



APPENDIX 3

2024-25 SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT & SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN & THE HOUSING OMBUDSMAN DECISIONS

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1 INTRODUCTION AND SCOPE OF REPORT

This is Sheffield City Council's Annual Ombudsman Report for the period of 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025.

Sheffield City Council currently acts as Landlord for 41,263 homes.

This report summarises findings by the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) and the Housing Ombudsman (HOS) during the twelve-month period, from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025, in respect of Sheffield City Council (SCC).

The 2024-25 LGSCO and HOS Annual Letters are appended to this report as **Appendix A** (LGSCO) and **Appendix B** (HOS)

The 2024-25 Ombudsman Report Data Tables is appended to this report at **Appendix C**.

2 COMPLAINT POLICY

- 2.1** Sheffield City Council welcomes complaints as an opportunity to maintain high quality performance and a gateway to consistently review and improve the quality of the services offered to customers.
- 2.2** When a customer makes a complaint, their complaint will be handled through the approach set out in Sheffield City Council's Corporate Complaint Policy and procedures. We will do this irrespective of where and how customers make their complaint.
- 2.3** Sheffield City Council has a two staged approach when dealing with complaints. See: [Complain about a council service | Sheffield City Council](#)
- 2.4** Following a Housing Ombudsman Complaint Policy Review in June 2025, Sheffield City Council's Complaint Policy has been revised and updated in line with the recommendations made.

3. OMBUDSMAN PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS 2024-25

3.1 LOCAL GOVERNMENT & SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN FINDINGS

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

The Ombudsman has published an interactive map of council performance showing annual performance data for all councils in England, with links to published decision statements, public interest reports, annual letters and information about service improvements that have been agreed by each council. It also highlights those instances where each authority offered a suitable

remedy to resolve a complaint before the matter came to the Ombudsman and reports the authority's compliance with the recommendations made to remedy complaints. See:

[Sheffield City Council - Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman](#)

In July 2025, the LGSCO wrote only to organisations where there was exceptional practice or where there were concerns about an organisation's complaint handling. Sheffield City Council did not receive such a specific letter but publication of the LGSCO's findings were published on its website (as detailed above) on 16th July 2025. See **Appendix A**

The LGSCO has sent the Council all findings made in the year ending the 31 March 2025.

3.1.1 Appendix A1 sets out a summary of all the cases referred to the LGSCO, (138), those formally investigated, (22) and the 16 upheld findings made by the LGSCO. This includes the remedies agreed by the council and lessons learned.

3.1.2 Appendix C – sets out various data tables and comparator information with other authorities by department and outcome.

3.1.3 The significant findings in the LGSCO's Annual Letter are summarised below:

3.1.4 The LGSCO received 138 complaints. This represents a 4% (6) decrease on the previous year. A breakdown of complaints/enquiries by category is provided at **Appendix C (Table 2)**.

Nationally, the top three LGSCO highest complaint service areas were Education & Children's Services 27%, Housing 17%, and Adult Services 13%. This compares with Sheffield City Council's top three highest complaint areas: Education & Children's Services (22%); Housing Services (18%) and Adults (17%)

3.1.5 Of the 22 cases which the LGSCO formally investigated, 16 cases were upheld in the year to March 31st, 2025, compared to 20 cases in the previous year. See **Appendix A1**

To put this figure into context, the Ombudsman investigated 22 cases out of 7,899 complaints handled by the council, compared with 24 out of 8,634 in 2023-2024. This gives an escalation rate of 0.3% (22/7899) of overall cases requiring formal investigation and 0.2% (16/7899) of cases upheld by the Ombudsman.

2024-25 LGSCO SUMMARY FINDINGS:

The LGSCO formally investigated 22 cases.

Upheld rate – 73% (16) compared with 81% for similar authorities

- 2.8 upheld decisions per 100,000 residents compared with 3.5 in the previous year and the average of 4.7 upheld decisions per 100,000 residents for authorities of this type.
- 25% (4 of the 16 upheld cases), the Council had provided a satisfactory remedy before the complaint reached the Ombudsman. This is higher than the average of 13% for similar authorities.

Compliance – Ten cases were recorded for compliance outcomes and the Council achieved 100% compliance rate with the recommendations made.

