

AGENDA FOR STANDARDS COMMITTEE



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To: All Members of Standards Committee

Councillors : T Rafiq (Chair),
S Arif, M Hayes, D Hill, J Hook, D Quinn, M Rahimov,
M Smith and S Thorpe

Independent Persons: C Ainsworth and S Birtwell

Dear Member/Colleague

Standards Committee

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

Date:	Thursday, 24 th September 2026
Place:	Committee Rooms A & B, Bury Town Hall
Time:	6.00 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.

AGENDA

1 ELECTION OF THE CHAIR

2 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the Meeting held on the 23rd June 2026.

5 MEMBER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME 2026/27 & TRAINING REQUIREMENTS *(Pages 7 - 38)*

Report attached, including appendix 1.

6 CODE OF CONDUCT *(Pages 39 - 60)*

Report attached, including appendix 1 and 2.

7 LOCAL GOVERNMENT & SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN ANNUAL REVIEW 2025-26 *(Pages 61 - 88)*

Report attached, including appendix A, B and C.

8 PUBLIC OFFICE (ACCOUNTABILITY) BILL (HILLSBOROUGH LAW) *(Pages 89 - 94)*

Report attached.

9 URGENT BUSINESS

10 DATE OF NEXT MEETING(S)

- 6.00pm, Thursday 3rd December 2026, Bury Town Hall (If required)
- 6.00pm, Thursday 11th March 2027, Bury Town Hall

Minutes of: **STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

Date of Meeting: 23rd June 2026

Present: Councillor T Rafiq (in the Chair)
 Councillors S Arif, M Hayes, D Hill, J Hook, D Quinn,
 M Rahimov, M Smith and S Thorpe

Also in attendance: J. Dennis, Director of Law and Governance.
 M. Cunliffe, Democratic Services.
 Independent Persons: Mr S. Birtwell and Mr C. Ainsworth

Public Attendance: No members of the public or press were present at the meeting.

1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

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 12th February 2026 were approved as a correct record.

4 STANDARDS COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

The 2026-2027 terms of reference for the Standards Committee were attached to the agenda for reference purposes as this was the first meeting of the Committee for the municipal year.

The Director of Law and Governance, Jacqui Dennis added that there were two independent Members at present but three could be in position.

It was agreed:

That the terms of reference be noted.

5 STANDARDS COMMITTEE DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME 2026-2027

The 2026-2027 draft work programme for the Standards Committee was attached to the agenda for reference purposes ahead of the forthcoming municipal year of meetings.

The Director Law & Governance provided a brief overview on items listed for future meetings.

The Independent Member, Craig Ainsworth commented on Member complaints and the process for dealing with these and investigating if training had been undertaken. The Director Law & Governance stated that core mandatory training was required for Members of Planning and Licensing Committees with the Member Development Group covering training requirements.

A Member enquired if feedback from the Member Development Group could be given on the mandatory training requirements and other topics provided for Members along with any attendance data and the process for following up those that don't attend the sessions provided.

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

The Member Complaints update had been omitted in error from the March 2027 meeting and this would be included on the work programme.

It was agreed:-

That the items on the draft work programme be approved and an update on the Member Development offer be provided to the next meeting.

6 NATIONAL CASE UPDATE

The Director Law & Governance provided an update report on recent standards cases and developments from other local authorities, as reported in the press and sector publications.

The report highlighted key themes nationally emerging from recent findings and identified any learning points relevant to the Council.

Recent national reporting confirms that Standards Committees and hearing panels continue to uphold complaints across a range of authorities, with consistent themes emerging.

A number of cases relate to failures to treat others with respect and inappropriate conduct in meetings.

Examples were provided and discussed from other authorities across the country where key breaches had been identified:

The details included:-

- Nature of the conduct
- Sanctions / outcomes
- Matters to Note / Learning Points

There is increasing scrutiny of Member conduct outside formal meetings, particularly interactions with residents and officers which can lead to bullying and misuse of position.

Misuse of information and poor casework handling remain a recurring source of complaints, often with data protection implications.

Issues of probity, bias and influence in quasi-judicial roles also continue to present significant risk.

The Director Law & Governance added the pressure of social media making Members contactable all the time was also a factor.

A lengthy discussion took place including Facebook complaints and if these should occur when comments are made via private and restricted Facebook groups. The Director Law & Governance stated that the Nolan principles which links to the code of conduct can apply to all forms of communications. It was also noted that failure to abide by a resolution would result in a breach.

Members also discussed failures to declare interests and how that can lead to a criminal offence. The Director Law & Governance would flag all these issues up at the code of conduct training sessions which are provided to elected Members.

It was agreed:

That the report be noted.

7 LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN UPDATE

The Director Law & Governance provided a verbal report to the Committee and reported that the national annual report from the LGO would not be released until July.

Therefore, this item would be included on the next Standards Committee agenda when comparisons could be made with the national picture and trends across other Councils.

A Member commented on social housing and would any data be available on that subject area. The Director Law & Governance stated that was dealt with by the Housing Advisory Board and that kind of information can be compiled.

It was agreed:

That the verbal update be noted.

8 URGENT BUSINESS

No urgent business was reported.

9 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next Standards Committee meeting was scheduled to take place at 6.00pm on Thursday the 24th September 2026 at Bury Town Hall.

COUNCILLOR T RAFIQ
Chair

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



Classification	Item No.
Open	

Meeting:	Standards Committee
Meeting date:	24 th September 2026
Title of report:	Member Development Programme 2026/27 & Training Requirements
Report by:	Jacqui Dennis, Director Law & Governance
Decision Type:	N/A Report for information only
Ward(s) to which report relates	(Not applicable)

Executive Summary:

The report provides Standards Committee with an overview of the Council's Member Development Programme for 2026/27, including the mandatory training requirements for Members, arrangements for monitoring attendance and completion, and the processes in place for addressing non-attendance. It also responds to a question raised by a Member at a previous Standards Committee regarding the training offer, attendance data and follow-up arrangements. Information is drawn from the Member Development Offer 2026-2027 found in appendix 1.

Recommendation(s)

1. Note the contents of the Member Development Programme for 2026/27.
2. Note the arrangements in place for monitoring attendance and training completion.
3. Note the response provided to the Member question concerning mandatory training, attendance monitoring and follow-up arrangements.
4. Support continued reporting of Member development activity and compliance with mandatory training requirements.

Background

The Member Development Programme is reviewed yearly, and the latest version is for the 2026/27 municipal year and is designed to support Members at all stages of their elected role. The programme is structured around four themes:

- Core Training
- Specialist Training
- Optional Training
- Leadership Development

The programme includes a combination of face-to-face sessions, virtual learning and e-learning modules to provide flexibility and improve accessibility for Members.

Following a request by the Member Development Group the Democratic Services Team are working with officers to deliver the option of face-to-face training for all core training modules.

Mandatory Training Requirements

The Member Development Group has identified a number of core training requirements that all Members are expected to complete in order to support good governance, statutory compliance and the effective discharge of their responsibilities. These include:

- Code of Conduct Training
- Corporate Planning and Performance Briefing
- LET'S Do It Strategy Update
- GDPR (annually)
- Health and Safety (minimum every three years)
- Equality and Diversity (minimum every three years)
- Corporate Parenting (minimum every three years)
- Safeguarding Against Radicalisation (minimum every three years)
- Climate Change (minimum every three years)

Members may also submit evidence of equivalent training completed through employment or voluntary roles for consideration and recording against their training record.

Committee-Specific Mandatory Training

Certain committee appointments carry mandatory training requirements. Members serving on regulatory or quasi-judicial committees must complete the relevant training before participating in decision-making meetings.

This includes:

- Planning Control Committee
- Licensing and Safety Committee
- Employment Panel
- Audit Committee
- Other specialist committees where training is prescribed

Training on the purpose of the meeting and an overview of responsibilities are covered for the three scrutiny committees.

The Member Development Offer confirms that Members of Licensing and Safety Committee, Planning Control Committee and Employment Panel must attend the relevant training before participating and voting at meetings.

Attendance Monitoring

Attendance and completion of mandatory training are monitored through a combination of:

- Attendance registers for in-person and virtual sessions.
- Completion reports from the Council's e-learning platform.
- A Member training dashboard which records progress against mandatory learning requirements.
- Updates provided by Democratic Services from training providers and officers delivering sessions.

Attendance information can be reported periodically to the Member Development Group and Standards Committee to provide assurance regarding compliance with the Council's training expectations.

Follow-Up Arrangements for Non-Attendance

Where Members do not attend mandatory training sessions or fail to complete required e-learning modules, a staged approach is adopted:

1. Reminder communications areas of high noncompliance are escalated and a targeted training session is put on through Democratic Services highlighting outstanding training requirements.

2. Alternative opportunities are provided where possible, including repeat sessions, virtual attendance options, recorded materials or e-learning modules.
3. Individual follow-up is undertaken with Members whose records show outstanding mandatory learning.
4. The Member Development Group receive regular reports on the training status of all elected members as a standing item.
5. Group Leaders may be notified where significant mandatory training requirements remain incomplete.
6. For regulatory committees, Members who have not completed the required training may be prevented from participating in committee business until the training requirement has been met, in accordance with the Council's governance arrangements.

This approach seeks to encourage compliance while supporting Members in balancing training commitments alongside their wider council and community responsibilities.

Member Question

At the Standards Committee a member asked whether feedback from the Member Development Group could be provided regarding mandatory training requirements, attendance data and arrangements for following up Members who do not attend training. Whilst the Member Development Group has not yet met and is set to meet on the 6th October, an overview of the training requirements as agreed at Member Development Group has been included in this report.

Response

The Member Development Group has been involved in shaping and reviewing the 2026/27 Member Development Offer, which includes a clear distinction between mandatory core training, specialist training linked to specific committee roles, optional learning opportunities and leadership development activities. The Group has supported the principle that Members should complete essential governance and compliance training and that those serving on regulatory committees must undertake the relevant specialist training before exercising decision-making responsibilities.

Attendance at both in-person and virtual sessions is recorded by Democratic Services, whilst completion of e-learning modules is monitored through the Council's online learning management system and Member training dashboard. This enables the Council to maintain accurate training records and identify outstanding requirements.

Where Members do not attend mandatory sessions, Democratic Services undertakes follow-up through alternative learning opportunities. Where non-compliance persists, Group Leaders may be informed, and where training is linked to membership of a

regulatory committee, Members may be unable to participate in committee business until the relevant training has been completed.

The Member Development Group will continue to review attendance levels, training content and delivery methods throughout the year to ensure the programme remains effective, accessible and responsive to Members' development needs.

Background paper:

Appendix 1 Member Development Offer 2026/27

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LET'S Develop

***Welcome to Your Members'
Development Offer 2026–
2027***

This booklet is designed to support you in your role as an elected member and help you make the biggest impact for your community. It sets out the training and development opportunities available throughout the municipal year and explains how we'll work together to strengthen local democracy.

- Councillor R Gold, Cabinet Member Customer Service, Communications and Corporate Affairs, 2025-2026

Why This Matters

Being a councillor is a rewarding role, but it comes with responsibilities. Understanding how local government works and how you can influence decisions is key to making a difference. Training isn't just a tick-box exercise, it's about giving you the tools, confidence, and knowledge to lead effectively.

Background and Context

After a fallow year in 2025–2026, all ten Greater Manchester councils—Manchester, Salford, Bolton, Bury, Tameside, Trafford, Oldham, Rochdale, Stockport and Wigan—will hold elections in 2026, 2027 and 2028. Each year, one-third of councillors will be elected. The next fallow year will be 2029, unless a by-election is required.

This development offer is here to help you develop your skills to be an effective councillor whilst navigating this changing landscape alongside playing your part in shaping the future of local democracy.

How Local Government is Organised

Local government in England can look different depending on where you are. Some areas have two tiers; county and district councils, while others have a single unitary authority responsible for all services.

In Greater Manchester, things are a little different and since 2011, Bury Council has been part of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA), which brings together the ten councils and a directly elected Mayor to make decisions on issues that matter most to our region.

What Does Devolution Mean for You?

Devolution gives Greater Manchester more control over priorities and funding, around £22 billion to better reflect the needs of 2.8 million residents. It covers areas like:

- Policing and crime
- Housing and transport
- Planning and business support
- Skills and training
- Health and social care

This means your role as a councillor is more important than ever in shaping decisions that affect people's lives.

As a councillor you may get the opportunity to sit on committees that oversee the work and strategic direction of the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities.

Our Development Plan for 2026–2027

We've designed a programme that supports every member, whether you're newly elected or an experienced councillor taking on new responsibilities. The offer is built around four key components:

1. **Core** - Essential training for all members to ensure statutory compliance, good governance, and alignment with the **Let's Do It! Strategy**.

2. **Specialist** - Targeted development for new members, portfolio holders, committee chairs, and regulatory committee members.

If you receive a special responsibility allowance, attendance at some of these sessions is expected.

3. **Optional** - Additional training for members who want to deepen their knowledge or prepare for future roles. *Estimated time:*

4. **Leadership** - Advanced leadership development for Cabinet Members, Deputy Cabinet Members, and Opposition Portfolio Holders often delivered in partnership with the Local Government Association (LGA).

Further Support: This booklet is just the starting point. You'll also find resources from:

- Local Government Association (LGA)
- Centre for Governance and Scrutiny
- The King's Fund
- Association of Democratic Services Officers (ADSO)
- North West Employers
- Bury Council

These organisations offer a wealth of training and guidance to help you succeed.

Your Journey Starts Here

Ad hoc training opportunities may, of course, emerge throughout the year and Members will be contacted with any amendments to the programme. The plan includes a mix of in person, virtual and E-learning recognising different learning styles and experiences.

