



Coventry City Council

Cabinet Member for Policy and Leadership

12 November 2025

Audit and Procurement Committee

24 November 2025

Ethics Committee

8 January 2026

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member for Policy and Leadership – Councillor G Duggins

Director approving submission of the report:

Chief Executive

Ward(s) affected:

All

Title:

Complaints to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman 2024/25

Is this a key decision?

No

Executive summary:

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) is the final stage for complaints about Councils, all adult social care providers (including care homes and home care agencies) and some other organisations providing local public services. It is a free service that investigates complaints in a fair and independent way and provides a means of redress to individuals for injustice caused by unfair treatment or service failure.

Coventry City Council's complaints policy sets out how individual members of the public can complain to the Council, as well as how the Council will handle their compliments, comments and complaints. The Council also informs individuals of their rights to contact the LGSCO if they are not happy with the Council's decision once they have exhausted the Council's complaints process.

The LGSCO issues an annual letter to the Leader and Chief Executive of every Council, summarising the number and trends of complaints dealt with relating to that Council that year. The latest letter, issued 21 July 2025, covers complaints to the LGSCO relating to Coventry City Council between April 2024 and March 2025 (2024/25).

This report sets out the number, trends and outcomes of complaints to the LGSCO relating to Coventry City Council in 2024/25. It focuses on upheld complaints, service areas with a high number of complaints, compliance with Ombudsman's

recommendations, learning from complaints, comparisons with prior years, and how we compare to other local authorities.

Recommendations:

The Cabinet Member for Policy and Leadership is recommended to:

1. Consider the Council's performance in relation to complaints to the LGSCO.
2. Note the Council's updated complaints process and guidance.
3. Request the Audit and Procurement Committee to review and be assured that the Council takes appropriate action in response to complaints investigated and where the Council is found to be at fault.

The Audit and Procurement Committee is recommended to:

1. Consider the Council's performance in relation to complaints to the LGSCO.
2. Note the Council's updated complaints process and guidance.
3. Review and be assured that the Council takes appropriate actions in response to complaints investigated and where the Council is found to be at fault.

The Ethics Committee is recommended to:

1. Comment on the findings.
2. Consider the Council's performance in relation to complaints to the LGSCO complaints that were upheld.
3. Note the Council's updated complaints process and guidance.

List of appendices included:

Appendix 1: Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual Review Letter 2025

Appendix 2: Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Investigation Decisions in 2024/25 for Coventry City Council

Background papers:

None

Other useful documents

[Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman Annual Review of Local Government Complaints 2024-25](#)

Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

No

Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?

Yes – Audit and Procurement Committee on 24th November 2025 and Ethics Committee on 8th January 2026.

Will this report go to Council?

No

Report title:**Complaints to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman 2024/25****1 Context (or background)**

- 1.1 The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) is the final stage for complaints about Councils, all adult social care providers (including care homes and home care agencies) and some other organisations providing local public services. It is a free service that investigates complaints in a fair and independent way and provides a means of redress to individuals for injustice caused by unfair treatment or service failure.
- 1.2 Coventry City Council's complaints policy, published on the Council's website at www.coventry.gov.uk/complaints/, sets out how individual members of the public can complain to the Council, as well as how the Council will handle their compliments, comments and complaints. The Council also informs individuals of their rights to contact the LGSCO if they are not happy with the Council's decision once they have exhausted the Council's complaints process.
- 1.3 The LGSCO issues an annual letter to the Leader and Chief Executive of every Council, summarising the number and trends of complaints dealt with relating to that Council that year. The latest letter, issued 21 July 2025, covers complaints to the LGSCO relating to Coventry City Council between April 2024 and March 2025 (2024/25). The letter can be found in Appendix I.
- 1.4 This report sets out the number, trends and outcomes of complaints to the LGSCO relating to Coventry City Council in 2024/25. This report focuses on upheld complaints, service areas with a high number of complaints, learning from complaints, comparisons with prior years, and how we compare to other local authorities.
- 1.5 The Council has a robust and transparent policy for handling complaints. In addition to this annual report, the Council also produces formal reports on complaints about adult social care and children's social care, to Cabinet Member Adult Services and Cabinet Member Children and Young People respectively.

