

AGENDA FOR STANDARDS COMMITTEE



*Contact: Michael Cunliffe
Direct Line: 0161 253 5399
E-mail: m.cunliffe@bury.gov.uk
Website: www.bury.gov.uk*

To: All Members of Standards Committee

Councillors : N Bayley (Chair), A Booth, R Gold, M Hayes,
J Hook, D Quinn, M Rahimov, D Vernon, K Hussain and
T Rafiq

Dear Member/Colleague

Standards Committee

You are invited to attend a meeting of the Standards Committee which will be held as follows:-

Date:	Thursday, 18 September 2025
Place:	Meeting Rooms A & B - Town Hall
Time:	5.30 pm
Briefing Facilities:	If Opposition Members and Co-opted Members require briefing on any particular item on the Agenda, the appropriate Director/Senior Officer originating the related report should be contacted.
Notes:	Please note the start time is 30 minutes earlier than usual.

AGENDA

1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING & ANY MATTERS ARISING *(Pages 3 - 6)*

4 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GUIDANCE

This agenda item will be deferred until the next meeting.

5 CODE OF CONDUCT- ANNUAL REVIEW *(Pages 7 - 28)*

Report attached.

6 LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN ANNUAL REVIEW LETTER 2024-25 *(Pages 29 - 68)*

Report attached.

7 URGENT BUSINESS

8 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

6.00pm, Wednesday 26th November 2025

Minutes of:	STANDARDS COMMITTEE
Date of Meeting:	1 st July 2025
Present:	Councillor N Bayley (in the Chair) Councillors A Booth, R Gold, M Hayes, K Hussain, D Quinn, T Rafiq, T Tariq and D Vernon
Also in attendance:	Jacqui Dennis, Director of Law and Democratic Services. Michael Cunliffe, Democratic Services. Independent Persons: Craig Ainsworth and Stuart Birtwell
Public Attendance:	No members of the public or press were present at the meeting.

1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were submitted by Councillors J Hook and M Rahimov.
Council T. Tariq acted as a substitute representative for Councillor Rahimov.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING & ANY MATTERS ARISING

The Minutes of the last meeting held on the 3rd April 2025 were approved as a correct record.

4 STANDARDS COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

The 2025-2026 terms of reference for the Standards Committee were attached to the agenda for reference purposes ahead of the forthcoming municipal year of meetings.

A Member enquired if a serving Police Officer could become a Councillor.

It was agreed:

That the terms of reference be noted.

5 STANDARDS COMMITTEE DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME 2025-2026

The 2025-2026 draft work programme for the Standards Committee was attached to the agenda for reference purposes ahead of the forthcoming municipal year of meetings.

Members commented that the Council was committed to the LGA and the family friendly rights for elected Members including maternity and paternity leave. Jacqui Dennis, Director Law & Governance reported that a policy had already been agreed by full Council to cover this family friendly policy.

The February 2026 meeting had not had items allocated as there may be items arise over the coming months that are appropriate to be listed on the last agenda of the year.

A discussion took place on the Member development programme and this could be included as a future item for circulation and comments before sign off.

It was agreed:-

That the items on the draft work programme be approved.

6 CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

Jacqui Dennis reported at the April 2025 meeting, Standards Committee requested that a Code of Corporate Governance was drafted and returned to this committee early in the next municipal year for comments.

Members were asked to review the draft guide and provide comments on the document attached to the agenda pack.

Corporate Governance is the term used to describe how the council manages its affairs and its relationship with the community, colleagues, customers, and partners. The code promotes the values of the Authority upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour, ethical standards and legal compliance.

The Code is a document which is reviewed annually and reflected any governance changes made during that time period.

Craig Ainsworth commented if section A could strengthen the role of Standards within it. Councillor Hayes asked for clarity on the Caldicott Guardian and an explanation was provided.

It was proposed that the views of this Committee and the Executive Leadership Team are obtained prior to a final draft returning to this Committee for it's approval.

It was agreed:-

That the report and draft guide be noted with comments welcome to be submitted.

7 REMOTE MEETING ATTENDANCE & PROXY VOTING UPDATE

Jacqui Dennis reported that following time limited Covid remote attendance permissions that expired in 2021, local authority meetings have been required to be held in a single, specified, physical 'place'.

On the 24th October 2024, the government published a consultation on remote attendance and proxy voting at local authority meetings. The consultation closed on the 19th December 2024 and received 5,844 responses. The consultation sought views on the practical implications of allowing remote attendance and proxy voting at local authority meetings.

The multiple-choice responses to each question were analysed and figures broken down in the report.

The government was of the view that in-person authority meetings remain vital for local democracy, but that hybrid and remote attendance, and proxy voting, will enable local authorities in England to develop more modern, accessible, and flexible working practices.

The government would work collaboratively with the relevant sectors to develop clear and supportive guidance in relation to both remote attendance and proxy voting policies.

Members commented on possible arrangements including a hybrid option if they were unable to attend a meeting in person but they would require the correct ICT equipment.

Craig Ainsworth felt that it could give rise to more complaints with careful online monitoring required.

It was agreed:-

That the Committee noted the update and a further report be produced once more information was released from Central Government.

8 URGENT BUSINESS

No urgent business was reported.

9 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next Standards Committee meeting was provisionally scheduled to take place at 6.00pm on Thursday the 18th September 2025 at Bury Town Hall.

COUNCILLOR N BAYLEY
Chair

(Note: The meeting started at 6.00pm and ended at 7.00pm)

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Classification: Open	Decision Type: Non-Key
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Report to:	Standard Committee	Date: 18 September 2025
Subject:	Code of conduct	
Report from	Director of Law & Governance	

Summary

A revised code of conduct was previously agreed by the members of this Committee and subsequently agreed by Council. The Committee recommended that the code is annually reviewed by this Committee.

Members also adopted a guide to the code.

Recommendation(s)

1. Members review the code of conduct (Appendix 1) and guidance to Members on the code of conduct (Appendix 2).
2. Instruct the Monitoring Officer to revise the code and guidance following the review.

Reasons for recommendation(s)

3. This recommendation aligns with Members decision to review the code annually.

Alternative options considered and rejected

4. N/A

Report Author and Contact Details:

Name: Jacqui Dennis
Position: Director of Law & Governance
Department: Corporate Core
E-mail: J.Dennis@bury.gov.uk

Background

1. Previously Standards Committee approved a revised Member code of conduct following a recommendation from a subgroup of the Committee. Consideration was given to the Council's existing Code of Conduct for Members following the publication of the Local Government Ethical Standards report produced by the Committee on Standards in Public Life (CSPL) and the Local Government Association's (LGA) Model Code of Conduct (LGA's Model

Code). At that time it was noted that the code had not been updated following the introduction of a revised model code. Members considered the guidance in detail and a new code was agreed.

2. At a subsequent meeting on the 3rd April 2024 Member agreed guidance to the code of conduct. The Guidance was brought forward by the Committee to assist and aid members understanding of the code and to give examples of what behaviour may result in a breach of the code of conduct.
3. Training on the revised code was provided to all Members following the introduction of the new code. Training on the code is provided annually by the Monitoring Officer. The next training session will take place in October.
4. Members are asked to review the code and consider whether any revisions are needed to the code or guidance. Any changes to the code will need to be approved by Council.
5. The Monitoring Officer would welcome Members view on whether there are particular areas of the code that should be the focus for the forthcoming Members training.

Appendices:

Please list any appended documents.

1. Member code of conduct
 2. Member guide to the code of conduct
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The Code of Conduct

Part 1 General Provisions

1. Introduction and Interpretation

- 1.1. This Code applies to you as soon as you sign your declaration of acceptance of the office of councillor or attend your first meeting as a co-opted member and continues to apply to you until you cease to be a member.
- 1.2. This Code of Conduct applies to you when you are acting in your capacity as a member which may include when:
- (a) you misuse your position as a member;
 - (b) your actions would give the impression to a reasonable member of the public with knowledge of all the facts that you are acting as a member.
- 1.3. The Code applies to all forms of communication and interaction, including:
- (a) at face-to-face meetings
 - (b) at online or telephone meetings
 - (c) in written communication
 - (d) in verbal communication
 - (e) in non-verbal communication
 - (f) in electronic and social media communication, posts, statements and comments.
- 1.4. It is your responsibility to comply with this Code. Failure to do so may result in a sanction being applied by the Council. Failure to take appropriate action in respect of a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest may result in a criminal conviction and a fine of up to £5,000 and /or disqualification from office for a period of up to five years. In this Code - "meeting" means any meeting of:
- (a) the Council;
 - (b) any of the Council's committees or sub-committees, joint committees or joint sub-committees;
 - (c) the Cabinet or any committee of the Cabinet.
- 1.5. "Member" includes a co-opted member and an appointed member.

2. Scope

- 2.1. You are also expected to uphold high standards of conduct and show leadership at all times when acting as a member. Subject to sub-paragraphs (2.2) and (2.3), you must comply with this Code whenever you are acting as a member or co-opted member of the Council or an appointed member of a joint committee, and references to your official capacity are construed accordingly.
- 2.2. This Code does not have effect in relation to your conduct other than where it is in your official capacity.
- 2.3. Where you act as a representative of the Council:
- (a) on another relevant authority, including the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, the , you must, when acting for that other authority, comply with that other authority's code of conduct; or
 - (b) on any other body, you must, when acting for that other body, comply with this Code, except insofar as it conflicts with any other lawful obligations to which that other body may be subject.

3. General Obligations

- 3.1 You will treat councillors and members of the public with respect and treat local authority employees, employees and representatives of partner organisations and those volunteering for the local authority with respect and respect the role they play.
- 3.2 You must not:
- (a) bring your role or local authority into disrepute.
 - (b) do anything which may knowingly cause the Council to breach the Equality Act 2010 and promote equalities and do not discriminate unlawfully against any person;
 - (c) bully, harass or be abusive to any person;
 - (d) intimidate or attempt to intimidate any person who is or is likely to be:
 - (i) a complainant,
 - (ii) a witness, or
 - (iii) involved in the administration of any investigation or proceedings, in relation to an allegation that a member (including yourself) has failed to comply with his or her authority's code of conduct; or
 - (e) do anything which compromises or is likely to compromise the impartiality of those who work for, or on behalf of, the Council;

3.3 You must not:

- (a) disclose information given to you in confidence by anyone, or information acquired by you which you believe, or ought reasonably to be aware, is of a confidential nature, except where:
 - (i) you have the consent of a person authorised to give it;
 - (ii) you are required by law to do so;
 - (iii) the disclosure is made to a third party for the purpose of obtaining professional advice provided that the third party agrees not to disclose the information to any other person; or
 - (iv) the disclosure is:
 - reasonable and in the public interest; and
 - made in good faith and in compliance with the reasonable requirements of the Council; or
 - you have consulted the Monitoring Officer prior to its release.
- (b) prevent another person from gaining access to information to which that person is entitled by law.
- (c) improperly use knowledge gained solely as a result of my role as a member for the advancement of myself, my friends, my family members, my employer or my business interests.

3.4 You must:

- (a) not use or attempt to use your position as a member improperly to confer on or secure for yourself or any other person, an advantage or disadvantage;
- (b) not misuse council resources.
- (c) when using the resources of the local authority or authorising the use by others:-
 - act in accordance with the Council's reasonable requirements; and
 - ensure that such resources are not used improperly for political purposes (including party political purposes) unless that use could reasonably be regarded as likely to facilitate, or be conducive to, the discharge of the functions of the local authority or of the office to which you have been elected or appointed.
 - must have regard to any applicable Local Authority Code of Publicity made under the Local Government Act 1986.

3.5 When reaching decisions on any matter you must have regard to any relevant advice provided to you by:

- (a) The Council's Chief Finance Officer; or
- (b) The Council's Monitoring Officer,

Where that officer is acting pursuant to his or her personal statutory duties.

- 3.6 You must give reasons for all decisions in accordance with any statutory requirements and any reasonable additional requirements imposed by your authority.
- 3.7 You will:
- (a) undertake Code of Conduct training provided by the local authority.
 - (b) cooperate with any Code of Conduct investigation and/or determination.
 - (c) comply with any sanction imposed on me following a finding that I have breached the Code of Conduct.

Part 2 - Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

4. ***Notification of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests***

- 4.1 Within 28 days of becoming a member or co-opted member, you must notify the Monitoring Officer of any 'disclosable pecuniary interests'.
- 4.2 A 'disclosable pecuniary interest' is an interest of yourself, or of your partner if you are aware of your partner's interest, within the descriptions set out in the table below.
- 4.3 "Partner" means a spouse or civil partner, or a person with whom you are living as husband or wife, or a person with whom you are living as if you are civil partners.

