Classification:	Decision Type:
Open	Non-Key

Report to:	Overview & Scrutiny Committee	**Date:** 24 November 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. Additional oversight and accountability for LGO supplied information is provided by the Council's Standards Committee and Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

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

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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 which is sent direct to the Council's Chief Executive, Leader and Chair of Overview & Scrutiny. (Attached as appendix A).
A report on this subject matter was also included at the Standards Committee meeting held on the 24th September 2026, which Members duly noted.

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.

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**	***Comparison to previous year***	***2024/25***
Adult Care Services	9	*No change*	*9*
Corporate & Other Services	5	*Decrease*	*9*
Education & Children's Services	33	*Increase*	*28*
Environmental & Public Protection & Reg	12	*Decrease*	*18*
Highways & Transport	16	*Increase*	*14*
Planning & Development	4	*Decrease*	*10*
Housing	12	*Increase*	*9*
Benefits and Tax	5	*Increase*	*2*
Other	1	*No change*	*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 both the Council's Standards Committee and the Overview & Scrutiny Committee.