

17 July 2024

*By email*

Dr Reeves  
Chief Executive  
Oxfordshire County Council

Dear Dr Reeves

### **Annual Review letter 2023-24**

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 2024. The information offers valuable insight about your organisation's approach to complaints, and I know you will consider it as part of your corporate governance processes. As such, I have sought to share this letter with the Leader of your Council and Chair of the appropriate Scrutiny Committee, to ensure effective ownership and oversight of complaint outcomes, which offer valuable opportunities to learn and improve. In addition, this year, we have encouraged Monitoring Officers to register to receive the letter directly, supporting their role to report the decisions we uphold to their council.

For most of the reporting year, Paul Najsarek steered the organisation during his tenure as interim Ombudsman, and I was delighted to take up the role of Ombudsman in February 2024. I look forward to working with you and colleagues across the local government sector to ensure we continue to harness the value of individual complaints and drive and promote systemic change and improvement across the local government landscape.

While I know this ambition will align with your own, I am aware of the difficult financial circumstances and service demands that make continuous improvement a challenging focus for the sector. However, we will continue to hold organisations to account through our investigations and recommend proportionate actions to remedy injustice. Despite the challenges, I have great confidence that you recognise the valuable contribution and insight complaints, and their swift resolution, offer to improve services for the public.

### **Complaint statistics**

Our statistics focus on three key areas that help to assess your organisation's commitment to putting things right when they go wrong:

**Complaints upheld** - We uphold complaints when we find fault in an organisation's actions, including where the organisation accepted fault before we investigated. We include the total number of investigations completed to provide important context for the statistic. This year, we also provide the number of upheld complaints per 100,000 population.

**Compliance with recommendations** - We recommend ways for organisations to put things right when faults have caused injustice and monitor their compliance with our recommendations. Failure to comply is rare and a compliance rate below 100% is a cause for concern.

**Satisfactory remedy provided by the authority** - In these cases, the organisation upheld the complaint and we agreed with how it offered to put things right. We encourage the early resolution of complaints and give credit to organisations that accept fault and find appropriate ways to put things right.

Finally, we compare the three key annual statistics for your organisation with similar authorities to provide an average marker of performance. We do this for County Councils, District Councils, Metropolitan Boroughs, Unitary Councils, and London Boroughs.

Your annual data, and a copy of this letter, will be uploaded to our interactive map, [Your council's performance](#), on 24 July 2024. This useful tool places all our data and information about councils in one place. You can find the detail of the decisions we have made about your Council, read the public reports we have issued, and view the service improvements your Council has agreed to make as a result of our investigations, as well as previous annual review letters.

### **Supporting complaint and service improvement**

In February, following a period of consultation, we launched the [Complaint Handling Code](#) for councils, setting out a clear process for responding to complaints effectively and fairly. It is aligned with the Code issued to housing authorities and landlords by the Housing Ombudsman Service and we encourage you to adopt the Code without undue delay. Twenty councils have volunteered to take part in an implementation pilot over the next two years that will develop further guidance and best practice.

The Code is issued to councils under our powers to provide guidance about good administrative practice. We expect councils to carefully consider the Code when developing policies and procedures and will begin considering it as part of our processes from April 2026 at the earliest.

The Code is considered good practice for all organisations we investigate (except where there are statutory complaint handling processes in place), and we may decide to issue it as guidance to other organisations in future.

Our successful complaint handling training programme continues to develop with new modules in Adult Social Care and Children's Services complaint handling available soon. All our courses include practical interactive workshops that help participants develop their complaint handling skills. We delivered 126 online workshops during the year, reaching more than 1,700 people. To find out more visit [www.lgo.org.uk/training](http://www.lgo.org.uk/training) or get in touch at [training@lgo.org.uk](mailto:training@lgo.org.uk).

We were pleased to deliver an online complaint handling course to your staff during the year. I welcome your Council's investment in good complaint handling training and trust the course was useful to you.

Returning to the theme of continuous improvement, we recognise the importance of reflecting on our own performance. With that in mind I encourage you to share your view of our organisation via this survey: <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/ombudsman/>. Your responses will help us to assess our impact

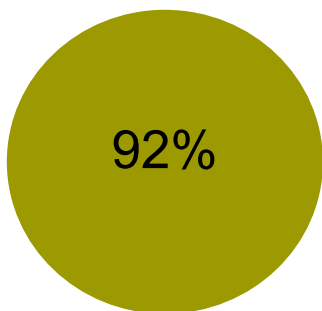
and improve our offer to you. We want to gather a range of views and welcome multiple responses from organisations, so please do share the link with relevant colleagues.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Amerdeep Somal', followed by a horizontal line.

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

### Complaints upheld



**92%** of complaints we investigated were upheld.

This compares to an average of **85%** in similar organisations.

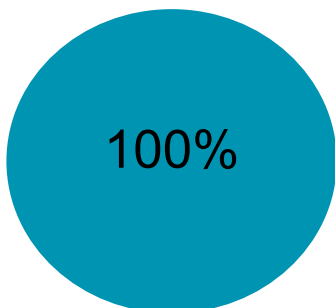
**34**  
upheld decisions

This is 4.6 upheld decisions per 100,000 residents.

The average for authorities of this type is 4.5 upheld decisions per 100,000 residents.

Statistics are based on a total of **37** investigations for the period between 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024

### Compliance with Ombudsman recommendations



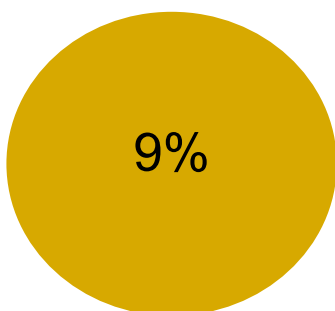
In **100%** of cases we were satisfied the organisation had successfully implemented our recommendations.

This compares to an average of **100%** in similar organisations.

Statistics are based on a total of **30** compliance outcomes for the period between 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024

- Failure to comply with our recommendations is rare. An organisation with a compliance rate below 100% should scrutinise those complaints where it failed to comply and identify any learning.

### Satisfactory remedy provided by the organisation



In **9%** of upheld cases we found the organisation had provided a satisfactory remedy before the complaint reached the Ombudsman.

This compares to an average of **7%** in similar organisations.

**3**  
satisfactory remedy decisions

Statistics are based on a total of **34** upheld decisions for the period between 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024

Reference	Authority	Category	Received
22009918	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	18/08/23
22012023	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	21/04/23
22012504	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	08/08/23
22014218	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	13/04/23
22016613	Oxfordshire County Council	Adult Care Services	26/04/23
22017603	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	19/04/23
22017645	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	19/04/23
22017647	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	19/04/23
22017850	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	21/04/23
23000021	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	06/04/23
23000027	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	06/04/23
23000227	Oxfordshire County Council	Adult Care Services	20/04/23
23000335	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	05/06/23
23000575	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	05/07/23
23000771	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	21/04/23
23001033	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	11/05/23
23001236	Oxfordshire County Council	Adult Care Services	02/05/23
23001241	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	02/05/23
23001287	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	18/05/23
23001478	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	09/05/23
23001843	Oxfordshire County Council	Highways & Transport	12/05/23
23001972	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	16/05/23
23002015	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	02/06/23
23002156	Oxfordshire County Council	Corporate & Other Services	18/05/23
23002374	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	23/05/23
23002467	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	25/05/23
23002611	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	30/05/23
23002614	Oxfordshire County Council	Corporate & Other Services	30/05/23
23002802	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	01/06/23
23002950	Oxfordshire County Council	Adult Care Services	07/06/23
23003023	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	06/06/23
23003116	Oxfordshire County Council	Adult Care Services	12/06/23
23003197	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	08/06/23
23003387	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	12/06/23
23003565	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	15/06/23
23003748	Oxfordshire County Council	Corporate & Other Services	20/06/23
23003868	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	21/06/23
23004122	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	26/06/23

23004194	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	11/07/23
23004266	Oxfordshire County Council	Corporate & Other Services	21/06/23
23004364	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	29/06/23
23004410	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	11/07/23
23004520	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	04/07/23
23004822	Oxfordshire County Council	Highways & Transport	10/07/23
23004898	Oxfordshire County Council	Adult Care Services	11/07/23
23005078	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	12/07/23
23005193	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	14/07/23
23005397	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	24/07/23
23005484	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	18/08/23
23005512	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	20/07/23
23005516	Oxfordshire County Council	Adult Care Services	26/07/23
23005871	Oxfordshire County Council	Adult Care Services	25/07/23
23006356	Oxfordshire County Council	Highways & Transport	12/10/23
23006665	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	08/08/23
23006672	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	18/08/23
23007097	Oxfordshire County Council	Adult Care Services	01/09/23
23007123	Oxfordshire County Council	Corporate & Other Services	14/08/23
23007197	Oxfordshire County Council	Adult Care Services	14/08/23
23007225	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	22/08/23
23008228	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	11/09/23
23008495	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	07/09/23
23008538	Oxfordshire County Council	Adult Care Services	01/09/23
23008642	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	06/09/23
23008868	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	12/09/23
23009383	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	27/09/23
23009519	Oxfordshire County Council	Highways & Transport	27/09/23
23009555	Oxfordshire County Council	Highways & Transport	27/09/23
23009808	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	03/10/23
23009902	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	05/10/23
23009913	Oxfordshire County Council	Highways & Transport	05/10/23
23010442	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	13/10/23
23010568	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	15/10/23
23010626	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	16/10/23
23010738	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	25/10/23
23010779	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	18/10/23
23010817	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	18/10/23
23010921	Oxfordshire County Council	Adult Care Services	11/10/23

23011270	Oxfordshire County Council	Adult Care Services	24/10/23
23012184	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	14/11/23
23012355	Oxfordshire County Council	Highways & Transport	08/11/23
23012972	Oxfordshire County Council	Adult Care Services	16/11/23
23013098	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	20/11/23
23013259	Oxfordshire County Council	Adult Care Services	22/11/23
23013381	Oxfordshire County Council	Corporate & Other Services	28/11/23
23013664	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	30/11/23
23013767	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	30/11/23
23013782	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	30/11/23
23014025	Oxfordshire County Council	Highways & Transport	05/12/23
23014133	Oxfordshire County Council	Adult Care Services	20/12/23
23014461	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	12/12/23
23014604	Oxfordshire County Council	Corporate & Other Services	13/12/23
23014767	Oxfordshire County Council	Adult Care Services	10/01/24
23014905	Oxfordshire County Council	Adult Care Services	04/01/24
23015048	Oxfordshire County Council	Adult Care Services	18/03/24
23015319	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	03/01/24
23015538	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	25/01/24
23015559	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	10/01/24
23016223	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	18/01/24
23016452	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	24/01/24
23016510	Oxfordshire County Council	Corporate & Other Services	19/01/24
23016682	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	25/01/24
23016722	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	25/01/24
23017024	Oxfordshire County Council	Highways & Transport	30/01/24
23017026	Oxfordshire County Council	Adult Care Services	30/01/24
23017098	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	30/01/24
23017160	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	31/01/24
23017446	Oxfordshire County Council	Corporate & Other Services	06/02/24
23017799	Oxfordshire County Council	Highways & Transport	09/02/24
23018456	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	21/02/24
23018492	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	22/02/24
23018559	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	22/02/24
23018680	Oxfordshire County Council	Other	22/02/24
23018940	Oxfordshire County Council	Adult Care Services	14/03/24
23020288	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	22/03/24
23020304	Oxfordshire County Council	Adult Care Services	18/03/24
23020564	Oxfordshire County Council	Highways & Transport	22/03/24

23020751	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	26/03/24
23012324	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	08/11/23