Member

We're committed to supporting you every step of the way. Whether you're learning the basics or developing your leadership skills, this programme is designed to help you thrive in your role and will support you to make a real difference for the people of Bury.

New Councillors

Local councils are governed by an important regulatory framework providing powers, duties and obligations. It is important for new councillors to have the knowledge and understanding to ensure accountability and lawful decision-making.

During this time all core training programmes should be completed and will be monitored via an online dashboard either via the e-learning offer or by attending in-person training sessions available on the training programme. All this training is provided as essential training for all elected members to ensure statutory compliance, good governance, and alignment with the Let's Do It! Strategy.

Core Induction Training

This is essential training for all new members to ensure statutory compliance, good governance, and alignment with the **Let's Do It! Strategy**.

Member Induction Session (New Councillors)

There will be a Member Induction session this year 13th May 2026. This session will involve an overview of

- Support available from the Democratic Services Team
- Discretionary grants
- Development and training
- Member casework
- Code of conduct
- Register of interest

Annual Core Training

No matter how long you have been a councillor, there are key training sessions that we expect all members to attend annually, to ensure their skills and knowledge remain current.

Code of Conduct

All members are expected to attend a Code of Conduct training session, delivered by the Monitoring Officer, to advise and update Members on the Members Code of Conduct. There will be two options available during each municipal year. The sessions for the 2026/27 municipal year are 13th May 2026 and 03rd November 2026.

Corporate Planning and Performance Briefing Session

All members are encouraged to attend a session with Kate Waterhouse, Executive Director (Strategy & Transformation) on 17th June 2026, to receive an introduction and overview of the Council's Corporate Plan for 2026–2027.

LET'S Do It Training

An all-member session will provide a brief update on the continued progress of our 'LET'S Do It Strategy' throughout the 2026/27 period.

- Local: Strengthened neighbourhood working through increased resident engagement and co-designed local initiatives.
- Enterprise: Update on our regeneration plans and outcomes across our communities.
- Together: How we are continuing to embed a culture of collaboration, inclusion, and shared leadership across the borough.
- Strengths: Celebrating our success. These achievements reflect the collective efforts of our partners, communities, and council teams, all working together to turn ambition into action.

Core Functional Training

In addition to the above training, all Members are required to complete the 6 core training modules. This training should be undertaken through your online e-learning account:

- GDPR – To be completed annually
- Health and Safety – To be completed at least every 3 years
- Equality and Diversity – To be completed at least every 3 years
- Corporate Parenting – To be completed at least every 3 years
- Safeguarding against radicalisation – To be completed at least every 3 years
- Climate Change – To be completed at least every 3 years

Members can complete these modules online through the Council's e-learning portal, attend a face-to-face session scheduled throughout the year. If you complete any of these modules as part of other employment or voluntary roles please share the details with Democratic Services in order for your training record to be updated.

To access online training, you will need to log into your e-Learning account. All Councillors have been automatically enrolled on the Core training modules and can also freely access over 200 other courses through the e-learning portal here: [Me Learning](#). Where appropriate, prior and outside learning to satisfy core training requirements will be accepted. If you have undertaken accredited training elsewhere in any of the 6 core functional areas through your current jobs or voluntary roles, you can provide certification to A.J.Tomlinson@bury.gov.uk, and we will upload this on your training record.

Specialist Training

This is targeted development for new members, portfolio holders, committee chairs, and regulatory and scrutiny committee members. This training is not mandatory but is recommended if you are interested in developing your skills or sitting on a committee.

Internal Regulatory Committee Training

All Members of Council are invited to attend training given to members of the Licensing and Safety Committee, Planning Control Committee, Audit Committee, Human Resources and Appeals Panel and the Housing Advisory Board. This constitutes 'Specialist' training for committee members and 'Optional' for others.

If you are a member of a regulatory committee you must attend the relevant training session before you will be allowed to attend and vote at a meeting.

External Regulatory Training

To help you understand the key regulatory frameworks that shape our work, we offer optional briefing sessions and training for all Members. These sessions focus on the three main external regulators that oversee critical areas of the Council's responsibilities:

- Ofsted – covering Children's Social Care and SEND
- Care Quality Commission (CQC) – overseeing Adult Social Care
- Regulator of Social Housing – ensuring compliance in housing standards

Each session will be delivered by the Council's senior leadership team, providing insight into what these frameworks mean for our services and your role as a councillor.

If you are a member of a regulatory committee we recommend you attend the relevant training sessions to keep your knowledge up to date.

Committee Specific Training

To assist with members roles on committee meetings including Cabinet Members, and Shadow Cabinet Members.

Dates for these sessions can be found in the training schedule at the end of this booklet.

Members of Licensing and Safety Committee, Planning Control Committee and the Employment Panel must attend regulatory training ahead of attending the first meeting of the municipal year.

Scrutiny Committee Training

At Bury Council we have three Scrutiny Committees covering a wide range of topics. Before the first meeting of each Committee members should attend a briefing session from lead officers which will cover work over the next municipal year. Members will be invited throughout the course of the year to attend pre-committee briefings, extra support sessions for complex topics and Chairs of the Committee will be brought together to meet at a Scrutiny Chair meeting quarterly to share ideas, discuss cross cutting work programmes and support one another.

Continuing Your Journey as a Councillor (Year Two Onwards)

Congratulations on reaching this stage! By now, you may want to deepen your knowledge, take on new responsibilities, or prepare for future leadership roles. This year's programme is designed to help you do just that, with specialist and advanced training opportunities that reflect the latest policy changes and priorities for 2026/27.

All this training is provided as an opportunity to equip you with practical knowledge, strengthen your ability to scrutinise and influence decisions and help you to network with key partners across Greater Manchester.

The optional training is also recommended for Councillors who have interests in progression, taking on additional roles and those who understand the fundamentals and want to continue their professional development.

Optional Training

Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM)

TfGM coordinates transport across Greater Manchester and acts as the executive arm of the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA). Its strategies are set by the GMCA and the Greater Manchester Transport Committee (GMTC), which includes 33 councillors from the ten boroughs plus the Mayor.

This session will provide insight into future transport plans, ongoing projects, and the Bee Network, including rail integration starting in December 2026. You'll also have the chance to ask questions about how these changes affect your community.

Recycle for Greater Manchester (R4GM)

R4GM works with nine Greater Manchester councils (excluding Wigan, which manages its own waste services) to help residents reduce waste and recycle responsibly. This session will cover:

- The Waste Contract
- The new Greater Manchester Waste Strategy (adopted late 2025)
- Future for sustainable waste management

National Planning and Local Framework

Government reforms announced in January 2025 require local plans to be completed within 30 months (down from an average of seven years). This session will explore:

- Local Plan production
- Our role as a planning authority
- Regeneration and housing development
- Economic development and GMCA links

Civil Contingencies Training

Led by the Assistant Director for Public Protection and Resilience, this session will cover:

- The Civil Contingencies Act
- Emergency preparedness
- Risk assessment
- Business continuity
- Public information
- Coordination with other responders

Greater Manchester Police and Community Safety

These sessions, delivered by GMP and Council officers, will update members on local operations, intelligence gathering, and safeguarding.

The first session on 3 June will focus on:

- The Community Safety Partnership
- Safeguarding Partnership Awareness

Audit and Finance Training

Following reports to Audit Committee in January 2025, external auditors issued a disclaimed opinion for the 2021/22 and 2022/23 financial years and highlighted significant weaknesses in Value for Money arrangements. A statutory recommendation called for an urgent Council-wide improvement plan with strong member oversight.

To support this, training has been arranged to give all members a clear understanding of audit requirements, financial oversight, and risk management.

Additional sessions will cover Risk Management and Treasury Management.

It is recommended that all members attend these sessions to develop their skills.

National Planning and Local Framework

In January 2025, the government confirmed an overhaul of local plans, setting a clear expectation that they must now be completed within **30 months** rather than the previous average of seven years.

This training session will cover:

- How local plans are produced
- Our role as a planning authority
- Regeneration and housing development
- Economic development and links with the GMCA

Leadership Training for Senior Councillors and Aspiring Senior Councillors

Cabinet Members and other councillors in leadership roles play a vital part in steering the council and the borough through challenges while delivering an ambitious programme for residents. These roles are complex and demanding, so ongoing development is essential.

This offer includes:

- Access to mentoring
- Specialist training
- Networking opportunities

It is targeted at Cabinet Members, Deputy Cabinet Members, and Opposition Leaders and Portfolio Holders. Group Leaders will work with the Director of Law & Governance and People & Inclusion to agree individual development plans tailored to each portfolio.

Any councillor who aspires to be a Cabinet member, or Deputy Cabinet Member should work with their Group Leader and Democratic Services to develop a training plan to support their learning and development in their role.

The Leadership Academy

The Leadership Academy, delivered by the Local Government Association (LGA), is the flagship development programme for councillors in leadership positions. It is recognised by The Institute of Leadership, the UK's leading body for leadership and management.

The programme helps councillors develop the skills needed to navigate challenges such as:

- Budget reductions
- Service transformation
- Community engagement
- Complex political environments

If you are interested in this offer, please discuss it with your Group Leader.

Councillor Development Resources

The LGA provides a wide range of resources to support councillor development. These can be accessed at your own pace and include guidance on:

- [Chairing skills](#)
- [Commissioning services](#)
- [Community leadership](#)
- [Creating a 'fit for the future' organisation](#)
- [Effective opposition in local government](#)
- [Engaging with young people](#)
- [Equality, diversity and inclusion \(EDI\)](#)
- [Facilitation and conflict resolution](#)
- [Finance for non-finance portfolio holders / cabinet members](#)
- [Handling complaints for service improvement](#)
- [Influencing skills](#)
- [The local path to net zero](#)
- [Local government finance](#)
- [Mentally healthier places](#)
- [Neighbourhood and community engagement](#)
- [Neighbourhood planning](#)
- [Planning](#)
- [Scrutiny of finance](#)
- [Stress management and personal resilience](#)
- [Supporting residents with complex issues](#)
- [Working with town and parish councils](#)

Bury Council Training for Councillors

Training	Core Training	Optional Training	Specialist Training	Leadership Training
Member Induction – Yearly offer Mandatory for New Members	Y			
Code of Conduct – Yearly	Y			
Corporate Planning and Performance Briefing Session	Y			
LET'S Do It	Y			
GDPR – To be completed annually	Y			
Health and Safety – To be completed at least every 3 years	Y			
Equality and Diversity – To be completed at least every 3 years	Y			
Corporate Parenting – To be completed at least every 3 years	Y			
Safeguarding against radicalisation – To be completed at least every 3 years	Y			
Climate Change	Y			
Licensing and Safety Committee Training			Y	
Planning Control Committee			Y	
Audit Committee			Y	
Human Resources and Appeals Panel			Y	
Housing Advisory Board.			Y	
Scrutiny Committee Training			Y	
Ofsted – covering Children's Social Care and SEND		Y		
Care Quality Commission (CQC) – overseeing Adult Social Care		Y		
Regulator of Social Housing – ensuring compliance in housing standards		Y		
Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM)		Y		
Recycle for Greater Manchester (R4GM)		Y		
Audit and Finance Training		Y		
National Planning and Local Framework		Y		
Civil Contingencies Training		Y		
Greater Manchester Police and Community Safety		Y		
The Leadership Academy				Y
Access to mentoring				Y
Networking opportunities				Y

Training Schedule 2026/27

Date/Time	Event details	Location	Category	Responsible officer
13 May 2026 9pm – 16.00pm	New Councillor Induction and drop in with Exec Directors and Incoming Mayor	Mayor's Parlour/ Council Chamber and Learning Hub	Core *for new members	Rachel Everitt Chloe Ashworth
21 st May 2026 1pm	Planning Control Committee Elected Member Training	Teams	Core *for members of planning committees and substitutes	Dave Marno
26 th May 2026 18/20:00	Licensing Committee Training	In Person – Peel Room	Core *for members of Licensing committees and substitutes	Michael Cunliffe Jacqui Dennis
27 th May 2026 18:00	Locality Board – Training	Teams – Booked In Dem Services Calendar – Chloe to add link	Core *for elected members and Cabinet Member of Locality Board and substitutes	Chloe Ashworth

Date/Time	Event details	Location	Category	Responsible officer
01 st June 2026 18.00	HMO Training (to help EM in their role representing residents at Planning meetings)	Teams	Optional	Daniel Ryan/Dave Marno/Micheal Cunliffe
24 th June 2026 18.00 - 20.00	Scrutiny Member Training	Teams	Core for all Scrutiny Members	Josh Ashworth Rachel Everitt
25 th June 2026 As part of the meeting	Employment Panel Training	TBC	Core (for members of Employment Panel committees and substitutes)	Andrea Tomlinson/ Kelly Barnett
29 th June 2026 17.00 - 19:00	Production of the Local Plan and our role as a planning authority Regeneration and Housing Development Economic Development and the GMCA links	Teams	Optional	Crispian Logue/David Wiggins/David Marno Rob Summerfield/Roz Catlow Patterson Sarah Porru/Rachel Crossland
6 July 17.30 - 18:30	Corporate Planning and Performance Briefing	In person Peel Room	Core	Exec team members (Kate Waterhouse to chair)
Date TBC	Where do you keep the Ketchup	In person	Cllrs to book on this	Mike Nichols
22 nd July 2026 18.00	Audit Committee Training	In person	Core for all Audit	Neil Kissock

