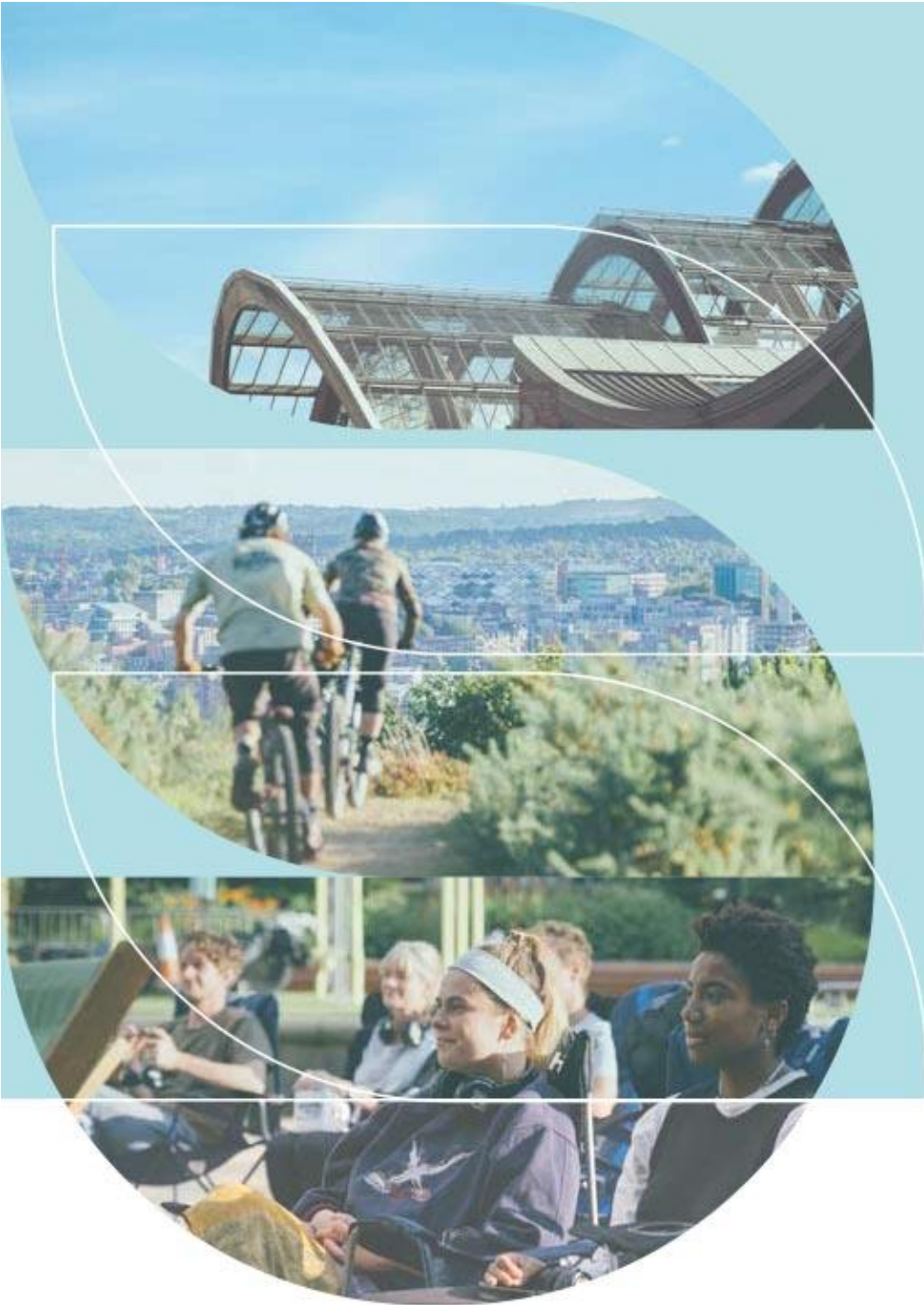




2025-26 Annual Report of Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, and Housing Ombudsman Decisions

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Annual Ombudsman Report

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1. Executive summary

This report provides Sheffield City Council's annual assessment of Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and Housing Ombudsman decisions for 2025–26, setting out complaint volumes, upheld findings, comparative performance, compliance with recommendations and the service improvements being delivered in response.