Notification of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests	
Subject	Description
Employment, office, trade, profession or vocation	Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain
Sponsorship	Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from the Council) made or provided within the 12 month period prior to notification of the interest in respect of any expenses incurred by you in carrying out duties as a member, or towards your election expenses. This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation Act) 1992

Contracts	Any contract which is made between you or your partner (or a body in which you or your partner has a beneficial interest) and the Council - (a) under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed: and (b) which has not been fully discharged.
Land	Any beneficial interest in land which is within the area of Bury Metropolitan Borough Council
Licences	Any licence (alone or jointly with others) to occupy land in the area of Bury Metropolitan Borough Council for a month or longer
Corporate Tenancies	Any tenancy where (to your knowledge) - (a) the landlord is the Council: and (b) the tenant is a body that you, or your spouse or civil partner or the person with whom you are living with as if they were spouses/ civil partners is a partner of or a director* of or has a beneficial interest
Notification of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests	
Subject	Description
Securities	Any beneficial interest in securities of a body where - (a) that body (to your knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of Bury Metropolitan Borough Council; and (b) either - (i) the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 of that body or (ii) if the share capital of that body is of more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which you or your partner has a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class

- (a) For the purposes of the above, "a body in which you or your partner has a beneficial interest" means a firm in which you or your partner is a partner or a body corporate of which you or your partner is a director, or in the securities of which you or your partner has a beneficial interest "director" includes a

member of the committee of management of an industrial and provident society.

- (b) "land" excludes an easement, interest or right in or over land which does not carry with it a right for you or your partner (alone or jointly) to occupy the land or receive income, and
- (c) "securities" means shares, debentures, debenture stock, loan stock, bonds, units of a collective investment scheme within the meaning of the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 and other securities of any description, other than money deposited with a building society.

5. *Non Participation in Case of Disclosable Pecuniary Interest*

5.1 Where a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to one of your Disclosable Pecuniary Interests as set out in the table above, you must disclose the interest and:

- (a) You must not participate in any discussion of the matter at the meeting.
- (b) You must not participate in any vote taken on the matter at the meeting.
- (c) You must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation.
- (d) If it is a 'sensitive interest', you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest, just that you have an interest. Dispensation may be granted in limited circumstances, to enable you to participate and vote on a matter in which you have a disclosable pecuniary interest.
- (e) If the interest is not registered, you must disclose the interest to the meeting.
- (f) If the interest is not registered and is not the subject of a pending notification, you must notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest within 28 days.

6. *Non Participation in Case of Disclosure of Other Registerable Interests*

6.1 Where a matter arises at a meeting which *directly relates* to the financial interest or wellbeing of one of your Other Registerable Interests (included on your Register of Members Interest Form) you must disclose the interest and:

- (a) You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting but otherwise must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and
- (b) You must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation.
- (c) If it is a 'sensitive interest', you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest

You must register the following as an Other Registerable Interest:	
(a)	any unpaid directorships
(b)	any body of which you are a member or are in a position of general control or management and to which you are nominated or appointed by your authority
(c)	any body <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) exercising functions of a public nature (ii) directed to charitable purposes or (iii) one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union) of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management

7. **Offences**

7.1 It is a criminal offence to:

- (a) Fail to notify the Monitoring Officer of any disclosable pecuniary interest within 28 days of election.
- (b) Fail to disclose a disclosable pecuniary interest at a meeting if it is not on the register.
- (c) Fail to notify the Monitoring Officer within 28 days of a disclosable pecuniary interest that is not on the register that you have disclosed to a meeting.
- (d) Participate in any discussion or vote on a matter in which you have a disclosable pecuniary interest.

7.2 As a Cabinet Member discharging a function acting alone and having a disclosable pecuniary interest in such a matter, failing to notify the Monitoring Officer within 28 days of the interest.

7.3 As a Cabinet Member discharging a function acting alone, and having a disclosable pecuniary interest in a matter, taking any steps in relation to such a matter.

7.4 Knowingly or recklessly providing information that is false or misleading in notifying the Monitoring Officer of a disclosable pecuniary interest or in disclosing such interest to a meeting.

7.5 The criminal penalties available to a court are to impose a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale and disqualification from being a councillor for up to five years.

Part 3 - Other Interests

8. ***Notification of Personal Interests***

8.1 In addition to the disclosable pecuniary interests notifiable under the Localism Act 2011, you must, within 28 days of –

- (a) this Code being adopted by or applied to your authority; or
- (b) your election or appointment to office (where that is later), notify the Monitoring Officer in writing of the details of your other personal interests, where they fall within the “Other Registerable Interest” categories set out in paragraph 6 above for inclusion in the register of interests.

8.2 You have a personal interest in any business of your authority where it relates to or is likely to affect -

- (a) any body of which you are in a position of general control or management and to which you are appointed or nominated by your authority;
- (b) any body -
 - (i) exercising functions of a public nature;
 - (ii) directed to charitable purposes; or
 - (iii) one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union), of which you are in a position of general control or management;
- (c) the interests of any person from whom you have received a gift or hospitality with an estimated value of at least [£100]

9. ***Disclosure of Non-Registerable Interests***

9.1 Where a matter arises at a meeting which *directly relates* to the financial interest or wellbeing (and is not a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest set out in Table above) or a financial interest or well-being of a relative or close associate, you must disclose the interest you must disclose the interest and.

- (a) You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting but otherwise must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and
- (b) you must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation.
- (c) If it is a ‘sensitive interest’, you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest

9.2 *Where a matter arises at a meeting which affects –*

- (a) your own financial interest or well-being;
- (b) a financial interest or well-being of a relative or close associate; or
- (c) a financial interest or wellbeing of a body included under Other Registrable

Interests you must disclose the interest. In order to determine whether you can remain in the meeting after disclosing your interest the following test should be applied.

9.3 *Where a matter (referred to in paragraph 9.2 above) affects the financial interest or well-being:*

- (a) to a greater extent than it affects the financial interests of the majority of inhabitants of the ward affected by the decision and;
- (b) a reasonable member of the public knowing all the facts would believe that it would affect your view of the wider public interest.

9.4 *You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting. Otherwise, you must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation.*

9.5 *If it is a 'sensitive interest', you do not have to disclose the nature of the interest.*

9.6 *Where you have an Other Registerable Interest or Non-Registerable Interest on a matter to be considered or is being considered by you as a Cabinet member in exercise of your executive function, you must notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest and must not take any steps or further steps in the matter apart from arranging for someone else to deal with it.*

10. Gifts and Hospitality

10.1. You will:

- (a) not accept gifts or hospitality, irrespective of estimated value, which could give rise to real or substantive personal gain or a reasonable suspicion of influence on my part to show favour from persons seeking to acquire, develop or do business with the local authority or from persons who may apply to the local authority for any permission, licence or other significant advantage.
- (b) register with the Monitoring Officer any gift or hospitality with an estimated value of at least £100 within 28 days of its receipt.
- (c) register with the Monitoring Officer any significant gift or hospitality that I have been offered but have refused to accept.

11. Non Participation in Case of Prejudicial Interest

11.1 Subject to you disclosing the interest at the meeting, you may attend a meeting and vote on a matter where you have a prejudicial interest that relates to the functions of your authority in respect of:

- (a) school meals or school transport and travelling expenses, where you are a parent or guardian of a child in full time education, or are a parent governor of a school, unless it relates particularly to the school which the child attends;
- (b) statutory sick pay under Part XI of the Social Security Contributions and Benefits Act 1992, where you are in receipt of, or are entitled to the receipt of, such pay; and
- (c) any ceremonial honour given to members.
- (d) housing, where you are a tenant of the Council provided that those functions do not relate particularly to your tenancy or lease;
- (e) an allowance, payment or indemnity given to members;
- (f) setting council tax or a precept under the Local Government Finance Act 1992

12. *Interests Arising in Relation Overview and Scrutiny Committees*

12.1 In any business before an overview and scrutiny committee of the Council (or of a sub-committee of such a committee) where:

- (a) that business relates to a decision made (whether implemented or not) or action taken by the Cabinet or another of the authority's committees, sub-committees, joint committees or joint sub-committees; and
- (b) at the time the decision was made, or action was taken, you were a member of the Cabinet, committee, sub-committee, joint committee or joint sub-committee mentioned in paragraph (a) and you were present when that decision was made or action was taken.

12.2 You may attend the meeting of the overview and scrutiny committee for the purpose of explaining the reasons for the decision or answering questions or giving evidence relating to the business, but you cannot participate otherwise in the discussion or in any vote on the matter.

Part 4 - General Matters Relating to Parts 2 and 3

13. *Register of Interests*

13.1. Subject to paragraph 14 any disclosable pecuniary interests or personal interests notified to the Monitoring Officer will be included in the register of interests. A copy of the register will be available for public inspection and will be published on the authority's website.

14. *Sensitive interests*

14.1 This paragraph applies where you consider that disclosure of the details of a disclosable pecuniary interest or a personal interest could lead to you, or a person connected with you, being subject to violence or intimidation, and the Monitoring

Officer agrees. In these circumstances, if the interest is entered on the register, copies of the register that are made available for inspection and any published version of the register will exclude details of the interest but may state that you have a disclosable pecuniary interest, the details of which are withheld under Section 32(2) of the Localism Act 2011.

15. *Dispensations*

- 15.1. The Council may grant you a dispensation, but only in limited circumstances, to enable you to participate and vote on a matter in which you have a disclosable pecuniary interest or a prejudicial interest.

Appendix A – The Seven Principles of Public Life

The principles are:

Selflessness

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

Integrity

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must disclose and resolve any interests and relationships.

Objectivity

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

Openness

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

Honesty

Holders of public office should be truthful.

Leadership

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

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This document provides a quick guide as to some example behaviours which have been considered against the Member Code of Conduct. This guide should be read in conjunction with the code of conduct. The guide will be reviewed annually by the Standards Committee.

The Local Government Association provides a detailed accompanying Guidance on Local Government Association Model Councillor Code of Conduct

<https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/guidance-local-government-association-model-councillor-code-conduct>

Impartiality of officers of the council

You must not try and force them to act differently, change their advice, or alter the content of that report, if doing so would prejudice their professional integrity.

Disrepute

Behaviour that is considered dishonest and/or deceitful can bring your local authority into disrepute.

EG A councillor posted a tweet reading "Cllr Blogs why don't you just throw in the towel, just go before you cause any more damage to the reputation of the council. You and some members of your cabinet have failed. I hope that the SFO is brought in to investigate your conduct. #failedleadership." The complainant stated that she found the tweet 'very offensive' and bullying and also considered that the tweet would reasonably bring the councillor's office and the authority into disrepute. The councillor was found to have brought his authority into disrepute by reducing public confidence in the council.

EG A councillor brought his role and authority into disrepute by taking advantage of a local authority mistake and failing to prevent local authority-employed contractors from working on his privately-owned home. The local authority mistakenly sent decorators to the home, an ex-local authority property. The councillor only told the local authority about the mistake after the work had been completed and then said he could not be charged for the work.

EG The chair of a local authority made a deeply inappropriate remark at a local authority meeting that was reported in the local media and was accused of bringing his role and authority into disrepute. It was clear in both the meeting and the local media reporting that other councillors expressed concerns about his comments and found them inappropriate. It was found that he had not brought his authority into disrepute but that he had brought his role into disrepute.

Acting as a private individual

E.G An argument with a neighbour which does not relate to local authority business would not engage the code, even if your neighbour happens to know you are a

councillor and therefore complains to the local authority about being treated disrespectfully. **HOWEVER**

E.G A councillor and an officer had a personal relationship. The councillor sent and encouraged the officer to send inappropriate social media messages, including messages of a sexual nature, during office hours. The panel rejected arguments that the councillor had been acting in an entirely personal capacity. It found that the councillor could not divorce himself from his role as the officer's quasi-employer and that, when sending or encouraging the officer to send the messages during working hours, he was acting in his official capacity.

E.G Attempting to misuse your position as a councillor would include if you threaten to use your position improperly to block someone's planning, licence or grant application. In effect you would be doing something that only a councillor could do even if as a matter of fact, you did not have the power to do so. That may include an assumption, for example, that you would put inappropriate pressure on officers or fellow councillors or lobby behind the scenes for a particular outcome. It should not be up to a member of the public to have to work out whether you are in fact on a planning committee.

E.G Another example would be disclosing confidential information improperly you had received because of your role as a councillor.

E.G A councillor returning from a party got into an argument with a taxi driver. When he arrived home, he refused to pay the fare and when he spoke to the manager of the taxi company, he said that he was a councillor and would make sure that the taxi driver's licence was withdrawn by the council. While he was entitled to dispute the payment if he was dissatisfied with the service he had received he was found to have breached the code by invoking his office and seeking to misuse his position to intimidate the manager and driver and to seek to gain an advantage for himself, notwithstanding the fact that he did not in reality have the ability to carry out his threat.

