



SCRUTINY COMMISSION – 2nd SEPTEMBER 2026

CORPORATE COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS
ANNUAL REPORT 2025 – 2026

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE RESOURCES

Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this report is to present for the Commission's consideration the Corporate Complaints and Compliments Annual Report, covering the period from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026. This is attached as appendix A to this report.

Background

2. The Council manages and coordinates complaints using one of three policies and associated processes as follows:
 - a) Children's Social Care Complaints Policy (statutory)
 - b) Adult Social Care Complaints Policy (statutory)
 - c) Corporate Complaints Procedure (complaints relating to other services provided by the Council where there is no access to a statutory complaint procedure)
3. An annual report is produced for each policy, with complaints managed under the Corporate Complaints Procedure as the primary subject of this report. However, the main annual report does include some figures in relation to statutory case volumes for completeness.
4. The annual reports relating to the two statutory processes are considered at their respective Overview and Scrutiny Committees in September of each year.
5. The Council's annual Corporate Complaints and Compliments Report is produced by the Complaints and Information Service and provides an insight on the key trends pertaining to complaints and compliments as well as wider case information.
6. The detail is included in the annual report itself, and a summary of the headline trends and insight emerging from the analysis of complaints activity during 2025/2026 is set out below.

Headlines (2024-25 comparative data is in brackets)

Demand/Volume

7. The Demand/volume of complaints for 2025/2026 was as follows:
 - a) 1,630 corporate complaints were received – a 26% increase (1,287) from 2024/2025. This is 224 complaints per 1,000 service users.
 - b) Children and Family Services and Environment and Transport Departments consistently present as the top two departments in terms of volume due to 'SENA' (Special Education Needs Assessment) and 'School and SEN Transport' related complaints.
 - c) The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman received 146 complaints and enquiries in respect of the Council– a 19% increase (122) from 2024/2025.

Performance

8. The top five service areas where complaints cases were closed were:
 - SENA
 - Child Protection
 - School & SEN Transport
 - SENA School Place
 - Highway Repair & Maintenance

Stage 1 response times

9. The Council's Complaints Procedure allow for up to 40 working days (from the date of receipt by the Council respond to Stage 1 complaints. During 2025/2026, the percentage of complaints responded to within 20 working days decreased from the previous year; however, 90% were responded to within 40 working days.
10. There is pressure across services with an increase of AI being used by complainants. Complainants are using AI to assist with complaints which is presenting challenges due to the length and complexity of the complaints being received taken longer to investigate and respond too
 - 30% of all complaints received a response within 10 working days.
 - 62% received a response within 20 working days.
 - 90% received a response within the maximum 40 working days.

Escalation to Stage 2 and response times

11. If a complainant remains dissatisfied following the outcome of stage 1, they may request further consideration of their complaint. Such requests will be considered under Stage 2 of the Corporate Complaints Procedure.

12. In 2025/2026 218 complaints were escalated to Stage 2, a significant increase from previous years (74). This increase is driven mainly by Children and Family Services, specifically SEND. Work has been completed throughout the year to identify the root cause of stage 2 escalation to allow for improvement work to be completed. This increase highlights the importance of early resolution and strengthening response quality.
13. 39% of all Stage 2 complaints received a response within 20 working days. This has decreased from 2025/26 (51%). To assist with efficiency of responding to complaints and create consistency, the Complaints Team created a complaint template responses to be used across services.

Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)

Enquiries

14. The LGSCO received 146 enquiries relating to the county council, in 2025/2026 compared to 122 in 2024/2025 (a 19% increase).

Decisions Upheld

15. 118 cases were received, of these 27 (33%) were investigated, with 25 of the 27 upheld, giving an uphold rate of 89%. Adjusted for Leicestershire County Council's population, this is 3.4 upheld decisions per 100,000 residents (compared to 4.5 for 24/25 and the average for similar authorities in 25/26 being 5.2).

Upheld Cases

16. There has been a reduction in the overall number of upheld cases from 33 to 25, of which:
 - Education & Children's Services received 17 (the top two were 6 cases for SENA and reviews and 6 cases for SEN provision and EHC (Education and Health Care) plans).
 - Adult Social Care received 8 (4 cases relating to domiciliary care).
17. It is worth noting that in the LGSCO's Annual Review of Local Government Complaints 2025-26 it was stated *'The picture painted by the complaints we deal with is consistent and concerning. In special education needs service, in housing and in adult social care, we are seeing the consequences of systems under sustained and serious strain'*.
18. The LGSCO's annual report states that Education made up 17% of complaints it received, with the main cause for upholding being SEN assessment & reviews and SEN Provision and EHC plans.
19. In respect of Adult Social Care the LGSCO's report confirmed 13% of the cases received were about adult social care with the main cause for being upheld being charging issues.

Remedy Payments

20. The Council continues to have regard to the LGSCO's guidance on remedies, and this has prevented several complaints escalating through appropriate local settlement offers.
21. Financial payments made across Corporate Complaints increased by £16,381 from £21,113 in 2024/2025 to £37,494 to 2025/2026. It should be cautioned that this figure does not include redress offered by the Council at the local stages of its complaints procedure.

Public Reports and Compliance

22. The LGSCO monitors remedies being carried out by the Council where fault has been found and remedial actions proposed. Failure to carry out remedies within agreed timeframes is recorded as non-compliance.
23. Cases that raise serious issues, highlight matters of public interest or cases of non-compliance can lead to the LGSCO issuing a Public Report.
24. The LGSCO did not issue any public reports against the Council during 2025/2026, and the Council complied with all recommendations.

Compliments

25. There was a 63% increase in the volume of compliments recorded during the year with 641 received across all services; with Libraries, Heritage and Museums receiving 63% of the total volume. Work has been completed throughout the year to encourage compliments, this included a QR code being introduced in libraries to encourage service users to provide feedback, training being completed with services on how to record compliments and a section on compliments being added to the new starter training session. The Complaints Team continue to encourage all service areas to notify us of any compliments received so we can continue to acknowledge the good work being completed across all service areas

Recommendations

26. The Commission is asked to:
 - (a) note the contents of the Corporate Complaints Annual Report, attached as Appendix A, covering the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026;
 - (b) provide comment and feedback on the content and analysis within the report.

Background Papers

None.

Equality Implications

None

Human Rights Implications

None.

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

None.

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List of Appendices

Corporate Complaints and Compliments Annual Report 2025 – 26

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