Summary of the sixteen LGSCO upheld cases by Service Area:

- Strategic Support Services – Revenue & Benefits – 5
- Children's Service Social Care – 1
- Children's Service Education & Skills (SEN) – 2
- Children's Service Education Other - 2
- Adults Wellbeing & Care Services – Care Governance & Financial Inclusion – 3
- Adults Wellbeing & Care Services – Living & Aging Well Long-Term Support - 1
- Neighbourhoods Service – Streetscene & Regulations – Parking – 1
- Neighbourhoods Service – Streetscene & Regulations – Environmental & Waste – 1

The top three categories most upheld were Revenue & Benefits 31% (5); Children Services 31% (5) and Adults Services 25% (4). This compares with the most upheld by category of similar authorities: Education & Children's Services (44%) and Adults Services (25%).

3.1.6 The LGSCO website shows that the Council's upheld rate of 73% (16/22) is lower than that of similar authorities – 81%.

This may be interpreted as 2.8 upheld decisions per 100,000 residents. This is lower than the average for authorities of this type - 4.7 upheld decisions per 100,000.

3.1.7 The Council has provided satisfactory remedies in 25% (4/16) of cases upheld by the Ombudsman which is better than the average for similar authorities of 13% and the national average of 12%.

3.1.8 Compliance rates show the proportion of cases in which the LGSCO was satisfied their recommendations had been implemented. Ten cases were recorded for compliance outcomes. Sheffield City Council had a 100% compliance rate with these recommendations. This is in line with the average of 100% achieved by similar authorities and higher than the national compliance rate of 99.7%.

Timely compliance is important; it helps to rebuild customer/residents' confidence when we carry out recommendations within the agreed timeframe.

3.1.9 For service improvements and learnings from the LGSCO findings, please see section 4.1 below.

3.2 HOUSING OMBUDSMAN FINDINGS

On 18th June 2025, the Housing Ombudsman (HOS) wrote to organisations where five or more findings were identified on cases determined between 1 April 2024 and 31st March 2025 - the results of which are published on its website (as detailed below). See: **Appendix B**

[Landlords Archive - Housing Ombudsman](#)

Appendix B1 sets out a summary of the upheld findings made by the HOS, the remedies agreed by the council and lessons learned.

Appendix C – sets out various data tables and comparator information with other authorities by department and outcome. See Table 3.

Appendix D provides a glossary of the Housing Ombudsman's terminology/definitions.

3.2.1 Thirteen determinations were initially recorded for Sheffield City Council. However, as two were 'Outside Jurisdiction (OSJ)', these were disregarded, which reduced the number of cases determined (decided upon) to 11. To put this figure into context, the Ombudsman determined 11 cases out of 7,899 complaints handled by the council. This gives an escalation rate of 0.14% (11/7899) of overall cases, and 0.1% (9/7899) of upheld cases.

3.2.2 The significant findings in the HOS Annual Letter are summarised below:

The HOS formally investigated 11 cases.

Maladministration rate – 83% compared with 80% for similar authorities and 71% nationally.

Of the twenty-three findings, the top three categories for findings for Maladministration were:

- Property condition 82%, compared with the national average of 73%
- Anti-Social Behaviour 67%, compared with the national average of 66%
- Complaint Handling 100%, compared with the national average of 77%

There were no HO complaint handling failure orders compared with 1 in the previous year.

Compensation - Following the determinations, SCC was ordered to pay compensation on nine out of the eleven cases determined which was a total of £9,098 compared with £14,320 in the previous year.

Compliance – The Council received forty Orders and met 100% compliance with all orders.

Summary of the nine HOS upheld cases by Service Area:

- Neighbourhoods Service – Repairs & Maintenance Service – 5
- Neighbourhoods Service – Housing – 1
- Neighbourhoods Service – Neighbour Nuisance ASB -1
- Neighbourhoods Service – Repairs & Maintenance Service and Housing Neighbourhood Support Team-1
- Neighbourhoods Service – Housing Allocation/Rehousing - 1

3.2.3 Twenty-five findings were made by the HOS. However, as two findings were out of jurisdiction, these were disregarded. Of the remaining twenty-three findings, nineteen related to maladministration/service failure findings. This compares with seven cases determined and seventeen individual maladministration/service failure findings in the previous year.