Date/Time	Event details	Location	Category	Responsible officer
			Committee Members	
2 nd Sept 2026 18.30 19.30	All Member GMCA Fire and Rescue Session	Peel Room	Optional	
16 September 2026 17.30 - 18.30	Pre Council briefing or drop in Session Bee Network	Peel Room		Ben Blackburn TFGM
17 September 2026 17.00 - 18.00	GDPR – All Member in person Session			Jacqui Dennis - Confirmed
5 October 2026 17.30 - 18.30	Equality and Diversity – All Member session	In Person – Peel Room	Core	Lee Cawley - Confirmed
8 October 2026 17:30-18:30	Corporate Parenting & OfSTED	Peel Room	Core	Linda Evans
TBC	Where do you keep the Ketchup – Condensed Cllr		Optional	Mike Nichols
15 Oct 26 17.30 - 19.30	Community Safety/Safeguarding Partnership Awareness Session,	In Person – Peel Room	Optional ,	Chris Woodhouse and GMP
19 Oct 26 17.00 - 18.00	Safeguarding against Radicalisation TBC	In person		Mark Gay – Ben Dunne

Date/Time	Event details	Location	Category	Responsible officer
22 October 17:00-19:00	Guidance on how highways are delivered	Teams	Optional	Peter Stokes
28 Oct 2026 18.00 - 20.00	Civil Contingencies	Teams	Optional	Ben Thomson Paddy Norton and Kate Waterhouse
03 rd November 2026 17:00-19:00	Councillors Code of Conduct	Council Chamber	Core	Jacqui Dennis Rachel Everitt
11 th November 2026 17.30 - 19.00	Pre Council briefing or drop in Session - TBD Regulator of Social Housing	Council Chamber	Optional	Rachel Everitt Sian Grant
16 November 17.30 - 19.00pm	All Member Health & Safety in person session	Peel Room	Core	Mark Redding
25 November 5.30pm	Illicit tobacco and vape – All Member	Peel Room	Optional	Ben Thomas, Kelly Halligan
7 December 2026 – 5.30pm	All Member Briefing on the Kings Awards and Personal Honours - Lord Lieutenants Office	Peel Room	optional	David Catterall Karen Lee * Eamonn O'Neal
06 th January 2027 17:00	All Member Health and Wellbeing Focus			Tim Normanton
20 th January 2027	Pre Budget Council Finance training session	Council Chamber	Optional	Neil Kissock

Date/Time	Event details	Location	Category	Responsible officer
17.30-18.30				
1 February 2027	Climate Change – All Member in Person	Peel Room	Optional	Chris Horth & Ben Thomson
15th February 2027 17:30-19:00	Casework Training Session & Member Drop in		Optional	Christine Seymour & Racquel Dickin
24 th February 2027	Pre Council Briefing or drop in session - TBD		Optional	Rachel Everitt
15 th March 2026 18.00 - 20.00	Lets Update All Member Briefing		Optional	TBC
17 th March 2027 17:30-18.30	Pre Council briefing or drop in Session		Optional	Targeted briefing on police and fire to all elected members in our local authority

Key Contacts:

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LGA	Email: info@local.gov.uk Telephone: 020 7664 3000
North West Employers	support@nwemployers.org.uk 0161 834 9362

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Classification: Open	Decision Type: Non-Key
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Report to:	Standard Committee	Date: 24 September 2026
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.

This report presents the Code of Conduct and the accompanying guide for the Committee's 2026 annual review.

Recommendation(s)

1. Members review the code of conduct (Appendix 1) and guidance to Members on the code of conduct (Appendix 2).
2. Identify any amendments or clarifications required to either document
3. Instruct the Monitoring Officer to revise the code and guidance following the review.
4. Identify any areas of the Code that should be emphasised in the forthcoming Members training session.

Reasons for recommendation(s)

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

Alternative options considered and rejected

6. Not to undertake the annual review. This option is not recommended as it would be inconsistent with the Committee's earlier decision.

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. Section 27 of the Localism Act 2011 requires a relevant authority to promote and maintain high standards of conduct by its members and co-opted members and to adopt a code dealing with the conduct expected of them when acting in that capacity. Any change to the adopted Code must be approved by Council.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. On 18th September 2025 the Committee undertook an annual review and was invited to consider whether any amendments were required to the Code or the accompanying guide. Members are asked to review the code and consider whether any revisions are needed to the code or guidance.
5. Members may wish to consider whether the code is clear in relation to provisions covering respect, bullying, harassment, disrepute, confidentiality and whether any parts of the code or accompanying guidance require further practical examples
6. The Monitoring Officer has reviewed the approach taken by other Greater Manchester authorities and considers that Bury's Councillor Code of Conduct remains substantially aligned with the LGA Model Councillor Code and reflects current sector practice. No substantive amendments are considered necessary by the Monitoring Officer at this time.
7. 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

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 (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

- Placing unreasonable expectations on someone in relation to their job, responsibilities, or hours of work, or coercing someone to meet such expectations
- Sexual harassment

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.

Discrimination

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.

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.

Impartiality of officers

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.

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.

Confidential Information

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.

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.

Misuse of position

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: 24 September 2026
Subject:	Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual Review 2025-26	
Report of	Director of Law & Governance	

Summary

The purpose of this report is to outline the findings and recommendations of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman for 2025-2026.

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 2025/26 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 received 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 as appendix A).
- 1.2. As with previous years, the statistics focus on three key areas:
 - Complaints upheld
 - Satisfactory remedies provided by the authority
 - Compliance with recommendations

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. New changes for 2025/26

- 3.1 The LGO published a timely compliance statistic alongside the overall compliance rate. This statistic will show both the number and percentage of cases where agreed recommendations were recorded as completed on time. To be recorded as 'on time,' all parts of a multi part recommendation will need to have been recorded as delivered within agreed timescales.
- 3.2 The LGO understand the large majority of organisations achieve a 100% compliance rate with their recommendations, but a lower proportion are delivering agreed recommendations within the specified timeframes. The introduction of this new statistic provides further insight into the overall compliance rate and credits those authorities that adhere to agreed timescales, thereby ensuring prompt resolutions for individual complainants and service improvements that help prevent others from being similarly affected.

4. Key dates

20th May

Letters and information were issued to all authorities and the online map updated for 2025/26 statistics.

8th July

Letters were issued to authorities when the LGO had concerns or wanted to highlight exceptional practice. Bury Council received no further communications, therefore no matters needed to be raised.

15th July

Letters were published on the LGO website alongside the annual review of local government complaints. (Appendix C). The LGO Annual Review of Local Government Complaints in England for 2025-2026 pulls together the national picture of trends and common issues that have arisen from complaints over the last year.

5. Complaints and Enquiries Received by the Ombudsman in 2025/26

- 5.1. 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 is attached to the report as (Appendix A) and data available to view in the public domain (Appendix B). The number of complaints and enquiries received for 25/26 as compared to 24/25 has decreased slightly.

2025-2026-	97
2024-2025-	100
2023-2024-	78
2022/2023-	72
2021/2022-	68
2020/2021 -	38 (Covid hit year)

- 5.2. The complaints received by the Ombudsman about the Council in 2025/26 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 B) also lists the 83 cases decided.

Service Number of Complaints	2025/26	<i>Comparison to previous year</i>	2024/25
Adult Care Services	9	<i>No change</i>	9
Corporate & Other Services	5	<i>Decrease</i>	9
Education & Children's Services	33	<i>Increase</i>	28
Environmental & Public Protection & Reg	12	<i>Decrease</i>	18
Highways & Transport	16	<i>Increase</i>	14
Planning & Development	4	<i>Decrease</i>	10
Housing	12	<i>Increase</i>	9
Benefits and Tax	5	<i>Increase</i>	2
Other	1	<i>No change</i>	1

6. Ombudsman Complaint Decisions

- 6.1. 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. Upheld decision can be viewed online: [Decision results - Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman](#)
- 6.2. 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 **86%** of complaints investigated were upheld compared to an average of **83%** in similar authorities.

Decision of Ombudsman	2025/26	2024/25
Investigated – Upheld	18	10
Investigated – Not Upheld	3	4

- 6.3. The compliance data by the Ombudsman for the Council is also included within (Appendix B). There was a 100% compliance rate with recommendations and a 94% timely compliance rate compared to 79% in similar organisations.

7. Ombudsman's Annual Review Letter

- 7.1 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 2026.

- 7.2 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](#)

8. Other Information & Comparisons

- 8.1 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.
- 8.2 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.
- 8.3 In comparison to other GM authorities, upheld data patterns for 2025-26 are as follows:-

Authority	Bury	Rochdale	Bolton	Oldham
Complaints Upheld	18 out of 21	5 out of 17	11 out of 13	6 out of 6

9. Monitoring complaints

- 9.1 Officers carefully monitor the LGO process and the large number of complaints especially in Children's Services. This can sometimes involve the same complainant with multiple complaints.
- 9.2 The LGO Link Officer and Monitoring Officer regularly review cases and the LGO have welcomed significant strides the Council has made over the last few years 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 (This LGO report will be on a meeting agenda later in the autumn).

20 May 2026

By email

Ms Ridsdale
Chief Executive
Bury Metropolitan Borough Council

Dear Ms Ridsdale

Annual Review letter 2025-26

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 2026.

We recognise that local authorities continue to face significant pressures in delivering services to their communities. We hope the data and insight we share with you each year remains a useful tool for reflection and continuous improvement. Please consider it as part of your corporate governance processes.

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

In addition, you can find the detail of the decisions we have made about your Council, read 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.

We will write to organisations in July where there is exceptional practice or where we have concerns about 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 15 July 2026.

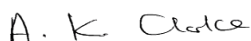
Supporting complaint and service improvement

We remain committed to supporting the sector to embed effective systems of redress. Where authorities are navigating reorganisation and devolution, we are ready to help ensure that robust complaint handling is built into new arrangements from the outset. Please do get in touch if your organisation would benefit from our advice and guidance.

Our [Complaint Handling Code](#), in force since April 2025, is now applied in our casework and offers structure and support to your local complaint system. Our training programme provides a flexible, expert-led route to building complaints capability across your teams, with courses open for individual delegates to book. Contact training@lgo.org.uk for more information.

Our Annual Review of Local Government Complaints will be published in July 2026, setting out the national picture of complaints, trends across service areas, and emerging systemic issues. We encourage you to read it alongside your own organisation's data.

Yours sincerely,



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

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Complaints and Enquiries Received (by Category) 2025-26

Authority Name	Adult Social Care	Benefits and Tax	Corporate and Other Services	Education and Children's Services	Environmental Services, Public Protection and Regulation	Highways and Transport	Housing	Planning and Development	Other	Total
Bury Metropolitan Borough Council	9	5	5	33	12	16	12	4	1	97

Complaints and Enquiries Decided (by Outcome) 2025-26

Authority Name	Not for us / not ready for us			Assessed and closed	Investigated						
	Invalid or Incomplete	Advice Given	Referred Back for Local Resolution	Closed after Initial Enquiries	Not Upheld	Upheld	Total	Upheld decisions per 100,000 residents	Average no of upheld decisions per 100,000 residents of similar authorities	Uphold rate (%)	Average uphold rate (%) of similar authorities
Bury Metropolitan Borough Council	2	1	19	40	3	18	83	9.0	4.6	86%	83%

Remedy and compliance outcomes 2025-26

Authority Name	Number of upheld complaints	Uphold Rate (%)	Average uphold rate (%) of similar authorities	Upheld cases where the authority provided a satisfactory remedy before the complaint reached the Ombudsman (%)	Average satisfactory remedy rate of similar authorities (%)	Number of cases with a compliance outcome recorded during the year	Number of compliance outcomes recorded as delivered on time	Percentage of compliance outcomes recorded as delivered on time (timely compliance rate) (%)	Average timely compliance rate in similar organisations (%)	Cases we were satisfied the authority successfully implemented our recommendations to remedy the complaint (compliance rate) (%)	Average compliance rate of similar authorities (%)
Bury Metropolitan Borough Council	18	86%	83%	11%	16%	17	16	94%	79%	100%	100.0%

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Annual Review of Local Government Complaints 2025-2026

July 2026



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Ombudsman's foreword

The scale of demand on our service this year should give every local authority pause for thought. The number of complaints we received this year has risen significantly and more sharply than at any time over the past 10 years. Last year we saw a 16% increase in the number of complaints we received. This year that figure has more than doubled to 33%. That increase is not concentrated in one area, it is consistent across all services.

This is not a picture unique to local government. There are rising demands across all UK public sector Ombudsman bodies and we are witnessing a broader crisis of public confidence in public services. When people cannot get the help they need, and feel they have no other recourse, they come to us. That so many are doing so tells us something important. It speaks not just about individual service failures, but about the gap between what residents expect and what they are receiving.

The picture painted by the complaints we deal with is consistent and concerning. In special educational needs services, in housing, and in adult social care, we are seeing the consequences of systems under sustained and serious strain.

I am acutely aware of the scale of reform currently underway. It is much needed and long overdue. The Casey Commission's work on adult social care, SEND reforms and the wider

devolution programme all represent genuine opportunities to address problems that have been allowed to deepen for too long. But reform takes time to design, legislate and deliver. The children waiting for education support, and the vulnerable adults without adequate housing or care, cannot wait for those benefits to arrive.

This year, we welcomed the publication of independent research by the University of Manchester, funded by the Nuffield Foundation, examining how local authorities respond to our service improvement recommendations in SEND. The findings of that research, "Set Up to Fail?", echo much of what we see in our own data.

The research confirms that many of the problems driving complaints to us are rooted in national systemic failures: inadequate funding, chronic shortages of educational psychologists, and demand that has consistently outpaced available resource. Local authority officers interviewed for the research described a SEND system that is, in their own words, "fundamentally broken" and a "national crisis". We believe these findings apply across many local services, particularly housing and adult social care.