Reference	Authority	Category	Decided	Decision	Decision Reason	Remedy	Service improvement recommendations
22009052	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	03/04/23	Upheld	fault & inj	Apology,Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble,Provide training and/or guidance,Procedure or policy change/review	The Council has agreed to consider how it manages its internal process for altering names of service users who have gone through gender transition to ensure it does not inadvertently disclose sensitive information. The Council should ensure staff who may deal with sensitive information about transgender children are adequately trained on how to do so to avoid inadvertently disclosing a person's gender information who would not otherwise need to be aware of this information.
22009918	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	20/09/23	Closed after initial enquiries	Other Agency better placed		
22010056	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	23/08/23	Upheld	fault & inj	Apology,Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble,Provide training and/or guidance,Provide services to person affected	The Council has agreed to remind relevant staff of the need for child protection enquiries to be concluded when started and the importance of speaking to children alone to seek their views. The Council failed to complete one of its child protection enquiries for the children in this case and did not consult sufficient health professionals during its child protection proceedings. It has agreed to review what caused the Council to drift and act indecisively with regards to whether it enforced attendance or re-considered the suitability of the education being provided to the children.
22011357	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	09/06/23	Upheld	fault & inj	Apology,Procedure or policy change/review,Provide training and/or guidance	The Council has agreed to review its procedures for children out of school to ensure it carries out regular reviews of children it knows are missing in education. This is to ensure it takes timely, appropriate action to support the child back into education without delay or to consider whether it is appropriate to offer alternative provision. The Council has agreed to remind relevant staff to respond to complaints in a timely manner in line with its complaint handling policy.
22011673	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	28/06/23	Upheld	fault & inj	Apology,Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble,Financial redress: Loss of service	
22012000	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	13/07/23	Upheld	fault & inj	Apology,Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble,Financial redress: Loss of service,Provide training and/or guidance	The Council has agreed to remind relevant staff of the Council's duties under law and guidance to provide alternative provision when a child of statutory school age is out of school for health or other reasons. The Council should consider sharing a copy of our focus report Out of School...Out of sight? and this final decision with the reminder. The Council has agreed to remind relevant staff to ensure they obtain EHCP review documentation, issue notices within timescales, approach school settings in good time, consult professionals in good time, issue the EHCP within timescales and keep young people and parents informed. The Council has agreed to ensure relevant staff are made aware of the importance of making and keeping clear and accurate records of their decision making in respect of personal budget requests.
22012023	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	11/10/23	Upheld	fault & inj	Apology,Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble,Financial Redress: Quantifiable Loss	
22012504	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	11/01/24	Upheld	fault & inj - no further action organisation already remedied		
22012848	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	16/05/23	Upheld	fault & inj	Apology,Financial redress: Loss of service,Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble,Procedure or policy change/review,Provide training and/or guidance	The Council will ensure all front-line Special Educational Needs staff and their managers review our Focus Report "Out of school, out of sight?" of July 2022. The Council will provide us with the details of how it monitors education of children who are out of school.
22013657	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	20/06/23	Upheld	fault & inj	Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble	
22013701	Oxfordshire County Council	Adult Care Services	20/06/23	Upheld	fault & inj	Apology,Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble,Financial redress: Loss of service,Procedure or policy change/review,Provide training and/or guidance	The Council will draw up an action plan to address the following concerns: record keeping, recording the time and duration of care calls accurately and tailoring care plans to individual needs. The Council will update the action plan to include a summary of improvements made by the Care Provider following input from its Quality Improvement Team. Ensure officers involved in the Council's complaint response have received training on how to draft complaint responses and provide a copy of the training material. Ensure the Quality Improvement Team has completed training referred to in the Council's enquiry response and provide copies of the training material.
22013912	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	21/06/23	Upheld	fault & inj	Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble,Procedure or policy change/review	The Council will amend any policy or protocol document to ensure it correctly states when Stage Two timescales start within the statutory complaints process; when it is requested in writing. This change should be sent to all staff involved in this procedure.
22014218	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	04/09/23	Upheld	fault & inj	Apology,Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble,Financial redress: Loss of service,Provide training and/or guidance	The Council will send written reminders to relevant staff of the Council's responsibilities under Section 19 of the Education Act 1996 when it is made aware a child is attending school part-time. This should cover what the Council should consider when assessing the suitability of education and whether to provide or work towards full-time education for the child.
22014564	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	30/06/23	Upheld	fault & inj	Apology,Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble,Financial redress: Loss of service,Provide training and/or guidance,Procedure or policy change/review	The Council will review its procedures for consulting for new education placements for children with Education, Health and Care plans. In particular, it will ensure its staff are consulting early enough and with sufficient providers to prevent unnecessary delays in children accessing a new education placement. The Council will remind all its Special Educational Needs staff that it is the Council's duty to ensure children receive the provision set out in their Education, Health and Care plans, and an appropriate education under section 19 of the Education Act, and that those duties cannot be delegated to a school. The Council will discuss the findings of an investigation into how it issued an Education, Health and Care plan, a suitable education and specialist education for a child at an appropriate committee or cabinet meeting. This is to ensure the Council's leaders are aware of the delay finalising the Education, Health and Care plan, its poor communication with the family and its failure to provide a child with suitable education. The Council will consider if additional actions are needed to improve its services.
22014617	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	01/08/23	Upheld	fault & inj	Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble	
22016591	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	14/08/23	Upheld	fault & inj	Apology,Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble,Financial redress: Loss of service	
22016613	Oxfordshire County Council	Adult Care Services	28/04/23	Advice given	Previously considered and decided		
22016710	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	21/08/23	Upheld	fault & inj	Apology,Financial redress: Loss of service,Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble,Provide training and/or guidance,Provide services to person affected	The Council has agreed to arrange training to ensure council officers are aware of the Council's duties under Section 19 of The Education Act 1996 to provide provision or suitable education for children of compulsory age who cannot attend school because of exclusion, medical reasons or otherwise.
22016812	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	18/04/23	Closed after initial enquiries	Other Agency better placed		
22016873	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	12/04/23	Closed after initial enquiries	26(6)(a) tribunal SENDIST		
22016944	Oxfordshire County Council	Adult Care Services	21/08/23	Upheld	fault no inj		
22017068	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	26/07/23	Upheld	fault & inj	Apology,Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble	
22017249	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	27/09/23	Upheld	fault & inj	Apology,Financial redress: Loss of service,Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble,Provide training and/or guidance,Procedure or policy change/review	The Council has agreed to remind relevant Special Educational Needs and Disabilities staff of the duty to consider alternative provision in line with statutory guidance once it becomes aware a child is not attending school. The Council has agreed to explain to the Ombudsman what action it has taken or intends to take to reduce delays in issuing amended Education, Health and Care plans following annual reviews.
22017567	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	15/05/23	Referred back for local resolution	Premature Decision - referred to Organisation		

22017603	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	20/09/23	Upheld	fault & inj	Apology,Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble,Provide training and/or guidance	The Council will remind relevant staff to finalise Education, Health and Care plans within the statutory timescales and to check the school or college named in section I is appropriate for the person's age and stage of education, especially where it is a continuation of a placement for post 19 education. The Council will also remind relevant staff to ensure young people and their parents are kept regularly informed during the Education, Health and Care plan review process, especially where it continues outside of the statutory timescales.
22017645	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	11/05/23	Closed after initial enquiries	Other reason not to investigate		
22017647	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	11/05/23	Advice given	Previously considered and decided		
22017656	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	18/04/23	Closed after initial enquiries	Other Agency better placed		
22017850	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	21/04/23	Referred back for local resolution	Premature Decision - advice given		
23000021	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	06/04/23	Referred back for local resolution	Premature Decision - advice given		
23000027	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	15/05/23	Closed after initial enquiries	Sch 5.1 court proceedings		
23000227	Oxfordshire County Council	Adult Care Services	17/05/23	Closed after initial enquiries	No worthwhile outcome achievable by investigation		
23000335	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	07/06/23	Upheld	Injustice remedied during organisations complaint processes		
23000575	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	02/01/24	Upheld	fault & inj	Apology,Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble,Financial redress: Loss of service,Improved BinJ remedy,Provide services to person affected	
23000771	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	27/09/23	Upheld	fault & inj	Apology,Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble,Financial redress: Loss of service,Provide training and/or guidance,Procedure or policy change/review	Review its processes to ensure when a child is unable to attend a school alternative education provided by the Council is suitable, full-time and on par with what a child would receive within school and that alternative provision is put in place without delay. Remind relevant officers of the need to finalise Education, Health and Care Plans within the statutory timescales.
23001033	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	11/05/23	Referred back for local resolution	Premature Decision - advice given		
23001236	Oxfordshire County Council	Adult Care Services	02/05/23	Referred back for local resolution	Premature Decision - advice given		
23001241	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	02/05/23	Referred back for local resolution	Premature Decision - advice given		
23001287	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	18/05/23	Referred back for local resolution	Premature Decision - advice given		
23001478	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	19/09/23	Not Upheld	no fault		
23001843	Oxfordshire County Council	Highways & Transport	17/05/23	Closed after initial enquiries	26(6)(c) Court remedy		
23001972	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	27/09/23	Upheld	fault & inj	Apology,Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble,Financial redress: Loss of service,Provide training and/or guidance,Provide services to person affected	Provide evidence of the training given to staff on statutory processes and communication.
23002015	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	02/06/23	Referred back for local resolution	Premature Decision - advice given		
23002156	Oxfordshire County Council	Corporate & Other Services	28/06/23	Closed after initial enquiries	Not warranted by alleged fault		
23002374	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	07/06/23	Closed after initial enquiries	Sch 5.1 court proceedings		
23002467	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	25/05/23	Referred back for local resolution	Premature Decision - advice given		
23002611	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	30/05/23	Referred back for local resolution	Premature Decision - advice given		
23002614	Oxfordshire County Council	Corporate & Other Services	01/06/23	Closed after initial enquiries	Sch 5.4 personnel		
23002802	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	03/11/23	Upheld	fault & inj	Apology,Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble,Financial redress: Loss of service,Procedure or policy change/review	Review its policy relating to its funding arrangements with a view to mitigating any possible delays in future. The Council should inform the Ombudsman of the outcome of its review.
23002950	Oxfordshire County Council	Adult Care Services	04/09/23	Closed after initial enquiries	No worthwhile outcome achievable by investigation		
23003023	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	12/07/23	Upheld	Injustice remedied during LGO consideration	Provide services to person affected	
23003116	Oxfordshire County Council	Adult Care Services	24/11/23	Upheld	fault & inj - no further action organisation already remedied		
23003197	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	25/10/23	Upheld	fault & inj	Apology,Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble,Financial redress: Loss of service,Provide training and/or guidance	Issue written reminders to relevant staff to ensure they are aware of • The Council's duty to issue the amended EHC plan as soon as practicable and within eight weeks of the date it sent the EHC plan and proposed amendments to the parents; • the Council's duties under section 19 of the Education Act 1996 to provide provision or suitable education for children of compulsory age who cannot attend school because of exclusion, medical reasons or otherwise.
23003387	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	28/11/23	Upheld	fault & inj	Apology,Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble,Procedure or policy change/review	The Council will provide evidence to the Ombudsman of its long-term plan to access or recruit further educational psychologists.
23003565	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	15/06/23	Referred back for local resolution	Premature Decision - advice given		
23003748	Oxfordshire County Council	Corporate & Other Services	06/07/23	Closed after initial enquiries	Not warranted by alleged fault		
23003868	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	27/07/23	Closed after initial enquiries	No worthwhile outcome achievable by investigation		
23004122	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	21/07/23	Closed after initial enquiries	No worthwhile outcome achievable by investigation		
23004194	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	11/07/23	Referred back for local resolution	Premature Decision - advice given		
23004266	Oxfordshire County Council	Corporate & Other Services	22/06/23	Closed after initial enquiries	Other Agency better placed		
23004364	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	18/07/23	Closed after initial enquiries	Not warranted by alleged fault		
23004410	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	01/09/23	Upheld	Injustice remedied during LGO consideration	Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble	
23004520	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	22/08/23	Closed after initial enquiries	26B(2) not made in 12 months		
23004822	Oxfordshire County Council	Highways & Transport	08/08/23	Referred back for local resolution	Premature Decision - referred to Organisation		
23004898	Oxfordshire County Council	Adult Care Services	16/08/23	Closed after initial enquiries	Not warranted by alleged injustice		
23005078	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	06/11/23	Not Upheld	No worthwhile outcome achievable by further investigation		
23005193	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	14/07/23	Referred back for local resolution	Premature Decision - advice given		
23005397	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	29/08/23	Closed after initial enquiries	26B(2) not made in 12 months		
23005484	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	21/09/23	Closed after initial enquiries	No worthwhile outcome achievable by investigation		
23005512	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	16/01/24	Upheld	fault & inj	Financial redress: Loss of service,Procedure or policy change/review	The Council will review why it took three months to issue its decision to amend a child's Education, Health and Care Plan. If the Council identifies flaws in its process or areas for improvement, it will prepare an action plan setting out how it will address those issues.
23005516	Oxfordshire County Council	Adult Care Services	26/07/23	Referred back for local resolution	Premature Decision - referred to Organisation		
23005871	Oxfordshire County Council	Adult Care Services	25/07/23	Referred back for local resolution	Premature Decision - advice given		
23006356	Oxfordshire County Council	Highways & Transport	06/11/23	Closed after initial enquiries	No worthwhile outcome achievable by investigation		
23006665	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	09/01/24	Upheld	fault & inj	Apology,Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble,Financial redress: Loss of service,Procedure or policy change/review	The Council will review its procedures for carrying out due-diligence when concerns are raised that a child is not receiving education in line with an Education, Health and Care Plan. This is to ensure processes are in place for the Council to take action at an early stage, and if necessary consider whether alternative provision is appropriate.
23006672	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	22/09/23	Closed after initial enquiries	Not warranted by alleged injustice		
23007097	Oxfordshire County Council	Adult Care Services	16/10/23	Closed after initial enquiries	26B(2) not made in 12 months		
23007123	Oxfordshire County Council	Corporate & Other Services	30/08/23	Closed after initial enquiries	Not warranted by alleged fault		
23007197	Oxfordshire County Council	Adult Care Services	22/09/23	Closed after initial enquiries	Not warranted by alleged fault		
23007225	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	22/08/23	Referred back for local resolution	Premature Decision - advice given		
23008495	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	06/10/23	Closed after initial enquiries	No worthwhile outcome achievable by investigation		
23008642	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	22/03/24	Upheld	fault & inj	Apology,Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble	
23008868	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	16/10/23	Closed after initial enquiries	Not warranted by alleged injustice		
23009383	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	27/09/23	Incomplete/Invalid	Insufficient information to proceed and PA advised		
23009519	Oxfordshire County Council	Highways & Transport	17/10/23	Closed after initial enquiries	26(6)(c) Court remedy		