2 Options considered and recommended proposal

- 2.1 Across all Councils, the LGSCO received 20,773 complaints and enquiries in 2024/25, up 2836 (+16%) from 17,937 the previous year. The areas receiving the greatest number of detailed investigations were Children's Services (5,652), Housing (3,621), and Adult Services (2,777).
- 2.2 For Coventry City Council, the LGSCO received 101 complaints and enquiries in 2024/25, which is 21 more (+26%) than the previous year (80).

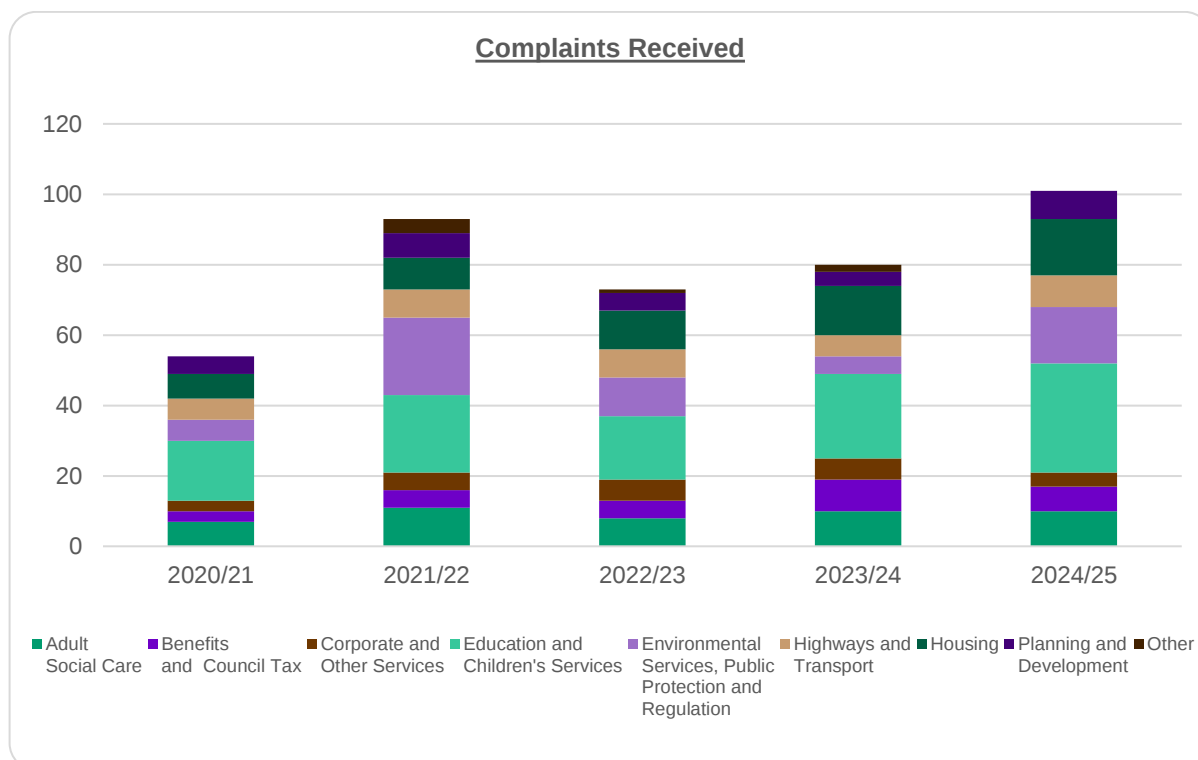
2.3 Figure 1.

Figure 1: Complaints and enquiries received by category

Category (as defined by LGSCO)	Complaints in 2023/24	Complaints in 2024/25	Change in Year
Adult care services	10	10	0
Benefits and Council tax	9	7	-2
Corporate & other services	6	4	-2
Children's and Education services	24	31	7
Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation	5	16	11
Highways & transport	6	9	3
Housing	14	16	2
Planning & development	4	8	4
Other	2	0	2
Total	80	101	21

2.4 Figure 2 sets out how the number of complaints and enquiries received by the LGSCO in last 7 years.

Figure 2: Complaints and enquiries received in last 5 years



2.5 In 2024/25 the LGSCO received 21 more complaints and enquiries relating to Coventry than in 2023/24 (**101 in 2024/25** compared to **80** in 2023/24). The category with the highest number of complaints and enquiries remained Children's and Education Services with 31 (up 29% from 24 in 2023/24), while the service with the greatest percentage increase was Environmental Services, up 320% (up from 5 to 16 in 2024/25). However, there was a decrease (33%) from 6 to 4 complaints in Corporate and Other Services in 2024/25. Benefits and Council Tax also saw a decrease in complaints from 9 to 7 (22%).