Despite those pressures, the research demonstrates that our work makes a real difference.



Local authorities universally accept our recommendations, and our service improvement recommendations lead to real change at local level through increased focus and accountability, even in the face of national challenges. Good administration matters. It matters to the people who depend on these services, and we know it matters to the local authorities that are legally responsible for delivering them.

“When people cannot get the help they need, and feel they have no other recourse, they come to us. That so many are doing so tells us something important. It speaks not just about individual service failures, but about the gap between what residents expect and what they are receiving.”

That is why I want to speak directly to local authority Chief Executives and Leaders through this report. The responsibility to act does not rest solely with central government. The “Set Up to Fail?” research is candid that national pressures have shifted blame onto local authorities for failures that are, in significant part, not of their making. We understand that. But it also shows that the way local authorities respond to those pressures, and how seriously they engage with learning from complaints, makes a measurable difference to outcomes for residents. The authorities that work constructively with us, embed learning from our recommendations and invest in strong complaint-handling, consistently demonstrate better practice. That is not a coincidence.

The once-in-a-generation programme of local government reorganisation and devolution now under way presents a genuine opportunity to redesign services, break down the silos that have frustrated joined-up delivery for decades, and find locally-driven solutions to problems that have persisted through successive waves of national reform. New technology, smarter joint commissioning, and integrated approaches to health, care and housing have the potential to make a real difference now, while we wait for the wider benefits of national reform to take effect. A complaints service that works from day one gives new authorities

an immediate window into inherited failures and a live gauge of their own performance, intelligence that, left uncaptured, cannot be recovered.

I also want to be direct about the financial dimension. Poor decisions, delayed action and inadequate services are not only harmful to residents, they are also costly. The cumulative expense of complaints, legal challenges and emergency interventions far exceeds the cost of investment in effective, well-managed services. Getting it right first time is both the right thing to do and, in the long run, the financially prudent course. For local authorities managing significant budget pressures, that is not a secondary consideration.

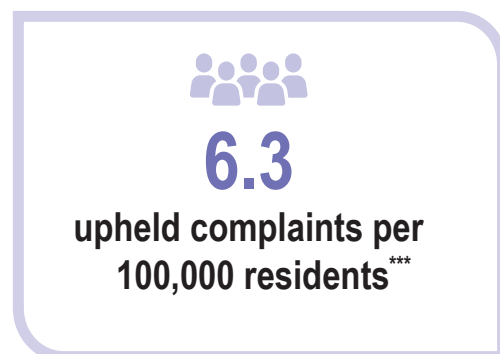
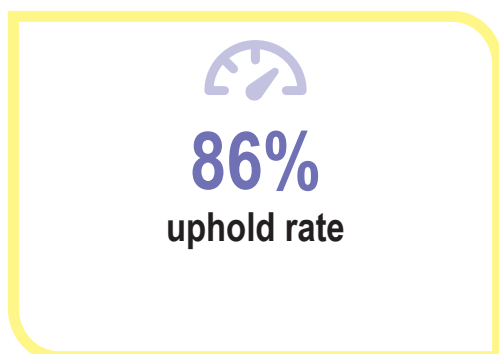
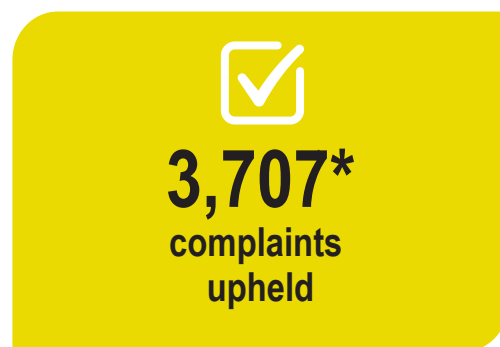
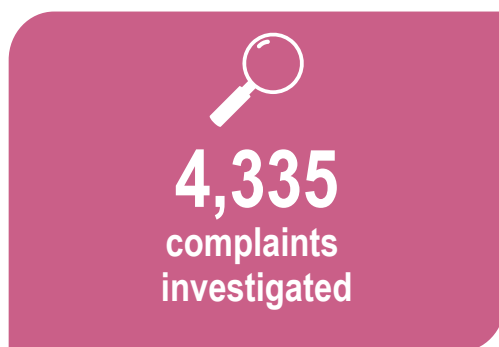
We see this in our casework. This year we saw a 20% increase in the number of complaints where we were happy with how the complaint was resolved locally. This is evidence of increased levels of good practice in complaint handling within the sector and I hope this will continue as local authorities embed our Complaint Handling Code in local practice and policy.

I recognise that local authorities are operating in genuinely difficult circumstances, with constrained resources, stretched workforces and rising demand. I do not underestimate the complexity of what is being asked of you. But strong and honest leadership, including a genuine commitment to learning from what goes wrong, makes a measurable difference in both efficient service delivery and improving public trust.

The problems documented here are serious. But they are not insurmountable. And the opportunity to address them, at pace and at scale, has rarely been greater.

Amerdeep Clarke
Local Government and
Social Care Ombudsman
July 2026

Headline statistics



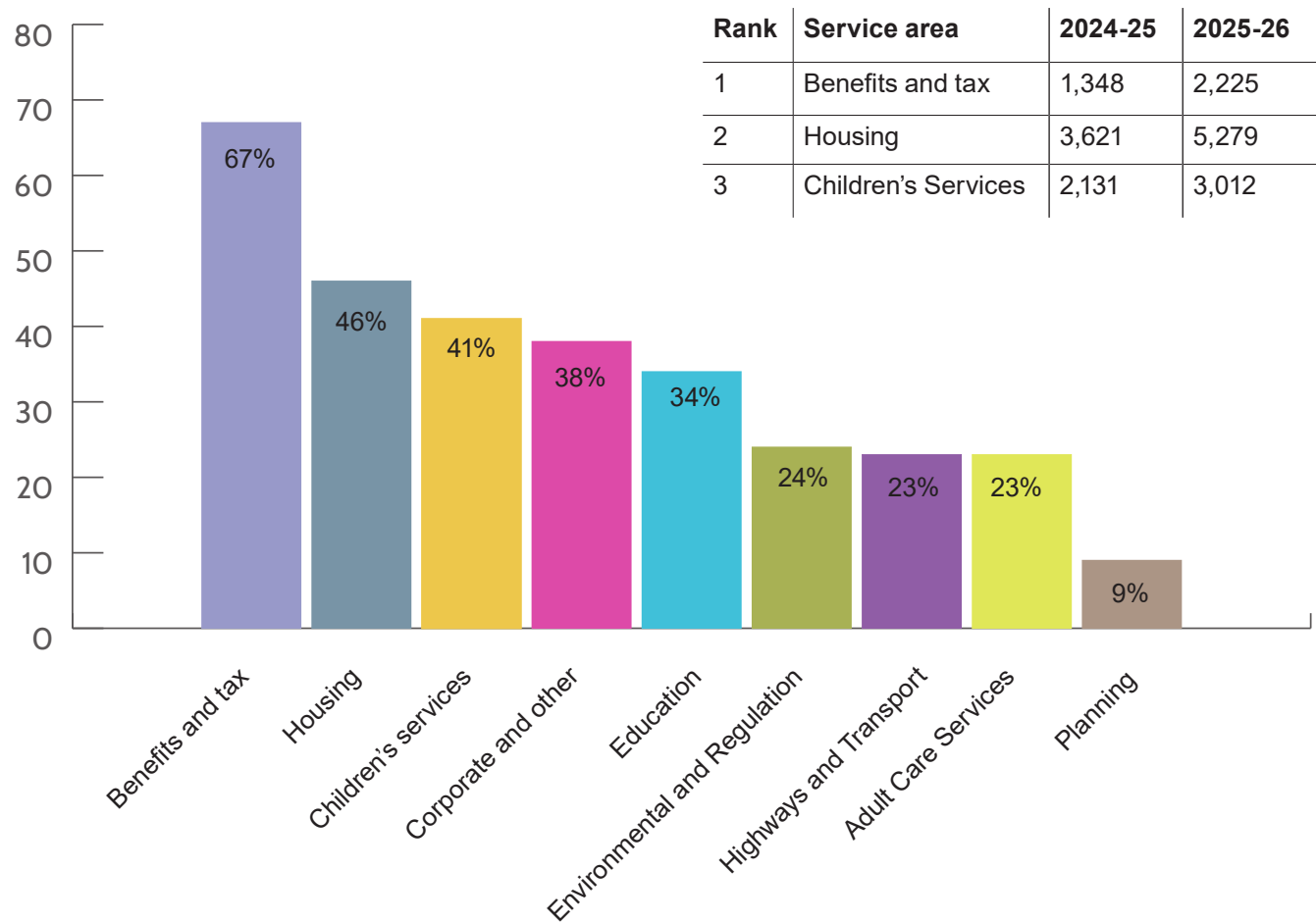
*Includes cases where we found the organisation offered a suitable remedy early on

**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

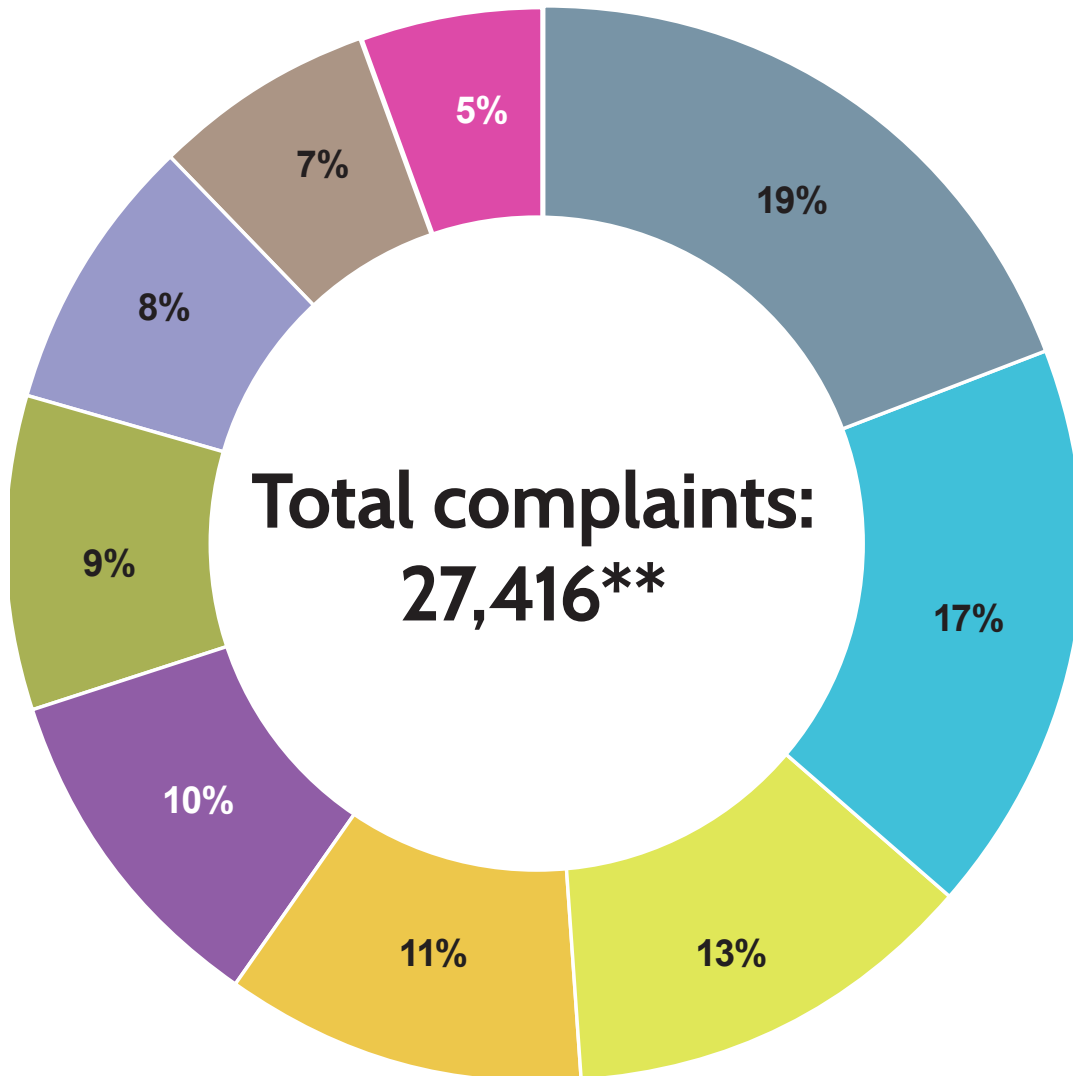
Complaints and enquiries received

PERCENTAGE GROWTH ON PREVIOUS YEAR BY CATEGORY



Complaints and enquiries received

COMPLAINTS AND ENQUIRIES BY SHARE OF TOTAL



Service area	Cases**
Housing	5,279
Education	4,721
Adult Care Services	3,429
Children's Services	3,012
Highways and Transport	2,818
Environmental and Regulation	2,559
Benefits and Tax	2,255
Planning and Development	1,870
Corporate and Other	1,473

Percentages add up to 99% due to rounding.

**This does not include 209 cases where we did not have sufficient information to categorise the complaint.

Oversight and organisational learning

Local authority chief executives, directors and elected members should use the information we publish to strengthen complaint handling and assess the overall health of their local complaint system.

Our [good practice guides](#) for senior leaders and elected members explain how complaint data can be used to understand service performance and strengthen oversight.

USING DATA FOR OVERSIGHT

You can use our [performance map](#) to view key statistics that provide insight into an organisation's approach to complaint handling.