Overall Ombudsman escalation remains low when considered against the total number of complaints handled by the Council, with 31 LGSCO investigations and 14 Housing Ombudsman determinations arising from 9,548 complaints. However, the report identifies important areas for continued improvement, including the increase in LGSCO referrals, the low rate of satisfactory remedies provided before Ombudsman involvement, Housing Ombudsman maladministration and service failure findings, and two complaint handling failure orders.

For LGSCO cases, the Council received 182 complaints and enquiries, a 31.9% increase on the previous year. Of the 31 cases formally investigated, 25 were upheld, giving an upheld rate of 81%, which is slightly below both the average for similar authorities and the national average. The Council achieved 100% compliance with LGSCO recommendations, demonstrating that agreed remedies were implemented, but the satisfactory remedy rate of 8% was below comparator and national averages, indicating a need to resolve more cases effectively before they reach formal Ombudsman investigation.

For Housing Ombudsman cases, 14 determinations were considered in scope, with 30 findings recorded after exclusions. Nineteen findings related to maladministration or service failure, giving a maladministration rate of 63.3%, compared with 83% in the previous year. There were no findings of severe maladministration, which is a positive improvement, but the Council received two complaint handling failure orders and was ordered to pay compensation totalling £13,117, highlighting the need for continued focus on evidence, timeliness, communication and complaint handling assurance.

The report sets out a range of completed and planned service improvements, including staff reminders, policy reviews, complaint handling training, strengthened oversight through performance boards, improved quality assurance, better use of complaints data, and targeted improvement activity within Housing and Repairs.

The key priority for 2026–27 is to demonstrate that these actions are reducing repeat failings, improving complaint resolution at the earliest opportunity, and strengthening customer confidence in how the Council listens, responds and learns from complaints.

2. Introduction and scope of report

This is Sheffield City Council's Annual Ombudsman Report for the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026. Sheffield City Council currently acts as Landlord for 37,467 homes as of 31 March 2026.

The appendices are as follows:

- The LGSCO Annual Letter for 2025–26 is provided at **Appendix A**. The Housing Ombudsman will publish its 2025–26 final findings in its Annual Complaints Review in September 2026. See: [Landlords with a maladministration rate of 75% or higher](#).
- The 2025–26 Ombudsman Report Data Tables, including benchmarking data, are appended to this report at **Appendix B**.

3. Complaints policy

Sheffield City Council welcomes complaints as an opportunity to maintain high-quality performance and to consistently review and improve the quality of services offered to customers.

When a customer makes a complaint, their complaint will be handled through the approach set out in Sheffield City Council's Corporate Complaint Policy and procedures. We will do this irrespective of where and how customers make their complaint.

Sheffield City Council has a two-stage approach when dealing with complaints. See: [Complain about a council service | Sheffield City Council](#)

4. Ombudsman performance analysis 2025–26

4.1 Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman findings

The LGSCO performance data includes lessons learned with a view to looking at wider improvements that may be achieved.

The Ombudsman has published an interactive map of council performance showing 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. It also highlights those instances where each authority offered a suitable remedy to resolve a complaint before the matter came to the Ombudsman and reports the authority's compliance with the recommendations made to remedy complaints. See: [Sheffield City Council - Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman](#)

In June 2026, the LGSCO wrote only to organisations where there was exceptional practice or where there were concerns about an organisation's complaint handling. Sheffield City Council did not receive such a specific letter, but the LGSCO's findings were published on its website on 15 July 2026. See **Appendix A**.