2.6 It is not possible to comment on the Council's overall performance based solely upon the number of complaints or enquiries to the LGSCO. Interpretation is challenging in relation to number, as a high number of complaints may indicate that a Council has been effective at signposting people to the LGSCO through their complaints handling process. Equally it could be argued that a high number of complaints may highlight that a Council needs to do more to resolve issues through its own complaints process and so save customers from needing to escalate their complaints to the LGSCO.

2.7 When dealing with an enquiry, the LGSCO can choose to investigate cases where it sees merit in doing so. Following an investigation, the LGSCO can decide if a complaint is:

- **upheld** – where a council has been at fault and this fault may or may not have caused an injustice to the complainant; or where a council has accepted it needs to remedy the complaint before the LGSCO makes a finding on fault; or
- **not upheld** – where, following investigation, the LGSCO decides that a council has not acted with fault.

2.8 In 2024/25 the LGSCO made **101** decisions relating to Coventry City Council, an increase of **32** from the previous year:

- **4 x** incomplete/invalid.
- **0 x** advice given.
- **22 x** 'referred back' for local resolution.
- **53 x** closed after initial enquiries; and
- **22 x** complaints investigated, of which **17** were upheld and **5** were not upheld.

2.9 The number of complaints investigated (**22** in 2024/25) was up on 2023/24 (just 8) but on a par with 2022/23 (20).

- The LGSCO upheld 77% of complaints investigated in 2024/25 (17 out of 22). Excepting 2023/24's unusually low figures (33%, 3 out of 8), 2024/25's total is the same in absolute case numbers (17) as investigated in 2022/23, while percentage-wise it is slightly lower overall (77% 2024/25 compared to 85% 2022/23). It is also not too dissimilar from the preceding years (71% 2021/22; 77% 2020/21).
- This compares to the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) statistical neighbours' upheld rate of 79%, West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) upheld rate of 83% and a national upheld rate of 83% for 2024/25.
- The tables below, set out how Coventry compares to its CIPFA statistical peers (Figure 3) and with the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) constituent authorities (Figure 4).

Figure 3: Complaints investigated: Comparison with CIPFA peers 2024/25

Overall, 79% of complaints were upheld among Coventry and its 15 statistically equivalent peers. The authority with the highest percentage of complaints upheld in 2024/25 was Kirklees (94%), followed by Derby (93%), with Medway the lowest (63%). Coventry ranked 10th, with 77% upheld.

Local Authority	Total	Not Upheld	Upheld	% Upheld
Kirklees	17	1	16	94%
Derby	14	1	13	93%
Sandwell	16	2	14	88%
Wolverhampton	8	1	7	88%
Rochdale	13	2	11	85%
Bristol	46	8	38	83%
Salford	11	2	9	82%
Bolton	10	2	8	80%
Blackburn and Darwin	9	2	7	78%
Coventry	22	5	17	77%
Bradford	34	8	26	76%

Leicester	23	6	17	74%
Sheffield	22	6	16	73%
Oldham	11	3	8	73%
Medway	24	9	15	63%

Figure 4: Complaints investigated: Comparison with WMCA constituent authorities 2024/25

