# Haringey Council’s safeguarding failure exposes systemic backlog and risks for vulnerable residents



An investigation into Haringey Council’s social work department has uncovered a startling failure to respond to safeguarding concerns, with more than 1,100 emails—including over 500 welfare reports from the police—left unread. This backlog raised serious questions about the council's ability to protect vulnerable residents, particularly spotlighted by the case of a man known as Mr Y, who suffered repeated seizures and endured inadequate support despite early warnings.

The inquiry was initiated after a friend of Mr Y first contacted the council in June 2023 expressing concerns about his welfare. Despite repeated alerts from emergency services, the council failed to allocate a social worker until June 2024. During this period, Mr Y’s condition deteriorated, leading to damage in his home and eventually resulting in an eviction notice being issued in September 2023. It was not until Mr Y suffered a fall and was hospitalised in September 2024 that the council’s involvement became more active, yet by then critical time had been lost. He was evicted from his home at the end of October 2024. A year after the initial complaint, Mr Y’s friend contacted the council again after he had sustained a life-changing injury, highlighting the council’s continued failure to act in a timely manner.

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, Julie Odams, described the council’s inactivity as “shocking,” emphasising the risk of significant harm caused by the council’s inertia. She acknowledged that although it cannot be confirmed whether earlier intervention would have prevented the injury, the uncertainty has left Mr Y’s friends and family questioning if the outcome might have been different with proper support. The ombudsman recommended compensation payments of £2,000 to Mr Y and £200 to his friend to acknowledge the council’s failings and the trouble caused by prolonged complaints.

Following these revelations, the council admitted the failures amounted to a serious oversight by multiple staff. They devised an action plan to address the backlog and improve safeguarding protocols, including enhanced staff training to better manage referrals. However, the council has not disclosed details regarding the number of individuals potentially affected, the duration over which the emails accumulated, or whether disciplinary actions have been taken against those responsible.

Haringey Council’s cabinet member for health, social care, and wellbeing, Lucia das Neves, publicly apologised for the mistakes and pledged transparency and accountability. The council has reportedly cleared the backlog of unread emails and is undertaking an independent review of its safeguarding arrangements. Das Neves stated the council is committed to learning from the incident to ensure improved care and support standards for residents in the future.

This case underscores broader concerns about systemic issues within local authority social work departments. The missed emails, including numerous police welfare reports, suggest deep operational issues that could have left other vulnerable people at risk. The ombudsman’s call for a review of safeguarding policies aims to prevent similar lapses.

According to industry commentary and local government watchdogs, the Haringey incident is a stark reminder of the vital need for prompt and effective response frameworks in social care services. The council’s promised reforms and ongoing scrutiny will be closely watched as stakeholders seek reassurance that vulnerable residents will no longer be let down.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/council-missed-1100-emails-raising-concerns-about-vulnerable-residents-JFC42X4CYNLUFHW32QG6ZUMX6Y/), [[2]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/haringey-council-london-borough-missed-emails-vulnerable-residents-b1250885.html), [[3]](https://www.localgov.co.uk/Ombudsman-slams-council-over-safeguarding-backlog/63181), [[4]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/council-missed-1100-emails-raising-concerns-about-vulnerable-residents-JFC42X4CYNLUFHW32QG6ZUMX6Y/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/council-missed-1100-emails-raising-concerns-about-vulnerable-residents-JFC42X4CYNLUFHW32QG6ZUMX6Y/), [[2]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/haringey-council-london-borough-missed-emails-vulnerable-residents-b1250885.html), [[5]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/london-haringey-b1250885.html)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/council-missed-1100-emails-raising-concerns-about-vulnerable-residents-JFC42X4CYNLUFHW32QG6ZUMX6Y/), [[3]](https://www.localgov.co.uk/Ombudsman-slams-council-over-safeguarding-backlog/63181), [[6]](https://www.localgov.co.uk/Ombudsman-slams-council-over-safeguarding-backlog/63181)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/council-missed-1100-emails-raising-concerns-about-vulnerable-residents-JFC42X4CYNLUFHW32QG6ZUMX6Y/), [[6]](https://www.localgov.co.uk/Ombudsman-slams-council-over-safeguarding-backlog/63181), [[7]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/council-missed-1100-emails-raising-concerns-about-vulnerable-residents-JFC42X4CYNLUFHW32QG6ZUMX6Y/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/council-missed-1100-emails-raising-concerns-about-vulnerable-residents-JFC42X4CYNLUFHW32QG6ZUMX6Y/), [[4]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/council-missed-1100-emails-raising-concerns-about-vulnerable-residents-JFC42X4CYNLUFHW32QG6ZUMX6Y/)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/council-missed-1100-emails-raising-concerns-about-vulnerable-residents-JFC42X4CYNLUFHW32QG6ZUMX6Y/), [[7]](https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/council-missed-1100-emails-raising-concerns-about-vulnerable-residents-JFC42X4CYNLUFHW32QG6ZUMX6Y/), [[3]](https://www.localgov.co.uk/Ombudsman-slams-council-over-safeguarding-backlog/63181)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/council-missed-1100-emails-raising-concerns-about-vulnerable-residents-JFC42X4CYNLUFHW32QG6ZUMX6Y/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/haringey-council-london-borough-missed-emails-vulnerable-residents-b1250885.html> - An investigation revealed that Haringey Council's social work department overlooked over 1,100 emails, including more than 500 police welfare reports, concerning vulnerable residents. The inquiry was initiated after complaints about the council's handling of safeguarding issues related to a man with repeated seizures. The council acknowledged the oversight and has implemented an action plan to address the backlog and improve safeguarding procedures.
3. <https://www.localgov.co.uk/Ombudsman-slams-council-over-safeguarding-backlog/63181> - The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman criticised Haringey Council for a significant safeguarding failure, highlighting that hundreds of police welfare reports went unread. The investigation found over 1,100 unread emails in the council's social work inbox, including more than 500 police reports, exposing a systemic backlog that left residents at serious risk. The council has committed to a comprehensive action plan to address the issues and enhance safeguarding practices.
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