23009555	Oxfordshire County Council	Highways & Transport	16/10/23	Closed after initial enquiries	Not warranted by alleged fault		
23009808	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	28/03/24	Not Upheld	Other reason not to continue with investigation		
23009902	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	05/10/23	Referred back for local resolution	Premature Decision - advice given		
23009913	Oxfordshire County Council	Highways & Transport	02/11/23	Closed after initial enquiries	Not warranted by alleged injustice		
23010568	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	07/11/23	Closed after initial enquiries	26(6)(a) tribunal SENDIST		
23010738	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	21/11/23	Closed after initial enquiries	Not warranted by alleged injustice		
23010779	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	20/11/23	Closed after initial enquiries	Sch 5.1 court proceedings		
23010817	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	18/10/23	Referred back for local resolution	Premature Decision - advice given		
23010921	Oxfordshire County Council	Adult Care Services	19/12/23	Referred back for local resolution	Premature Decision - referred to Organisation		
23012355	Oxfordshire County Council	Highways & Transport	08/11/23	Referred back for local resolution	Premature Decision - advice given		
23012972	Oxfordshire County Council	Adult Care Services	16/11/23	Incomplete/Invalid	Insufficient information to proceed and PA advised		
23013098	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	09/01/24	Closed after initial enquiries	Not warranted by alleged injustice		
23013259	Oxfordshire County Council	Adult Care Services	22/11/23	Referred back for local resolution	Premature Decision - advice given		
23013381	Oxfordshire County Council	Corporate & Other Services	06/12/23	Closed after initial enquiries	Not warranted by alleged injustice		
23013664	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	19/01/24	Closed after initial enquiries	Other Agency better placed		
23013782	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	18/01/24	Referred back for local resolution	Premature Decision - advised		
23014025	Oxfordshire County Council	Highways & Transport	23/01/24	Closed after initial enquiries	26B(2) not made in 12 months		
23014461	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	02/02/24	Referred back for local resolution	Premature Decision - advised		
23014604	Oxfordshire County Council	Corporate & Other Services	14/12/23	Closed after initial enquiries	Sch 5.4 personnel		
23014905	Oxfordshire County Council	Adult Care Services	04/01/24	Referred back for local resolution	Premature Decision - advice given		
23015319	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	09/02/24	Closed after initial enquiries	No worthwhile outcome achievable by investigation		
23015538	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	12/03/24	Closed after initial enquiries	26(6)(a) tribunal SENDIST		
23016223	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	18/01/24	Incomplete/Invalid	Insufficient information to proceed and PA advised		
23016452	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	24/01/24	Referred back for local resolution	Premature Decision - advice given		
23016510	Oxfordshire County Council	Corporate & Other Services	04/03/24	Closed after initial enquiries	Not warranted by alleged fault		
23016682	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	29/02/24	Closed after initial enquiries	No worthwhile outcome achievable by investigation		
23016722	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	28/02/24	Referred back for local resolution	Premature Decision - referred to Organisation		
23017024	Oxfordshire County Council	Highways & Transport	29/02/24	Advice given	Previously considered and decided		
23017026	Oxfordshire County Council	Adult Care Services	30/01/24	Referred back for local resolution	Premature Decision - advice given		
23017098	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	30/01/24	Closed after initial enquiries	Not warranted by alleged injustice		
23017160	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	31/01/24	Referred back for local resolution	Premature Decision - advice given		
23017446	Oxfordshire County Council	Corporate & Other Services	28/03/24	Closed after initial enquiries	Not warranted by alleged injustice		
23017799	Oxfordshire County Council	Highways & Transport	21/03/24	Closed after initial enquiries	Not warranted by alleged fault		
23018492	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	25/03/24	Closed after initial enquiries	Sch 5.1 court proceedings		
23018559	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	22/02/24	Referred back for local resolution	Premature Decision - advice given		
23018680	Oxfordshire County Council	Other	22/02/24	Incomplete/Invalid	Insufficient information to proceed and PA advised		
23020304	Oxfordshire County Council	Adult Care Services	18/03/24	Incomplete/Invalid	Insufficient information to proceed and PA advised		
21005436	Oxfordshire County Council	Adult Care Services	19/09/23	Upheld	fault & inj	Apology,Provide information/advice to person affected,Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble,Provide services to person affected,Procedure or policy change/review	The Council will introduce a policy, clarifying communication principles when providing social care services to people for whom others hold a Lasting Power of Attorney.
23012324	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	08/11/23	Referred back for local resolution	Premature Decision - advice given		

Reference	Authority	Category	Decided	Remedy	Remedy Target Date	Remedy Achieved Date	Satisfaction with Compliance
22000090	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	18/01/23	Apology Provide services to person affected Financial redress: Loss of service Procedure or policy change/review Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble Provide training and/or guidance	18/04/23	11/07/23	Remedy completed late
22009052	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	02/04/23	Apology Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble Provide training and/or guidance Procedure or policy change/review	26/06/23	04/07/23	Remedy completed late
22009852	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	03/03/23	Apology Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble	03/04/23	26/04/23	Remedy completed late
22010056	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	22/08/23	Apology Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble Provide training and/or guidance Provide services to person affected	23/11/23	08/12/23	Remedy completed late
22011357	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	08/06/23	Apology Procedure or policy change/review Provide training and/or guidance	10/07/23	05/07/23	Remedy complete and satisfied
22011673	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	27/06/23	Apology Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble Financial redress: Loss of service	28/07/23	10/07/23	Remedy complete and satisfied
22012000	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	12/07/23	Apology Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble Financial redress: Loss of service Provide training and/or guidance	13/10/23	12/10/23	Remedy complete and satisfied
22012023	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	10/10/23	Apology Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble Financial Redress: Quantifiable Loss	13/11/23	10/11/23	Remedy complete and satisfied
22012848	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	15/05/23	Apology Financial redress: Loss of service Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble Procedure or policy change/review Provide training and/or guidance	16/08/23	20/08/23	Remedy complete and satisfied
22013657	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	19/06/23	Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble	20/07/23	19/07/23	Remedy complete and satisfied
22013701	Oxfordshire County Council	Adult Care Services	19/06/23	Apology Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble Financial redress: Loss of service Procedure or policy change/review Provide training and/or guidance	20/09/23	14/09/23	Remedy not complete but satisfied
22013912	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	20/06/23	Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble Procedure or policy change/review	21/09/23	16/07/23	Remedy complete and satisfied
22014218	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	03/09/23	Apology Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble Financial redress: Loss of service Provide training and/or guidance	04/12/23	29/11/23	Remedy complete and satisfied

22014564	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	29/06/23	Apology Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble Financial redress: Loss of service Provide training and/or guidance Procedure or policy change/review	02/10/23	09/10/23	Remedy complete and satisfied
22014617	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	31/07/23	Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble	01/09/23	05/09/23	Remedy completed late
22016591	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	13/08/23	Apology Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble Financial redress: Loss of service	14/09/23	06/09/23	Remedy complete and satisfied
22016710	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	20/08/23	Apology Financial redress: Loss of service Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble Provide training and/or guidance Provide services to person affected	21/11/23	24/09/23	Remedy complete and satisfied
22017068	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	25/07/23	Apology Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble	29/08/23	05/09/23	Remedy completed late
22017249	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	26/09/23	Apology Financial redress: Loss of service Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble Provide training and/or guidance Procedure or policy change/review	27/10/23	24/10/23	Remedy complete and satisfied
22017603	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	19/09/23	Apology Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble Provide training and/or guidance	20/12/23	20/12/23	Remedy complete and satisfied
23000575	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	02/01/24	Apology Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble Financial redress: Loss of service Improved BinJ remedy Provide services to person affected	05/02/24	05/02/24	Remedy complete and satisfied
23000771	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	26/09/23	Apology Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble Financial redress: Loss of service Provide training and/or guidance Procedure or policy change/review	27/10/23	25/10/23	Remedy complete and satisfied
23001972	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	26/09/23	Apology Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble Financial redress: Loss of service Provide training and/or guidance Provide services to person affected	27/10/23	01/11/23	Remedy complete and satisfied
23002802	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	03/11/23	Apology Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble Financial redress: Loss of service Procedure or policy change/review	05/01/24	03/01/24	Remedy complete and satisfied
23003023	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	11/07/23	Provide services to person affected	21/08/23	09/08/23	Remedy complete and satisfied
23003197	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	24/10/23	Apology Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble Financial redress: Loss of service Provide training and/or guidance	25/12/23	24/11/23	Remedy complete and satisfied
23003387	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	28/11/23	Apology Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble Procedure or policy change/review	28/01/24	22/01/24	Remedy complete and satisfied

23004410	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	31/08/23	Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble	29/09/23	10/09/23	Remedy complete and satisfied
23005512	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	16/01/24	Financial redress: Loss of service Procedure or policy change/review	16/02/24	27/02/24	Remedy complete and satisfied
23006665	Oxfordshire County Council	Education & Childrens Services	09/01/24	Apology Financial redress: Avoidable distress/time and trouble Financial redress: Loss of service Procedure or policy change/review	09/02/24	12/02/24	Remedy complete and satisfied

## Explanatory notes

### Cases received

Cases with a recorded received date between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024. Status as of 9 April 2024.

### Cases decided

Cases with a recorded decision date between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024. Status as of 9 April 2024. Some cases may have been reopened since that date, with either a decision outcome pending or a new decision

We report our decisions by the following outcomes:

**Invalid or incomplete:** We were not given enough information to consider the issue.

**Advice given:** We provided early advice or explained where to go for the right help.

**Referred back for local resolution:** We found the complaint was brought to us too early because the

**Closed after initial enquiries:** We assessed the complaint but decided against completing an investigation.

This might be because the law says we're not allowed to investigate it, or because it would not be an effective

**Upheld:** We completed an investigation and found evidence of fault, or we found the organisation accepted

**Not upheld:** We completed an investigation but did not find evidence of fault.

### Compliance outcomes

Cases with a recorded remedy achieved date between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024. Status as of 15 May 2024. The relevant date is the date of compliance with the recommendations (for example, the date on an apology letter) rather than the date the evidence is provided to us. If we were notified after 15 May 2024 of a

Some cases may be marked as 'Remedy completed late' even when the remedy achieved date is before the remedy target date. This happens because the target date covers all remedies (service improvements and personal remedies). As service improvements often have a longer timescale for completion, we will mark a

# Annual Review of Local Government Complaints

July 2024





# Ombudsman's foreword

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I was delighted to be appointed to the role of Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman in February 2024 and am pleased to reflect on the year and present our Review of Local Government Complaints for 2023–24. Having previous experience of complaints in other sectors I am excited to work within the local government and social care sectors in a role that can bring about significant change for individuals and communities, both locally and nationally.

