



Ombudsman

ANNUAL REPORT 2025

**PROMOTING
FAIRNESS IN
PUBLIC SERVICES**

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Ombudsman

Annual Report
2025



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Introduction from the Ombudsman

This Report reviews the activity of our Office in 2025 as we continued to provide a free, impartial and independent complaint investigation and resolution service to the public and contribute to improved delivery of public services. We achieved this by dealing with individual complaints, pursuing investigations undertaken on our own initiative and providing training and support to public bodies.

In recent years we have had a significant and steady increase in the number of complaints we receive. That trend continued in 2025 when we received a record high number of 5,297 complaints. This is an increase of 11% on the number of complaints received in 2024. I am happy to report that we also increased the number of complaints that we dealt with - 4,996 - a 6 % increase on 2024. Despite significant challenges, we dealt with 80% of these complaints within 3 months and 94% within 6 months. We also dealt with around 9,000 enquiries over the course of the year. As can be seen from the analysis in this report complainants benefitted from our intervention in around 47% of cases.

In 2025, we continued to experience an increase in complaints received about local authorities at 1,793. This represents an increase of 20% on the 2024 figure of 1,497 complaints received.

Because of the increase in complaints about local authorities, in recent years, we engaged with the County and City Management Association (CCMA), the Local Government Management Agency (LGMA) and other local authority colleagues to develop a standardised Local Authority Complaints Policy. I am hopeful that implementation of this policy will improve service delivery and complaint handling by local authorities.

It has been over ten years, since the Ombudsman's remit was extended to include the private nursing home sector. As part of the Office's review of developments during those years, we hosted a number of online webinars, attended by over 200 representatives from private nursing homes across the country. The webinars focused on the content and accessibility of nursing home complaints policies and the role of the Ombudsman in nursing home complaints.

In my view one of the strengths of the Office of the Ombudsman for over 40 years has been our vigilance and persistence in protecting the positive changes achieved and pursuing, with vigour, Government and public bodies to ensure maximum access to public services that are delivered

to the highest possible standards, particularly to the most vulnerable in our society. In that regard I would like to draw attention to a number of areas where we continue to ensure that recommendations of this Office and Government commitments are implemented.

This Office has been pursuing the issue of the lack of access to transport for people with disabilities for almost 15 years. In April 2011, the then Ombudsman Emily O'Reilly published the investigation report 'Too Old to be Equal?' She found that this upper age limit was a breach of the Equal Status Act 2000. The Government accepted the Ombudsman's recommendation that it complete a review of the Mobility Allowance scheme.

In September 2012, Ombudsman Emily O'Reilly undertook a separate investigation into the Motorised Transport Grant. The Ombudsman found that the interpretation of the medical criteria for eligibility was unacceptably restrictive and contrary to equal status legislation.

Rather than extend the schemes, the Government, in an extraordinary move, closed both the Mobility Allowance and the Motorised Transport Grant schemes to new applicants in 2013.

As these schemes have not been available for 13 years, a separate scheme – the Disabled Drivers and Disabled Passengers (DDDP) scheme – took on more significance for people living with a disability because it became the only potential support available to them. Successive Ombudsman Office holders have highlighted the excessively restrictive nature of this only remaining scheme.

In November 2021, then Ombudsman Peter Tyndall published 'Grounded: Unequal access for people with disabilities to personal transport schemes' which outlined our investigations into the three transport support schemes. He highlighted the continuing unfairness and inequity of these schemes. Since the publication of Grounded, we have taken every opportunity to highlight the inequalities in these schemes and to call for fair, functional and flexible transport schemes for people with disabilities.

In my 2024 Annual Report, I reported that I had received an update from the Department of the Taoiseach to state that a new grant-based scheme would be developed and led by the Department of Transport. Shortly before publication of this Report, the Department of the Taoiseach informed me that the Department of Transport is progressing the development of the Vehicle Adaptation Scheme (VAS). It stated that a final implementation plan, including details of the Scheme, timeline and application process, will shortly be brought to Government for approval with the intention to commence the scheme in Quarter 1 of 2027. The Department also advised that the Department of Finance is continuing to work on the review of the Disabled Drivers Scheme (DDS).

After almost 15 years of inertia, it would appear that progress is finally being made in terms of righting this long-standing injustice.