The LGSCO has sent the Council all findings from the 182 cases referred in the year ending 31 March 2026, of which 31 cases were formally investigated and 25 were upheld. See summary below:

- The LGSCO received 182 complaints. This represents a 31.9% (44) increase on the previous year. A breakdown of complaints/enquiries by category is provided at **Appendix B (Table 1)**.
- Sheffield City Council's top three highest complaint areas were Children and Families Services, 33% (60 out of 182), comprising Children's Social Care (36) and Education (24);

Housing Services, 18.7% (34 out of 182); and Adults Services, 17% (31 out of 182). This compares with the national top three highest complaint areas of Housing, Education and Adults Services.

- Of the 31 cases formally investigated by the LGSCO, 25 were upheld in the year to 31 March 2026, compared with 16 cases in the previous year. To put this figure into context, the Ombudsman investigated 31 cases out of 9,548 complaints handled by the Council, compared with 22 out of 7,899 in 2024–25. This gives an escalation rate of 0.32% (31/9,548) of overall cases requiring formal investigation, compared with 0.27% in 2024–25, and 0.26% (25/9,548) of cases upheld by the Ombudsman, compared with 0.2% in 2024–25.
- The top three categories most upheld were Children and Families Services, including Education and Skills, 44% (11 out of 25); Adults Services, 32% (8 out of 25); and Neighbourhood Services – Housing, 16% (4 out of 25). This compares with the most upheld by category of similar authorities: Education, Housing and Adults Services.
- The LGSCO website shows that the Council's upheld rate of 81% (25/31) is lower than that of similar authorities – 83% and lower than the national average of 86%. This may be interpreted as 4.3 upheld decisions per 100,000 residents. This is lower than the average for authorities of this type - 4.6 upheld decisions per 100,000 and lower than the national average of 6.3 upheld decisions per 100,000.
- The Council has provided satisfactory remedies in 8% (2/25) of cases upheld by the Ombudsman which is lower than the average for similar authorities of 16% and the national average of 13%.
- Compliance rates show the proportion of cases in which the LGSCO was satisfied their recommendations had been implemented. Twenty-five cases were recorded for compliance outcomes. Sheffield City Council had a 100% compliance rate with these recommendations. This is in line with the average of 100% achieved by similar authorities and higher than the national compliance rate of 99.9%. Timely compliance is important; it helps to rebuild customer/residents' confidence when we carry out recommendations within the agreed timeframe.
- For service improvements and learnings from the LGSCO findings, please see section 5.1 below.

4.2 Housing Ombudsman findings

On 20 July 2026, the Housing Ombudsman (HO) wrote to organisations where five or more findings were identified in cases determined between 1 April 2025 and 31 March 2026, which will be published on its website by September 2026. Once validated, this report will be updated as required at [Landlords Archive - Housing Ombudsman](#)

This section sets out a summary of the upheld findings made by the HO, the remedies agreed by the Council and the lessons learned.

Appendix B – sets out various data tables and comparator information with other authorities by department and outcome. See Table 4.

Seventeen determinations were initially recorded for Sheffield City Council. However, as three were excluded from the report as withdrawn, these were disregarded, reducing the number of cases determined to 14.

To put this figure into context, the Ombudsman determined 14 cases out of 9,548 complaints handled by the council. This gives an escalation rate of 0.15% (14/9548) of overall cases, and 0.1% (11/9548) of upheld cases.