Observing the local government landscape, it is abundantly clear there are significant challenges, in particular the task of achieving financial stability when faced with rising demand on services. All authorities, regardless of type, size, or geography, are facing sizeable issues, but some concerns stand out as systemic; in particular, the strain on Special Educational Needs (SEN) & Disability Services. We have regularly highlighted the issues families face in getting the SEN support they are entitled to, and it is clear that action at a national policy level is needed and now.

The complaints that come to us provide great insight into individual organisations and the sector. Nationally, our data shows rising numbers of complaints received, an increase in the number of complaints we uphold, and it has highlighted ongoing issues within SEN, housing and adult social care services. The data we publish alongside this report, and [our interactive map](#) are great places to start to understand the local and national picture. This year we have included a new statistic for upheld complaints by population size. This gives an extra layer of local context to the statistics making it even simpler to compare authorities.

*Observing the local government landscape, it is abundantly clear that there are significant challenges, in particular the task of achieving financial stability when faced with rising demand on services*

Our dual role is to provide personal redress and support sector improvement. Even in these challenging times, we remain committed to supporting individuals to seek redress and make proportionate recommendations to put things right. Importantly, we look beyond the personal remedy and make wider recommendations to prevent the same fault from affecting others. This is how to get maximum value from investigations, moving from the transactional processing of individual complaints to influencing system change and service improvement for longer term benefit.

This is why oversight of complaints is so important, and we are increasingly using our data to help authorities spot issues before they escalate. More broadly, we play an important role in supporting oversight of the sector by sharing data and working with national bodies and government departments to improve understanding of the challenges being faced. I encourage authorities to take a similar approach and to use complaints information to identify early warning signs of service failure. There are best practice resources later in this report that will help you to take valuable learning from complaints.

This year's report is focused on data that will help authorities to evaluate and benchmark their performance and resources to support better complaint management. We welcome your feedback on the report, which can be sent to [Omblocalgovreview@lgo.org.uk](mailto:Omblocalgovreview@lgo.org.uk)

I thank my predecessor, Interim Ombudsman, Paul Najsarek, for leading the organisation for most of this reporting year and I look forward to working with colleagues across the local government sector to achieve our shared aims.

**Amerdeep Somal**  
Local Government and  
Social Care Ombudsman  
July 2024



# 2023-24 Data headlines

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Complaints Received

**17,937**



Complaints Decided

**17,126**



Complaints Investigated

**4,003**



Complaints Upheld\*

**3,215**



**12%**

Satisfactory remedies\*\*



**99.5%**

Compliance with our  
recommendations



**80%**

Uphold rate



**5.6**

Upheld complaints per  
100,000 residents\*\*\*

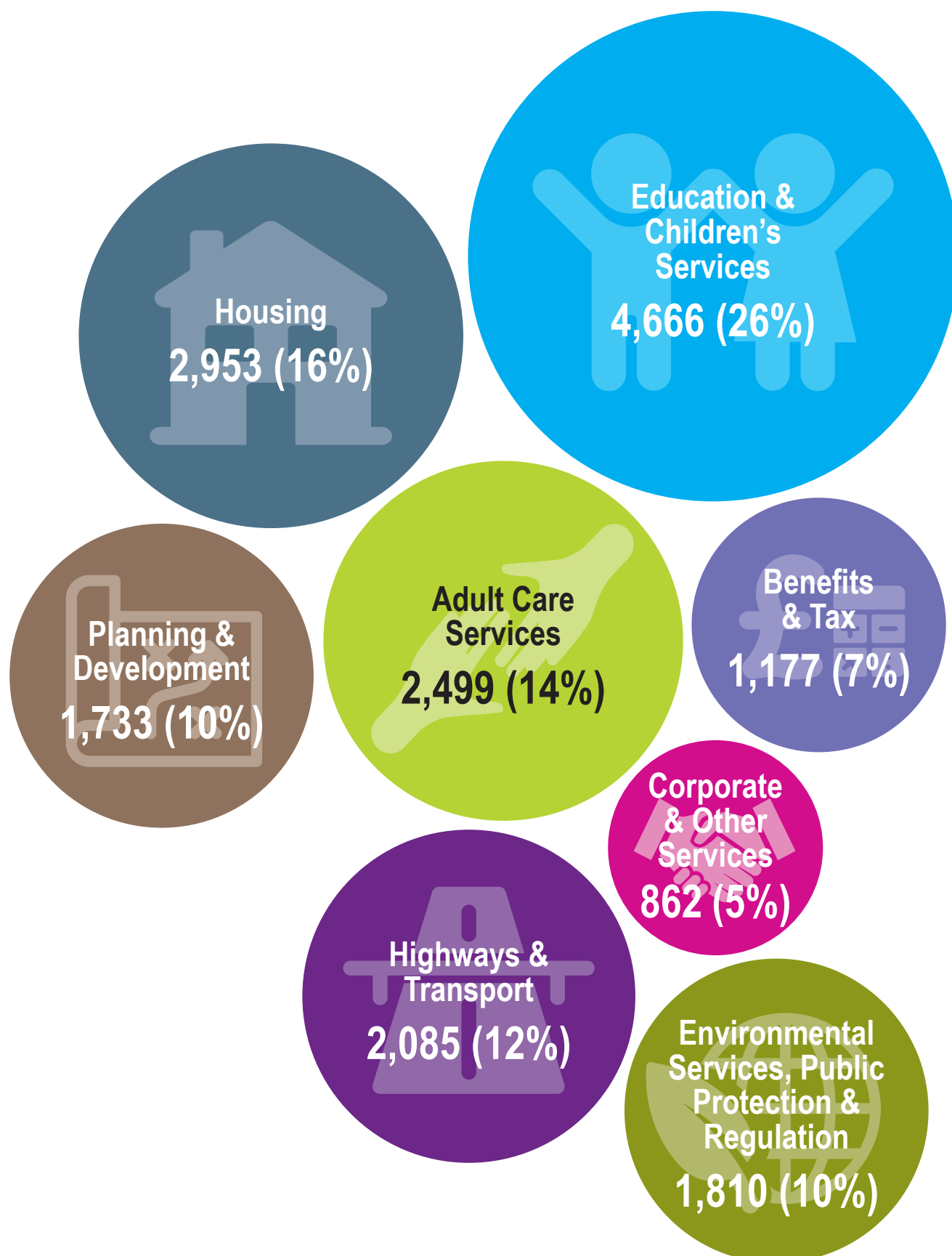
\* Includes cases where we found the organisation accepted fault early on.

\*\* We agreed with how the authority had offered to put things right.

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

# Complaints and enquiries received

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See pages 9–18 for data by service area and council type

# Key service areas: the Ombudsman's view

## Adult Social Care

Adult social care services continue to be in enormous demand. In 2023–24, 14% of all the complaints we received were about adult social care and we upheld 80% of the complaints we investigated. They show that discharging their statutory requirements and delivering services that people are entitled to is a significant challenge for local authorities across the country.

Cases are often complex across all age groups, requiring extensive interaction between professionals because of the wide range of organisations that are often involved in providing care. It is often assumed that the need for adult social care is predominantly amongst older people, but we see a significant proportion of cases that involve younger adults who need support to have an acceptable quality of life and enable them to play a meaningful role in society.

In 2023–24:

**14%** & **80%**  
of the complaints we received were about adult social care. of the complaints we investigated were upheld.

Alongside the complexity of individual cases, the system itself is complicated and is a significant challenge for people to navigate at a difficult point in their lives.

The main issues we see in our casework are delays in the assessment of people's needs, a failure to put the individual at the heart of the process and in communicating with them, and their families, effectively.

Assessments are often delayed and, when they do happen, often focus on what fits in with the system's offer rather than the individual needs of the person as required by the Care Act. Families, and the

people receiving care, are often not communicated with in good time or effectively and can find the information they receive too complicated to understand or ask questions about.

We see staff shortages and a high turnover of staff resulting in disruption to care and, in some cases, confusion about financial arrangements and responsibilities. The lack of workforce resilience is having a significant impact on people in need of support across England.

The health and care system needs to prioritise communication with people who use its services. Doing so would not only improve people's experience of using the care system but also reduce the demand caused by a lack of information. When people understand what is happening and feel involved in their care, they are less likely to chase for updates or to raise their concerns as complaints. The issue of communication was highlighted in our joint report with the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman '[People not structures](#)' released in July 2024.

Creating a sufficient social care workforce needs to be a national priority. The issue needs to be grasped firmly – with action prioritised – and a short, medium and long term approach developed to address the impact on people's lives when they need support the most.

## Special Educational Needs

Our casework is dominated by complaints about special educational needs provision. Education complaints made up 26% of all the complaints we received in 2023–24 and were 42% of all the cases we upheld. We found fault in 92% of the education cases we investigated, and the numbers are increasing rapidly.

The key issues are failures by councils to carry out Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan assessments

*The issue of communication was highlighted in our joint report with the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman '[People not structures](#)'*





**We found fault in  
92%  
of the education complaints  
we investigated.**

and reviews in good time and not providing the support stated in a EHC Plan once a child has one. These issues are often compounded by parents not receiving adequate information about what is happening to provide for their child's needs.

There has been no lack of comment from key players in this field, including the Education Select Committee, and in the media about the critical state of the support system for children with special educational needs and disabilities.

We have repeatedly made our position clear. The system is simply not working for children, families or local authorities: the money available is not sufficient to provide the services that children are entitled to, many organisations are severely understaffed and in many areas suitable and affordable support does not exist. It means young people, and their families, don't get the help they need and lose vital weeks, months and years of education and development as a result. They don't get that time back. No-one wins in the current system.

The issues within the wider special educational needs system are myriad and addressing them in isolation is not the answer. This crisis has been 10 years in the making; both councils and the government should have anticipated the issues, and planned for the future, when the Children and Families Act 2014 was brought in and demand for EHC Plans started to increase.

The required staff, including highly specialist roles like Educational Psychologists, cannot be trained overnight, and so this situation will not be resolved without significant input on a national scale.

The government must get a strong and comprehensive grip of this issue, right from reviewing the 2014 legislation through to ensuring the resources are in place, and retained, to support children how and when they need it. Special educational needs provision is an existential threat for the local authorities that provide children's services and, most importantly, affects the lives of thousands of children having long term effects on their aspirations and contribution to society.

## Housing

The supply of suitable council-supplied housing, and supporting people at risk of homelessness, continues to be a challenge across the country

and is a rapidly growing area of our casework. In 2023–24, 16% of the complaints we received were related to housing and we upheld 84% of those we investigated. The issues are particularly acute in London, with a large proportion of our investigations into housing being in the capital.

We see numerous cases where people are wrongly being denied access to housing registers or being given lower priority than they should be. This is due to delays in reviewing and assessing their housing needs, and disagreements over their requirements and the connections they have to a local area. There are also delays due to councils not looking promptly at issues when they are raised.

**In 2023–24:**



**16%** & **84%**  
of the cases we received were about housing. of the complaints we investigated were upheld.

We also see significant problems, again across the country but particularly in London, when people are homeless or threatened with homelessness. Councils sometimes fail to accept their duty to provide homelessness relief, causing some people to remain homeless longer than they should be. When families and individuals are placed in temporary accommodation it is often unsuitable, being too small, in disrepair or too far from schools and support networks, and they often end up staying there for far longer than they should.

All these issues, which are increasing at a rapid rate in our casework, indicate that some councils are failing to accept their duty to house people, sometimes by denying support incorrectly but more often denying the full level of support that people are entitled to. The lack of housing supply sits at the heart of this and is the likely reason for the approach of local authorities: there is simply not enough accommodation and housing, particularly in London, to meet demand and enable councils to meet the main housing duty.

A national approach to house building and social housing provision needs to be prioritised. This is not a quick fix, but sustainable and long-term solutions are required to address a situation that affects increasing numbers of people across the country and significantly hampers their life chances.

# Enhancing resident satisfaction: best practice in complaint management

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

## Putting things right when they go wrong

When we find fault, we make recommendations to put things right. These recommendations are non-binding yet, in almost all cases, authorities agree to comply with them. We were satisfied with authorities' compliance with our recommendations in 99.5% of cases.

There were 14 cases in which we were not satisfied the authority had complied with our recommendations. When this happens, we consider a range of actions, including issuing a public interest report and opening a new investigation into the authority's failure to provide the agreed remedy. Non-compliance is also reported publicly on our website.