3.2.4 **Appendix C, Table 4** details the 23 findings as follows:

- 19 of these findings were maladministration/service failure findings (found on 9 out of the 11 cases).
- 3 findings related to NO maladministration being found.
- 1 finding was related to reasonable redress

3.2.5 The HOS found Sheffield City Council's Maladministration rate to be 83% (19 out of the 23 findings), which related to nine of the eleven cases investigated. This compares with the national average of 71% and an average of 80% for Landlords of a similar size.

3.2.6 It should be noted that 54% (6 out of the 11) cases determined in 2024-25, related to complaints received and responded to by the Council in the 2022-23 reporting year. If these cases had been determined in that same reporting period, the maladministration rate for 2024-25 would have been reduced.

3.2.7 Severe Maladministration: Six out of the twenty-five findings related to complaint handling resulting in a 24% severe maladministration rate in this area. This compares with a national average of 5% complaint handling severe maladministration rate. For Local authorities of a similar size (10-50,000 units) the national average was 5%.

The six severe maladministration findings related to four Housing Repairs & Maintenance Service cases as follows:

- 1x in the landlord's handling of responsive repairs needed in the property.

- 1 x in the landlord's handling of damp and mould, and concerns about the structural safety of the property.
- 2 x in the landlord's handling of the associated complaints.
- 1 x in the landlords handling of the residents reports of a leaking pipe in the bathroom, repairs, damp and mould and subsequent temporary housing.
- 1 x in the landlord's record keeping.

For service improvements which address these issues please see section 4.2 below.

3.2.8 Maladministration: The top 3 categories for findings of Maladministration were:

- (i) Property Condition (82%) compared with local authorities of a similar size (74% and the national average of (73%)
- (ii) Antisocial Behaviour (61%) compared with local authorities of a similar size (74%) and the national average of (66%), and
- (iii) Complaint Handling (100%) compared with local authorities of a similar size (81%) and the national average of (77%)

If complaint handling was not a cause for failure, the Council's maladministration rate (83%) would have been reduced to 61%.

However, there has been a positive improvement in the Council's complaint handling performance since the previous year, reducing from 47% (9 out of 19 findings) to 22% (5 out of 23 findings).

3.2.9 The Council did not receive any Complaint Handling Failure Orders, compared with 1 in the previous year.

3.2.10 Following these Determinations, the Council was ordered to pay compensation regarding nine out of the eleven cases, totalling £9,098 compared with £14,320 in the previous year. Compensation categories were as follows:

- Property Condition - £6,047.87
- Complaints Handling - £1,600
- Anti-Social Behaviour - £1,300

3.2.11 The Council received 40 Orders and met 100% compliance with all these orders.

3.2.12 For service improvements which address these issues please see section 4.2 below.

4. SERVICES SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS

We aim to learn from complaints, so that we do not repeat the same problem.

4.1 LGSCO examples of key learning/service improvements include:

- Formal review of complaints policy undertaken in response to complaint handling codes issued by HOS. Changes effective from 01/10/25 for all Council service areas (**Complaints Team/all services**)

- The Council will issue a staff briefing to remind Council and Hallam24 Healthcare staff, where relevant, of the importance of reassessing and completing reviews of care plans in a timely manner; following care plans; and raising concerns about care plan tasks when necessary to avoid tasks being uncompleted. This will help to ensure all care needs of service users are met and reviewed in a timely manner, without delay.
- The Council will provide staff training about good communication when making and communicating decisions to service users. This will help to ensure clarity and avoid confusion when the Council is making and communicating decisions to service users. **(Adults Care Services – Safeguarding)**
- The Council will remind all waste management staff, including managers, what its waste management policy is. Specifically, that its policy says supported living waste is classed as domestic waste and is therefore eligible for free domestic waste collections. **(Refuse & Recycling)**
- The Council accepted that it should have investigated this complaint jointly with an NHS Trust. The Council said its complaints manager would review the Council's protocols for joint complaint handling with a view to ensuring that future opportunities for joint working are not missed. **(Children's Services Child Protection/Complaints Team)**
- The Council agree to review its process, including any standard or template letters, for responding to council tax reductions reviews to ensure it informs people of their rights to appeal relevant decisions to the Valuation Tribunal. **(Council Tax Support)**
- Provide a copy of the EOTAS policy to evidence it is acting following the fault identified in this case. **(Education, Special Educational Needs)**
- The Council has agreed to provide the Ombudsman with evidence it has reminded education staff that the Council should consider its section 19 duty to pupils from the fifteenth day of absence from school and clearly record its decision making at that time. **(Education, Alternate Provision)**
- By training or other means remind relevant staff of the importance of adhering to the Council's complaint policy times. **(Adult Care Services, Assessment & Care Plan)**