The significant findings in the HO Annual Letter are summarised below:

- The HO formally investigated 14 cases.
- Maladministration rate – 63.3% compared with 83% in the previous year.
- Of the thirty findings, the top three categories for findings for Maladministration were:
 - Managing relations 40% (12)
 - Responsive Repairs/activity 30% (9)
 - Anti-Social Behaviour 17% (5)
- There were 2 HO complaint handling failure orders compared with 0 in the previous year.
- Compensation - Following the determinations, SCC was ordered to pay compensation totalling £13,117.00 (11 cases) compared with £9,098 in the previous year.
- Summary of the ten HO upheld cases by Service Area:
 - Neighbourhoods Service – Repairs and Maintenance Service – 5
 - Neighbourhoods Service – Housing – 4
 - Neighbourhoods Service – Neighbour Nuisance ASB – 1

Thirty-two findings were made by the HO. However, as two findings were out of jurisdiction, these were disregarded. Of the remaining 30 findings, 19 related to maladministration or service failure. This compares with 19 individual maladministration or service failure findings in the previous year.

Appendix B, Table 4 details the 30 findings as follows:

- 19 of these findings were maladministration/service failure findings (found on 10 cases).
- 8 findings related to NO maladministration being found.
- 3 findings related to reasonable redress.

The HO found Sheffield City Council's maladministration rate to be 63.3% (19 out of 30 findings), which related to ten of the cases investigated. This compares with 83% in the previous year.

Severe Maladministration: There were no findings of severe maladministration compared with 24% findings of severe maladministration in the previous year.

Maladministration: The top three categories for findings of maladministration were:

- Managing relations 40% (12)
- Responsive Repairs/activity 30% (9)
- Anti-Social Behaviour 17% (5)

The Council did receive two Complaint Handling Failure Orders, compared with none in the previous year.

Following these determinations, the Council was ordered to pay compensation in eleven cases, totalling £13,117, compared with £9,098 in the previous year. Compensation categories were as follows:

- Orders - £11,117.00
- Recommendations - £2,000.00

5. Service Improvements

The service improvement activity set out below demonstrates how the Council is responding to Ombudsman findings by strengthening complaint handling, improving timeliness and communication, addressing service-specific weaknesses, and embedding learning across operational teams.

Completed actions include staff reminders, policy reviews, published information, improved signposting, complaint handling training and targeted service changes, while planned activity for 2026–27 will focus on quality assurance, earlier resolution, better use of complaints data and clearer evidence that learning is reducing repeat failings.

5.1 LGSCO examples of key learning and service improvements

The Council has agreed to issue written reminders to staff that handle complaints that they should ensure they signpost the complainant to the correct Ombudsman service when they respond to complaints. (**Environment and regulation**) – Completed.

Implementation Date: 16/04/2026

Ombudsman Comments: *We are satisfied with the actions the Council has taken in response to our recommendations. We have ended our involvement with this case and recorded a compliance outcome of Remedy satisfied on time. (26.04.2026)*

Within four weeks of its final decision, the Council will remind reviewing officers to ensure that reviews are carried out within eight weeks. (**Housing**) – Completed

Implementation Date: 19/11/2025

Ombudsman Comments: *Thank you for your email of 19th November. We are satisfied with the actions the Council has taken in response to our recommendations. We have ended our involvement with this case and recorded a compliance outcome of Remedy satisfied on time.*

Young people who were previously looked after children can remain with their former foster carers after their eighteenth birthday under a staying put arrangement. Councils have a duty to monitor these arrangements and to provide assistance and support, including financial support. These duties continue until the young person is 21. The Council agreed to review the current staying put policy to consider adding that all decisions made about an agreement should be confirmed to all concerned in writing. (**Children's Care Services**) - Completed

Implementation Date: 03/02/2026

Ombudsman Comments: *Thank you for your email of 3 February 2026. We are satisfied you have now carried out the agreed actions and we have ended our involvement with this case. Because the personal remedy was completed after the agreed date, we have recorded a compliance outcome of Personal remedy late. Service improvement satisfied on time.*

Provide evidence that it has published two information leaflets which provide information on the care process. The Council will provide us with an action plan on how it will improve complaint handling times. **(Children's Care Services)** – Completed