Timely compliance is important; it helps to rebuild complainants' confidence when an organisation carries out recommendations within the agreed timeframe. In a fifth of cases, recommendations were not carried out on time and compliance was late. To ensure remedies are implemented on time, authorities should consider:

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

## Best practice: systems and oversight

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

### WHAT TO LOOK AT

- The [Complaint Handling Code](#), issued this year, sets out a process that allows organisations to respond to complaints effectively and fairly.

- Our [council performance map](#) places all our council complaint statistics in a single, interactive hub. It is a mine of searchable information and allows comparisons to be made between similar councils.
- Each council page also includes our annual review letters, links to decisions we have made, public interest reports published, and every service improvement a council has agreed to make.
- We also publish [data tables](#) providing complaints information at local authority level, which can be freely analysed and segmented.
- New [statutory Overview & Scrutiny guidance](#) recommends scrutiny committee work programmes are informed by the reports and recommendations we issue.

### WHAT TO LOOK FOR

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

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

# Learning & improvement: public reports and good practice guides

We are one of the only Ombudsman schemes to [publish the decisions](#) we make. We do this to share learning and be transparent.

Cases that raise serious issues or highlight matters of public interest are issued as public interest reports. We published 27 **public interest reports** during the year, [listed at the end of this report](#).

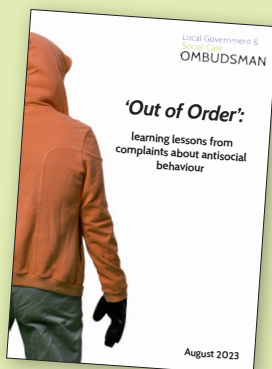
**Focus Reports** and **Good Practice Guides** collate case studies from our investigations to highlight either our most serious concerns or more specialist practitioner advice. During the year, we published:

## [Out of Order: Learning lessons from complaints about antisocial behaviour](#)

August 2023

We uphold nearly three quarters of complaints about antisocial behaviour, and the report revealed some of the common issues we see, including delays responding to residents' calls for help or acting on evidence presented to them, laying down prescriptive rules about what types of concerns will be looked at, and failing to bring in other agencies, such as the police.

The report asks councils to comprehensively consider the range of tools available to tackle residents' concerns, including use of the Community Trigger, to review antisocial behaviour cases.



## [Parent Power: personal budgets in Education, Health, and Care \(EHC\) Plans](#)

November 2023

We said that, too often, parents of children with special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities are not given a choice in how their children are supported because their local councils do not fully understand the personal budget process.

This report sets out the common problems we see – often rooted in poor communication and lengthy process delays and asks councils to review all policies and published information about personal budgets to ensure compliance with the law and guidance, and to set out clear agreements and arrangements for invoicing, payments, and reviews.



## [Unsuitable temporary accommodation](#)

May 2023

Aimed at local authorities' housing and homelessness teams, this good practice guide offers advice on dealing with people who are owed the main housing duty and are occupying temporary accommodation that the council accepts is unsuitable.

The guide discusses the relevant law and guidance around temporary accommodation, explains our role and approach to complaints, and how we remedy injustice when we find an authority at fault.



## In 2023–24:

We published

27

public interest reports,  
listed at the end of  
this report.



# The role of the Ombudsman in 2024

**The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman has been putting problems right and improving public services for 50 years. We have a unique role in supporting people from all walks of life when the services they rely on from councils, social care support and a range of other organisations go wrong and have a real impact on their day to day lives.**

The world is a very different place from when we were created in 1974 by the Local Government Act. In the last five decades we have evolved to become the efficient and focused organisation we are today. We help thousands of individuals to get justice every year and we increasingly change how organisations and whole systems deliver services, with a single decision often impacting hundreds or even thousands of people.

*We help thousands of individuals to get justice every year and we increasingly change how organisations and whole systems deliver services*

We know how much difference we can, and do, make to people's lives. That will always remain our core purpose. Our Corporate Plan, to be delivered over the next three years, will see us empower public services organisations to take on more ownership of providing good services, reach more of the people and communities who don't currently ask for our help, and play an increasing role in making whole systems better. We'll use our data more effectively and share it with more people and will strive to make our service better whilst ensuring the organisations we oversee make improvements too.

## OUR SERVICE:

- We conduct independent, impartial investigations of complaints about service failure and maladministration.
- We look at individual complaints about councils, all adult social care providers and some other organisations providing local public services.
- We are a free service and investigate complaints in a fair and independent way – we do not take sides.
- Where we find fault, we make recommendations for remedy to redress injustice caused. Where the evidence supports it, we also recommend changes to policy and practice to address wider systemic failures and to improve the local resolution of complaints and service provision.

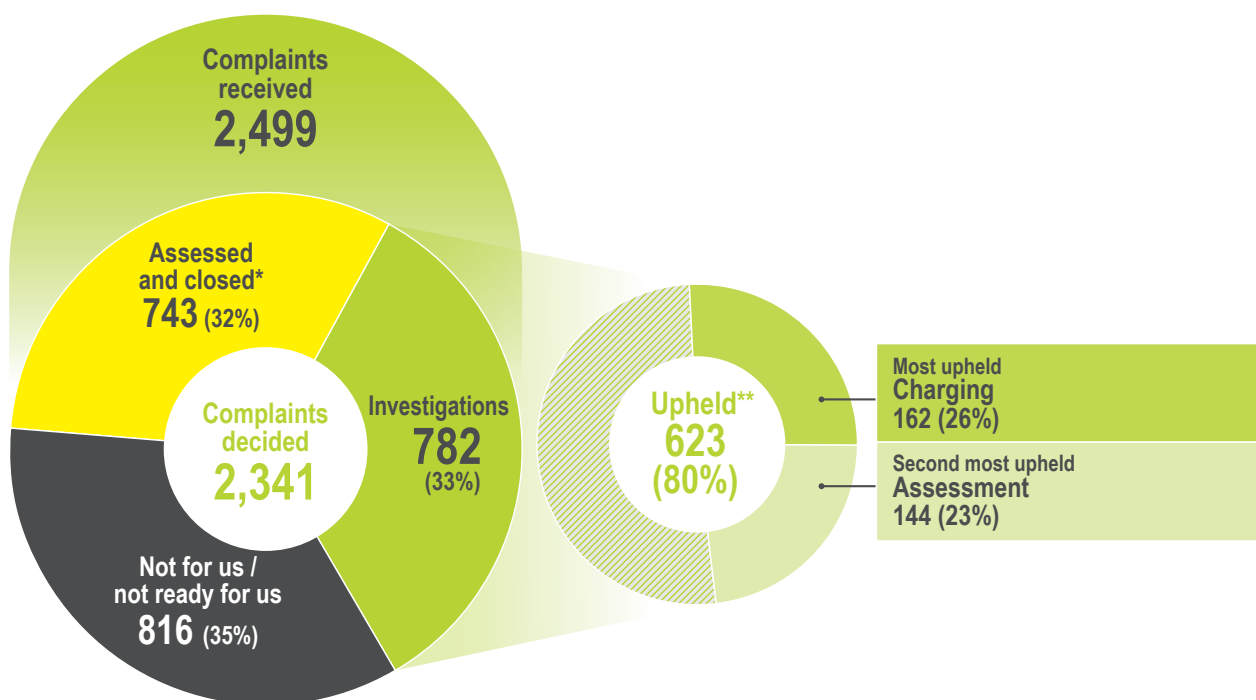
## Our objectives over the next three years:

- ✓ We remedy injustice through impartial, fair and rigorous investigations
- ✓ Our services are easy to find and easy to use
- ✓ We use what we learn from complaints to help improve local services
- ✓ We are accountable to the public and use our resources efficiently