Respect

EG The complaint alleged that the councillor posted on their blog a highly critical comment and an offensive caption about a former councillor, who had passed away and whose funeral had taken place the previous day. The councillor was found to have breached the provisions of his local authority's Code of Conduct relating to councillors treating others with respect; as well as conducting themselves in a manner which could reasonably be regarded as bringing their role or their authority into disrepute.

EG The complaint alleged that a councillor commented under a pseudonym on a local authority blog referring to possible nepotism in the awarding of a contract to a local firm by the local authority. The standards committee found that the councillor had breached the Code of Conduct in making the posts because he had failed to treat others with respect and, in doing so, he had conducted himself in a manner which brought his role and his local authority into disrepute.

EG The complaint alleged that a councillor had made remarks of an abusive, insulting and personal nature to the complainant, a police officer, and also made a number of unfounded allegations about him during two telephone calls to a police station made in his capacity as a ward councillor. It was found that the comments amounted to an unacceptable personal attack on the complainant and that the councillor had breached the respect provisions in his local authority's Code of Conduct.

Bullying

The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) characterises bullying as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means that undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient. Bullying might be a regular pattern of behaviour or a one-off incident, happen face-to-face, on social media, in emails or phone calls, happen in the workplace or at work social events and may not always be obvious or noticed by others.

Examples of bullying include but are not limited to:

- Verbal abuse, such as shouting, swearing, threats, insults, sarcasm, ridiculing or demeaning others, inappropriate nicknames, or humiliating language
- Physical or psychological threats or actions towards an individual or their personal property
- Practical jokes
- Overbearing or intimidating levels of supervision, including preventing someone from undertaking their role or following agreed policies and procedures
- Inappropriate comments about someone's performance
- Abuse of authority or power, such as placing unreasonable expectations on someone in relation to their job, responsibilities, or hours of work, or coercing someone to meet such expectations
- Ostracising or excluding someone from meetings, communications, work events or socials
- Sending, distributing, or posting detrimental material about other people, including images, in any medium
- Smear campaigns.

Examples of harassment include but are not limited to:

- Sending unwelcome emails
- Unnecessarily repetitive, intrusive questioning
- Unwelcome physical contact such as touching or invading 'personal space'
- Haranguing
- Intimidation
- Inappropriate remarks or questioning such as comments about someone's appearance, lewd comments, and offensive jokes
- Overbearing or intimidating levels of supervision, including preventing someone from undertaking their role or following agreed policies and procedures
- Inappropriate comments about someone's performance

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Placing unreasonable expectations on someone in relation to their job, responsibilities, or hours of work, or coercing someone to meet such expectations • Sexual harassment
<p>EG The complaint alleged that a councillor had behaved in a disrespectful and harassing manner towards two fellow female councillors and officers. It was established that the councillor had made unwarranted and inappropriate physical contact with the councillors and officers at an official event and had also made remarks towards the officers which were patronising and demeaning. The councillor was found to be in breach of the Code of Conduct.</p>
<p>Discrimination</p>
<p>EG The complaint alleged that a councillor 'liked' several racially discriminatory comments on social media and one comment advocating violence against Travellers. The panel found that 'Liking' of the offensive comments did amount to a failure to treat those who were the subject of such comments with respect and a failure to promote equalities in breach of the Code of Conduct.</p> <p>EG A councillor was a member of the local authority's recruitment panel to appoint a new chief executive. Five applicants were shortlisted. After one candidate had finished his presentation and left the room the councillor said, "good candidate, shame he's black". The panel found that the Code of Conduct had been breached.</p>
<p>Impartiality of officers</p>
<p>EG A councillor became involved in a social care case on behalf of a constituent during which time he inappropriately sought to influence operational decision-making and sent discourteous and disrespectful correspondence to the officers. In doing so, he lost sight of his overall responsibility to the local authority to allow its officers to perform their statutory functions. He was found to have breached the Code of Conduct.</p> <p>EG A councillor who, over a period of six months, persistently sought to influence the decisions of officers dealing with a complaint by his son and daughter-in-law against their local authority tenant neighbour was found, through his actions, to have compromised the impartiality of the officers and to have used his position improperly to promote the interest of his family and to have brought the role of councillor into disrepute in breach of the Code of Conduct.</p>
<p>Confidential Information</p>
<p>EG A councillor was assisting a resident in an adoption process, which the resident decided to subsequently withdraw from. The resident's estranged parent contacted the councillor for information as to what was happening with the case and the councillor inadvertently shared confidential information as she had not realised that father and son were estranged. This was found to be a breach of the code.</p> <p>EG A councillor circulated information about an officer's medical condition to other councillors and a local headteacher with whom he was acquainted. He was found to have disclosed information which should reasonably be regarded as being of a confidential nature and without the officer's consent in breach of the Code of Conduct.</p>
<p>Misuse of position</p>

EG The complaint alleged a councillor used his computer equipment provided by his local authority for private purposes by downloading inappropriate adult pornographic images and sending a number of letters to a local newspaper, which he falsely represented as being from members of the public. He was found to have misused the local authority's equipment in breach of the code and had brought his office into disrepute.

EG A councillor used local authority notepaper in an attempt to avoid parking penalties incurred by his son. He also dishonestly attempted to renew a parking permit for disabled drivers. He was convicted of attempting, by deception, to evade the parking penalties dishonestly. He was also found by his local authority to have breached this paragraph of the code.

Bias and Pre-determination

EG The complaint alleged that a councillor had behaved in a disrespectful and harassing manner towards two fellow female councillors and officers. It was established that the councillor had made unwarranted and inappropriate physical contact with the councillors and officers at an official event and had also made remarks towards the officers which were patronising and demeaning. The councillor was found to be in breach of the Code of Conduct.

EG A district councillor also belongs to a parish council that has complained about the conduct of an officer of the district council. As a result of the complaint the officer has been disciplined. The officer has appealed to a councillor panel and the councillor seeks to sit on the panel hearing the appeal. The councillor should not participate.

Contrast this with:

EG The complaint about the officer described above is made by the local office of a national charity of which the councillor is an ordinary member and is not involved with the local office. The councillor should be able to participate in this situation because the matter is not concerned with the promotion of the interests of the charity.

Improper involvement of someone with an interest in the outcome

EG A local authority receives an application to modify the Definitive Map of public rights of way. A panel of councillors are given delegated authority to make the statutory modification Order. They have a private meeting with local representatives of a footpath organisation before deciding whether the Order should be made. However, they do not give the same opportunity to people with opposing interests.

Commenting before a decision is made

EG A local authority appoints a barrister to hold a public inquiry into an application to register a village green. The barrister produces a report where he recommends that the application is rejected. A councillor attends a meeting in one of the affected wards and says publicly: "speaking for myself I am inclined to go along with the barrister's recommendation". He later participates in the local authority's decision to accept the barrister's recommendation. At the meeting the supporters of the application are given an opportunity to argue that the recommendation should not be accepted.

This is unlikely to give rise to a successful claim of predetermination or bias. The statement made by the councillor only suggests a predisposition to follow the recommendation of the barrister's report, and not that he has closed his mind to all possibilities. The subsequent conduct of the meeting, where supporters of the application could try and persuade councillors to disagree with the recommendation, would confirm this.

EG A developer entered into negotiations to acquire some surplus local authority land for an incinerator. Planning permission for the incinerator had already been granted. Following local elections there is a change in the composition and political control of the local authority. After pressure from new councillors who have campaigned against the incinerator and a full debate, the local authority's executive decides to end the negotiations. This is on the grounds that the land is needed for housing and employment uses.

The local authority's decision is unlikely to be found to be biased, so long as the eventual decision was taken on proper grounds and after a full consideration of all the relevant issues.



Classification: Open	Decision Type: Non-Key
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Report to:	Standards Committee	Date: 18 September 2025
Subject:	Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual Performance Data & Letters 2024-25	
Report of	Director of Law & Democratic Services	

Summary

The purpose of this report is to set out findings and recommendations of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman for 2024-2025.

Recommendation(s)

- (a) That the content of the Ombudsman's Annual Review Letter to the Council be noted; and:-
- (b) That the complaints made to the Local Government Ombudsman referred to the Council during 2024/25 and their outcomes be noted.

Report Author and Contact Details:

Name: Michael Cunliffe
 Position: Principal Democratic Services Officer
 Department: Legal and Democratic Services
 E-mail: m.cunliffe@bury.gov.uk

1. Background

- 1.1. The Council receives an Annual Report summarising all complaints dealt with by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman ("LGO"). This Report provides a brief commentary on the Ombudsman's Annual Review letter. (Attached).

2. Ombudsman's Jurisdiction

- 2.1. The Local Government Act 1974 established the then Local Government Ombudsman for England and for Wales. The Act defines the main statutory functions:
 - to investigate complaints against councils and some other authorities
 - to investigate complaints about adult social care providers from people who arrange or fund their own adult social care
 - to provide advice and guidance on good administrative practice

The main activity under Part III of the 1974 Act is the investigation of complaints, which it states is limited to complaints from members of the public alleging they have suffered injustice as a result of maladministration and/or service failure. The LGO jurisdiction under Part III covers all local authorities (excluding town and parish councils). The LGO changed its name to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman in 2017 to reflect the full scope of their jurisdiction.

3. Changes for 2024/25

- 3.1 The LGO made changes to the annual performance data and letters, issuing and publishing annual statistics earlier in the year and changing the way they present key statistics along with raising any performance concerns with individual authorities in July 2025.
- 3.2 The changes were in response to feedback that issuing annual data earlier in the year will better fit with local reporting cycles and that changes to the presentation of the statistics provides clarity and context. The LGO are retaining the existing statistics (uphold rate, satisfactory remedies provided by the authority, compliance rate) but have switched the emphasis from percentages to numbers. They also include the total number of complaints decided, the number assessed, and the number investigated to provide important context.

4. Complaints and Enquiries Received by the Ombudsman in 2024/25

- 4.1. The Ombudsman provided, statistics on how complaints upheld against the Council were remedied and those not pursued. This year's letter and information again includes a breakdown, showing the complaints and enquiries received and decisions made. **The letter and data are attached in Appendix A, B, C and D.** The number of complaints and enquiries received for 24/25 as compared to 23/24 has increased slightly.

2024-2025-	100
2023-2024-	78
2022/2023-	72
2021/2022-	68
2020/2021 -	38 (Covid hit year)
2019/2020 -	73

- 4.2. The complaints received by the Ombudsman about the Council in 2024/25 were split across service areas as follows (Note- these are LGO designated service categories, see Appendix B). These are compared with last year's figures. Appendix C lists the 89 cases decided.

Service Number of Complaints	2024/25	Comparison to previous year	2023/24
Adult Care Services	9	<i>Increase</i>	4
Corporate & Other Services	9	<i>Increase</i>	7
Education & Children's Services	28	<i>Decrease</i>	35
Environmental & Public Protection & Reg	18	<i>Increase</i>	6
Highways & Transport	14	<i>Increase</i>	9
Planning & Development	10	<i>Increase</i>	3
Housing	9	<i>Increase</i>	6
Benefits and Tax	2	<i>Decrease</i>	7
Other	1	<i>No change</i>	1

5. Ombudsman Complaint Decisions

- 5.1. The decision of "Upheld" is applied when the Ombudsman finds there is some fault in the way the Council acted – even if it has agreed to put things right during the course

of the Ombudsman investigation; or had already accepted it needed to remedy the situation before the complaint was apparent to the Ombudsman.

- 5.2. The LGO have advised on comparing statistics across the years and that they previously changed their investigation processes. This contributed towards an increase in the average uphold rate across all complaints. Members should consider comparing individual Council uphold rates against the average rate rather than against previous years.

For Bury **71%** of complaints investigated were upheld compared to an average of **81%** in similar authorities.

Decision of Ombudsman	2024/25	2023/24
Investigated – Upheld	10	23
Investigated – Not Upheld	4	3

- 5.3. The compliance data by the Ombudsman for the Council is also included within Appendix D.

6. Education & Children’s Services, Housing & Adult Services

- 6.1. Complaints about education and children’s services are still dominating the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman’s casework, but housing cases are now the second biggest area of concern for people complaining.
- 6.2. The Ombudsman’s annual review of its local government complaints for 2024-25 shows a continued increase in its caseload, with a record number of complaints received, exceeding 20,000 for the first time. Of these complaints, Education and Children’s Services made up 27 per cent of the caseload and 47 per cent of all upheld investigations. The Ombudsman found fault in 91 per cent of all Education and Children’s complaints, and 94 per cent of cases involving special educational needs provision.
- 6.3. Housing cases accounted for 17 per cent of all cases received and accounted for a higher proportion than last year. Of those cases investigated, the Ombudsman upheld 85 per cent, with issues remaining particularly acute in the London area.
- 6.4. The third highest area of casework was adult care services, taking 13 per cent of the Ombudsman’s workload – a slightly smaller proportion than last year. Of these, 78 per cent of investigations carried out were upheld.