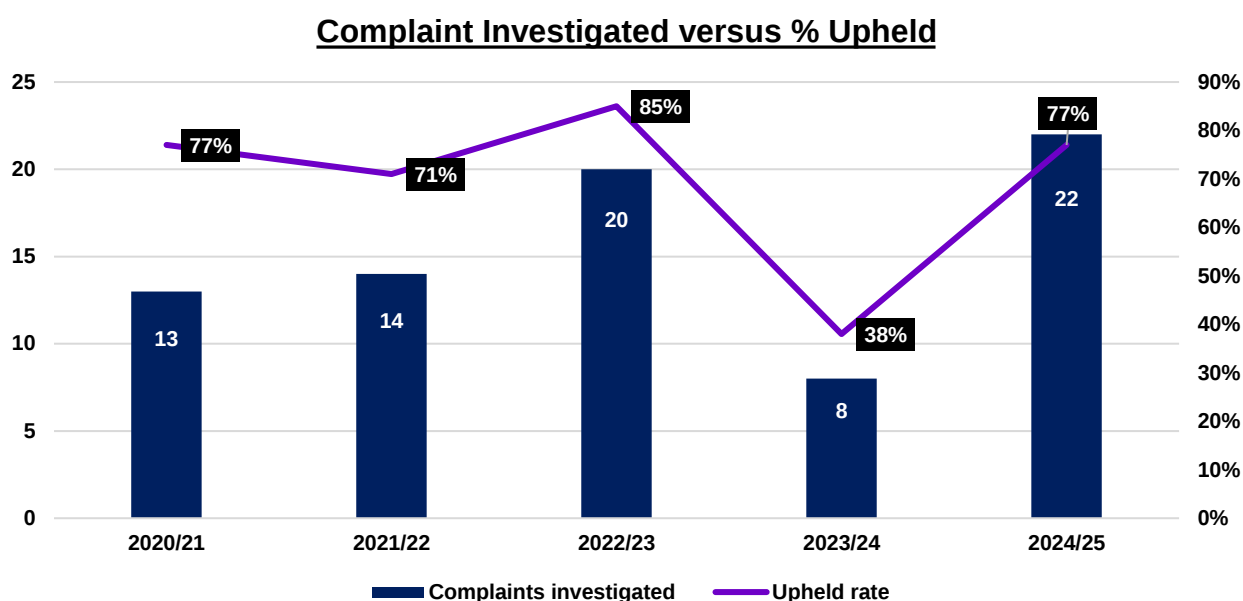
Of 204 complaints investigated across the seven constituent areas of the WMCA, 169 (83%) were upheld and 35 were not upheld. The authority with the highest percentage of complaints upheld in 2024/25 was Solihull (89%), followed closely by Walsall, Wolverhampton and Sandwell on 88%. while the lowest was Coventry had the lowest upheld percentage across the WMCA (77%).

The Ombudsman has made us aware that they are being more selective about the complaints they consider in detail, prioritising where it is in the public interest to investigate. Because the Ombudsman is now less likely to carry out investigations on 'borderline' issues, they are naturally finding a higher proportion of fault overall.

Local Authority	Total	Not Upheld	Upheld	% Upheld
Solihull	18	2	16	89%
Walsall	8	1	7	88%
Birmingham	114	20	94	82%
Wolverhampton	8	1	7	88%
Sandwell	16	2	14	88%
Dudley	18	4	14	78%
Coventry	22	5	17	77%

Figure 5: Complaints investigated, and percentage upheld over the last 5 years

Figure 5 sets out how the number of Coventry's complaints investigated, and the percentage of complaints upheld by the LGSCO for the last 5 years.



2.10 Following an investigation, the LGSCO will typically issue a statement setting out its findings and decision. If the LGSCO decides there was fault or maladministration causing an injustice to the complainant, it will typically recommend that a council take some action to address it. Wherever possible the LGSCO will publish decision statements on its website, except where the content of the report could identify the individual complainant. In some cases, where the LGSCO upholds a complaint, the LGSCO may choose to issue a formal report of maladministration.

2.11 In 2024/25, the Ombudsman reported that the Council agreed to, and carried out, the recommendations made in fourteen cases during the year. Of all cases that required remedies from the Ombudsman, the Council completed 100% of these within the given timescales.

2.12 There were 12 complaints that resulted in some form of financial redress or reimbursement (£10,875)

2.13 The following table, Figure 6, sets out details about the complaints that the LGSCO investigated by service area.

Figure 6: Complaints investigated by service area in 2023/24 compared to 2024/25

Service area	2023/24				2024/25			
	Upheld	Not upheld	% upheld	Response time (days)	Upheld	Not upheld	% upheld	Response time (days)
Adult social care	2	0	100%	22	4	1	80%	30
Bereavement Services				0	0	1	0%	3
Children's services	0	2	0%	33	5	0	100%	16

Education Services	0	0	0%	0	3	0	100%	16
Corporate & Other Services	0	1	0%	9	1	2	0%	7
Highways	1	0	100%	5				
Housing services	0	1	0%	7	3	1	80%	4
Planning	0	1	0%	2				
Regulatory Services				0	1	0	100%	22
Total	3	5	33%	13	17	5	77%	14

2.14 This year saw an increase in the number of detailed investigations completed: 22 in 2024/25 compared to 8 in 2023/24. These related to Adult Social Care, Children's Services, Housing Service, Regulatory Services and Blue Badges.