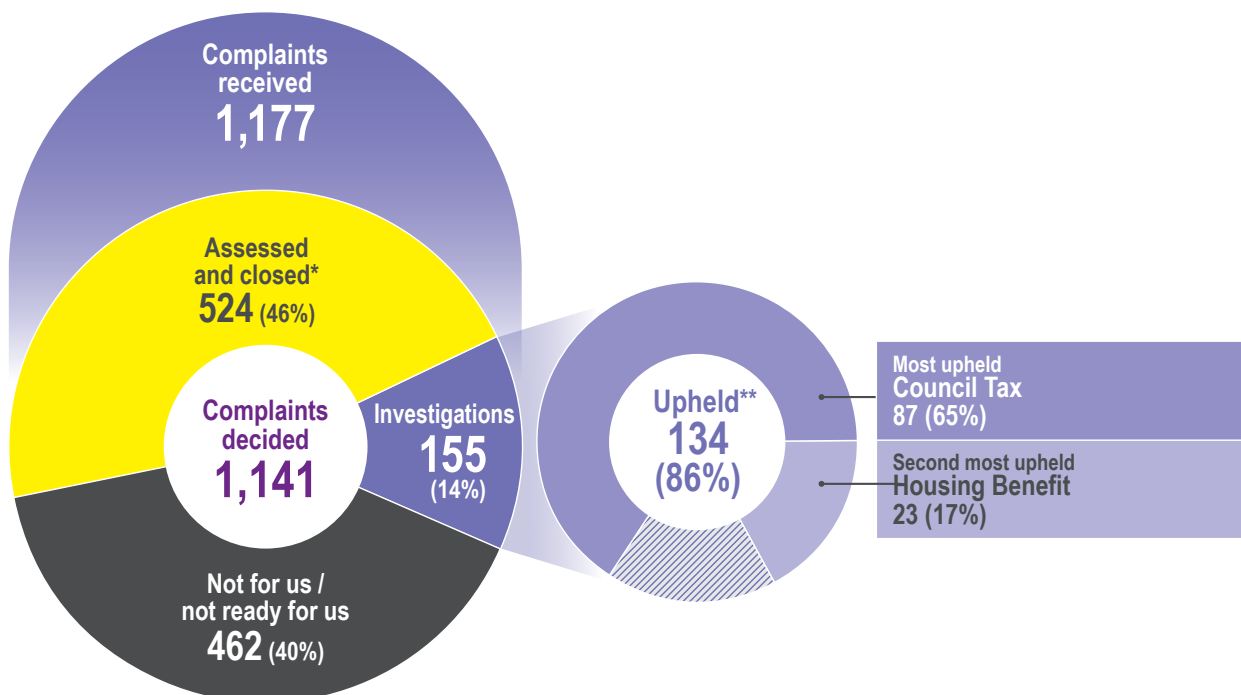


# 2023–24 statistics by service area

## Adult Care Services



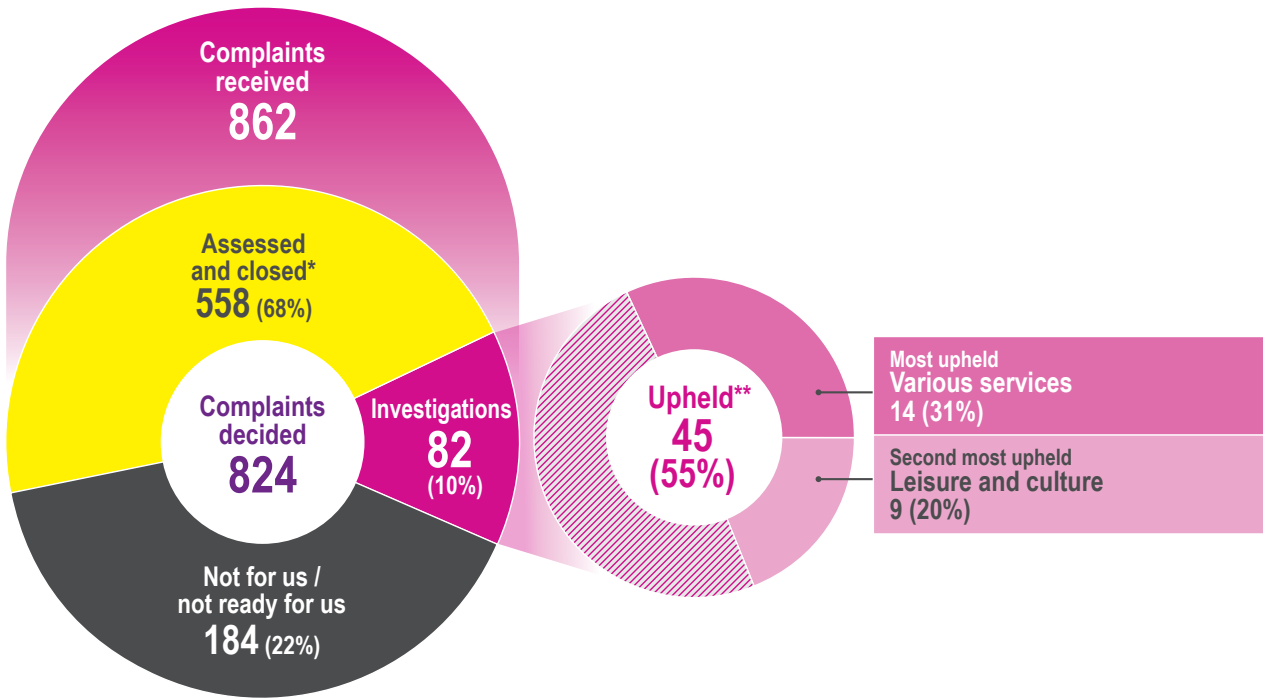
## Benefits & Tax



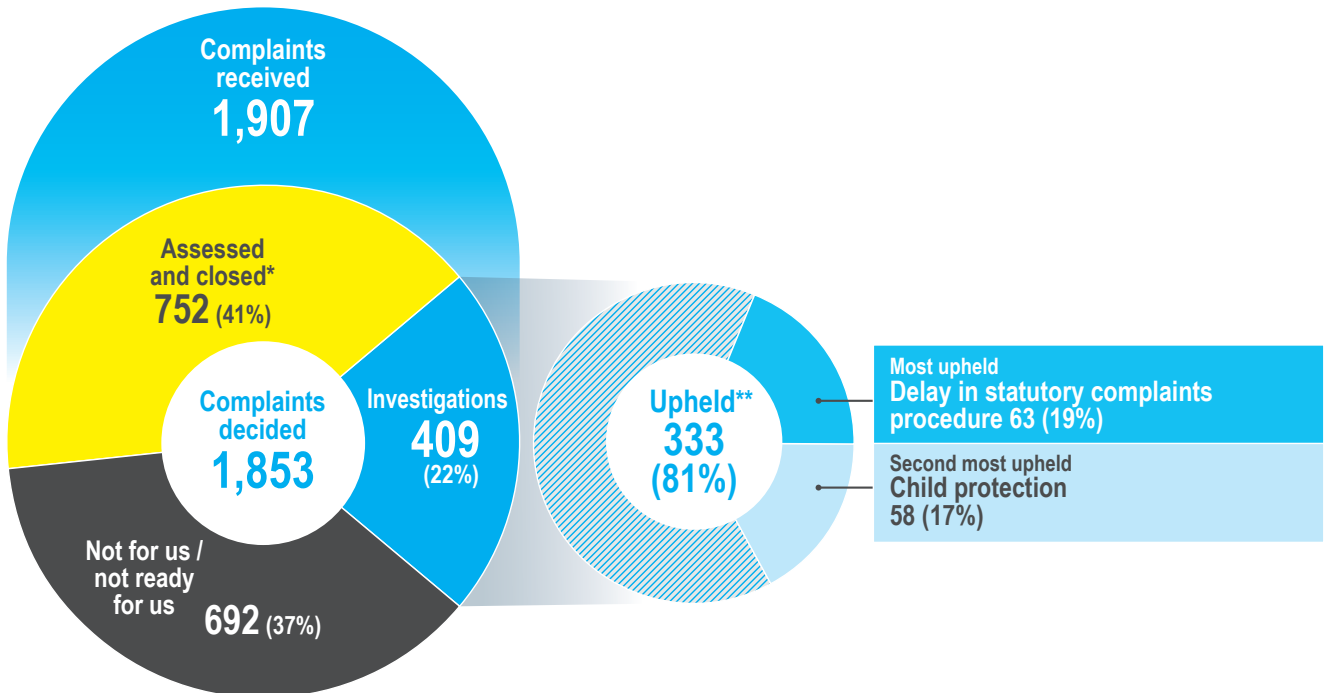
\* Assessed and closed – we assessed the complaint but decided against carrying out a further investigation. This might be because the law says we're not allowed to investigate it, or because it would not be an effective use of public funds if we did.

\*\* Upheld: we completed an investigation and found evidence of fault, or we found the organisation accepted fault early on.

Corporate & Other Services



Children's Services

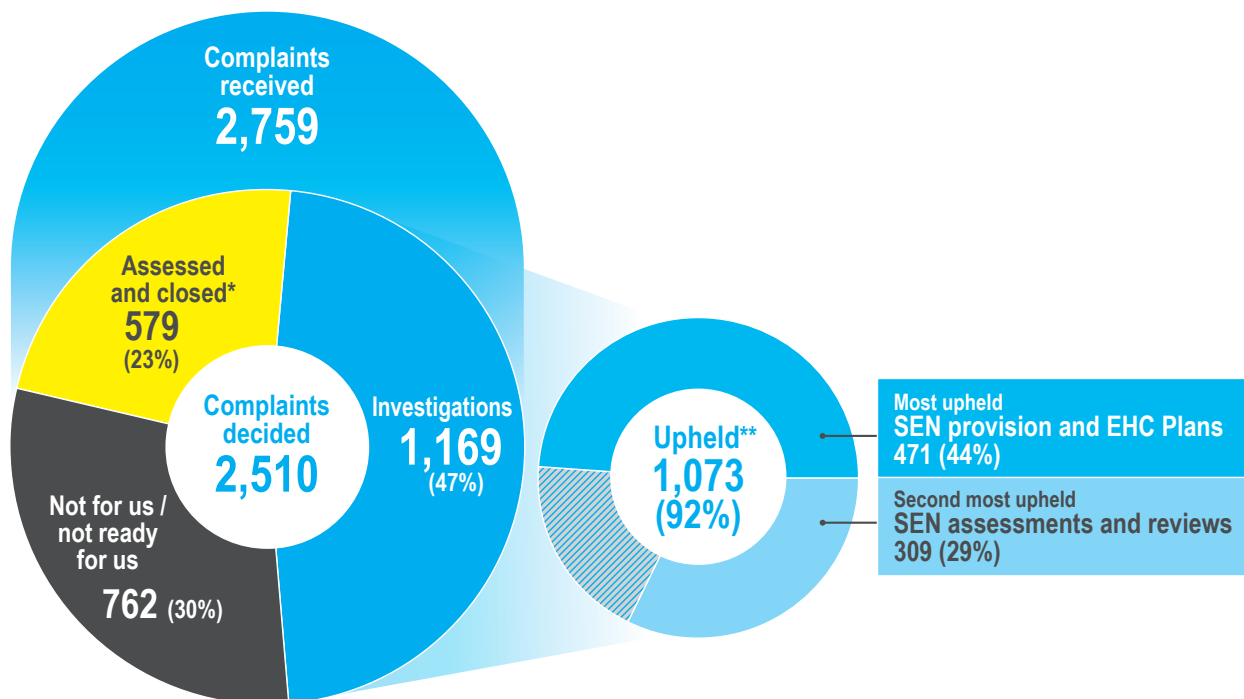


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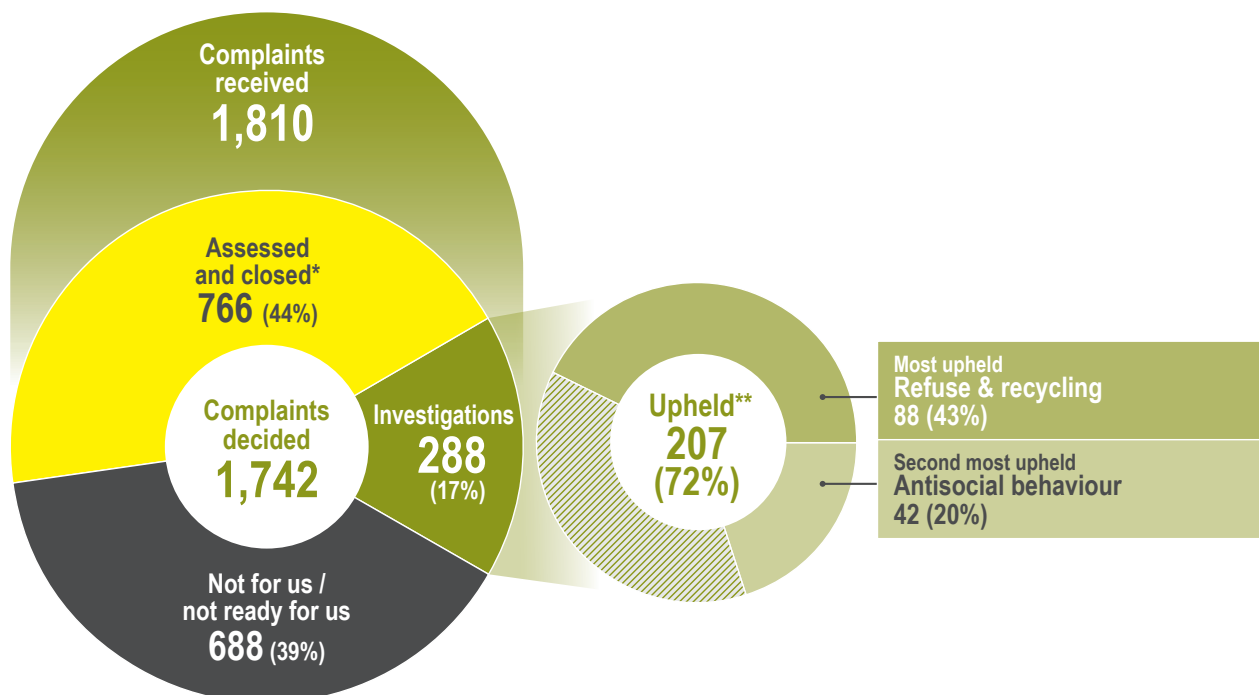
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## 2023–24 statistics by service area

### Education



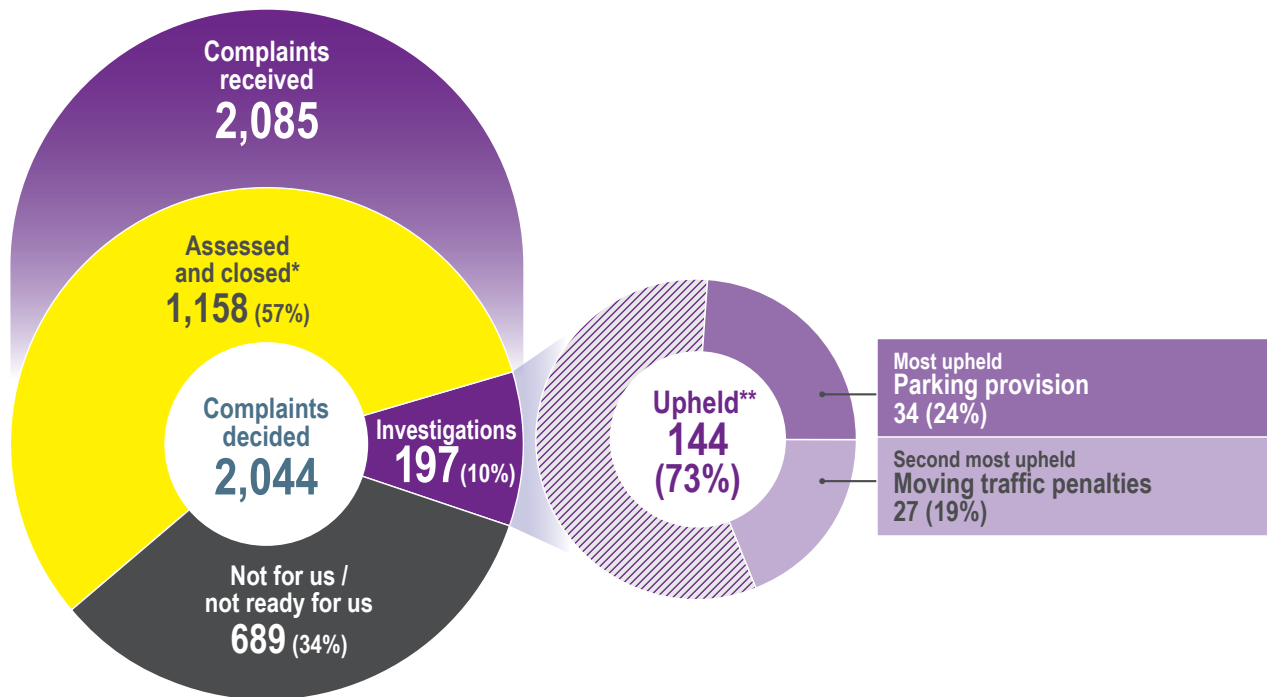
### Environmental Services, Public Protection & Regulation