7. Annual Review of Local Government Complaints in England for 2024-25

- 7.1. The LGO Annual Review of Local Government Complaints in England for 2024-2025 pulls together the national picture of trends and common issues that have arisen from complaints over the last year. This document is attached in Appendix E.

8. Ombudsman’s Annual Review Letter

- 8.1. The Annual Review letter provided an annual summary of statistics on the

complaints made to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) about this Council to the year ending 31 March 2025.

- 8.2 The LGO has an interactive map of performance. The map shows annual performance data for all Councils in England, with links to published decision statements, public interest reports, annual letters and information about service improvements that have been agreed by each Council. The intention of this tool is to place a focus on the authority's compliance with the recommendations. The interactive map can be accessed via the following link:
[Bury Metropolitan Borough Council - Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman](#)

9. Other Information & Comparisons

- 9.1 It should also be acknowledged that complaints to the Ombudsman do not always involve the Council or its appeals processes of any wrongdoing; but that they come from people who would have liked something more, or better, or a different outcome. It is unlikely that public expectations of services will diminish in the short term and therefore there is no reason to suppose that complaints will fall significantly. Despite these challenges, Officers are making every effort to ensure that capacity to respond to the Ombudsman is maintained.
- 9.2 It is important that the Council takes even greater measures to ensure that it is able to evidence that it learns from complaints and uses this learning to improve and maintain the quality of the services it commissions and provides.
- 9.3 In comparison to other GM authorities, data patterns for 2024-25 are as follows:-

Authority	Bury	Rochdale	Bolton	Oldham
Complaints Upheld	10	11	8	8
Implemented recommendations	100% This compares to an average of 100% in similar authorities.	100%	100%	100%
Satisfactory remedy	20% This compares to an average of 13% in similar authorities.	0%	13%	50%

10. Developments and Improvements

- 10.1 Officers monitor the LGO process and the large number of complaints in Children's Services, sometimes involving the same complainant with multiple complaints. To help Officers maintain an accurate record and meet the required deadlines, a matrix is produced by the Council's LGO link Officer. This is sent to relevant Officers and Directors to make them aware of live cases with deadlines for actions required and evidence to be produced for the LGO. The data for 2024-2025 demonstrates the improvements made.

- 10.2 The LGO Link Officer and Monitoring Officer regularly review and manage live cases and the LGO have welcomed significant strides the Council has made over the last 18 months improving its complaint functions. This involves a centralised policy & complaints team that oversees all casework and compliance. Additional oversight and accountability is provided by the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee (The LGO report will be on the November 2025 meeting agenda).

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21 May 2025

By email

Ms Ridsdale
Chief Executive
Bury Metropolitan Borough Council

Dear Ms Ridsdale

Annual Review letter 2024-25

I write to you with your annual summary of complaint statistics from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman for the year ending 31 March 2025. The information offers valuable insight about your organisation's approach to complaints, and I know you will consider it as part of your corporate governance processes. We have listened to your feedback, and I am pleased to be able to share your annual statistics earlier in the year to better fit with local reporting cycles. I hope this proves helpful to you.

[Your annual statistics are available here.](#)

In addition, you can find the detail of the decisions we have made about your Council, read the public reports we have issued, and view the service improvements your Council has agreed to make as a result of our investigations, as well as previous annual review letters.

In a change to our approach, we will write to organisations in July where there is exceptional practice or where we have concerns about an organisation's complaint handling. Not all organisations will get a letter. If you do receive a letter it will be sent in advance of its publication on our website on 16 July 2025, alongside our annual Review of Local Government Complaints.

Supporting complaint and service improvement

In February we published [good practice guides](#) to support councils to adopt our [Complaint Handling Code](#). The guides were developed in consultation with councils that have been piloting the Code and are based on the real-life, front-line experience of people handling complaints day-to-day, including their experience of reporting to senior leaders and elected members. The guides were issued alongside free [training resources](#) organisations can use to make sure front-line staff understand what to do when someone raises a complaint. We will be applying the Code in our casework from April 2026 and we know a large number of councils have already adopted it into their local policies with positive results.

This year we relaunched our popular [complaint handling training](#) programme. The training is now more interactive than ever, providing delegates with an opportunity to consider a complaint from receipt to resolution. Early feedback has been extremely positive with delegates reporting an increase in confidence in handling complaints after completing the training. To find out more contact training@lgo.org.uk.

Yours sincerely,



Amerdeep Somal
Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman
Chair, Commission for Local Administration in England

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of the Local Government Act 1972.

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Annual Review of Local Government Complaints 2024-25

July 2025



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Ombudsman's foreword

I am pleased to present our review of local government complaints for 2024-25.

We received a record number of complaints during the year, exceeding 20,000 for the first time – the result of a 16% increase in each of the past two years. Education & Children, Adult Care and Housing services continue to dominate our casework, accounting for 58% of the decisions we made.

The increase in complaints and the level of fault we find – we uphold 83% of the complaints we investigate – illustrates the systemic nature of the issues across local government.

Education & Children's complaints, and in particular the growing issues with special educational needs provision, made up 27% of the cases we received during the year, and made up 48% of cases we upheld. We found fault in more cases this year, with 91% upheld. We continue to maintain the view that urgent change is required to national policy on support for young people with special educational needs and disabilities, and we await the Government white paper, now expected in Autumn 2025.

Housing complaints accounted for 17% of the cases we received, a higher proportion than last year. We upheld 85% of the complaints we investigated and, while issues remain particularly prevalent in London, there are

similar issues repeated across the country. We see people being denied access to housing registers, being given the wrong priority, and not being treated fairly when homeless or faced with homelessness, including the use of unsuitable temporary accommodation. There is no doubt that the challenges around the supply of affordable housing are acute, and we recognise the commitment made to build more homes. Whilst construction takes place, councils need to look at implementing their policies, and the law, consistently and fairly – as many do despite the challenges – with people at the heart of their services and approach.

13% of the cases we received were about adult social care. Our casework tells us that delays in the assessment process and poor communication with individuals and families continue to be key themes. We upheld 78% of the adult social care complaints we investigated, slightly less than last year, but still a high proportion. Again we believe there are systemic problems at play and hope the current independent commission into adult social care will identify short, medium, and long-term solutions that help alleviate pressure in the system.



We know that change is needed to deliver sustainable and effective local government services. We published our Triennial Review during the year setting out the changes to our powers that would help to push up complaint handling standards and give more people access to redress.

The Review proposes four solutions:

- **Recommendation One:** Simplified legislation to ensure we can investigate all local government services, now and into the future, particularly as devolution promises to impart more decision making to new regional bodies.
- **Recommendation Two:** The statutory power to monitor compliance with our Complaint Handling Code.
- **Recommendation Three:** Requiring independent care providers to signpost to us, to drive up people's awareness of their rights.
- **Recommendation Four:** Extend our remit past the school gate, so we can look at how Education, Health and Care Plans are implemented, and how children are admitted and excluded in schools.

We look forward to the government's response.

“Despite the obvious pressures within local government, pleasingly, compliance with the recommendations we make remains high at 99.7%. This demonstrates the sector’s commitment to redress and improvement and the importance of good governance and leadership within complaint handling.”

Within our current powers, we issue investigation reports to highlight recurrent or significant fault, injustice, or remedy, highlight systemic problems or non-compliance with our recommendations. We published 26 reports during the year. Just over three quarters of these were on investigations about Education & Children's Services and Housing.

Authorities are required to consider our reports at a high decision-making level, such as council meetings. These reports are a great tool for learning from our casework.

Despite the obvious pressures within local government, pleasingly, compliance with the recommendations we make remains high at 99.7%. This demonstrates the sector's commitment to redress and improvement and the importance of good governance and leadership within complaint handling.

Our Complaint Handling Code offers further support and structure for council complaint systems. Published last year, we have worked with 20 pilot local authorities to understand the opportunities and challenges presented by the Code, resulting in the publication of a series of good practice guides and free training resources to support organisations in adopting it successfully.

Finally, I encourage councils to review the data and lessons from our casework in the report, use it to draw comparisons, evaluate performance, and make improvements.

Amerdeep Somal
Local Government and
Social Care Ombudsman
July 2025

Headline statistics



20,773
complaints received



19,660
complaints
decided



4,298
complaints
investigated



3,552*
complaints
upheld



12%
satisfactory remedies**



99.7%
compliance with our
recommendations



83%
uphold rate



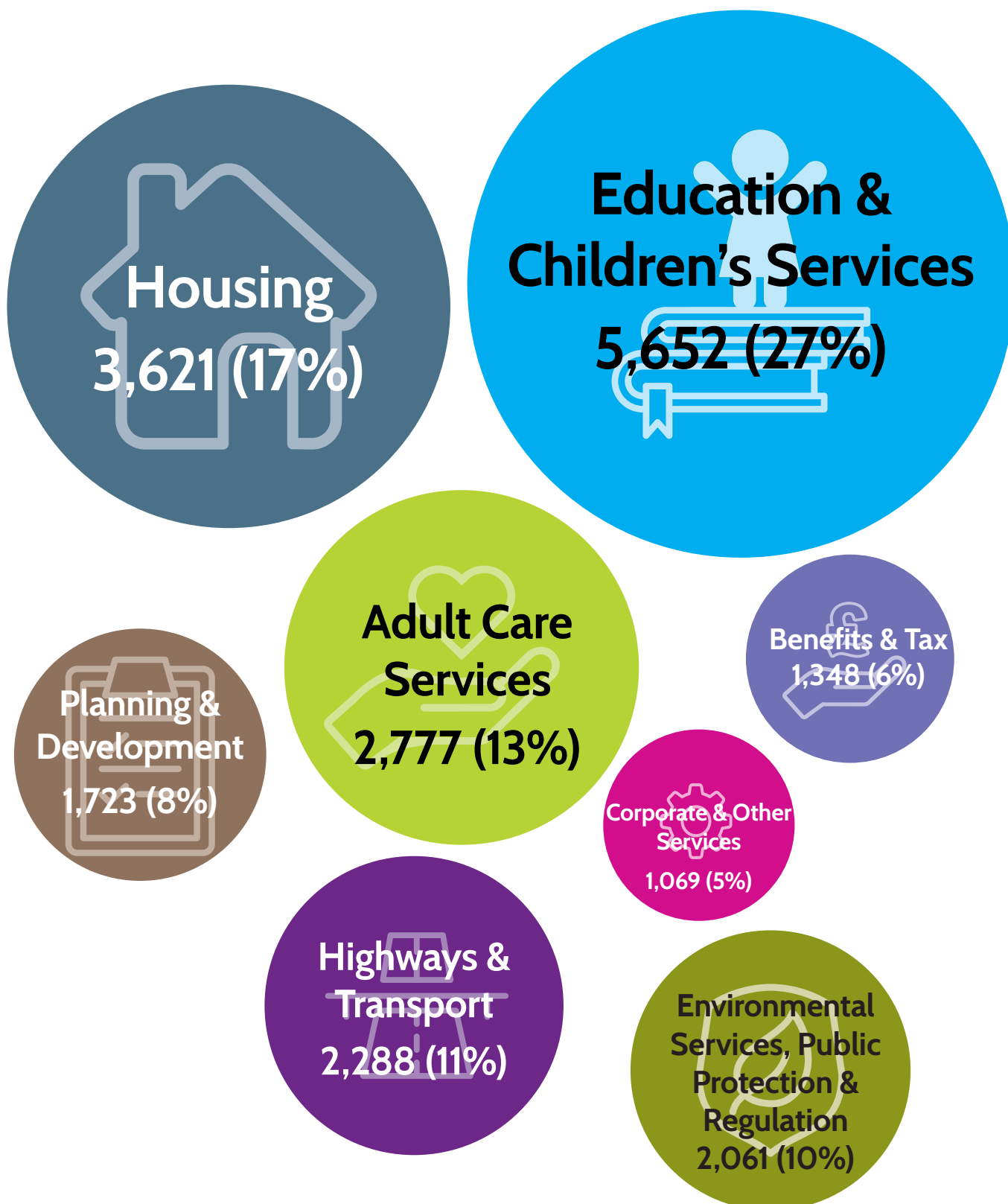
6.2
upheld complaints per
100,000 residents***

*Includes cases where we found the organisation offered a suitable remedy early on

**We agreed with how the organisation had offered to put things right

***Includes the following authority types only: County Councils, District Councils, London Boroughs, Metropolitan Councils, Unitary Authorities

Complaints and enquiries received



Percentages add up to 98% due to rounding.