2.15 The LGSCO typically expects Councils to respond to investigation enquiries within 20 working days. In 2024/25 Coventry averaged 14 working days.

2.16 Satisfactory remedy decisions are complaints where the Ombudsman has decided that while the authority did get things wrong, the authority had offered a satisfactory way to resolve it before the complaint was referred to the Ombudsman. In 2024/25 the LGSCO found that in 12% (2 of 17) of upheld cases Coventry had provided a satisfactory remedy before the complaint reached the Ombudsman. This compares to 13% in similar authorities nationally.

Figure 7: Satisfactory remedy provided before the complaint reached the Ombudsman comparison with other WMCA constituent authorities

Of 169 complaints upheld in WMCA area the Ombudsman considered that in only 16 cases the authority had provided a satisfactory remedy before the complaint reached them (9%).

Local Authority	Upheld cases where the authority had provided a satisfactory remedy before the complaint reached the Ombudsman		Total Number of complaints upheld
	%	Number	
Coventry	12%	2	17
Dudley	0%	0	14
Birmingham	5%	5	94
Sandwell	14%	2	14
Walsall	14%	1	7
Solihull	25%	4	16
Wolverhampton	29%	2	7

2.17 The LGSCO Annual Review Letter recognises compliance with Ombudsman's recommendations, which is published on the [interactive data map of council performance](#) which shows performance data for all councils in England. In 2024/25

the Ombudsman was satisfied we successfully implemented all their recommendations 100%, which matched the national average. This was based on 14 compliance outcomes - 4 Adult Care Services, 7 Children and Education Services, 2 Housing Service and 1 Corporate and Other Services.

2.18 Following their investigations, the LGSCO recommended some changes be made to the Council's processes and procedures. A summary of the recommendations is set out in the Learning from complaints table (Figure 8). Further details about the outcomes of each of the complaints investigated this year and the actions taken are set out in Appendix 2.

2.19 Figure 8: Learning from complaints

Service Area	Summary of actions agreed
Adult Social Care (ASC)	- Remind staff in its ASC service about the importance of taking proactive steps to consider suitable support at the earliest opportunity in cases where there are reports of domestic violence, to try to prevent the situation escalating. - Remind relevant staff of the duties in safeguarding adults who have mental capacity to make decisions. - Deliver training to staff in the initial contact team around recognising when parents need support. - Remind staff responsible for responding to complaints to have regard to the potential injustice identified faults and failures may have had on individuals, or those acting on their behalf, acknowledge this, and consider whether any additional remedy is appropriate on a case-by-case basis. - Remind ASC and its safeguarding staff to respond to reasonable questions and enquiries without delay or acknowledge receipt and inform individuals of when the Council can respond. This includes circumstances where the Council may be experiencing an increase in demand which limits its ability to respond as soon as it aims to.
Children Services	- Ensure staff are aware that once a complaint has entered Stage 1 of the Children's statutory procedure the Council is obliged to ensure that the complaint proceeds to Stages 2 and 3 of the procedure if the is the complainant's wish. - The Council must complete Stage 2 investigations within the required timescales of the Children's statutory complaints procedure.
Education Services	- Identify what steps the Council needs to take to ensure it has access to information relating to its actions and decision-making around a child's education when a member of staff leaves their role. - Provide guidance to staff of its duty to reassess and produce Education and Health Care Plans within the correct timescales. This includes issuing notification letters to parents about the Council's intention to maintain, amend or discontinue Education and Health Care Plans within four weeks of an annual review meeting, and to produce a final Education and Health Care Plan within 12 weeks of an annual review meeting.

	• Provide training and guidance to staff about the Council's statutory duty to provide educational provision within a child's EHC Plan, including that this duty does not end if a child is not accessing education in a school setting. • Provide guidance and training to staff about the Council's responsibility to provide education for children who are missing school, through illness or otherwise, when a child has been absent for 15 cumulative or consecutive days. • Produce an action plan to demonstrate how the Council will meet statutory timescales for annual reviews for Education, Health and Care plans. • Review its out of school procedures to ensure it meets its duties to secure alternative provision.
Housing	• The Council is to draw up procedures or guidance for considering homelessness applications where children might reasonably be expected to reside with the applicant when domestic abuse is a factor. This is to ensure officers appropriately consider if there is good reason to seek information from an alleged perpetrator and assess the risks to the applicant of doing so. The Council should also ensure officers appropriately record such decisions.
Corporate and Other Services	• Demonstrate that the Council has taken action - including making changes to appeal decision letter templates if needed - to ensure that officers deciding on Blue Badge applications and appeals clearly explain how evidence has been considered, the reasons for their decisions, and how their decisions have been made in line with the guidance.