- Uphold rates show the proportion of investigations in which we found fault, including cases where the authority accepted fault and offered a suitable remedy early. How does your authority compare with similar authorities?
- Offering a satisfactory remedy shows an authority is recognising fault and putting things right before a complaint reaches us. How often does this happen in your authority, and how does that compare with others?
- Compliance rates show the proportion of cases in which we were satisfied recommendations had been implemented, based on the evidence provided. Compliance below 100% is uncommon. Does your authority have a 100% compliance rate? If not, what is in place to prevent further non-compliance?
- Timely compliance means recommendations were implemented within the agreed timeframes. How does your authority's timely compliance rate compare with others?
- Service improvement recommendations are intended to prevent the same fault recurring. How does your authority track implementation, and how does it assess whether the agreed changes are making a difference?

Best practice in complaint handling

Effective complaint handling builds public confidence, strengthens oversight and helps services improve.

We support organisations to achieve this through our recommendations, alongside guidance and resources that help strengthen local complaint oversight.

PUTTING THINGS RIGHT

Timely compliance matters. Delivering remedies within the agreed timescale helps rebuild trust and shows that authorities take complaints seriously. This year, authorities were late in implementing agreed recommendations in more than 750 cases (23%). We now publish timely compliance rates on our website.

To ensure the timely delivery of recommendations, authorities should:

- set realistic timescales at draft decision stage
- track agreed recommendations and tell us promptly about any delay
- provide evidence as soon as a remedy has been completed
- have clear processes to ensure apologies and payments are made without delay.

SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

- The Complaint Handling Code sets the standard for fair and effective complaint handling. Since April 2026, we have applied the Code in our casework about local councils. We also provide good practice guides and training resources to support implementation.
- Focus Reports and Good Practice Guides bring together case studies from our investigations on specific topics, highlighting key concerns and offering specialist guidance for practitioners. During the year, we published reports and guides covering disabled housing, supporting children out of school and planning enforcement. Our council performance map brings complaint statistics together in one interactive resource. Users can compare similar councils and review annual letters, investigation reports and agreed service improvements.
- We also publish [data tables](#) with complaint information at local authority level for further analysis.

Oversight and organisational learning

We want authorities to have complaint systems that are effective, trusted and able to drive service improvement. Where support is needed, we offer a range of online complaint handling training. To find out more, visit www.lgo.org.uk/training.

Authorities that took part in complaint handling training during 2025-26 are [listed on our website](#).

Learning and Improvement

PUBLISHED DECISIONS AND REPORTS

We are one of the few Ombudsman schemes to publish every decision we make, supporting transparency and enabling wider learning from our casework.

Cases that raise serious issues or matters of public interest are published as investigation reports. During the year, we published 27 reports and three further reports. These are listed at the end of this report.

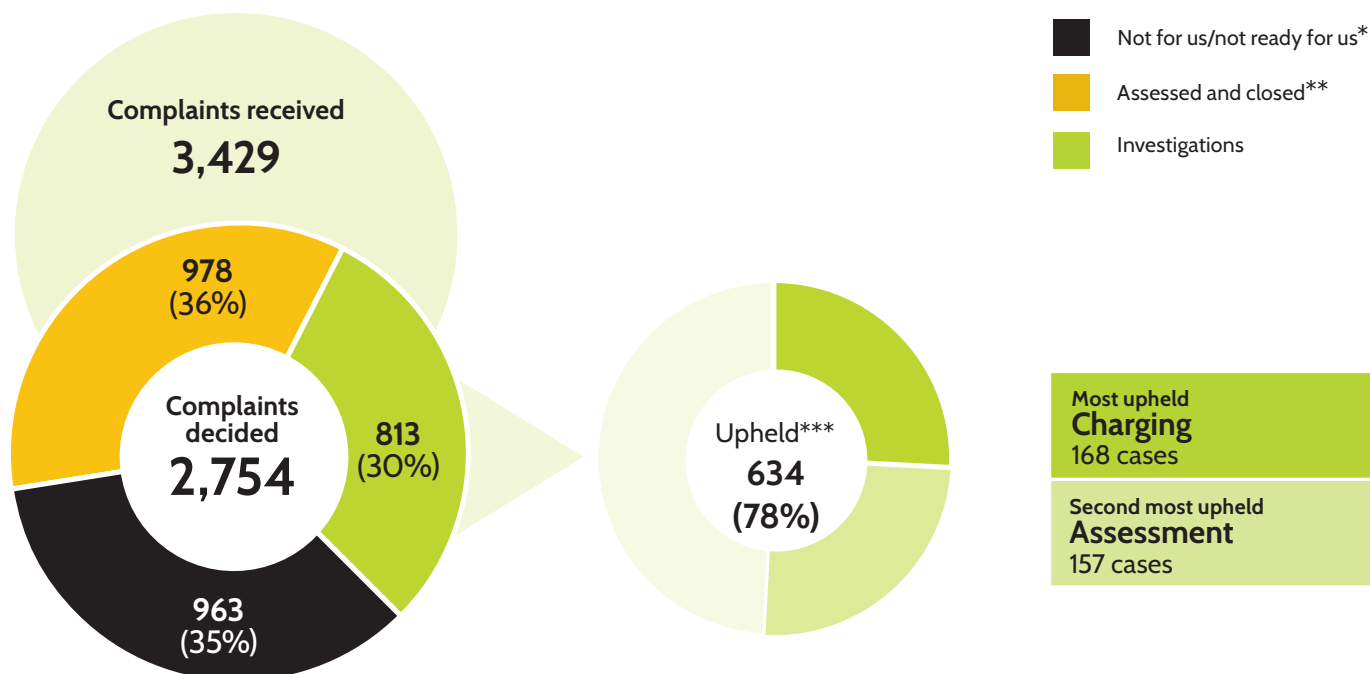
A further report is issued when an authority refuses to implement a recommended remedy or fails to respond to an earlier report. It highlights the non-compliance and may lead us to require the authority to publish a statement of non-compliance in a local newspaper, setting out what action was not taken and why.

A statement of non-compliance promotes accountability by informing the public when an authority has failed to act on our recommendations.

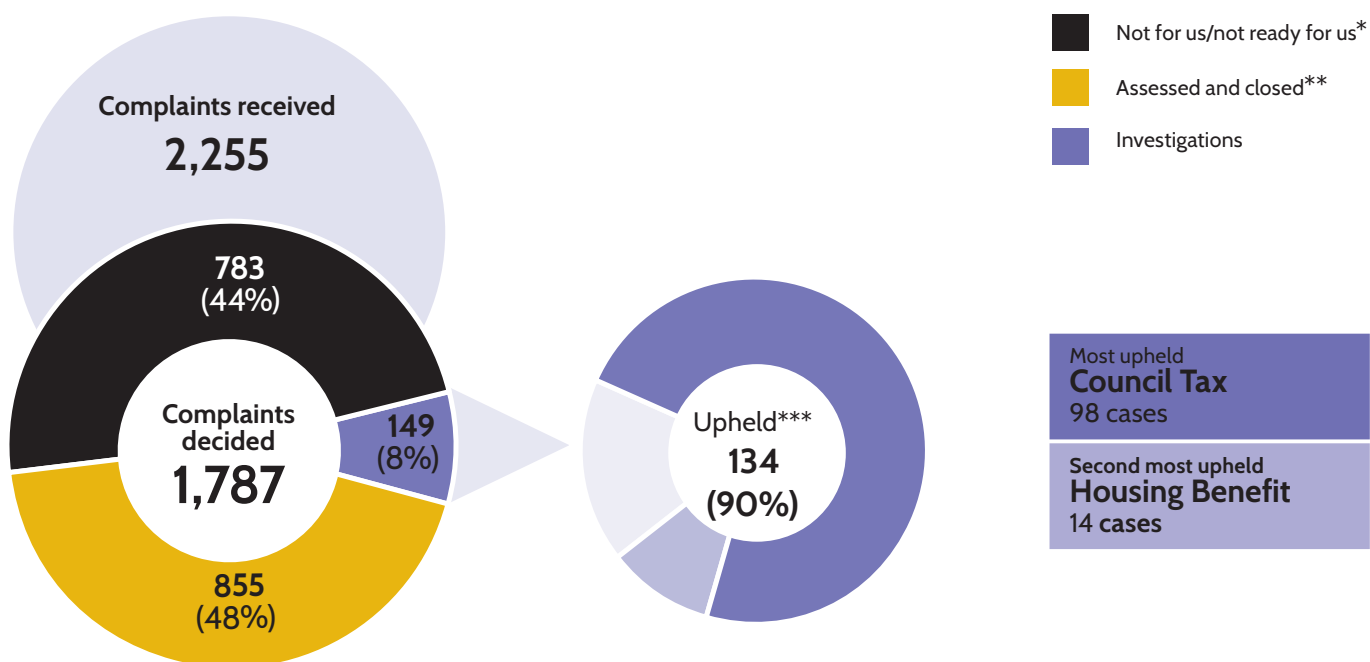
2025-26

Statistics by service area

Adult Care Services



Benefits & Tax



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

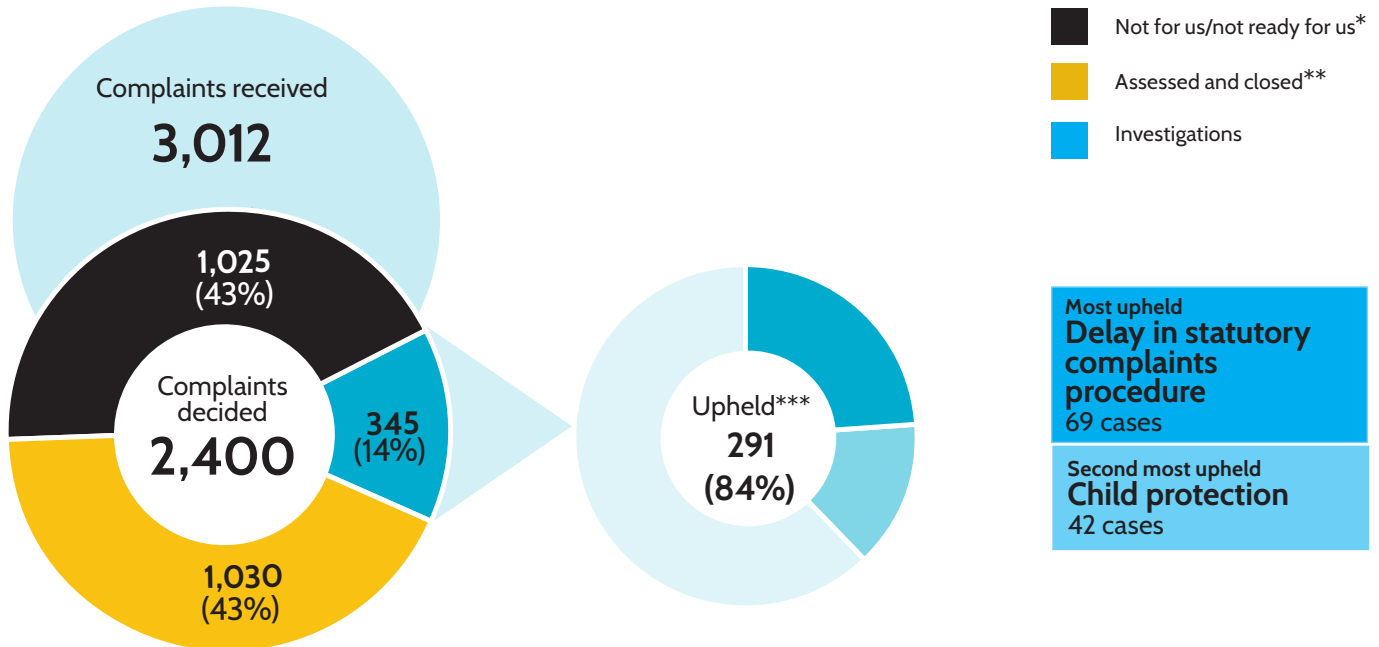
** Assessed and closed – we assessed the complaint but decided against carrying out a further investigation. This might be because the law says we're not allowed to investigate it, or because it would not be an effective use of public funds if we did.

*** Upheld: we completed an investigation and found evidence of fault, or we found the organisation offered a suitable remedy early on.