Enhancing resident satisfaction: best practice in complaint management

Listening to public concerns is an essential component of a well-run, accountable authority that is committed to public engagement, learning and improvement.

Putting things right when they go wrong

When we find fault, we make recommendations to put things right. These recommendations are non-binding yet, in almost all cases, authorities agree to comply with them. To assure ourselves we monitor compliance in a credible way, we demand evidence of what organisations have, or will, do to carry out each recommendation they have agreed to.

We were satisfied with authorities' compliance with our recommendations in 99.7% of cases.

There were 10 cases in which we were not satisfied the authority had complied with our recommendations. When this happens, we consider a range of actions, including issuing a report and opening a new investigation into the authority's failure to provide the agreed remedy. Non-compliance is also reported publicly on our website.

Timely compliance is important; it helps to rebuild people's confidence when an organisation carries out recommendations within the agreed timeframe. There were more than 500 cases (18%) where compliance was late because our recommendations were not carried out on time. To ensure remedies are implemented on time, authorities should consider:

- The timescales proposed at the draft decision stage to ensure they are achievable
- Keeping track of agreed recommendations and informing us of any delays
- Providing us with the evidence as soon as a remedy is completed
- Establishing processes that ensure apologies and payments to complainants are made promptly

Best practice: systems and oversight

Our performance data is a key part of the measures set out in the government's statutory guide for best value authorities, published in May 2024. The guidance says best value authorities:

- are willing to work with us to proactively identify areas for improvement and respond promptly to recommendations, and
- implement our service improvement recommendations at the earliest opportunity.

Our investigation reports are also considered, alongside other data, as potential indicators of failure.

We encourage staff and elected officials to use our guidance and the information we publish to implement effective processes and to determine the health of their local complaints system.

WHAT TO LOOK AT

- The [Complaint Handling Code](#) sets out a process that allows organisations to respond to complaints effectively and fairly. We will be applying the Code in our casework about councils from April 2026. We have good practice guides and training resources available to support organisations to adopt the Code.
- Our [good practice guides](#) for senior leaders and elected members explain how complaint data can be used to better understand the performance of services they are responsible for.
- Our [council performance map](#) has our council complaint statistics in a single, interactive hub. It is a mine of searchable information and allows comparisons to be made between similar councils. You can find annual review letters, investigation reports, and service improvements a council has agreed to make.

We also publish [data tables](#) with complaints information at local authority level, which can be freely analysed and segmented.

Enhancing resident satisfaction: best practice in complaint management

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- **Uphold rates** show the proportion of investigations in which we find some fault, or we found the authority accepted fault early on. How does your authority compare against the average for similar type authorities?
- **Offering a suitable remedy** to a complaint before it comes to us is a good sign your authority is offering appropriate ways to put things right. How often does your authority do this, and how does it compare with others?
- **Compliance rates** show the proportion of cases in which we are satisfied our recommendations have been implemented (based on the evidence authorities give us). Compliance below 100% is rare. Does your authority have a 100% compliance rate – if not, what is it doing to scrutinise complaints where it failed to comply?
- **Service improvement recommendations** aim to prevent a fault from reoccurring and affecting others in the same way. How do you track the way service improvements your authority agrees to make are implemented? How is their impact monitored?

We want authorities to operate, and benefit from, excellent complaint systems. Where support is needed to achieve this, we offer online complaint handling training and can deliver bespoke training to target specific issues. To find out more visit www.lgo.org.uk/training.

Authorities that took part in complaint handling training during 2024-25 can be found on our [website](#).

Learning & improvement: reports and good practice guides

We are one of the only Ombudsman schemes to **publish the decisions** we make. We do this to share learning and be transparent.

Cases that raise serious issues or highlight matters of public interest are issued as reports. We published **26 reports** during the year. These are listed at the [end of this report](#).

Focus Reports and good practice guides collate case studies from our investigations on certain subjects where we highlight our most serious concerns or provide specialist practitioner advice. During the year, we published:

Focus reports

People not structures: putting people at the heart of integrated care

July 2024

In this report, produced with the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman, we said Integrated Care Systems (ICS) are not doing enough to put the vulnerable people they support at the heart of what they do.

ICS are made up of representatives from local authority social services and NHS partnerships that work together to support the needs of people in their areas. The cases we highlight show the impact when people's experiences are not put front and centre.



“Local authorities and the NHS need to work as equal partners to put people at the heart of their services on every occasion. However, we are finding cases where disagreements about responsibility and funding are having a significant impact on people’s quality of life.”

Learning & improvement: reports and good practice guides

Children need families: helping to improve council services for adoptive families and their children

November 2024

We want to help improve the support councils provide to people throughout the adoption process. While we receive relatively few complaints from adoptive families, every single upheld case reflects a vulnerable child's fresh start in life being affected. This can either be in the support provided post-adoption, or the support and information given to potential adoptive parents.

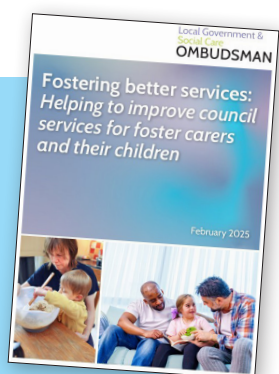


“Adopted children often have some of the most challenging starts to life, lacking in stability and continuity of care, so it is all the more important that councils get things right for them and their families. Councils need to get their processes, and the support they offer to these families right or they risk family units breaking down.”

Fostering better services: helping to improve council services for foster carers and their children

February 2025

This report is a companion piece to our Adoption report and looks at issues faced by both fostered children and the carers who support them, when councils don't get things right. The stories included a young woman, who came forward after she had left care with a claim she had suffered abuse, and her local council did not look into it properly. Other common issues include inaccurate advice to foster carers prior to placements starting, failing to follow correct processes to remove children and maintaining contact with birth family members.



“Foster carers play a key role in helping to provide stability for these children but need to be given the right tools to do it well. Councils need to ensure they provide the right information and support for the foster carers who look after the children they have ultimate responsibility for.”

Learning & improvement: reports and good practice guides

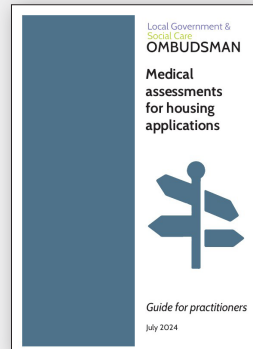
Good practice guides

Medical assessments for housing applications

July 2024

This guide shared the learning from our investigations on medical assessments in housing allocation cases, highlighting the common issues we see, based on around 20 detailed investigations we carry out a year.

The key learning points are grouped into three themes: councils making independent decisions about medical need, using good evidence of decisions, and in a timely way.



Domestic abuse and housing decisions

October 2024

This guide drew on our experience investigating housing complaints, since the new duties for councils were introduced in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, which amended the definition of priority need for homelessness to include people homeless because of domestic abuse.

The guide draws out important learning for councils to use the right definitions of domestic abuse and priority need and apply the right tests to decide if an applicant is homeless.



Household waste offences

October 2024

With this guide, we urge councils to take a proportionate approach to enforcing household waste offences, after upholding several cases with heavy handed fines being issued.

Councils have different powers at their disposal to handle apparent waste offences and must properly consider the details of the offence before deciding which of these to apply.



In 2024-25

We published

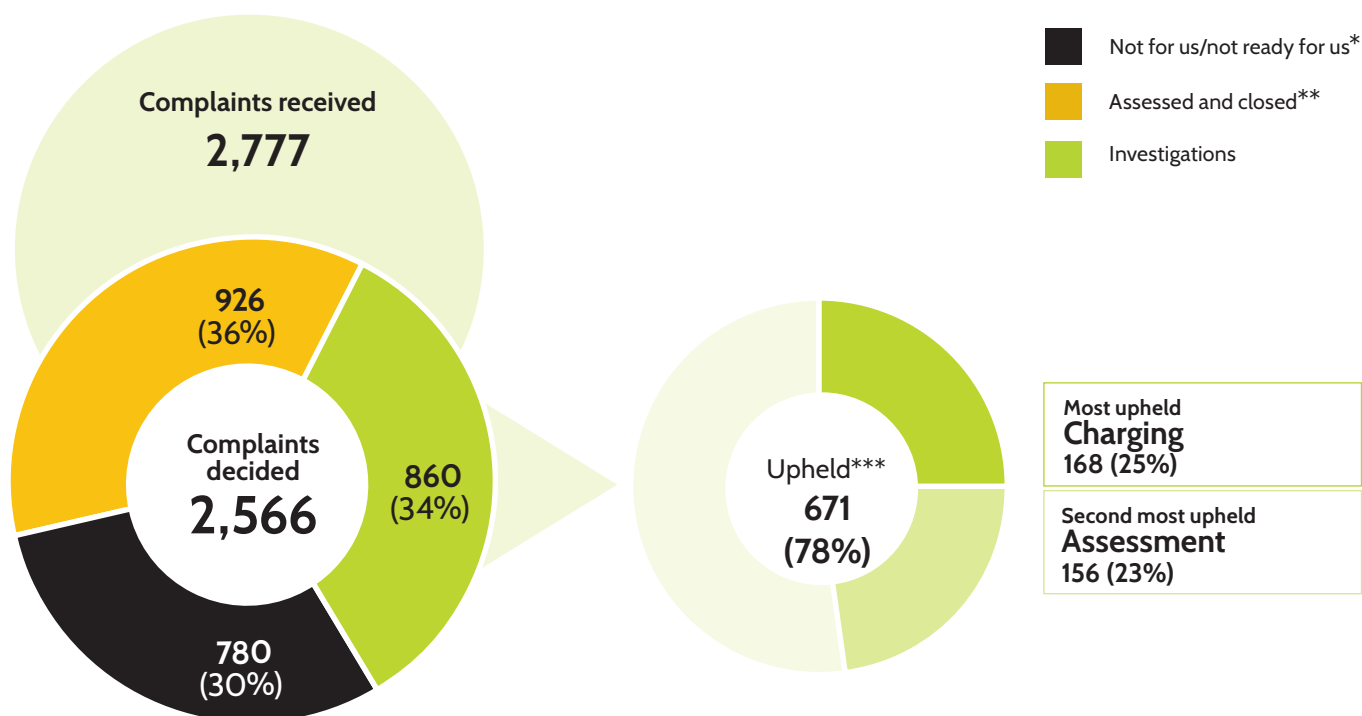
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investigation reports

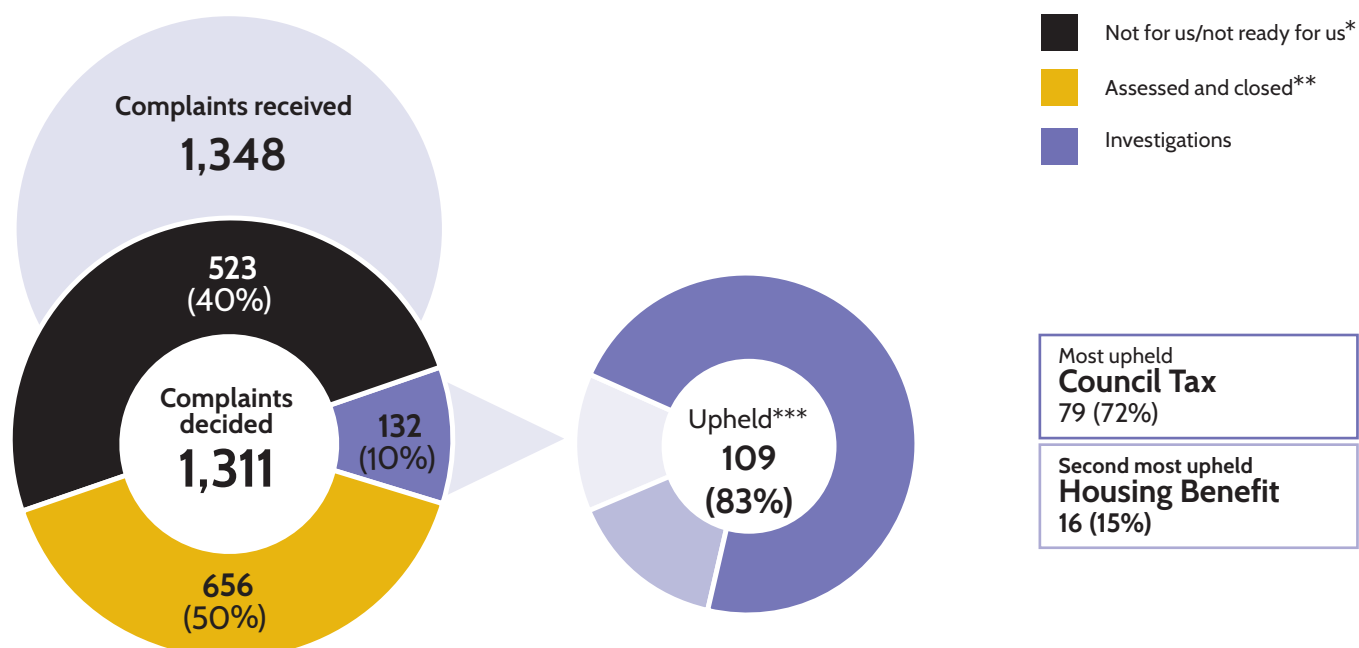
2024-25

Statistics by service area

Adult Care Services



Benefits & Tax



*Not for us – includes complaints brought to us before the council was given chance to consider it, or the complainant came to the wrong Ombudsman.