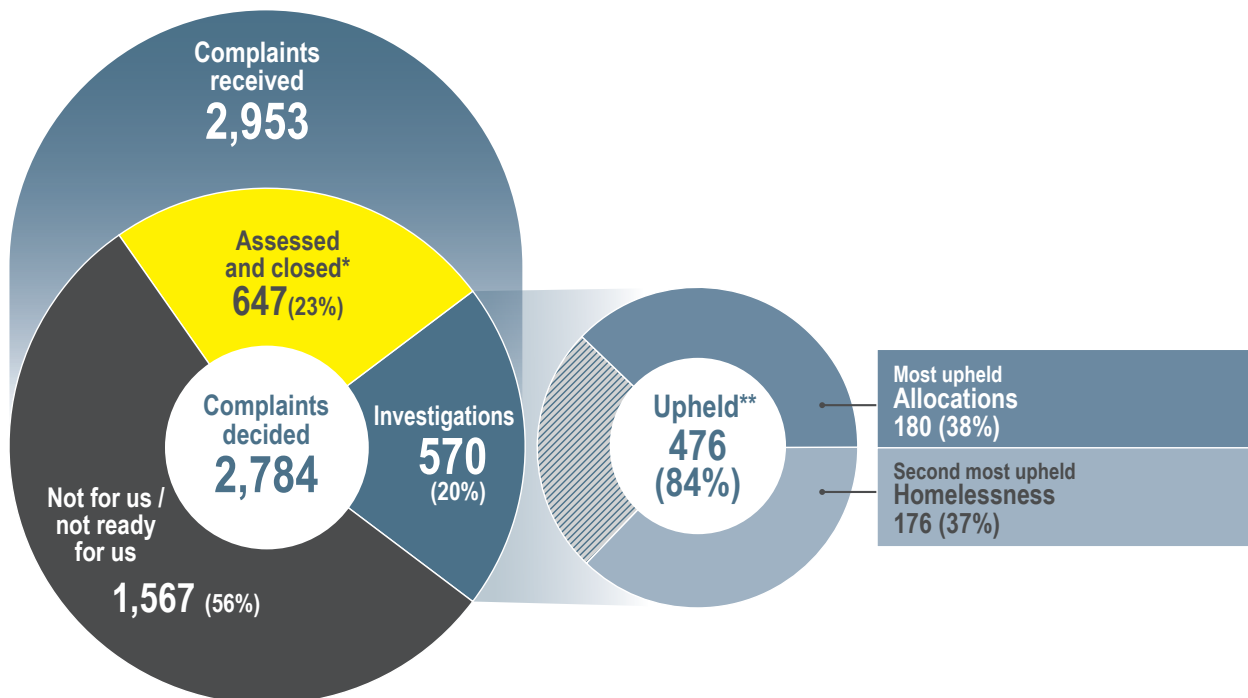
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## Highways & Transport



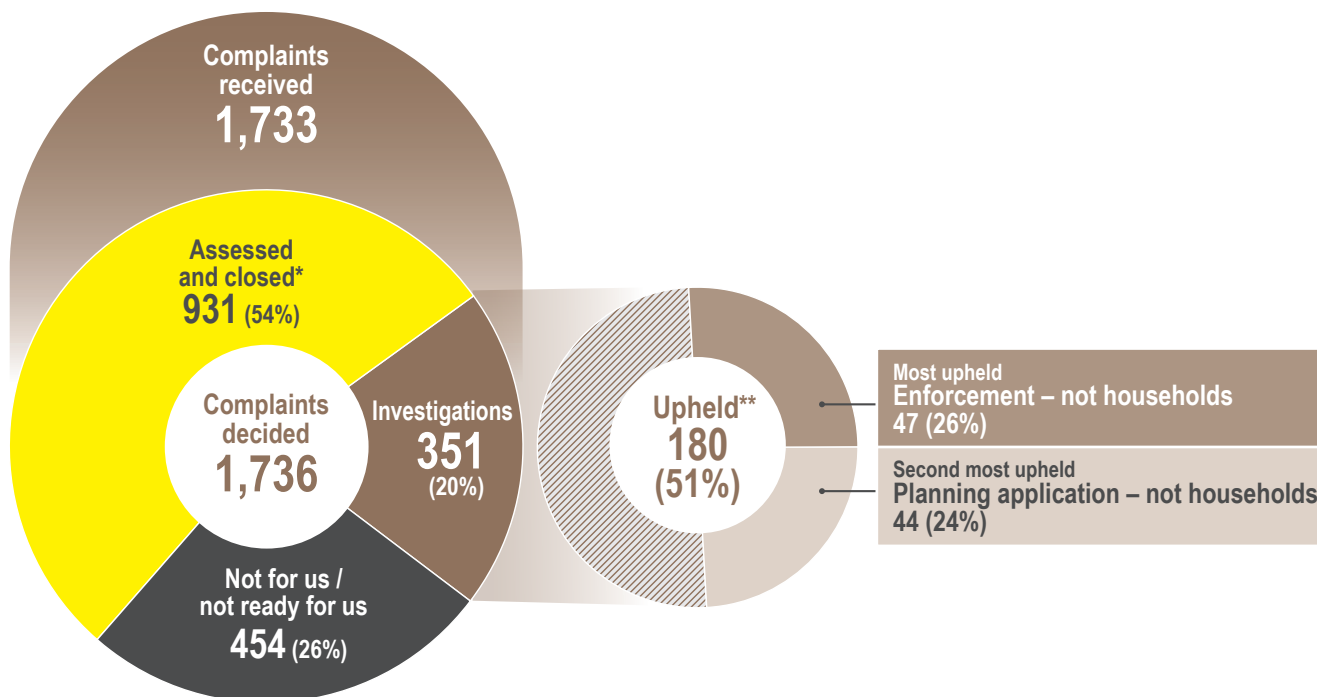
## Housing



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

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### Planning & Development

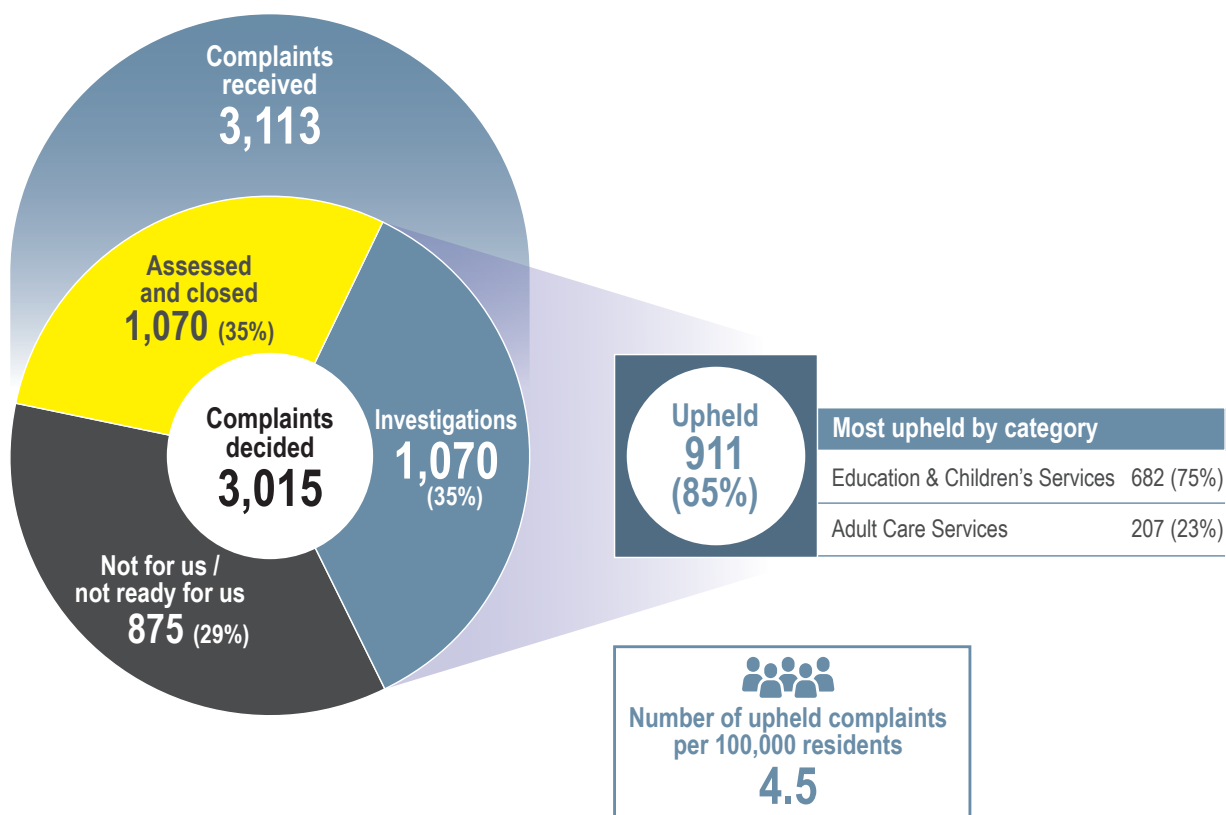


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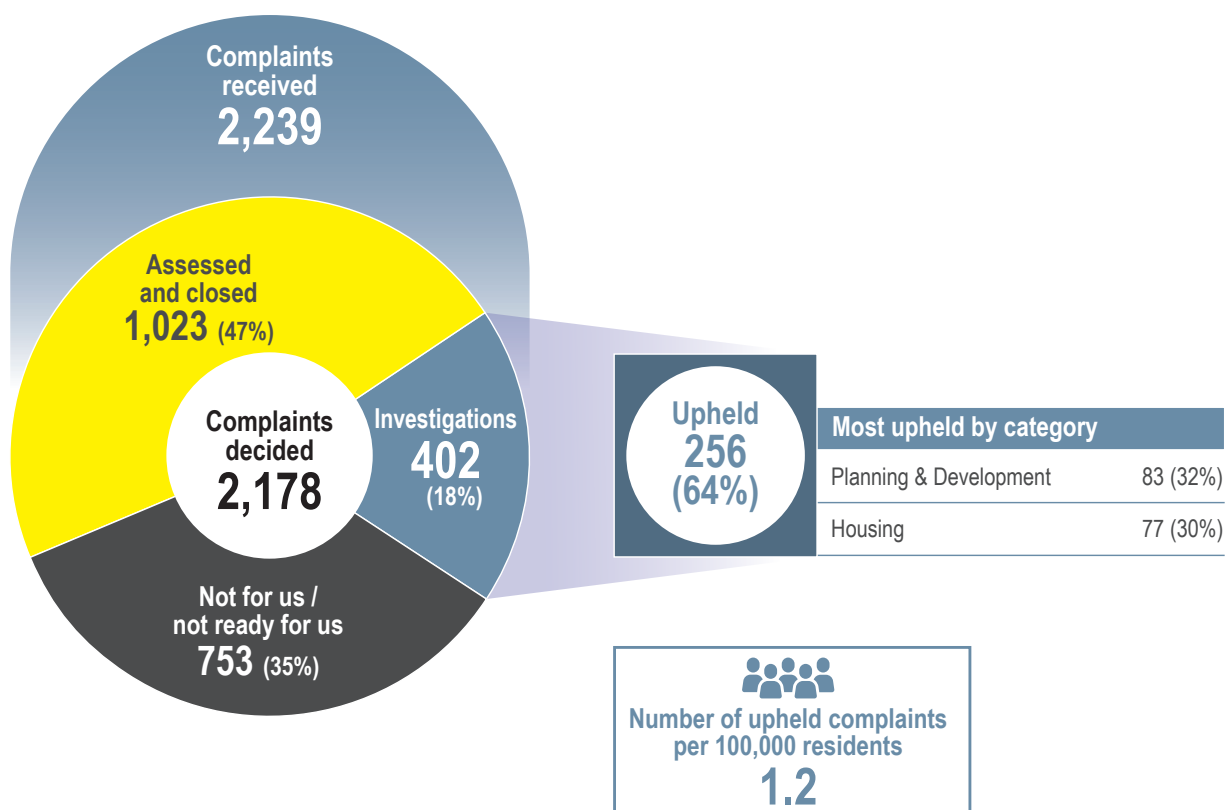
\*\* Upheld: we completed an investigation and found evidence of fault, or we found the organisation accepted fault early on.

