

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

Summary

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

Recommendation(s)

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

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1. Background

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

2. Ombudsman's Jurisdiction

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

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

3. Changes for 2024/25

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

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

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

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

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

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

5. Ombudsman Complaint Decisions

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

8. Ombudsman’s Annual Review Letter

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

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

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

9. Other Information & Comparisons

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

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

10. Developments and Improvements

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

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