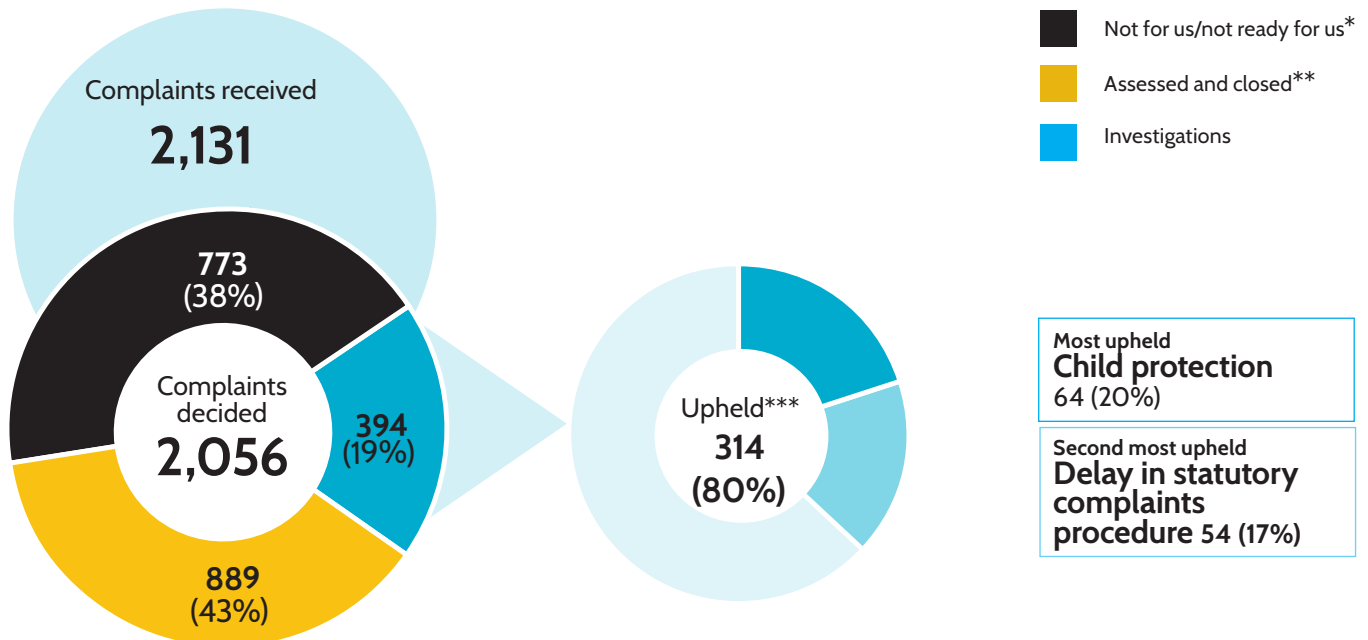
** Assessed and closed – we assessed the complaint but decided against carrying out a further investigation. This might be because the law says we're not allowed to investigate it, or because it would not be an effective use of public funds if we did.

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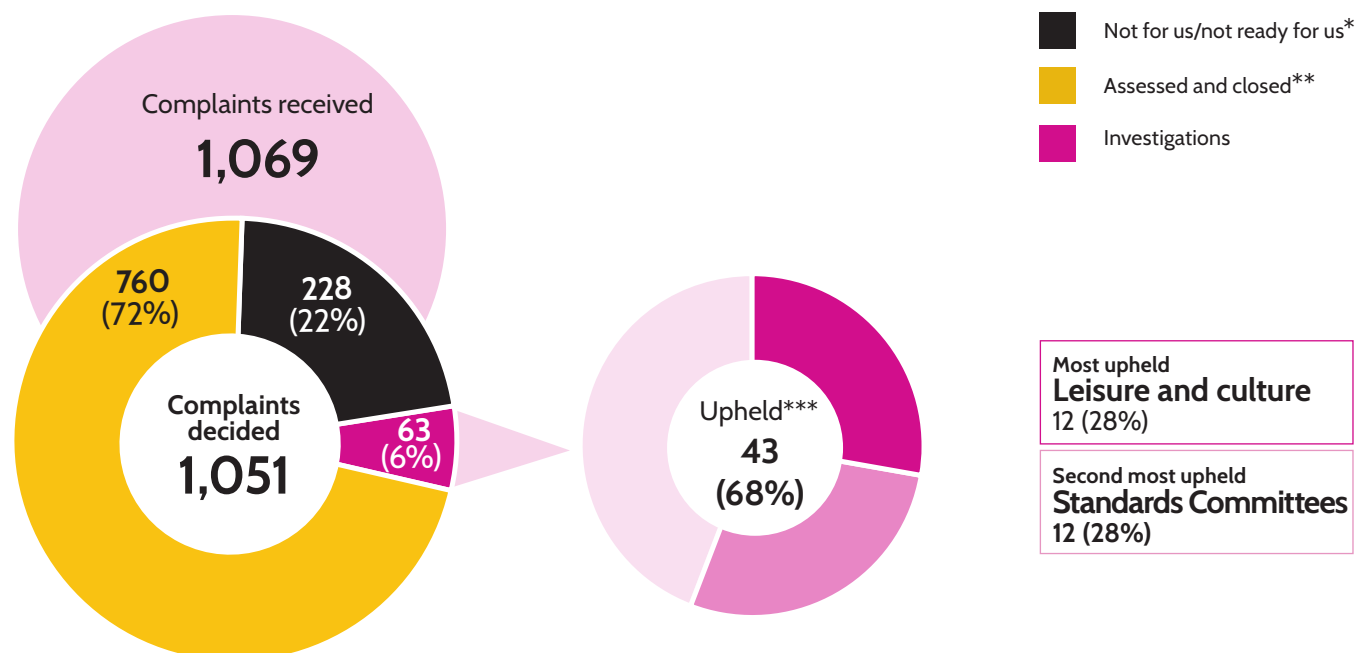
2024-25

Statistics by service area

Children's Services



Corporate & Other Services



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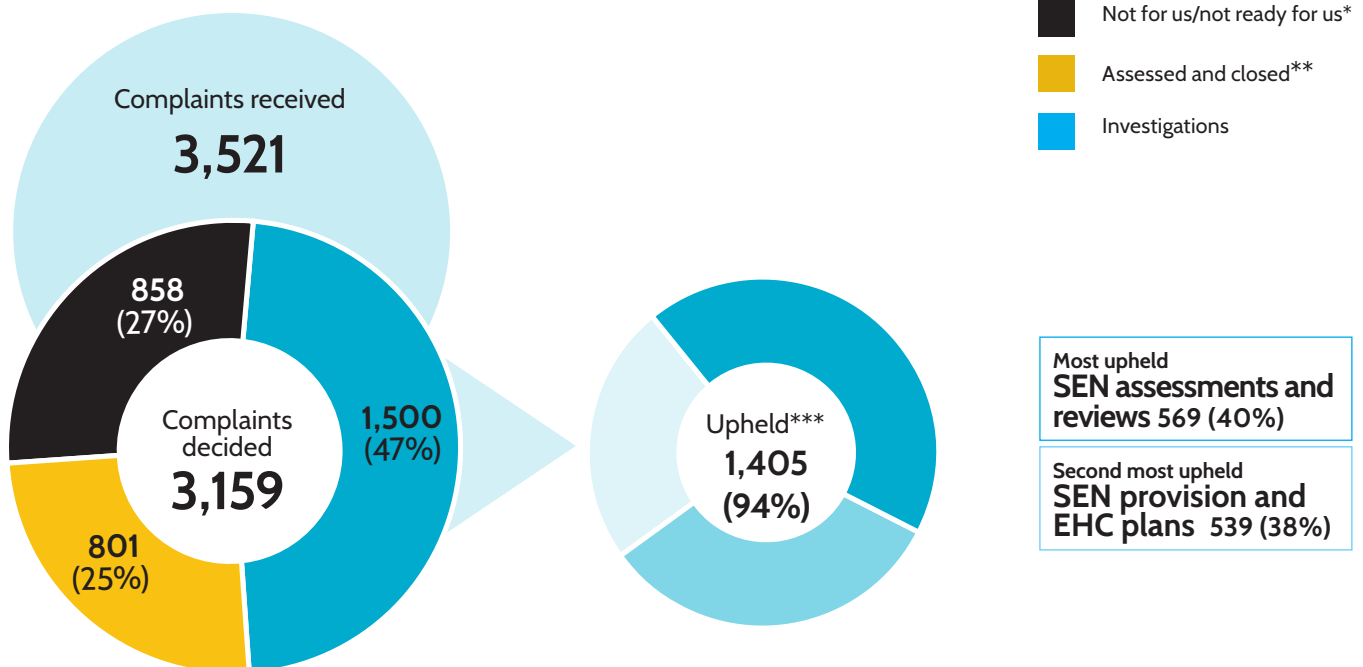
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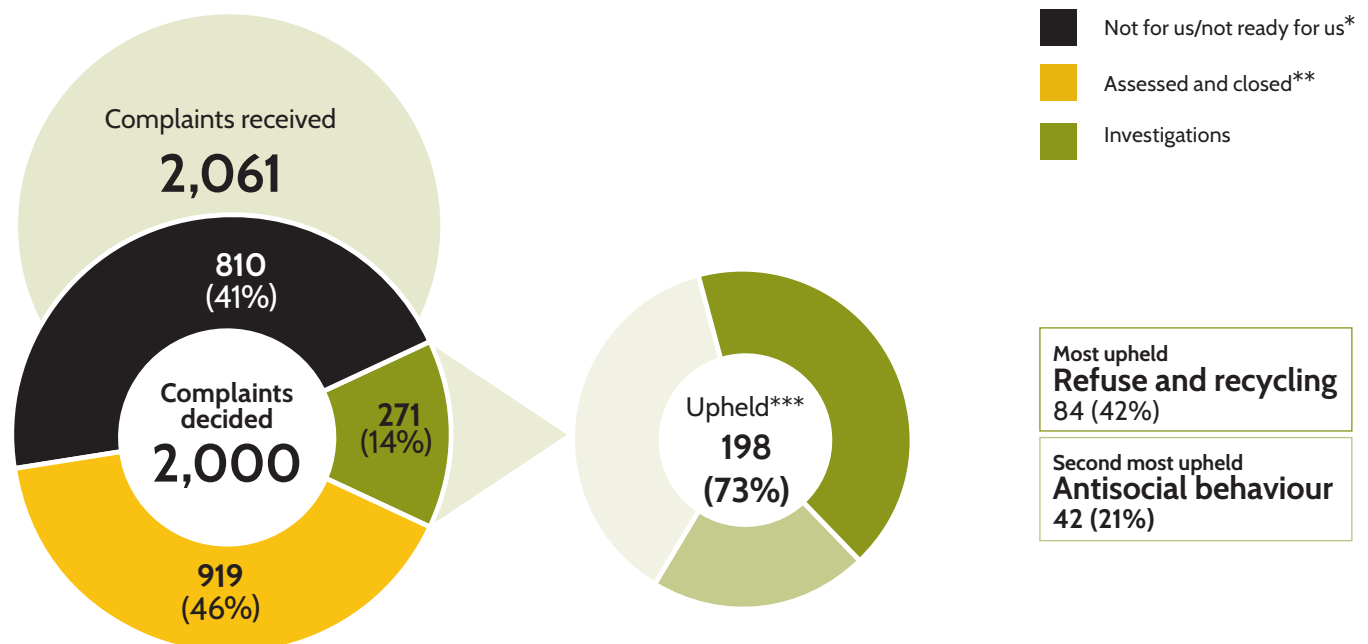
2024-25