In 2021, the then Ombudsman Peter Tyndall, published 'Wasted Lives: Time for a better future for younger people in nursing homes'. The report highlighted issues faced by younger people in nursing homes. Those impacted expressed a clear desire for more support to live meaningful and independent lives or to access a better quality of living, be that in their own homes or in more appropriate accommodation.

To implement the recommendations of Wasted Lives the HSE established the "Under 65 Programme". Up to the end of 2024 the programme had successfully transitioned over 100 people to more suitable accommodation and improved the lives of others who could not transition out of the nursing home through the Enhanced Quality of Life Supports (EQLS) element of the programme. The HSE response to the report is to be commended.



However, updates from the HSE in 2024 indicated that sufficient funding had not been allocated to successfully continue the programme in 2025 and beyond. This was a major setback and disappointment for the people concerned and their families. In my 2024 Annual Report I pointed out that this was wholly unacceptable. I called on the Government to provide sustainable and annual funding to support those people with disabilities in nursing homes who should transition to more appropriate accommodation to be able to do so and to provide funding for continuation of the EQLS programme.

I am pleased to report that by the end of 2025 the position was more positive. The scheme received €10 million in funding for 2026 including €8m for transitions, and for the very first-time ring-fenced funding for EQLS for under 65s in nursing homes. With this funding the HSE will, among other actions, support further transitions for 2026 and an extension to its pilot specialised rehabilitation programme.

Sustainable and annual funding remains absolutely essential, but I am encouraged that the scheme, which it was previously feared would falter due to lack of funding, will now continue and that many of those identified for moves to more suitable accommodation should now be able to do so.

In June 2025 we published our findings and recommendations following our investigation into the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) scheme. Some progress has been made on several of the recommendations. This includes additional training and guidance being provided to local authority staff, and information regarding already available supports, such as deposits, being made more accessible to potential applicants.

We continue to engage with the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage regarding the progress of implementing the remaining recommendations, with a view to making real improvements for those who are reliant on this scheme.

As I stated above one of the strengths of the Office of the Ombudsman is our perseverance in pursuing Government to honour its responsibilities and commitments. This is evident from our work relating, for example, to people under 65 living in nursing homes, and providing transport for people with disabilities, where we are at last seeing progress.

Our experience has been that Government can be slow to act when it is the rights and entitlements of the most vulnerable in our society that are negatively impacted. This is certainly the case in relation to the right of prisoners to have access to an independent complaints system.

It is now ten years (June 2016) since the then Minister for Justice announced the decision that prisoners' complaints would be dealt with by the Ombudsman. At the time the Minister stated: "... my officials have already had an initial exploratory meeting with the Ombudsman's office and will be raising this issue with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform...". In 2017 the Minister said: "... my own Department are in advanced discussions with the Ombudsman's office with the aim of establishing an effective complaints system for prisoners...".

Ten years and many, many meetings later it is frustrating and unacceptable that the Office of the Ombudsman is prohibited from dealing with complaints from prisoners.

There has been much criticism, both domestic and international, of the current prisoner complaints system in Ireland. It is not effective and is not in line with Ireland's international obligations.

We have undertaken considerable work with the various stakeholders including the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, the Prison Service and the Inspector of Prisons to advance a fair and effective complaints system for prisoners that would be resolution focused. The solution is readily available. In my view all that is required is for the Minister to prioritise implementing it. I am hopeful that, with the necessary commitment, the services of this Office will be extended to prisoners.

I will continue to pursue all of these issues and monitor progress in the hope of ensuring an appropriate focus on the delivery of fairness, dignity and respect for those affected.

In 2025 we continued to deliver our extensive outreach programme throughout the country and through national and local media. Further details are set out in Chapter 4 of this Report.

In 2025 we also published a commemorative book, looking back at 40 years of the Office of the Ombudsman. This publication is available for free download on our website. It sets out some cases and investigations the Office dealt with over 40 years, which not only reflect the development of the Office but developments in Irish society generally.

In 2025, we also continued to engage with public bodies to further improve their understanding of the complaints process. One key pillar of this initiative was the development of a short online training module for staff of public bodies. The course builds skills for effective complaint management at all levels within an organisation with a user-centred approach. The one-hour course can be completed at a learner's own pace and seeks to embed the principles of accountability, transparency, and service improvement. I would urge staff of all public bodies to complete it.