Implementation Date: 12/01/2026

Ombudsman Comments: *Thank you for your email of 20 January 2026. We are satisfied you have now carried out the agreed actions and we have ended our involvement with this case. Because the remedies were completed after the agreed date, we have recorded a compliance outcome of Remedy satisfied late (Personal remedy and service improvement late).*

Detail what the Council will do to ensure private housing disrepair cases are progressed in a timely manner **(Housing Services)** – Completed

Implementation Date: 09/10/2025

Ombudsman Comments: *We are satisfied you have now carried out the agreed actions and we have ended our involvement with this case. Because the remedies were completed after the agreed date, we have recorded a compliance outcome of Remedy satisfied late (Personal remedy and service improvement late).*

The Council has agreed to remind relevant staff in its special educational needs team that it is their responsibility to ensure occupational therapy provision, and any other provision in section F of the Education, Health and Care Plan, is delivered, and that this is not delegable to the NHS or any other third-party organisations. **(Education)** - Completed

Implementation Date: 11/08/2025

Ombudsman Comments: *We are satisfied with the actions the Council has taken in response to our recommendations. We have ended our involvement with this case and recorded a compliance outcome of Remedy satisfied on time*

The Council should review further with the care provider why carers are, at times, logging into care visits prior to their arrival at a given property. They should review the requirements of the contract and consider implementing the requirement to log into properties using the service users' telephone or a chip kept at the property. It should write to us to explain the action it will take to address this. **(Adult Care Services)** – Completed

Implementation Date: 07/08/2025

Ombudsman Comments: *We are satisfied with the actions the Council has taken in response to our recommendations. We have ended our involvement with this case and recorded a compliance outcome of Remedy satisfied on time*

5.2 Housing and Repairs Services continuous improvements

The Housing Service has a dedicated Complaints Service Improvement Group which works collaboratively to improve overall performance and to ensure alignment with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Handling Code.

Complaints performance is monitored regularly at the Performance and Delivery (P and D) Board, attended by senior management and managers from the corporate Customer Services team. The Board helps drive service improvements, based on trends in and learnings from complaints and other customer feedback.

Sheffield City Council's Performance and Delivery Board also has oversight of a new Complaints Improvement Plan, recently introduced to strengthen complaint handling in the Repairs and Maintenance service and ensure compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code. It addresses issues identified through complaints, Ombudsman investigations and service reviews by improving complaint recording, response quality, oversight and the use of customer feedback. Key improvements and actions within the plan include:

- Delivering refreshed complaints handling, investigation and CRM training for case coordinators, investigating managers and operational staff
- Reviewing staffing arrangements and resources to ensure sufficient capacity for complaint handling, including strengthened case coordination, management oversight and targeted work to reduce complaint backlogs and overdue cases.
- Improving the quality and consistency of complaint investigations and responses through new checklists, templates, quality assurance processes and clearer internal procedures.
- Strengthening communication throughout the complaints process, including earlier contact with tenants, more regular updates and improved coordination between complaints teams and operational services.
- Making better use of systems and data by improving CRM processes, strengthening record keeping, linking complaints more effectively to repairs activity and using complaint information to identify service improvements.
- Enhancing support for vulnerable tenants by improving access to customer information, communication preferences and vulnerability data when handling complaints.
- Embedding learning from complaints across the service through regular feedback, stronger links with customer experience teams, tenant groups, neighbourhood teams, asset management services and elected representatives.

The Housing Planning, Performance & Involvement Team works with the Communications and Tenants Satisfaction (CATS) tenant panel to gather customer insight, identify areas for improvement and develop new initiatives to further improve customer experience. Complaints are a key part of its scope, and complaints performance is regularly discussed by the Panel.

Examples of key service improvements made as a direct result of learning from complaints and tenant dissatisfaction include:

New Vulnerability Policy:

- Feedback from complaints, tenants, partner organisations and our own staff showed that we needed a better understanding of vulnerability and a more consistent approach to supporting vulnerable tenants.
- We listened to this feedback and developed a new Housing Service Vulnerability Policy. The policy helps staff identify vulnerability earlier and makes sure tenants receive the support they need in a consistent and fair way.
- The policy was developed in consultation with stakeholders and is now being used across the Housing Service.