Statistics by service area

Education



Environmental Services, Public Protection & Regulation



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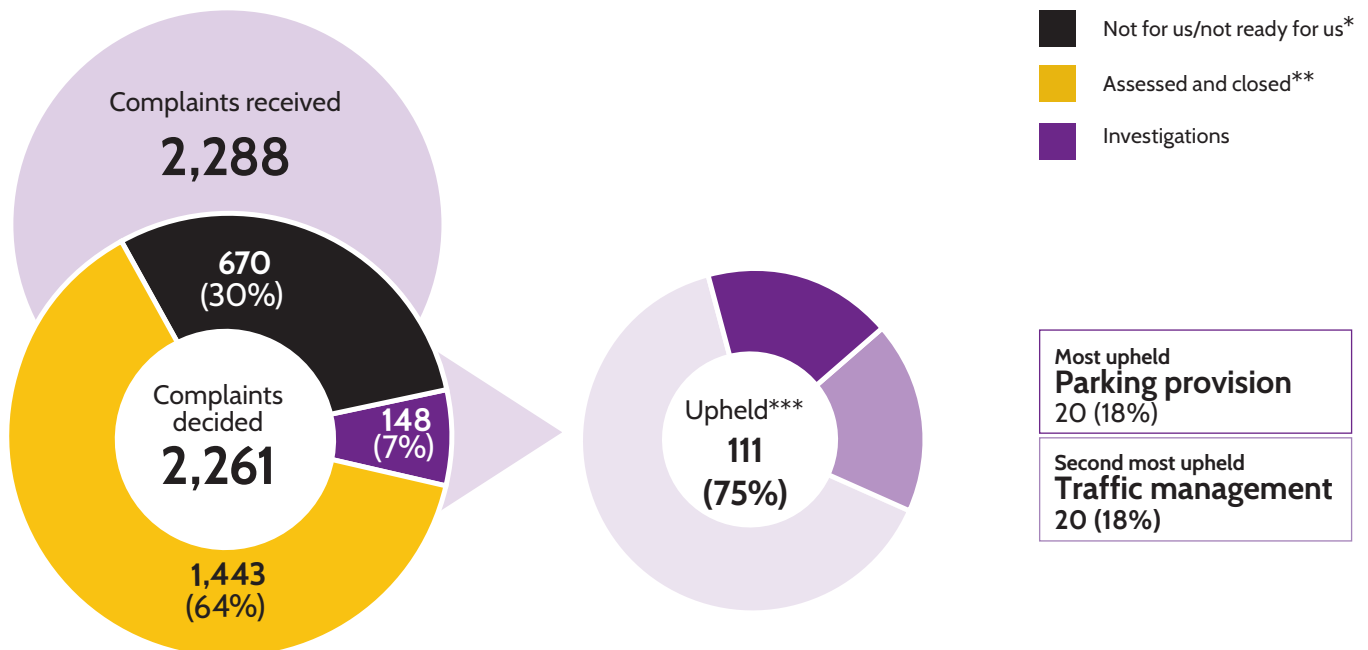
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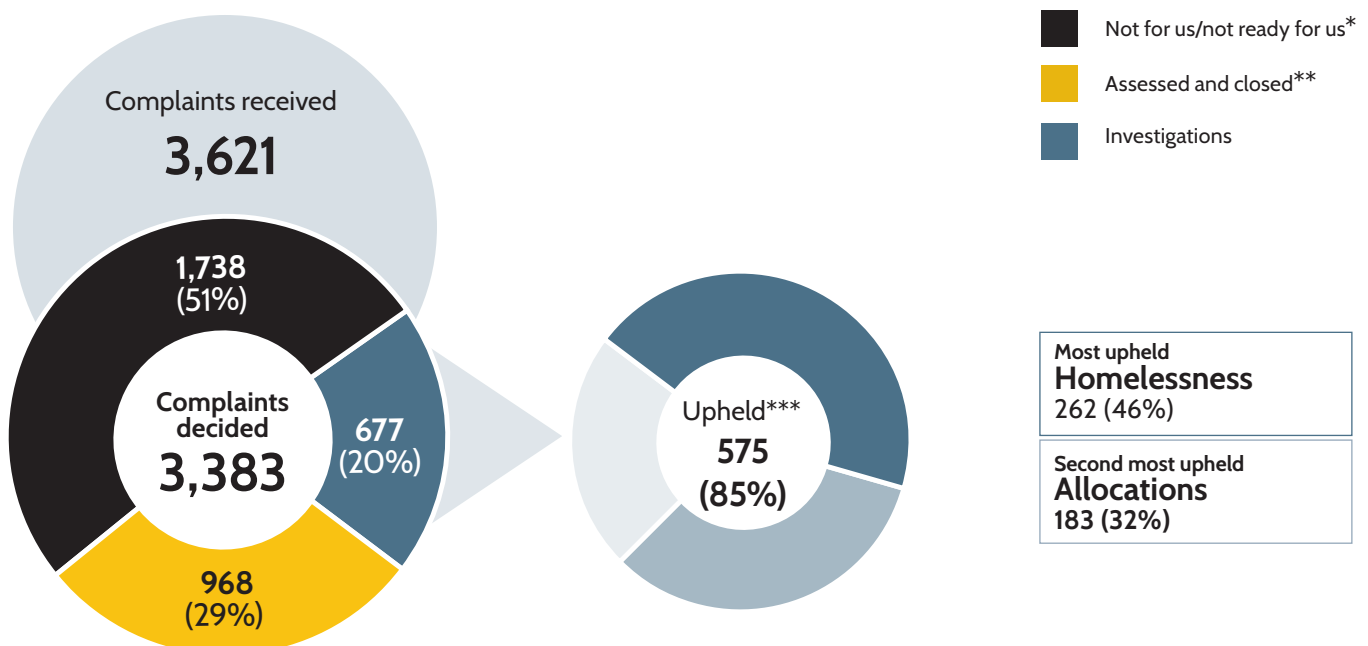
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Statistics by service area

Highways & Transport



Housing



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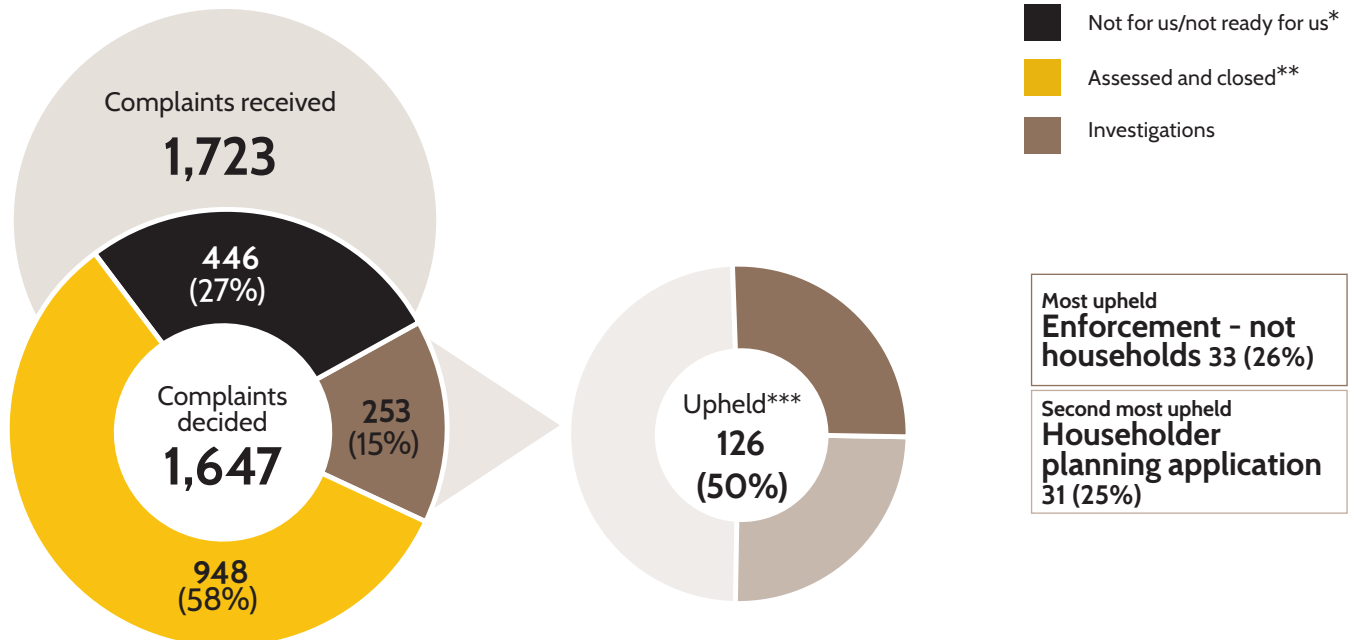
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Statistics by service area

Planning & Development

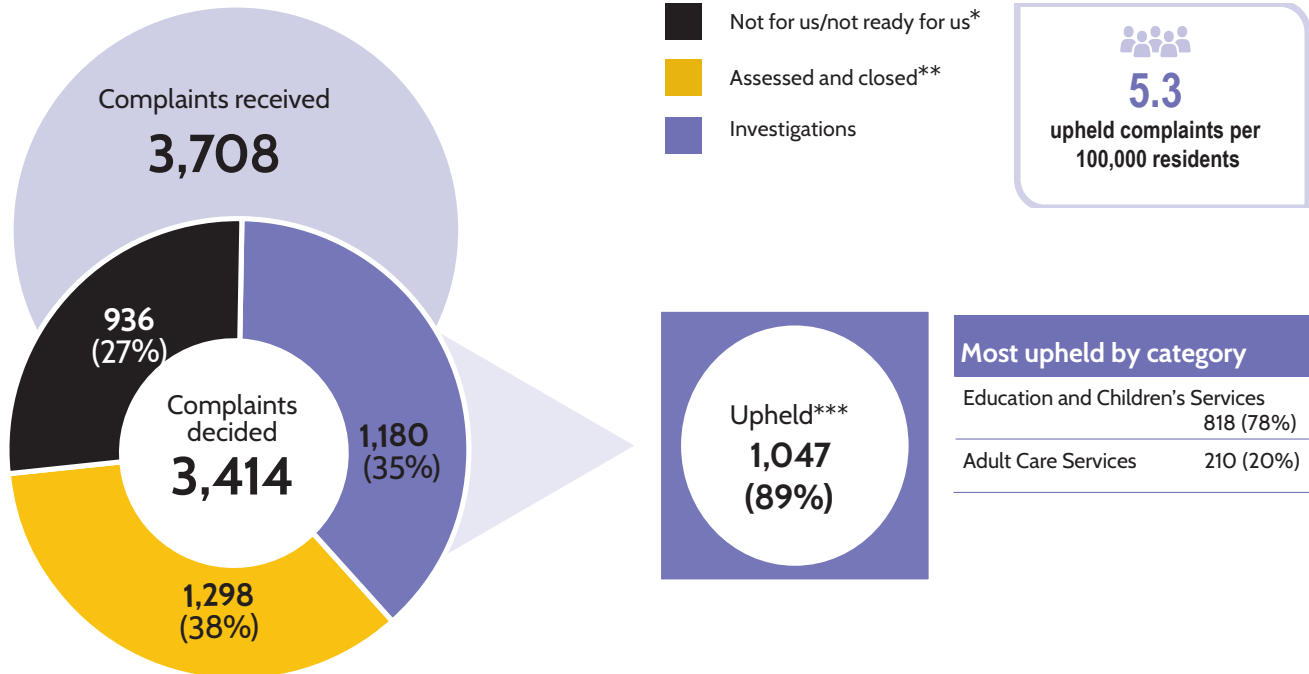


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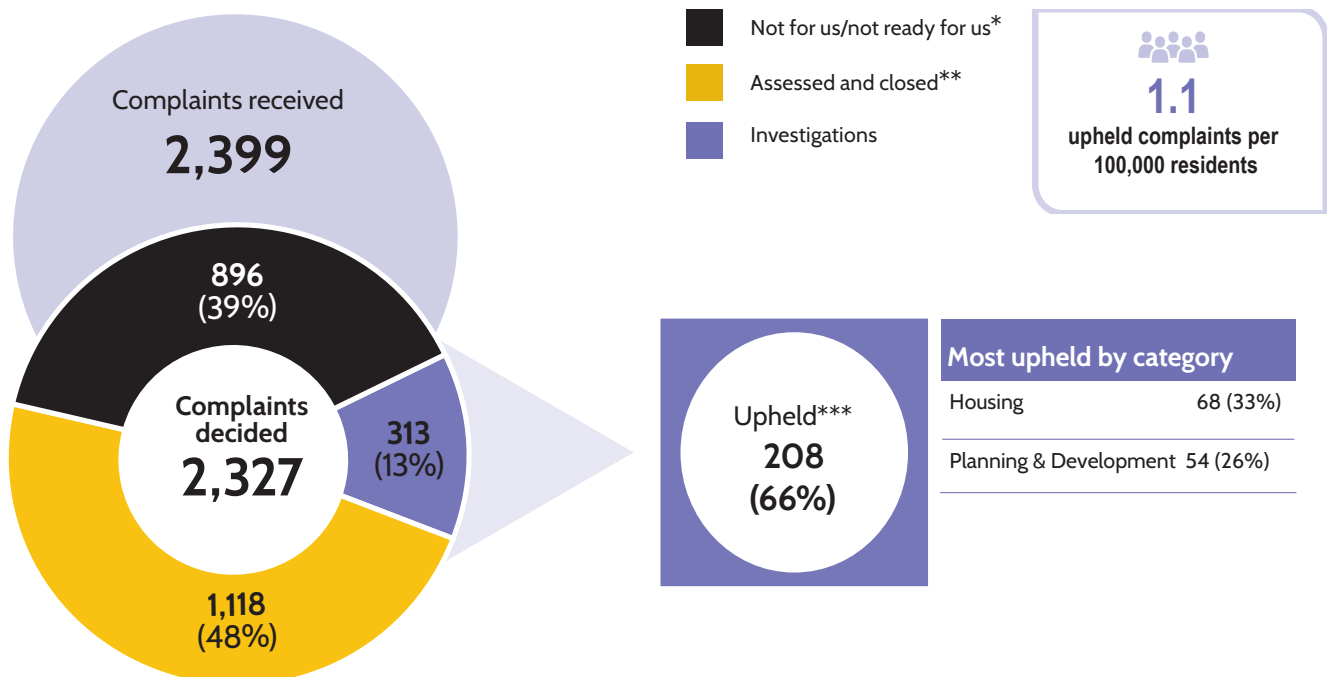
2024-25