3 Results of consultation undertaken

3.1 None identified or undertaken.

4 Timetable for implementing this decision.

4.1 The LGSCO Link Officer function is now part of the Council's Customer Service Team. All communication between the local authority and the LGSCO, such as complaints, enquiries, investigations, and remedies, all go via the Ombudsman Liaison Officer.

4.2 The Council's guidance and process for dealing with LGSCO complaints is set out in our Complaint Handling Guidance and the [LGSCO's Complaint Handling Code](#). This includes a requirement that Ombudsman investigations, particularly for upheld complaints, are properly communicated to elected members. Based on this:

- complaints to the LGSCO are formally reported to the Cabinet Member for Policy and Leadership and the Audit and Procurement Committee every year (this report). In addition, this report is also considered by the Ethics Committee.
- complaints about Adult Social Care and Children's Social Care, including cases investigated by the LGSCO, are reported through an annual report to the

Cabinet Member Adult Services and Cabinet Member Children and Young People respectively.

- where an investigation has wider implications for Council policy or exposes a more significant finding of maladministration, the Monitoring Officer will consider whether the implications of that investigation should be individually reported to relevant members; and
- should the Council decide not to comply with the LGSCO's final recommendation following an upheld investigation with a finding of maladministration or should the LGSCO issue a formal report (instead of a statement), the Monitoring Officer will report this to members under section 5(2) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

5 Comments from the Director of Finance and Resources and the Director of Law and Governance

5.1 Financial implications

There are no direct financial implications associated with this report. Financial remedies resulting from any complaints are typically paid out of service budgets. In 2024/25 there was 1 complaint which resulted in some form of financial remedy or reimbursement, totalling £10,875. This is detailed in Appendix 2 and was paid out of the budget of the relevant service areas. There was a case which required the Council to pay £400 a month to the complainant until satisfactory education provision was made, however, this matter was resolved by the Council without payment.

5.2 Legal implications

The statutory functions of the LGSCO are defined in the Local Government Act 1974. These are: to investigate complaints against Councils and some other authorities; to investigate complaints about adult social care providers from people who arrange or fund their own adult social care; and to provide advice and guidance on good administrative practice. The main activity under Part III of the 1974 Act is the investigation of complaints, which it states is limited to complaints from members of the public alleging they have suffered injustice as a result of maladministration and/or service failure.

The LGSCO's jurisdiction under Part III covers all local Councils, police and crime bodies, school admission appeal panels and a range of other bodies providing local services; and under Part IIIA, the LGSCO also investigate complaints from people who allege they have suffered injustice as a result of action by adult social care providers.

There is a duty under section 5(2) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 for the Council's Monitoring Officer to prepare a formal report to the Council where it appears that the authority, or any part of it, has acted or is likely to act in such a manner as to constitute maladministration or service failure, and where the LGSCO has conducted an investigation in relation to the matter.

6 Other implications

6.1 How will this contribute to the Council Plan (www.coventry.gov.uk/councilplan/)

The Council Plan sets out the Council's vision and priorities for the city. The vision:

One Coventry – Working together to improve our city and the lives of those who live, work and study here. Effective management and resolution of complaints, as well as learning from complaints, will help ensure that Council services meet the needs of residents and communities and helps build a foundation of trust in order for the Council to have new conversations with residents, communities and partners to enable people to do more for themselves as active and empowered citizens.

6.2 How is risk being managed?

It is important that the Council takes action and learns from the outcome of complaints. Appendix 2 sets out the actions the Council has taken; for example, providing training, instruction and guidance to staff and improving communications between services to help to reduce the likelihood of the same fault happening again.

6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?

The co-ordination and management of complaints to the LGSCO often involves considerable officer time at all levels of seniority. It includes collecting a significant amount of data, preparing and writing formal responses, and chasing to meet timescales set out. It may also require liaison with and external input from partner organisations and commissioned services.