I would like to thank the Director General, Elaine Cassidy, Senior Investigators David Tang, Siobhán O'Donoghue and Barry Quirke and all our staff for their hard work and commitment in 2025 which was a particularly challenging year. Further details of the important contribution made by our staff is set out in the Director General's update. I also want to thank our complainants for highlighting the issues they have and the public bodies for their continued cooperation in resolving complaints throughout 2025.

Finally, it is my pleasure to submit this Annual Report of the Office of the Ombudsman to the Dáil and Seanad pursuant to the provisions of Section 6(7) of the Ombudsman Act 1980 (as amended). This is the 42nd Annual Report submitted in relation to the work of the Office of the Ombudsman since it was established in 1984.

I look forward to continuing to work with the Oireachtas and with all our stakeholders to continue to drive fairness and improvements in the delivery of public services.



Ger Deering
Ombudsman
July 2026



Update from the Director General

I would like to commend our staff for their hard work and productivity during what was another busy year for our Office in managing further increases in complaints and enquiries received and processed.

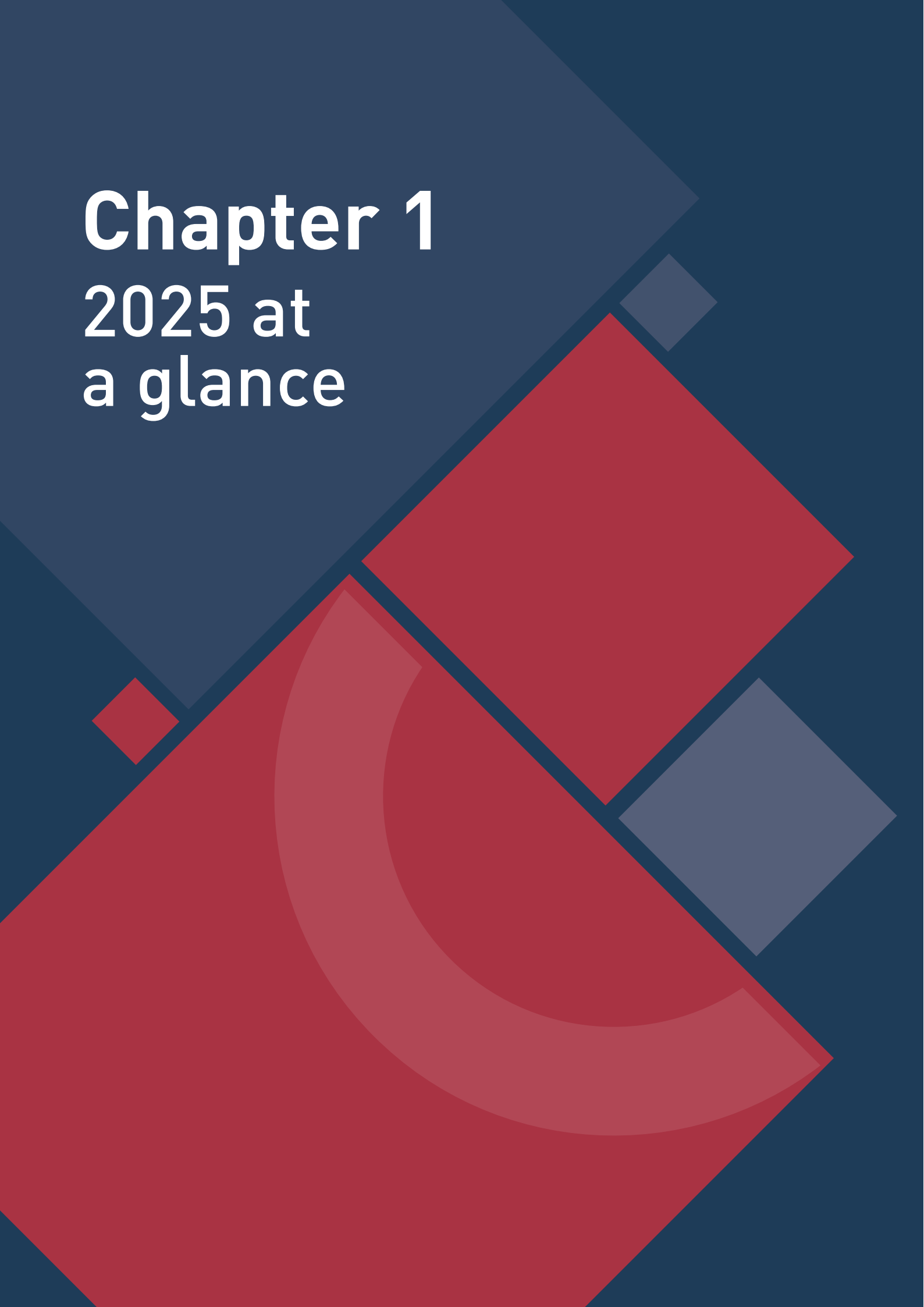
In December 2025, our Office was the subject of a random cybersecurity attack on some of its IT systems, including the electronic case management system we use to carry out our work. Our immediate priorities to protect personal data and restore our services safely were achieved and I am proud of the resilience of our staff in meeting the challenges and quickly restoring our services. Due to the loss of access to our case management system our casework is measured up until the 8 December 2025 only. Despite the slightly shorter recording period, our case completion figures were already higher than for the full year of 2024.