Statistics by authority type

County Councils



District and Borough Councils

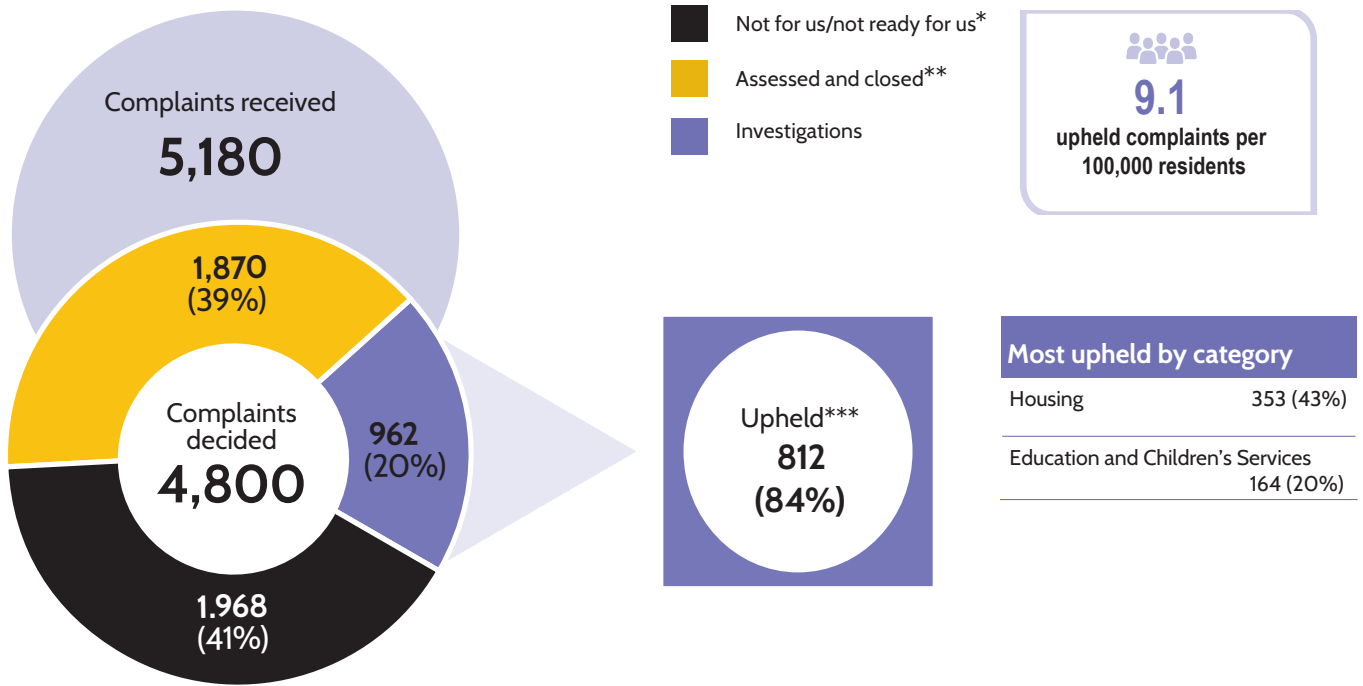


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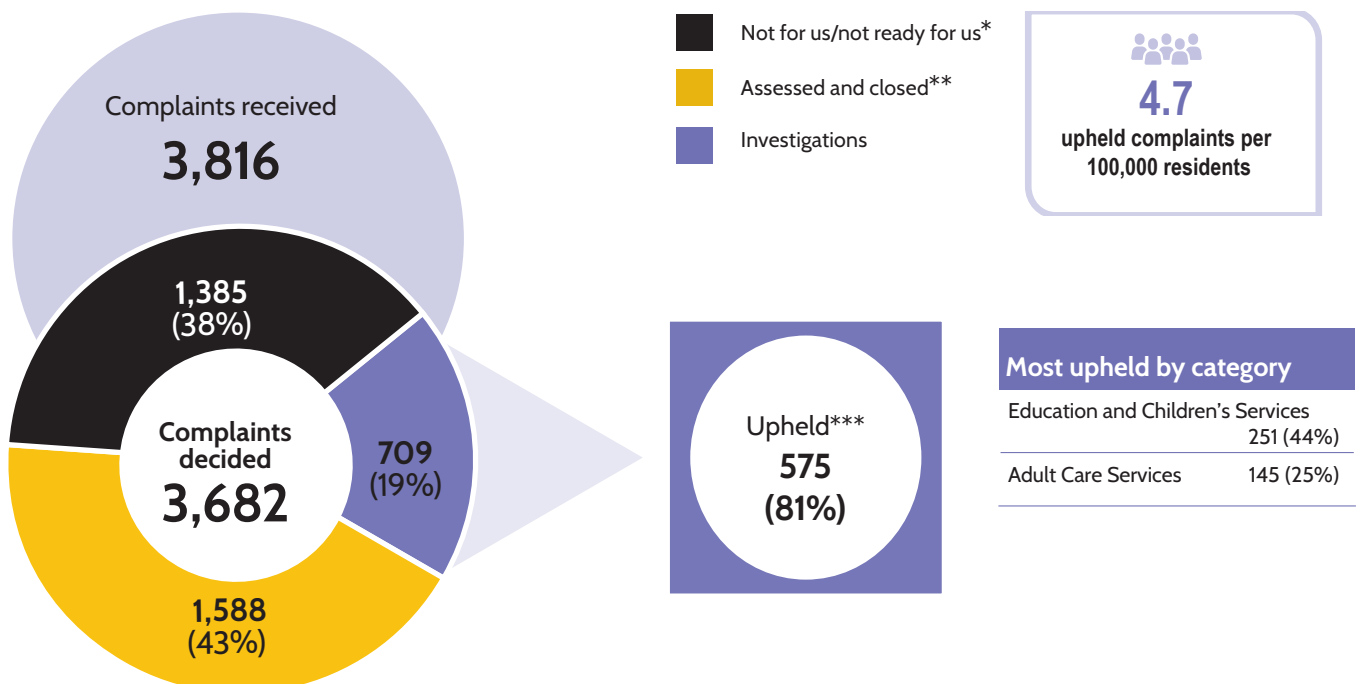
2024-25

Statistics by authority type

London Boroughs



Metropolitan Councils



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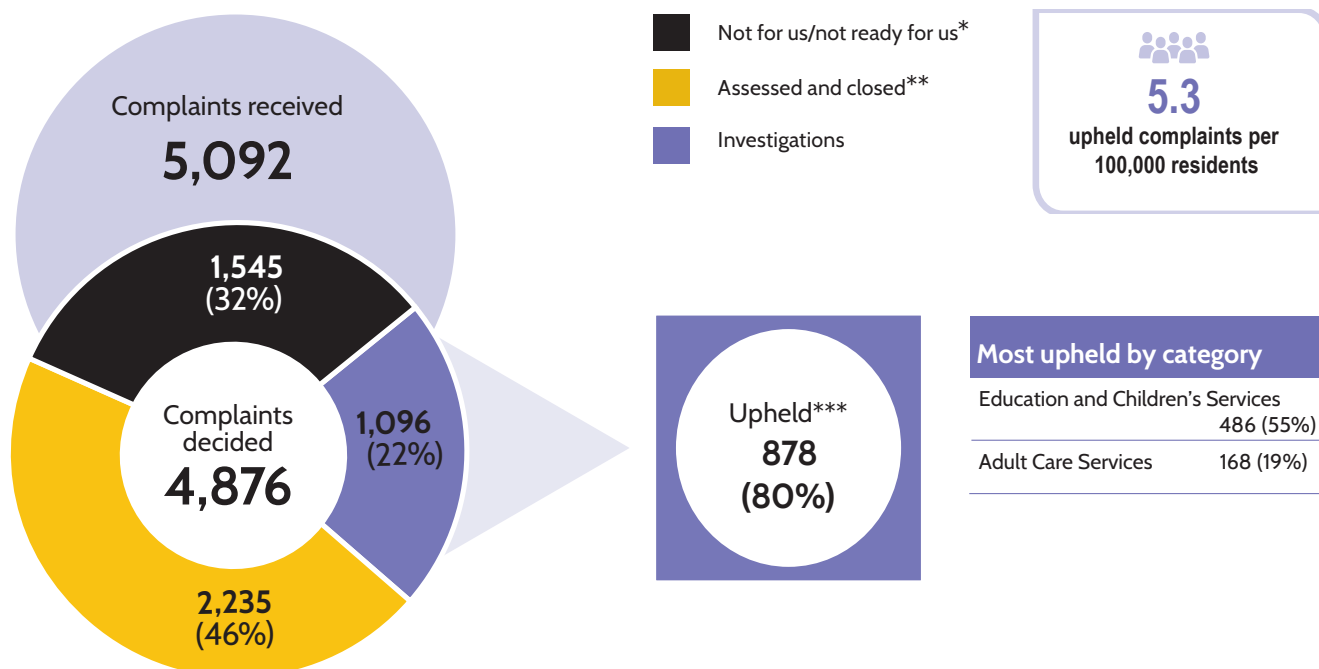
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2024-25



Statistics by authority type



Unitary Authorities





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Investigation reports



 Children's Services		
Devon County Council	Transition from children's to adult services	23001435
Worcestershire County Council (with Bromsgrove District Council 23004976)	Disabled child	23004979
Worcestershire County Council	Education of Looked After Child	23014839



 Education		
Essex County Council	SEN assessments & reviews	23003950
Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council	SEN assessments & reviews	24010066
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council	School transport	23013127
Somerset Council	SEN personal budgets & direct payments	23017883
Somerset Council	SEN assessments & reviews	24003239
Suffolk County Council	SEN assessments & reviews	23005778
Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council	SEN assessments & reviews	24000621
Trafford Council	Alternative provision	23019685

 Adult Care Services		
Essex County Council	Assessment	24001445
London Borough of Croydon	Direct payments	23000973
London Borough of Islington	Assessment	24000360

Investigation reports

 Housing		
Brentwood Borough Council	Homelessness	23018930
Bromsgrove District Council (with Worcestershire County Council – 23004979)	Disabled facilities grants	23004976
Leicester City Council	Domestic abuse	23015268
London Borough of Ealing	Domestic abuse	23014586
London Borough of Lewisham	Homelessness	22016576
London Borough of Tower Hamlets	Domestic abuse	22012133
London Borough of Tower Hamlets	Homelessness	23012189
London Borough of Tower Hamlets	Homelessness	23002608
London Borough of Tower Hamlets	Allocations	22013057
Manchester City Council	Homelessness	23017649

 Environmental Services & Protection		
North Hertfordshire District Council	Noise	23014065
Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames	Pollution	23011888

 Benefits & Tax		
Luton Borough Council	Housing benefit	23016145

**Local Government & Social
Care Ombudsman**

PO Box 4771

Coventry

CV4 0EH

T: 0300 061 0614

W: www.lgo.org.uk

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