4.2 Housing & Repairs Services Continuous Improvements:

- Housing Services (including Repairs & Maintenance) have a Complaints sub-group which is dedicated to ensuring alignment and adherence to the Housing Ombudsman Self-Assessment and to work collaboratively to improve overall performance.
- The Transparency Involvement and Accountability Board (internal officer group) monitors performance and supports a culture of service improvements identified through customer feedback, complaints and sector wide insights and best practice.
- The Planning, Performance & Involvement Team are working with tenant groups to identify areas where the Council can improve, including through scrutiny via the Mystery Shopper initiative (including Call Centre).
- The Regulator Social Housing (RSH), Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM's) saw increased performance across the following related perception measures:
 - Satisfaction that the landlord listens to tenant views and acts upon them – 5% improvement.
 - Agreement that the landlord treats tenants fairly and with respect – 2% improvement.
 - Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling complaints – 9% improvement
- A new (Anti-Social Behaviour Policy) was approved at the Communities, Parks, and Leisure Committee in June 2024.
- Created and launched tenant friendly documents on How to Report ASB (Our Procedure) and a Good Neighbour Guide in July 2024.

- A new Compensation Policy was approved at the Housing Policy Committee in January 2025.
- Feedback from complaints and other sources tells us that customers are unhappy with how long it takes to report a repair via the call-centre. In response, a new 24/7 automated telephone line for reporting repairs has been implemented to help reduce call-waiting times, along with an improved online ordering facility.
- A dedicated option on our call-centre customer menu has been introduced for customers wanting to report damp and mould issues, allowing their calls to be prioritised and be routed to staff with the right.
- In Repairs & Maintenance Service we have reviewed and reallocated coordinator resource across repairs to support Investigating Managers and introduced a temporary Customer Services Team Leader role to improve complaints handling within Repairs with a particular focus (for this role) on Stage 1 responses.
- There has of course been wider improvement activity across repairs with a significant focus on improving the number of overdue repairs and we are seeing numbers improve – whilst this is not specifically complaints handling per se but, in reducing the number of overdue repairs we would aim to see the number of complaints start to reduce.
- Reviewed our approach to damp & mould so as to ensure the Council is prepared and complies with Awaabs Law.
- Housing & Repairs Services, plan to improve Officer awareness and compliance of the revised Complaints Policy (due Oct 2025) - including and reiterating a two-staged policy, accurate recording of complaints in the case management system (CRM), qualitative and timely responses at all stages of the complaints policy.
- Housing Transformation and Improvement overview - As part of the Future Sheffield Programme, Housing Transformation is a priority in 25/26 and beyond. It will place customer experience at its heart as we design services for the future. We are committed to improving every customer interaction. That means each part of the service, team or process they are in contact with will be focused more on meeting their needs in the best way possible. We will do this by using new digital tools, new ways of working, and streamlined processes.
- Following an Order from the Housing Ombudsman by February 2025 the following must have taken place:
'All staff with responsibility for investigating housing complaints will have training on complaint handling within the next 12 months. The training should be in line with the guidance within the HO's Complaint Handling Code.'

This is being monitored and tracked with the Transparency, Involvement and Accountability Board. This will be important learning to all staff and give awareness of individual accountability.

4.3 What else are we doing to improve this area of performance in 2025-26?

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

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

5. APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT:



Appendix A -Sheffield
City Council LGSCO A



Appendix B 2024-25
HOS Landlord Report



Appendix A1
2024-25 LGSCO Cases



Appendix B1 -
2024-25 Housing Ombudsman



Appendix C -
2024-25 Ombudsman Report



Appendix D - HOS
Definitions.docx

- Appendix A – Sheffield City Council’s annual letter from the LGSCO
- Appendix B - Sheffield City Council’s annual letter from the HOS
- Appendix A1 – Summary of cases and lessons learnt – LGSCO
- Appendix B1 – Summary of upheld cases and lessons learnt – HOS
- Appendix C – Ombudsman Report Data Tables
- Appendix D – Glossary of the Housing Ombudsman’s definitions