It is therefore preferable (and beneficial) for complaints to be resolved informally at first point of contact wherever possible, or resolved through the Council's internal complaints procedures, adult social care complaints procedures, or children's social care complaints procedures, as appropriate. This would improve satisfaction for residents and communities, as well as save Council time and resources.

6.4 Equalities/EIA

We welcome all feedback and encourage members of the public to let us know if they have anything to say about Council services, whether that be for us to take action to put things right if something has gone wrong, or to let us know when we are doing something well.

The Council is committed to making it easy for everyone to submit compliments, comments or complaints to us, and we offer several different pathways to do so. As well as our [Compliments, Comments and Complaints](#) web page and our online [Speak Up](#) form, we also offer contact by telephone, email, social media, letter or via face-to-face contact. We also advise people that they can ask somebody else to act on their behalf, for instance, a friend or relative or Citizens Advice.

Where necessary and appropriate, translation and interpretation services, correspondence in large print, audiotape, or braille, or the services of an advocate (for instance, Barnardo's) are also available. Should a complainant remain dissatisfied following the conclusion of the Council's complaints process, they are able to refer their complaint to the LGSCO. Both the Council's complaints policy and individual complaint response letters set out the escalation process and make it clear how members of the public can do so.

In February 2024 the LGSCO launched the Complaint Handling Code for councils, setting out a clear process for responding to complaints effectively and fairly. The purpose of the Code is to enable organisations to resolve complaints raised by individuals promptly, and to use the data and learning from complaints to drive service improvements. It will also help to create a positive complaint handling culture amongst staff and individuals.

The LGSCO issued the Code as “advice and guidance” for all local Councils in England under section 23(12A) of the Local Government Act 1974. This means that Councils should consider the Code when developing complaint handling policies and procedures and when responding to complaints. If a Council decides not to follow the Code, the LGSCO expects it to have a good reason for this. Otherwise, it is expected that all Councils should adhere to the Code from April 2026.

The Code only applies to complaints where there is no statutory process in place. This means that some complaints about children’s services, adult social care and public health are not covered by the expectations set out in the Code. The Code does not apply to complaints about the behaviour of locally elected officials.

6.5 Implications for (or impact on) climate change and the environment
None.

6.6 Implications for partner organisations?
Investigations by the LGSCO may involve not only services directly provided by Coventry City Council, but also commissioned or outsourced services. In such cases, the Council will liaise with partner organisations and third-party contractors to comment or provide information as part of an investigation.

Report author(s):

Name and job title:

Chloe McGrandles
Ombudsman Liaison Officer

Contact:

<mailto:Ombudsman@coventry.gov.uk>

Enquiries should be directed to the above person.

Contributor/ approver name	Title	Service	Date doc sent out	Date response received or approved
Mark Adams	Interim Director of City Services	City Services	17/10/25	22/10/25
Andy Williams	Director of Business, Investment & Culture	Business, Investment & Culture	17/10/25	22/10/25
Clare Boden-Hatton	Director of Planning and Performance	Planning and Performance	17/10/25	19/10/25

Contributor/ approver name	Title	Service	Date doc sent out	Date response received or approved
Mandeep Chouhan	Customer Service Manager-Improvement and Development	Customer Services	17/10/25	22/10/25
Jaspal Mann	Policy, Equalities & Diversity Officer	Public Health	17/10/25	22/10/25
Sukriti Sen	Director of Children and Education	Children and Education	17/10/25	28/10/25
Alison Duggal	Director of Public Health and Wellbeing	Public Health	17/10/25	22/10/25
Pete Fahy	Director of Care, Health and Housing	Care, Health and Housing	17/10/25	22/10/25
Carl Holloway	Director of Policy and Communications	Policy and Communications	17/10/25	22/10/25
Susanna Chilton	Director of People and Facilities Management	People and Facilities Management	17/10/25	22/10/25
Suzanne Bennett	Governance Services Co-ordinator	Law and Governance	16/10/25	16/10/25
Barry Hastie	Director of Finance and Resources	Finance and Resources	22/10/25	28/10/25
Julie Newman	Director of Law and Governance	Law and Governance	22/10/25	23/10/25
Julie Nugent	Chief Executive		22/10/25	27/10/25
Councillor G Duggins	Cabinet Member for Policy and Leadership		28/10/25	29/10/25

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