

**CABINET - 8 SEPTEMBER 2026****CORPORATE COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS
ANNUAL REPORT 2025-2026****REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE RESOURCES****PART A****Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to advise the Cabinet of the Council's Corporate Complaints and Compliments Annual Report for the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026, appended to this report.
2. The Annual Report includes information on complaint handling performance for cases managed under the Corporate Complaint Procedure and includes trends, themes, and matters of general importance.

Recommendations

3. It is recommended that the Cabinet notes the Corporate Complaints and Compliments Annual Report 2025-2026.

Reasons for Recommendation

4. To ensure good governance and oversight of complaint handling performance and responsiveness.

Timetable for Decisions (including Scrutiny)

5. The Scrutiny Commission will consider the Annual Report at its meeting on 2 September 2026, and its comments will be reported to the Cabinet.
6. The Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Adults and Cultural Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee will consider annual reports regarding social care complaints at their meetings on 1 September and 7 September respectively.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

7. The County Council's Corporate Complaints Procedure requires the production of an annual report pertaining to cases managed under the

Corporate Complaints Procedure (paragraph 6.1 'Publishing complaints data'). Annual reports are available on the Council's website.

8. Additionally, statutory complaints processes set out requirements for reporting annual performance and this is mirrored in recommended reporting arrangements set out in the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Complaints Handling Code, 'Organisations should produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report for scrutiny and challenge' (paragraph 8.1 of the Complaint Handling Code).

Resource Implications

9. There are no resource implications arising from this report.
10. The Chief Legal Officer and Monitoring Officer has been consulted on this report.

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

11. None.

Officer(s) to Contact

Lucy Littlefair
Assistant Director: Corporate Services
Tel: 0116 305 6123
Email: Lucy.littlefair@leics.gov.uk

Alicia Lanham
Head of Business Services
Tel: 0116 305 8414
Email: Alicia.lanham@leics.gov.uk

Chelsea O'Neill
Complaints and Information Manager
Corporate Resources Dept.
Tel: 0116 305 6243
Email: Chelsea.oneill@leics.gov.uk

PART B

Background

12. The Council manages and coordinates complaints using one of three policies and associated processes, these are:
 - 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).
13. 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 also includes some figures in relation to statutory case volumes for completeness.
14. The annual reports relating to the two statutory processes are considered at their respective Overview and Scrutiny Committees in September each year.
15. The Council's annual Corporate Complaints and Compliments Report is produced by its Complaints and Information Service and provides an insight on the key trends pertaining to complaints and compliments as well as wider case information.
16. 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 given below.

Headlines

Demand/Volume

17. The headline data in respect of demand and volume for 2025/2026 is set out below (with 2024-25 comparative data in brackets) -
 - a) A total of 1,630 corporate complaints were received – a 26% increase (1,287) from 2024/2025. This is 224 complaints per 100,000 service users.
 - b) The Children and Family Services and Environment and Transport (now Growth, 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

18. The top five service areas where complaints cases were closed were:

- SENA
- Child Protection.
- School and SEN Transport.
- SENA School Place.
- Highway Repair and Maintenance.

Stage 1 response times

19. The Council's Complaints Procedure allows for up to 40 working days (from the date of receipt by the Council) to 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.

20. 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 to.

- 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

21. 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.

22. 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.

23. 39% of all Stage 2 complaints received a response within 20 working days. This has decreased from 2024/25 (51%). To assist with efficiency of responding to complaints and create consistency, the Complaints Team created a complaint template response to be used across services.

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO)

Enquiries

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

Decisions Upheld

25. A total of 27 (33%) of the 118 decisions were investigated, with 25 of the 27 upheld, giving an uphold rate of 89%. Adjusted for Leicestershire's population, this is 3.4 upheld decisions per 100,000 residents (4.5 for 2024/25 and the 2025/26 average for similar authorities is 5.2).

Upheld Cases

26. There has been a reduction in the overall number of upheld cases from 33 to 25, of which:
- Education and other Children's Services received 17 (the top two were 6 cases for SENA and reviews and 6 cases for SEN provision and Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs).
 - Adult Social Care received 8 (4 of which were cases relating to domiciliary care).
27. 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'*.
28. The LGSCO's annual report states that Education made up 17% of complaints it received in 2025/26, with the main cause for upholding being SEN assessment and reviews and SEN Provision and EHCPs.
29. 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

30. 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.
31. 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 (1 and 2) of its complaints procedure.

Public Reports and Compliance

32. 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.
33. Cases that raise serious issues, highlight matters of public interest, or cases of non-compliance can lead to the LGSCO issuing a Public Report. The LGSCO did not issue any public reports against the Council during 2025/2026, and the Council complied with all its recommendations.

Compliments

34. 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

Comments of the Scrutiny Commission

35. The Scrutiny Commission will consider the Complaints and Compliments Annual Report at its meeting on 2 September 2026 and its comments will be report to the Cabinet.

Conclusion

36. Complaints can be valuable in helping to identify recurring or underlying problems and potential improvements. Lessons can usually be learned from complaints that were upheld, but also sometimes in cases where no fault was found but the opportunity to improve services is identified. This mainly included training and communication to staff. Improvements were made to the quality of final responses to improve consistency and clarity of response, training was completed on the complaints process across services, complaint categories were developed to improve accuracy of recording and to better assist in root cause analysis.
37. Occasionally issues will emerge that need to be addressed over and above the original complaint. The Complaints and Information Team will always seek to look at the “bigger picture” to ensure that residents receive the best possible service from the Council.

Equality Implications

38. There are no equality implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

Human Rights Implications

39. There are no human rights implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

Background Papers

Leicestershire County Council Corporate Complaints Policy

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2023-05/corporate-complaints-policy-2023.pdf>

Report to the Cabinet on 12 September 2025 - Corporate Complaints and Compliments Annual Report 2024/25

<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=7879>

Appendix

Corporate Complaints and Compliments Annual Report 2025-2026

This page is intentionally left blank