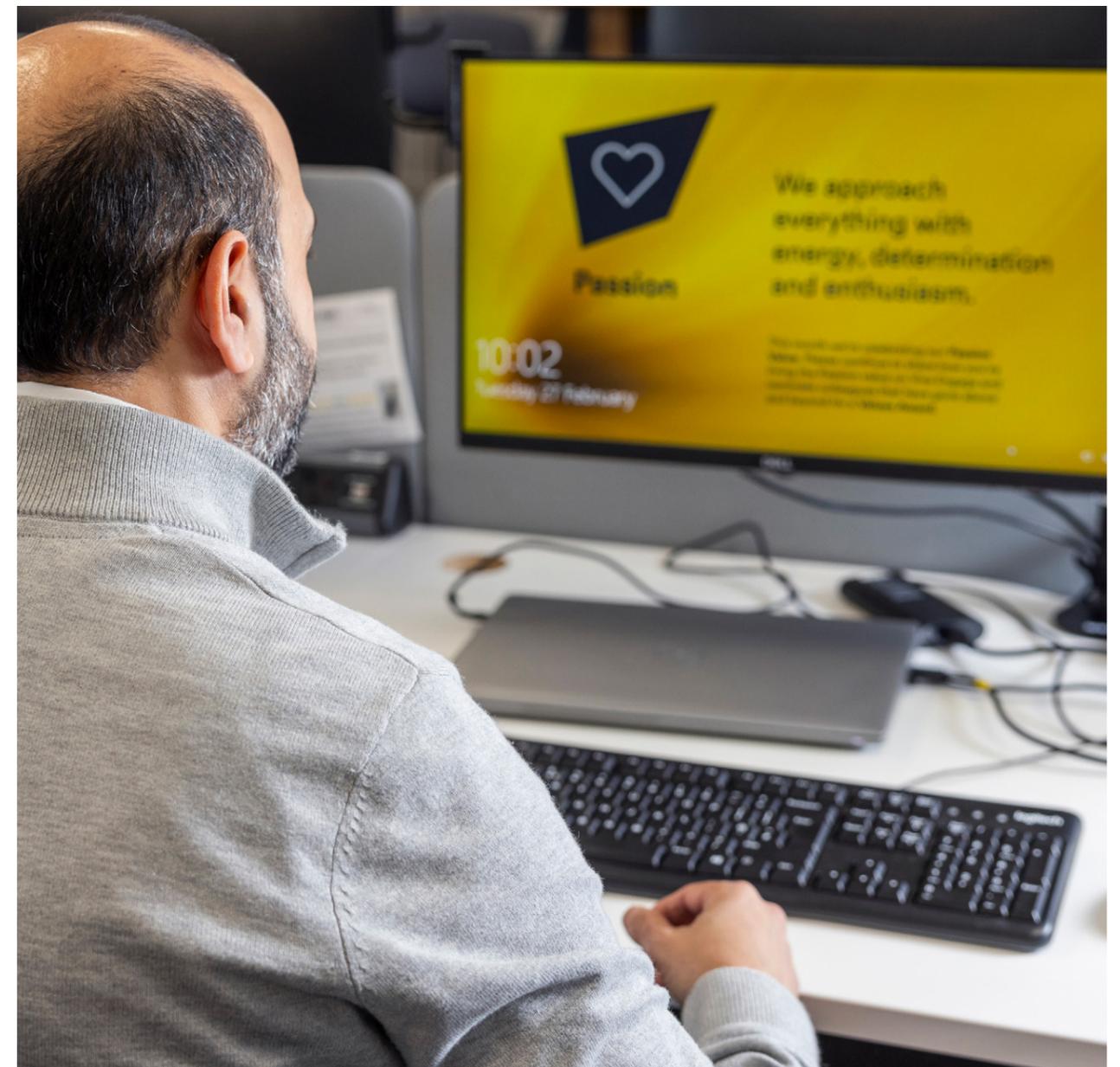
[Click here](#)

**Appendix 2** The Housing Ombudsman Special Report on L&Q

[Click here](#)

**Appendix 3** L&Q's online complaints hub

[Click here](#)



## 9 Translations and interpretation services

If you need to change the way we communicate with you, including document translation, braille, audio transcription or larger print, please contact us on **0300 456 9996**. If you're a resident in the North West, please contact us on **0300 777 7777**.

Once you speak to an Advisor, please let us know your chosen language and we will connect you to an interpreter who will assist you. For British Sign Language translation, please visit [www.interpreterslive.co.uk/directory](http://www.interpreterslive.co.uk/directory)

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Bir Danışmanla görüştüğünüzde size yardımcı olacak bir tercümana bağlanmak için lütfen seçtiğiniz dili bize bildirin.

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Quando falar com um Assessor, diga-nos qual é a sua língua de preferência e faremos a ligação a um intérprete que seja capaz de ajudar.

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Po rozmowie z doradcą prosimy poinformować nas o wybranym języku, a my połączymy Państwa z tłumaczem, który udzieli Państwu wsparcia.

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### ਇਸ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਦਾ ਅਨੁਵਾਦ ਕਰਨ ਵਿੱਚ ਮਦਦ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ?

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**For more information**

L&Q Group

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