New Safeguarding Procedures

- Learning from complaints, statutory reviews and feedback from partner organisations highlighted the need for clearer guidance for staff on safeguarding issues.
- In response, we developed and launched new Adult and Child Safeguarding Procedures for the Housing Service. These procedures clearly set out how staff should respond to safeguarding concerns and help ensure that vulnerable residents receive the right support at the right time.
- This gives tenants confidence that safeguarding concerns will be identified and managed consistently.

Easier ways to report repairs

- Tenants told us that it takes too long to get through on the phone to report a repair. In response, we introduced a new 24-hour automated telephone service which allows tenants to report repairs at any time of the day or night without needing to wait to speak to an adviser.
- This gives tenants more choice about how and when they contact us and makes it easier to report repairs when it is convenient for them.

Better communication during contractor improvement works

- A complaint highlighted that tenants did not always feel informed about progress when contractors are carrying out improvement work in their homes. As a result, the Asset Management team introduced work-in-progress visits carried out by Council staff alongside contractors. These visits provide a visible presence on site, help answer tenants' questions and give reassurance while works are ongoing.
- This has helped improve communication and the overall customer experience during improvement projects.

Action on fly-tipping and neighbourhood cleanliness

- Tenants and residents told us that fly-tipping, litter and environmental issues were affecting some neighbourhoods and communal areas. We responded by taking a range of actions, including installing cameras and signage in known problem areas and carrying out environmental improvement works where residents had reported concerns.
- These improvements have helped reduce environmental issues and improve the appearance of neighbourhoods for local residents.

Improving safety and communal spaces

- Feedback from tenant complaints, estate walkabouts and Local Area Housing Forums highlighted a range of concerns about safety and the condition of communal spaces.
- In response, we carried out a variety of improvements, including repairing or replacing fencing, improving communal areas, replacing damaged seating, tackling overgrown land and carrying out environmental improvements to make shared spaces cleaner, safer and more welcoming.
- These improvements have helped create neighbourhoods that residents can take pride in and enjoy more safely.
- Whilst tenant satisfaction with our complaints handling remained low at 33%, this is comparable with similar landlords nationally, which averaged 32% for the same period.

5.3 Further improvement activity planned for 2026–27

Working closely with the Customer Experience Strategy provides the continuous change needed to improve the way we manage and handle complaints. This includes:

- Continuing to embed the culture of a listening council through regular reminders, bulletins and communications to staff.
- Continuing to deliver regular IT training, advice and support workshops for staff and Accountable Managers responsible for complaint service performance.
- Providing additional focus and support at Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the complaints process to ensure comprehensive and timely responses are provided to complainants.

6. Appendices

Appendix A: Sheffield City Council's annual letter from the LGSCO

20 May 2026

By email Ms Josephs Chief Executive Sheffield City Council

Dear Ms Josephs



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

Appendix B - Ombudsman benchmarking data tables

Table 1: This table shows a breakdown of the 2024/25, 31 LGSCO Ombudsman formally investigated complaints.

Portfolio/ Partner	Service/Directorate	Subject	Formal enquiries made	Upheld	Not Upheld	Totals 2024/25
Adults Wellbeing and Care Service				8	3	11
	Adults Wellbeing and Care Services	Adults Social Care	31	8	3	
Children's Services				11	1	12
	Children and Families	Children's Social Care	36	8		
	Education and Skills	SEN	12	2	1	
		Education - other	12	1		
Neighbourhoods Services				4	1	5
	Communities	Communities				
	Housing	Housing	34	4	0	
		Customer Services	2			
		Markets				
	Leisure Parks and Libraries	Parks & Countryside				
		Bereavement Services				
	StreetScene and Regulation	Environmental services	10			
		Parking	4			
		Licensing				
Amey		Streets Ahead	14		1	
Veolia		Waste Management				
City Futures				2	1	3