# 2023–24 statistics by authority type

## County Councils

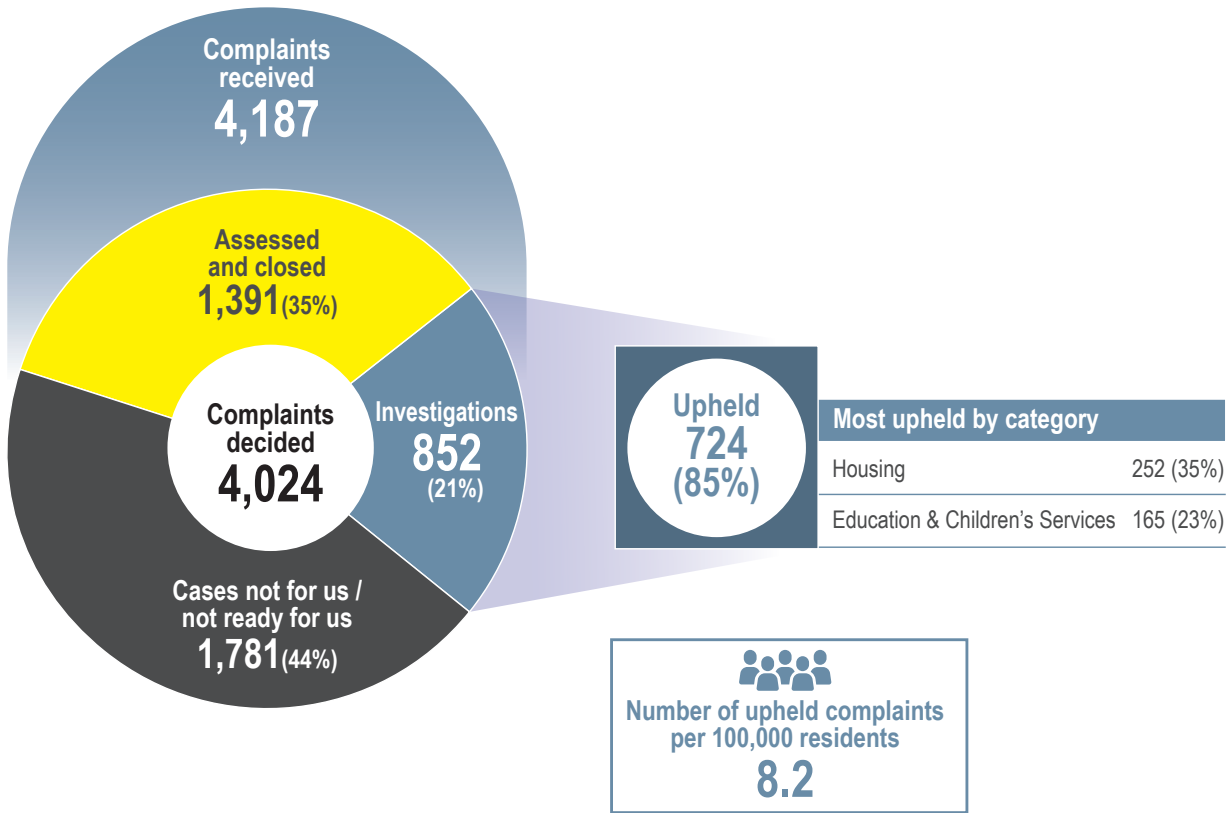


## District and Borough Councils

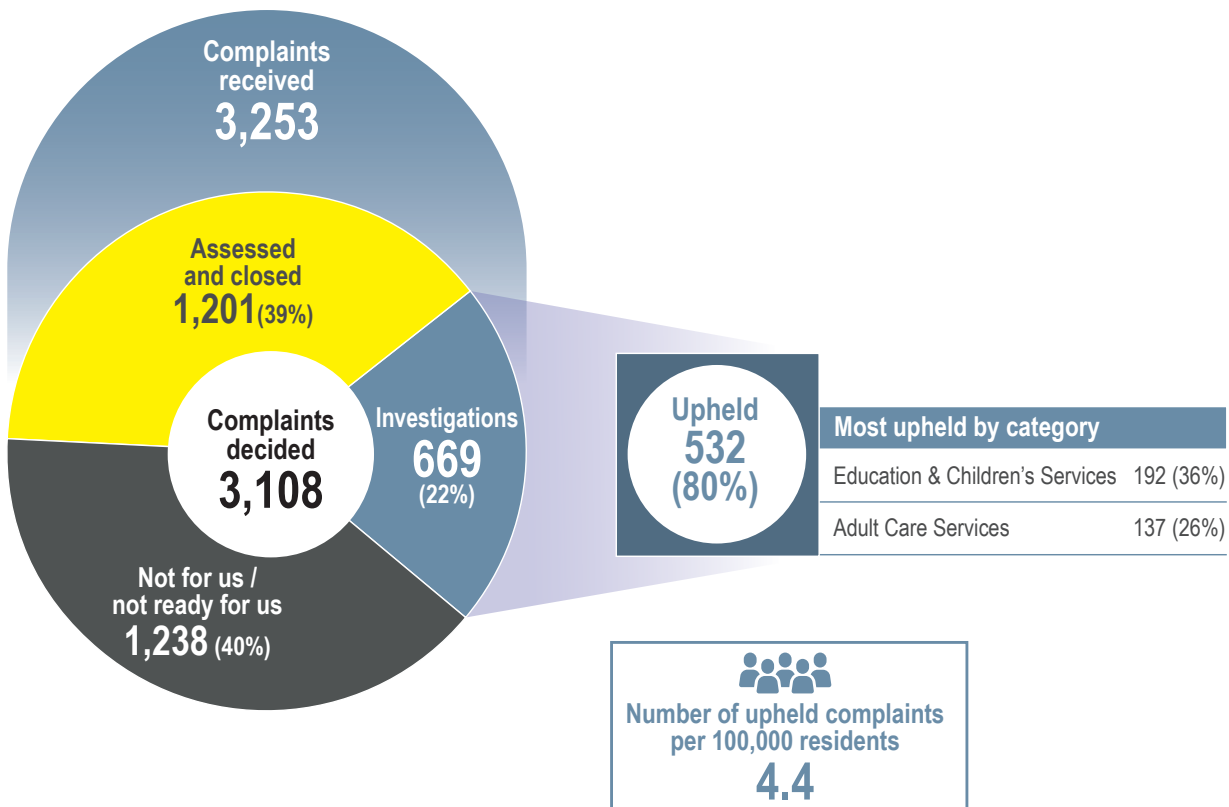


## 2023–24 statistics by authority type

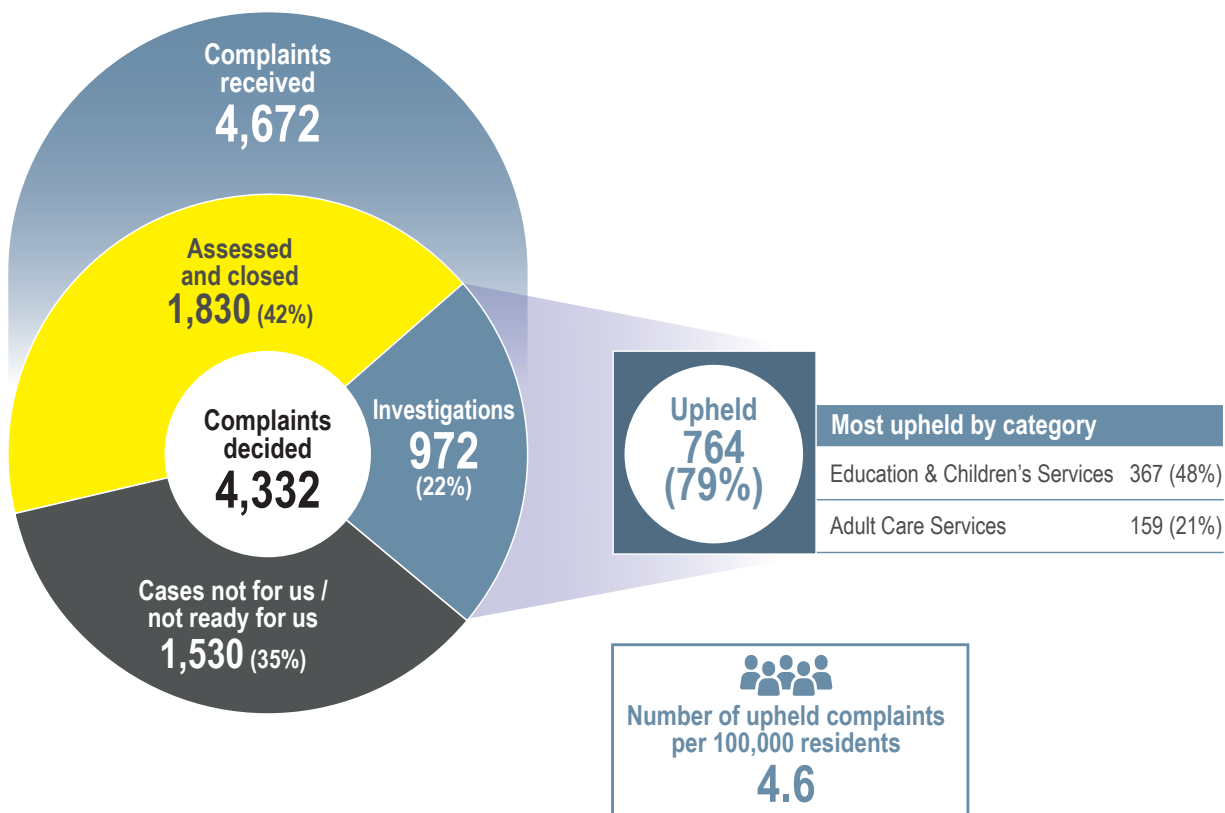
### London Boroughs



### Metropolitan Councils





## Unitary Authorities









# Public Interest Reports

We published 27 Public Interest Report in 2023/24. Links to the reports can be found below.

 <b>Children's Services</b>		
Cumberland Council (about former authority Cumbria County Council)	Delay in complaint investigation at stage 2	<a href="#">22012051</a>
Devon County Council	Family and friends carers	<a href="#">23000973</a>
South Gloucestershire Council	Disabled children	<a href="#">23005373</a>
Westmorland & Furness Council (about former authority Cumbria County Council)	Delay in complaint investigation at stage 2	<a href="#">23000172</a>

 <b>Education</b>		
Bury MBC	School transport	<a href="#">23005479</a>
Bury MBC	School admissions	<a href="#">23006024</a>
Kent County Council	Special educational needs	<a href="#">22003403</a>
Leicestershire County Council	School transport	<a href="#">21018756</a>
LB Wandsworth	Special educational needs	<a href="#">22015117</a>
RB Kensington & Chelsea	Free early education entitlement	<a href="#">21012481</a>
Stockton-on-Tees BC	School transport	<a href="#">22010732</a>
Surrey County Council	Special educational needs	<a href="#">23000875</a>

 <b>Adult Care Services</b>		
Calderdale MBC	Assessment & care plan	<a href="#">22008699</a>
Cambridgeshire County Council	Medication prescribing	<a href="#">22010218</a>
North Yorkshire Council (about former authority North Yorkshire County Council)	Charging	<a href="#">22013262</a>
Sandwell MBC	Residential	<a href="#">2201078</a>



## Housing



LB Ealing	Homelessness	<a href="#">22002098</a>
LB Lambeth	Homelessness	<a href="#">22007276</a>
LB Waltham Forest	Homelessness	<a href="#">22012789</a>
RB Kensington & Chelsea	Homelessness	<a href="#">23002077</a>
Worcester City Council	Private housing	<a href="#">22002724</a>



## Environmental Services, Public Protection & Regulation



Brentwood Borough Council	Pollution	<a href="#">22008221</a>
Gloucester City Council	Antisocial behaviour	<a href="#">22012725</a>
Thurrock Council	Refuse and recycling	<a href="#">23000556</a>



## Highways & Transport



LB Newham	Public transport	<a href="#">22006753</a>
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## Benefits & Tax



LB Barnet	Council tax	<a href="#">21017371</a>
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## Corporate & Other Services



LB Islington	Stage 2 complaint backlog	<a href="#">22007259</a>
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Local Government &  
Social Care  
**OMBUDSMAN**