

News | August 2026

Public service complaints

This month, we made 575 decisions on complaints and published 14 investigations, 11 of which were upheld.

Two recurring themes emerged in our casework this month.

Mould

In June, we published a [decision about The City of Edinburgh Council](#) having failed to ensure a property was in a reasonable condition before a disabled tenant moved in.

This month, we have published another case where a vulnerable tenant was offered a property that was not fit to let.

A carer, on behalf of the tenant who had visual, physical and severe mental health difficulties, raised issues including suspected mould, prior to starting the tenancy. Despite being given access to the property, the tenant did not move in, as the issues remained unresolved 12 weeks later and they did not consider the property to be habitable.

Our investigation found that the council failed to follow its own processes. It did not ensure a formal dampness report was provided and failed to properly consider whether the property met its own letting standards. We also found shortcomings in the council's complaint handling, with inaccurate and inconsistent responses, particularly in relation to the issue of mould.

As a result, we made recommendations to help ensure the council has effective processes in place to confirm properties meet the required standard before being offered to prospective tenants and that reports of mould are responded to appropriately.

[Read case 202408184](#)

Insufficient complaint investigation

A further six investigations published this month highlighted issues with complaints handling, including the failure to implement learning.

In one case, we upheld complaints about the medical and nursing care provided to a patient with liver cancer by NHS Ayrshire and Arran.

Our investigation found that the board failed to schedule an appointment within the timescale required by national standards after a referral for suspected cancer. This failure was not identified during the board's own complaint investigation.

The board's investigation did identify other failings and included apologies for several issues, including long waits in the emergency department, care being delivered in corridors because of bed shortages, and delays in medical reviews. It also identified clear failings in nursing care.

While we welcome the fact that the board recognised these shortcomings, identifying learning is only the first step. The board failed to produce an action plan following its complaint investigation, and the learning points it had identified were only followed up after we became involved in the case.

Failing to properly investigate complaints and implement learning means important opportunities to improve care may be missed, increasing the risk that similar problems will affect others in the future.

[Read case 202505720](#)

[Read our latest findings](#)

Preliminary investigation

Outside of our full investigations, over the past month we have supported a complainant who experienced delays in receiving an apology from a maternity service.

We also secured refunds for users of several services, including water and council tax services.

Independent National Whistleblowing Officer

Whistleblowing report on NHS Lothian liver cancer care pathway

This month, we published a [public interest report](#) on an NHS whistleblowing case concerning the care of patients with hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC), the most common form of liver cancer.

Our investigation found that the board had not fully considered the impact of delays within the care pathway and had not fully complied with the National Whistleblowing Standards in its handling of the concerns.

While we identified several areas of good practice, we also found an unreasonable delay in finalising the action plan following the board's own whistleblowing investigation.

We have made recommendations to improve whistleblowing practice and oversight of the HCC pathway, helping to ensure concerns lead to timely learning and action.

[Read case 202505555](#)

[Read our latest findings](#)

Speak Up Week

Speak Up Week 2026 will run from Monday 28 September to Friday 2 October 2026.

Our theme "Five Years of the Whistleblowing Standards – What's Changed? What's Next?" will explore the last five years and what needs to happen in the future.

- [Check out our resources that you can use to raise awareness for Speak Up Week, including backgrounds, social media graphics, posters and more!](#)
- [Sign up to our webinar on Thursday 1 October:](#) 'Reflecting on five years of the National Whistleblowing Standards' when our panellists will explore key achievements, what lessons have been learned, and the work that remains in building a positive speak up culture.

We hope these ignite your organisation to be thinking about and planning your own local events!

Scottish Welfare Fund

Last month, we responded to 84 enquiries and made 61 review decisions, 19 on community care grants and 42 on crisis grants.

Of these, 32% of community care grants were upheld and 14% of crisis grants were upheld.

In one case, we instructed the council to award the applicant curtains for their living room and bedrooms. We considered these items to be a high-priority need, as the applicant was fleeing domestic abuse and their need for privacy and a sense of safety was paramount.

Engagement

We continued our work with local authorities this month through three engagement sessions as part of our Learning Through Data project.

This project aims to improve reporting, learning, and continuous improvement in line with the [Scottish Government's SWF Review Action Plan](#).

During the sessions, we worked with councils to review trial data returns and shared guidance on analysing customer survey data.

[Read our latest findings](#)

Training

Complaints Investigation Skills

Our trainer-led course will equip participants with the knowledge to conduct robust investigations, ask the right questions, assess evidence, and make informed decisions.

Book your spot now:

- [Tuesday 1 September](#) – **last chance!**
- [Wednesday 2 September](#) – **last chance!**

- [Monday 30 November](#)
- [Tuesday 1 December](#)

Good Complaints Handling

Our Good Complaints Handling online training self-guided course is aimed at staff handling complaints at stage 1 of the [Model Complaints Handling Procedure \(MCHP\)](#) but would be useful for anyone involved in complaints handling looking to develop their knowledge.

The course takes around 45 minutes to complete and costs £50 per person.

[Book now](#)

Child Friendly Complaints

Our Child Friendly Complaints online training is tailored for complaints handlers and frontline staff. The course shows how organisations can put children and young people's rights at the heart of the complaints process.

The course takes around 45 minutes to complete and costs £50 per person.

[Book now](#)