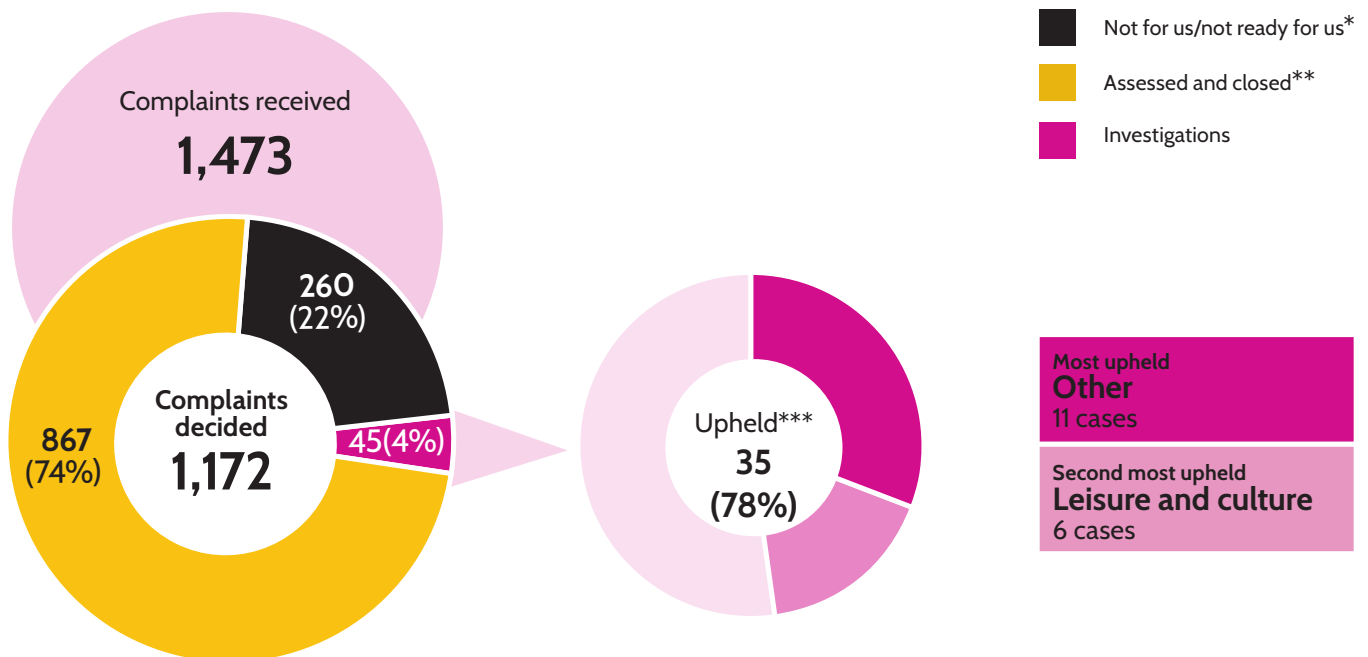
2025-26

Statistics by service area

Children's Services



Corporate & Other Services



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

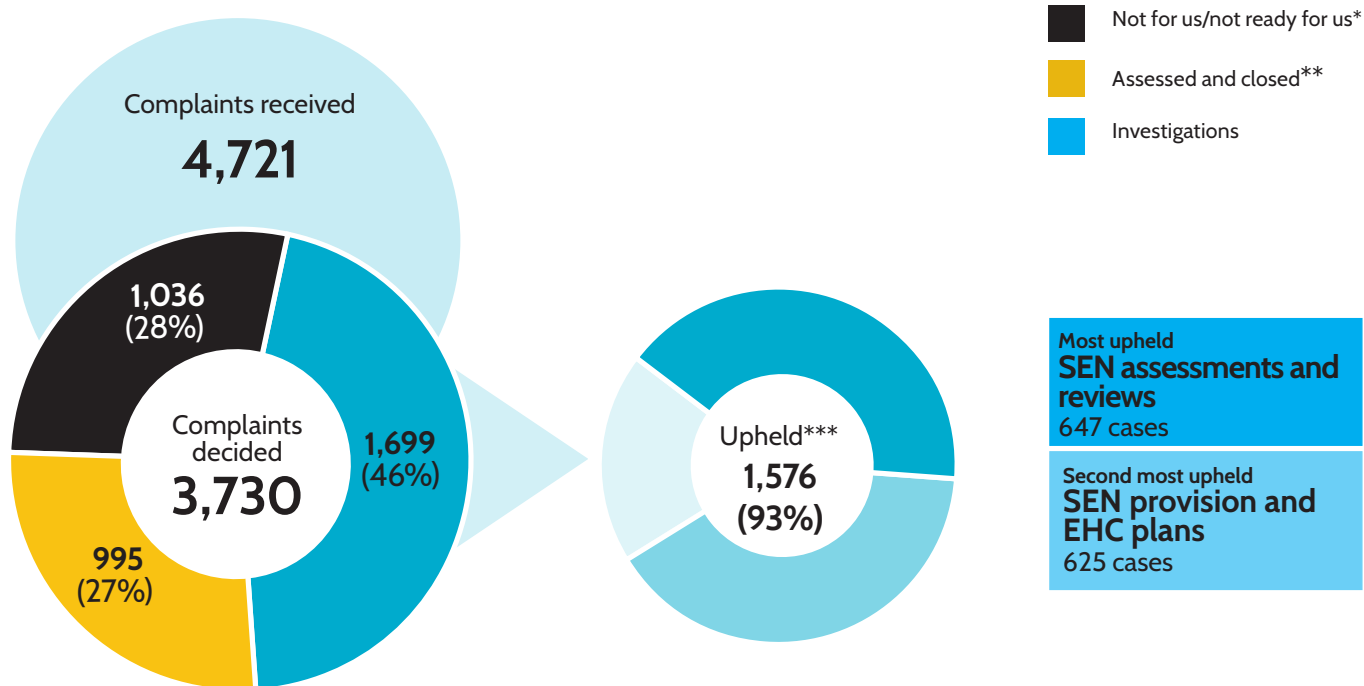
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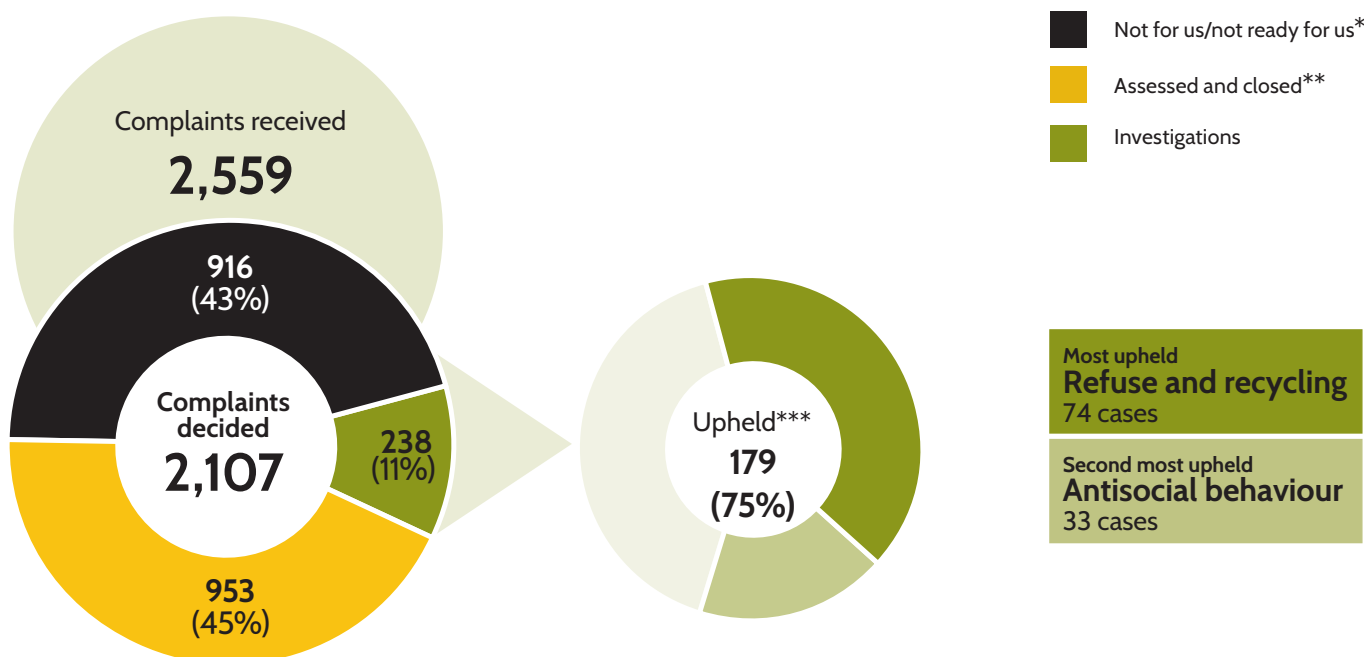
2025-26

Statistics by service area

Education



Environmental Services, Public Protection & Regulation



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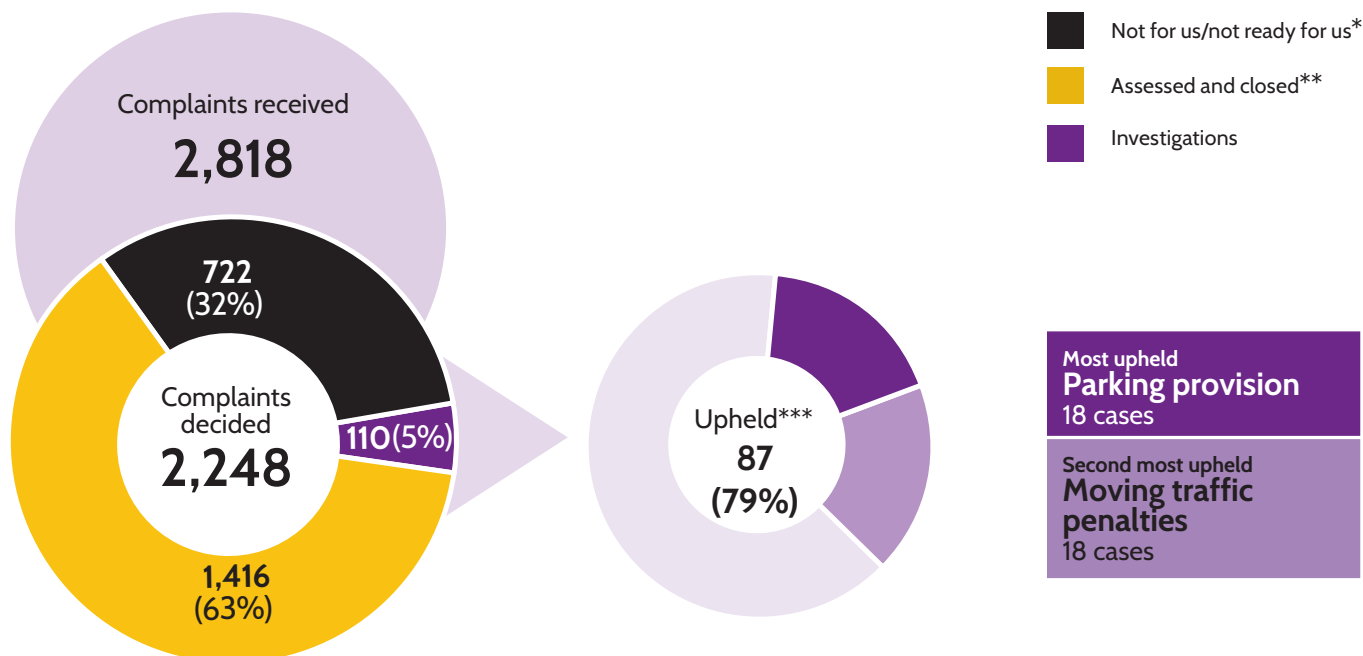
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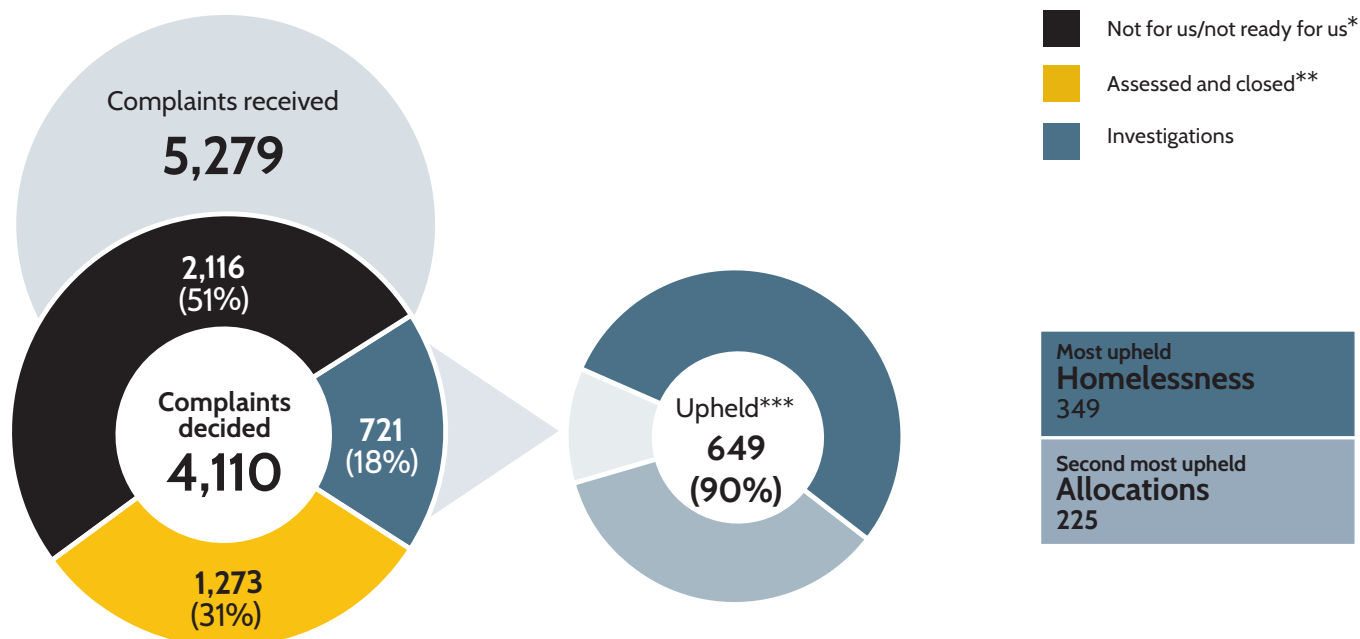
2025-26