	Investment, Climate Change and Planning	Planning Other	3		1	
		Building Control	2	1		
		Enforcement	5	1		
		Householder planning application	3			
Strategic Enabling Services				0	0	0
	Revenues & Benefits	Benefits	1			
		Revenues	10	0		
	Finance	Debt recovery				
	ICT	Misc				
	Strategy/Performance and Delivery	Misc and H/R				
	Legal	Information Management				
Public Health & Integ. Commissioning				0	0	0
			1			
OTHER						0
			2			
LGSCO TOTALS			182	25	6	31

Table 2: This table shows a breakdown of LGSCO decisions over the last four years.

LGSCO Decisions	2025/26	2024/25	2023/24	2022/23
Incomplete or invalid	7	12	10	9
Advice Given	12	11	18	13
Referred back for local resolution	58	36	44	41
Closed after initial enquiries	74	57	48	46
Investigated – not upheld	6	6	4	7
Investigation – upheld but remedied by LA	8	4	5	
Investigated – upheld	17	12	15	18
Public Report – upheld	0	0	0	1
Total	182	138	144	135
Not assessed as not LGSCO concerns	77	59		
Remainder cases which were assessed and closed/investigated	74	79		
Assessed & Closed	151	57		
Investigated	31	22		

Table 3: This table compares complaint outcomes across the core cites based on information provided by the LGSCO in the Annual Review Letters.

	Number of detailed investigations 2025/26	Number of complaints upheld 2025/26	Upheld rate 2025/26	Upheld decisions per 100,000 residents	Number of complaints where Satisfactory Remedy provided before complaint reached Ombudsman 2025/26 - % of upheld cases		Number of cases with a compliance outcome recorded during the year 2025/26	Compliance with Ombudsman Recommendations 2025/26	Timely compliance rate 2025/26
Birmingham	128	113	88%	9.5	9	8%	107	100%	77%
Bristol	31	23	74%	4.7	8	35%	20	95%	62%
Leeds	62	52	84%	6.2	9	17%	40	100%	88%
Liverpool	23	19	83%	3.7	5	26%	15	100%	93%
Manchester	40	34	85%	5.8	8	24%	26	100%	73%
Newcastle	11	9	82%	2.8	1	11%	7	100%	57%
Nottingham	9	8	89%	2.4	2	25%	4	100%	75%
Sheffield	31	25	81%	4.3	2	8%	25	100%	64%
Average % (similar LA to SCC)			83%	4.6		16%		100%	79%

*See also LGSCO: [Sheffield City Council - Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman](#)

Housing Ombudsman

Table 4: This table shows a breakdown of HO determinations (cases); individual findings and Complaint Handling Failure Orders over the last four years.

2025-26 data is provisional data awaiting the HO verification by September 2026.

HO Decisions	2025/26	2024/25	2023/24	2022/23
Number of cases determined	17	11	7	5
Number of findings of maladministration/service failure	19	9	6	3
Total Number of Individual Findings:	32	25	20	12
Outside jurisdiction	2	2	1	4
No Maladministration	8	3	2	3
Maladministration	13	9	14	4
Severe Maladministration	0	6	2	0
Service Failure	6	4	1	1
Redress	3	1	0	0
Total Maladministration/Service Findings	30	19	17	5
Maladministration rate*	63.3%	83%	89%	63%
National Maladministration Rate	Awaited*	71%	73%	55%
Average Maladministration for similar authorities	Awaited*	80%	78%	62%
Number of Complaint Handling Failure Orders	2	0	1	3

The number of findings of severe maladministration, maladministration and service failure, expressed as a percentage of the total number of findings (excluding findings of Outside Jurisdiction and Withdrawn).

* To be published by September 2026