Statistics by service area

Highways & Transport



Housing



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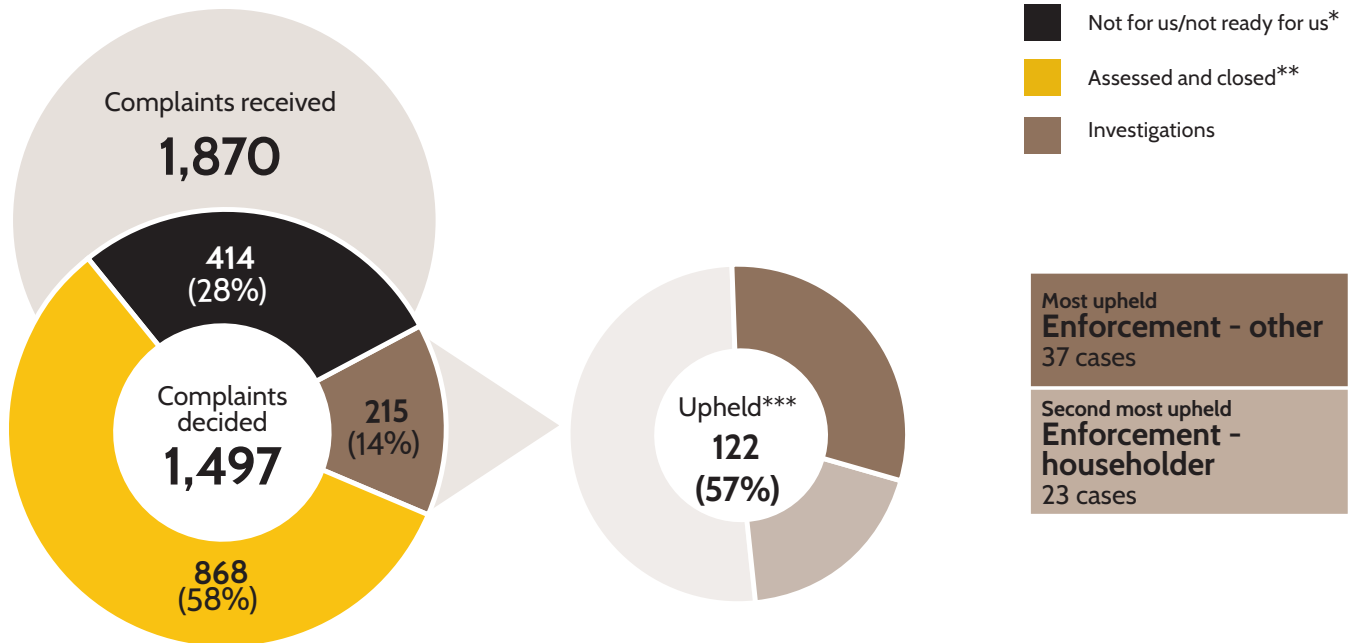
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2025-26

Statistics by service area

Planning & Development



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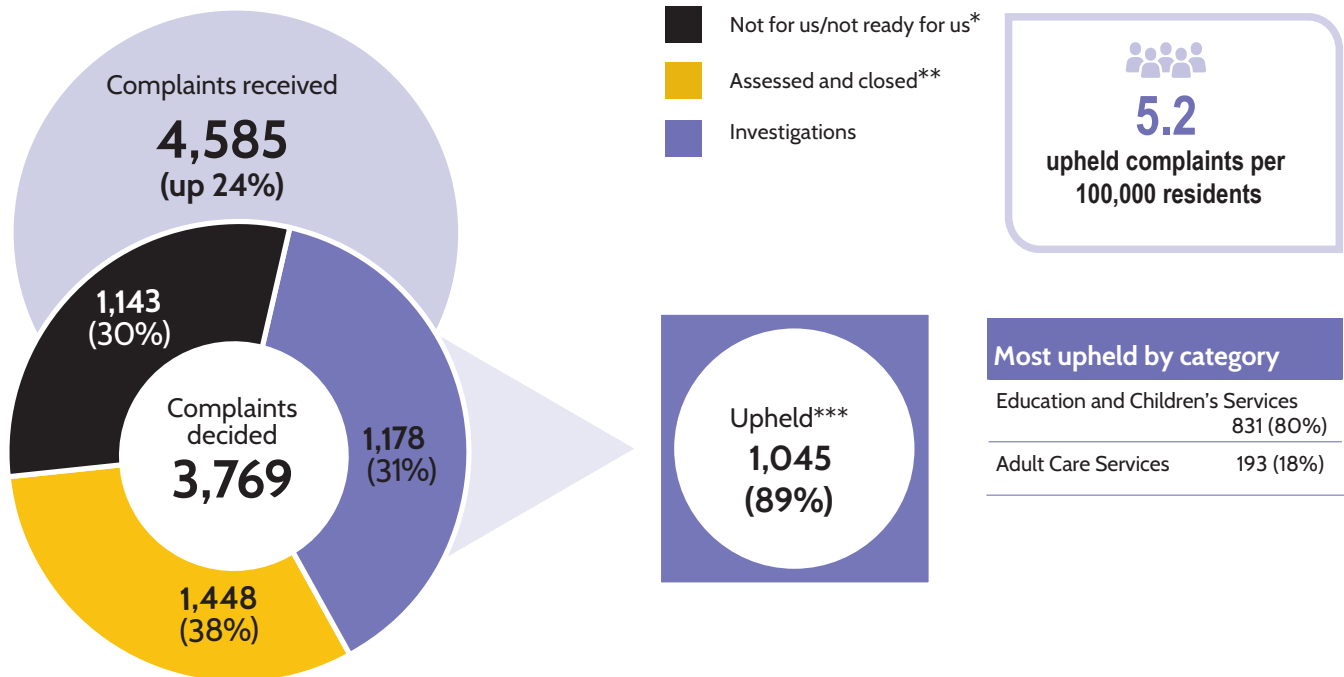
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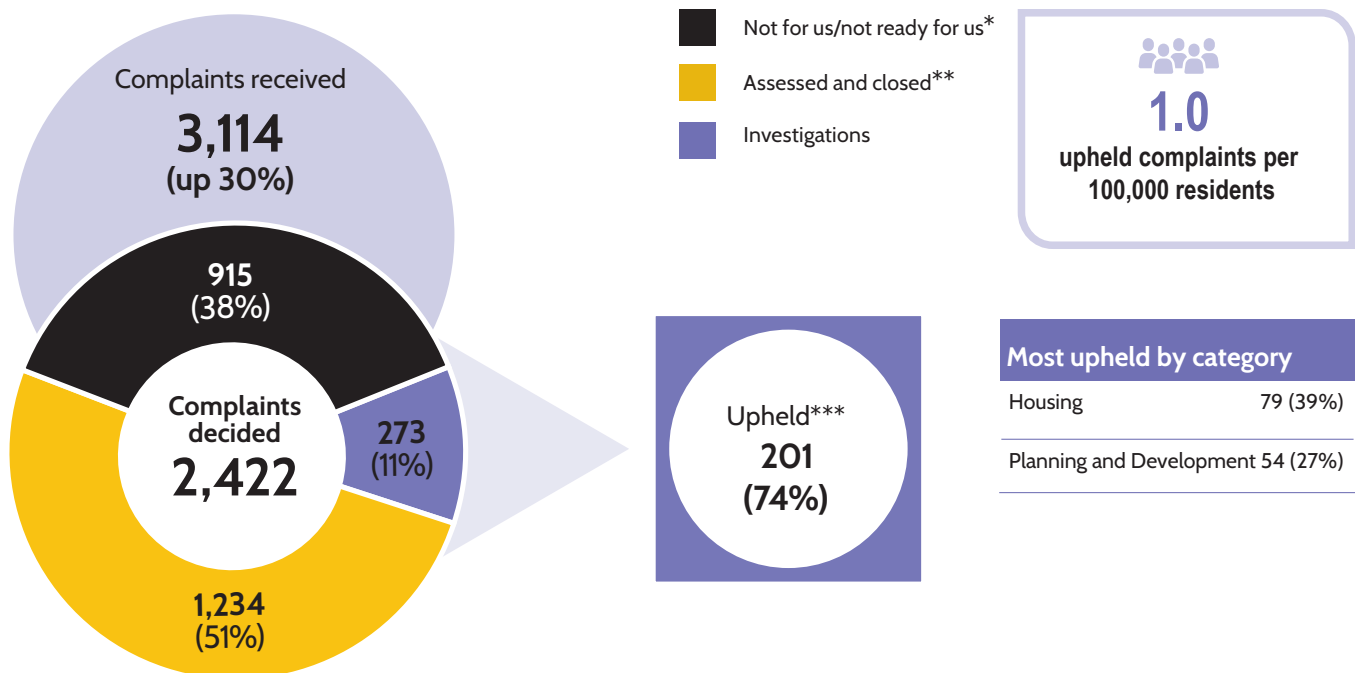
2025-26

Statistics by authority type

County Councils



District and Borough Councils



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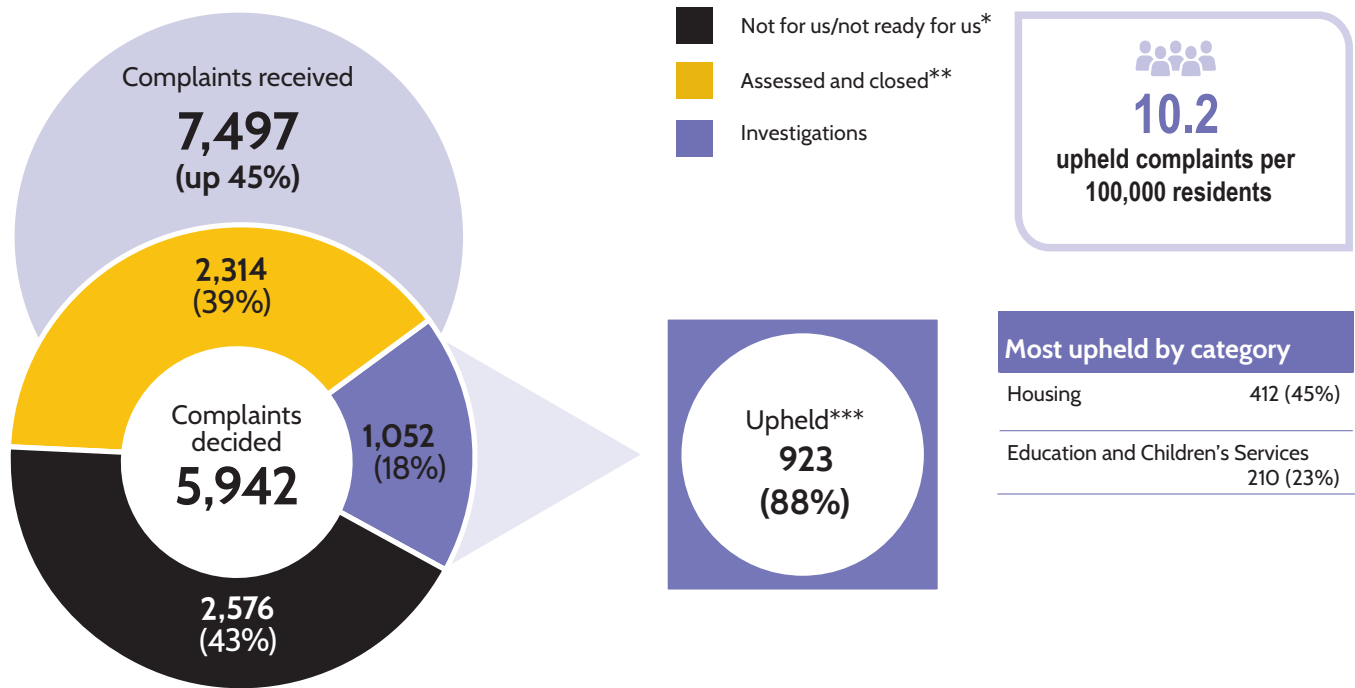
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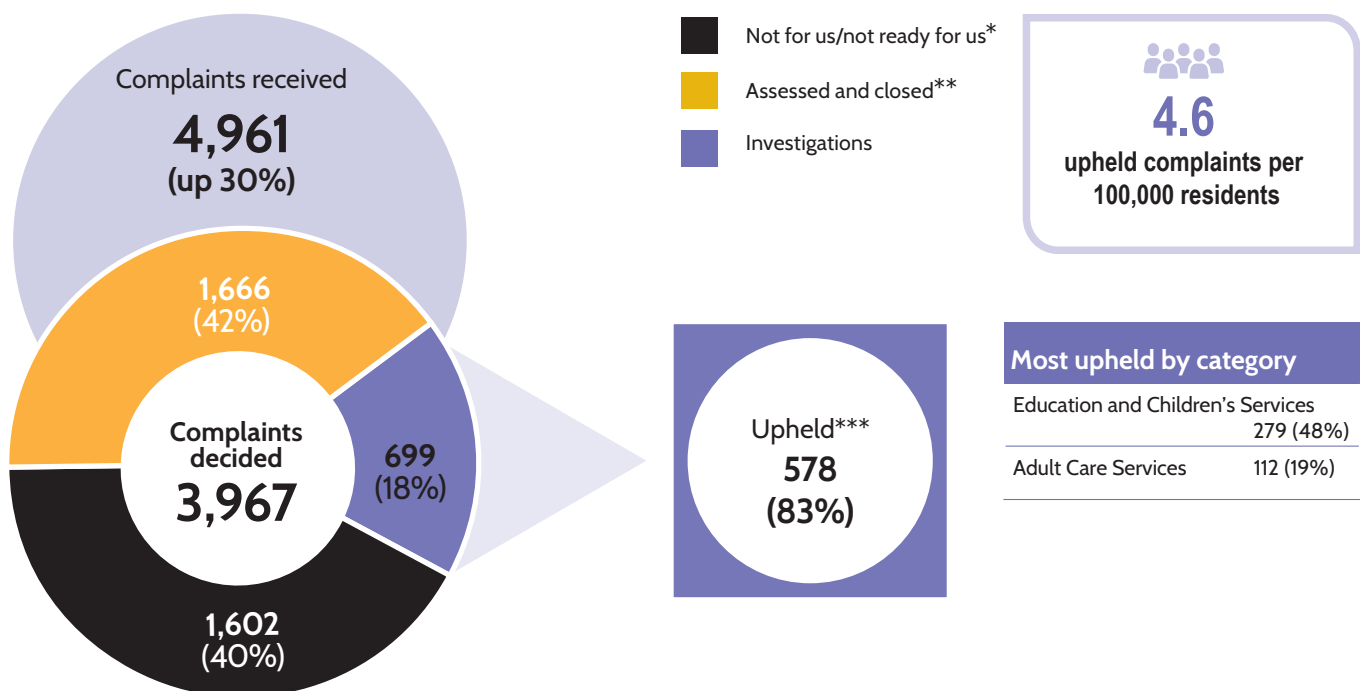
2025-26

Statistics by authority type

London Boroughs



Metropolitan Councils



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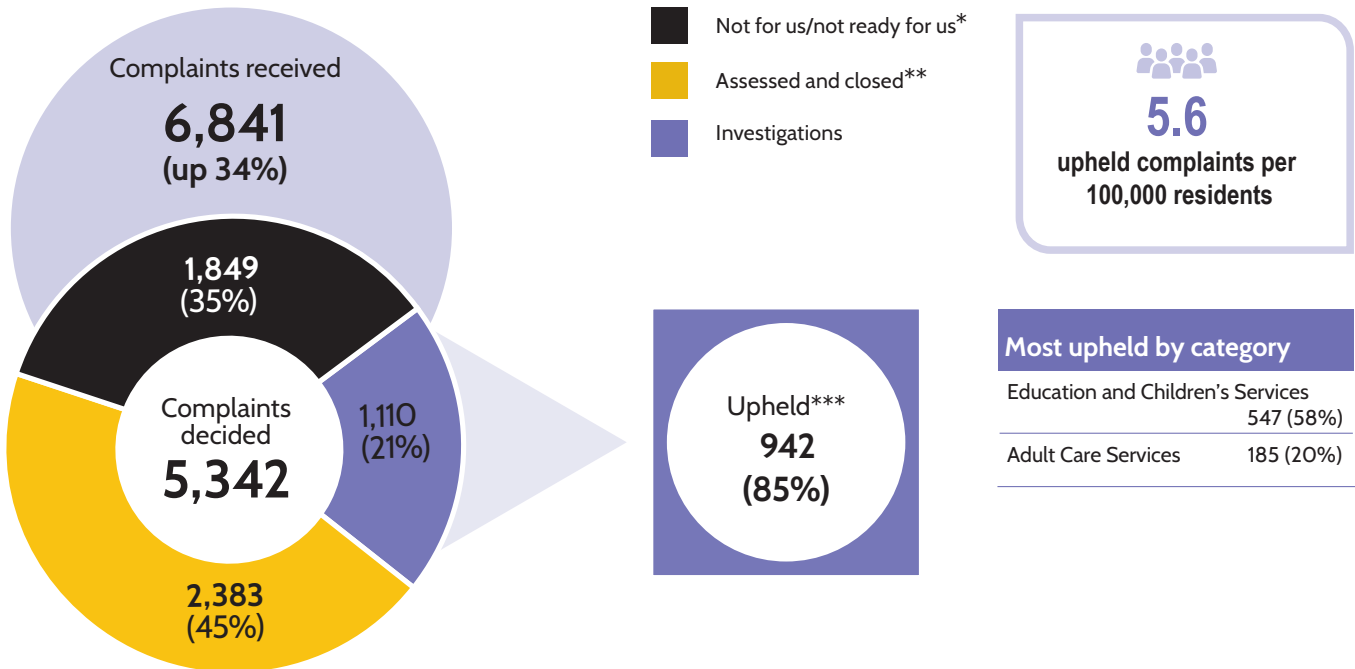
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2025-26

Statistics by authority type

Unitary Authorities



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Investigation reports

 Adult Care Services		
London Borough of Hackney	Transport	24003887
London Borough of Haringey	Safeguarding	24014203
West Sussex County Council	Transport	24009730

 Children's Services		
Cheshire East Council	Child protection	24009262
London Borough of Harrow	Delay in statutory complaints procedure	24022000
London Borough of Lewisham	Delay in statutory complaints procedure	24015996
London Borough of Waltham Forest	Disabled child	24010138
Southend-on-Sea City Council	Disabled child	23004755

 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

Investigation reports



Environmental Services & Protection



London Borough of Enfield

Antisocial behaviour

[24017695](#)



Highways & Transport



Transport for London

Other

[24021232](#)



Housing



Halton Borough Council

Homelessness

[23005581](#)

Leicester City Council

Homelessness

[24005927](#)

Leicester City Council - further report

Homelessness

[24005927](#)

Leicester City Council - further report

Domestic Abuse

[23015268](#)

London Borough of Croydon

Homelessness

[23015996](#)

London Borough of Hounslow

Homelessness

[24001000](#)

London Borough of Lewisham

Homelessness

[24016564](#)

London Borough of Waltham Forest

Homelessness

[24000033](#)

North Yorkshire Council

Disabled Facilities Grants

[24012483](#)

Norwich City Council

Allocations

[24018523](#)

South Kesteven District Council

Homelessness

[24010719](#)

South Kesteven District Council - further report

Homelessness

[24010719](#)

**Local Government & Social
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Local Government &
Social Care
OMBUDSMAN



Classification	Item No.
Open / Closed	

Meeting:	Standards Committee
Meeting date:	24 th September 2026
Title of report:	Public Office (Accountability) Bill (Hillsborough Law)
Report by:	Jacqui Dennis, Director Law & Governance
Decision Type:	Report for information only
Ward(s) to which report relates	(Not applicable)

Executive Summary:

The Bill would place important existing expectations of honesty, openness and accountability on a clearer statutory footing. Local authorities are directly affected. Elected members are within the Bill's scope, but the precise application differs between executive and non-executive members and between different parts of the Bill.

This summary report highlights the key features of the Public Office (Accountability) Bill, commonly referred to as the "Hillsborough Law", and explains the potential implications for local authorities and elected members. It is intended to support Member awareness and development. It is not a substitute for advice on a particular case.

It remains before the House of Lords and has not yet received Royal Assent. It's provisions may therefore change before enactment.

The Bill responds to concerns about the conduct of public bodies and public officials when serious incidents are investigated. Its principal features are:

- imposing a statutory duty of candour and assistance in connection with specified inquiries and investigations;
- requiring public authorities to promote and maintain standards of ethical conduct;
- creating an offence relating to misleading the public;

- replacing the common law offence of misconduct in public office with statutory offences; and
- making provision intended to support participation and representation at inquiries, investigations and inquests.

A local authority is within the Bill's concept of a public authority. The Bill therefore has institutional implications for the council, as well as potential individual implications for officers and members. An LGA employment law presentation from March 2026 summarised the Bill as applying to public authorities and their officers and members, including local authorities.

1. Duty of candour and assistance

The Bill would require a public authority and a public official, in dealings with specified inquiries and investigations, to act with candour, transparency and frankness and to provide assistance. The detailed application depends on the type of inquiry or investigation and on the statutory definitions.

2. Proceedings covered

The Bill makes provision for the duty to apply in relation to categories including inquiries under the Inquiries Act 2005, certain non-statutory inquiries and coronial investigations. The operative detail is contained in the Bill and its schedules.

The duty is not simply a general obligation applying to every council activity at all times. It is engaged through the statutory framework for specified inquiries and investigations, and the person concerned must fall within the relevant definition.

3. Standards of ethical conduct

The Bill would require public authorities to promote and take steps to maintain high standards of ethical conduct within the authority. The LGA briefing describes the expected standards by reference to the Nolan Principles:

- Selflessness
- Integrity
- Objectivity
- Accountability
- Openness
- Honesty
- Leadership

The Bill also envisages published arrangements explaining expected conduct, practical ways of meeting those expectations and routes for reporting failures. The precise duties and implementation requirements should be checked against the final enacted text and any statutory guidance.

4. Misleading the public

The Bill creates a statutory offence concerned with seriously improper conduct that intentionally or recklessly misleads the public. The offence is subject to detailed statutory elements and defences. It should not be treated as criminalising ordinary error, political disagreement or legitimate debate.

5. Misconduct in public office

The Bill would abolish the common law offence of misconduct in public office and replace it with statutory offences. These address seriously improper use of public office to obtain a benefit or cause a detriment, and certain grave breaches of a public-office duty to prevent death or serious injury. The statutory thresholds are important and fact-sensitive.

6. Participation and legal support

The Bill also makes provision aimed at improving the ability of affected people and bereaved families to participate in inquiries, investigations and inquests. Government material refers to expanded non-means-tested legal help and representation for inquests and to requirements concerning proportionate public-authority expenditure on legal representation.

Implications for Officers

For officers, the Bill is significant because it would apply not only at corporate level but also, in relevant circumstances, to public officials personally. This is likely to include employees and office-holders acting on behalf of the Council, including former officers where the statutory provisions apply to conduct or information connected with their former role.

The practical implications for Bury officers are likely to be greatest in service areas that may be involved in serious incidents, safeguarding matters, housing, adult social care, children's services, environmental health, emergency planning, licensing, regulatory enforcement, health and safety, complaints, legal services, democratic services, communications, information governance and audit. The relevance is not limited to those areas, but those functions are more likely to generate records, decisions or evidence required for an inquiry, inquest, investigation or formal review.

- Officers should ensure that advice, decisions, reasons, risk assessments and key communications are properly recorded and retained.
- Where an inquiry, inquest, investigation or inspection is anticipated, officers should preserve potentially relevant records and seek early advice from Legal Services, the Data Protection Officer and the relevant senior manager.
- Reports, witness statements, public communications and responses to external bodies should be accurate, complete and capable of being evidenced.
- Officers should avoid defensive drafting, selective disclosure, unsupported assertions or communications that prioritise reputation management over accuracy and candour.
- Managers should promote a culture in which staff can escalate concerns, correct inaccuracies and raise potential disclosure issues without delay.
- We will need to consider amending the Officer code of conduct, disciplinary procedures, whistleblowing, complaints handling, and document-retention procedures with the final statutory regime.

Implications for Members

The Bill uses different definitions for different purposes. It is therefore too broad to say simply that every Councillor is a "public official" for every provision.

Provision	Ordinary non-executive member	Executive member
Duty of candour and assistance	Not within the definition solely because the person is an elected member. Another statutory basis would be needed.	Within the express local-government exception where the member is part of the authority's executive.
Misleading-the-public offence	The same Schedule 2 distinction applies. Elected-member status alone is insufficient.	Within the express exception for executive members.
Misconduct-in-public-office offences	A member of a local authority is included as a holder of public office.	Included as a holder of public office.

This distinction was present in the Bill as introduced and remains material in the version brought from the Commons. It means that all councillors are potentially within the statutory misconduct framework, while the duty of candour and misleading-the-public provisions do not apply to an ordinary non-executive councillors merely because they are elected.

Subject to the final legislation, members should continue to place particular emphasis on:

- ensuring that formal decisions and the reasons for them are accurately recorded;
- being candid and complete when responding to an inquiry, inquest or investigation;
- avoiding statements presented as fact where their accuracy has not been established;
- preserving relevant documents, messages and records in accordance with council requirements;
- declaring and managing interests and conflicts appropriately;
- using appropriate channels to raise suspected wrongdoing or failures of candour; and
- seeking advice early where an incident may lead to an external investigation, inquiry or inquest.

The Bill should not inhibit robust political scrutiny, challenge or debate. Its focus is serious failures of honesty, candour and public-office responsibility. Members should nevertheless distinguish clearly between political opinion, allegation and verified fact.

Once the final form and commencement arrangements are known, Bury Council is likely to consider whether changes are needed in the following areas:

- Bury's member and officer codes of conduct, protocols and guidance, including escalation and advice routes;
- member and officer training on candour, ethical conduct, record-keeping and investigation response;

- procedures for inquiries, inquests, inspections and regulatory investigations;
- complaints, whistleblowing and escalation arrangements;
- Ensure Record of processing activity is up to date – ensuring records can be swiftly identified and obtained
- assurance that public statements and formal submissions are properly checked

The proposals are consistent with the wider emphasis on transparency, accountability and ethical governance in local government. If enacted, Bury Council is likely to need to review its existing governance, legal, democratic, complaints, information-governance and service-response arrangements to ensure that they meet the statutory requirements, particularly in relation to openness, record-keeping, complaint handling and responses to inquiries, inquests and investigations.

For elected members, many of the underlying principles will already be familiar through Bury's Members' Code of Conduct, the Nolan Principles and existing expectations around transparent decision-making. The practical emphasis is likely to be on accurately recorded decisions and reasons, clear distinction between political comment and verified fact, appropriate management of interests, and full cooperation where serious matters are formally investigated.

As the Bill is also likely to inform future member and officer development, the changes will be considered by the Standards committee, Member Development Group and Governance and Assurance Board. The Standards Committee will be asked to incorporate any changes in line with their annual review of the code of conduct and review any changes necessary to the Officer, Member protocol. Officer and Member training will be arranged once the Bill becomes law.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to note the update.

Background

[UK Parliament: Public Office \(Accountability\) Bill and current passage](#)

[UK Parliament: Bill publications and successive versions](#)

[GOV.UK: Hillsborough Law Bill policy paper and factsheets](#)

[LGA: Public Office Accountability Bill and Local Government Reorganisation, March 2026](#)

Report Author and Contact Details:

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