Towards the end of 2025 we completed the development of our online training module for customer service and complaint handling and we hope that this will be a valuable tool for all civil and public servants. We have made it free and available across all public sector training platforms. Following an extensive engagement with local authority colleagues, we also completed the development of a standardised Local Authority Complaints Policy to introduce a uniform approach to complaint handling across the sector. The online training and the complaints policy which were both formally launched in January this year, seek to embed the principles of accountability, transparency, and service improvement and meet one of our objectives of improving consistency of complaint handling by public bodies.

Our “corporate spine” supports the independence of the Office of the Ombudsman and provides necessary back office supports such as HR, ICT, Finance, Procurement, Facilities, Legal and Communications. This enables the Ombudsman team to concentrate on Ombudsman casework.

Our new Statement of Strategy - “Towards 2030”, which we launched earlier this year, sets out our key objectives such as timely, accurate and thorough complaint handling; conducting and reporting on own-initiative investigations and projects; engaging positively with public bodies to ensure our recommendations are implemented; and delivering outreach initiatives to improve reciprocal learning between our Office, public service providers and other stakeholders. I look forward to working with the Ombudsman team to implement this strategy.

Elaine Cassidy
Director General



Chapter 1

2025 at a glance

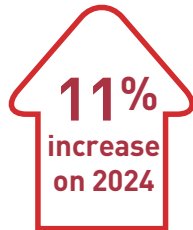


2025 at a Glance

We received

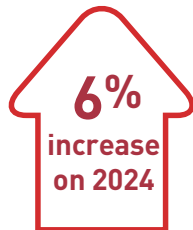
5,297

complaints in 2025

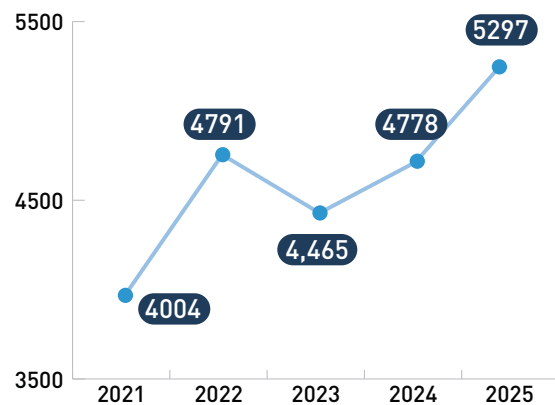


4,996

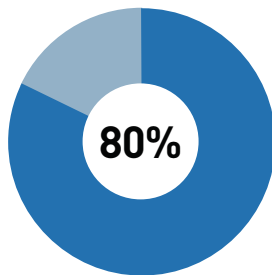
complaints completed



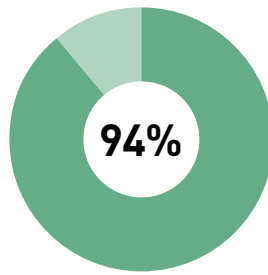
Complaints received last 5 years



Time taken to investigate complaints



Completed within
3 months



Completed within
6 months

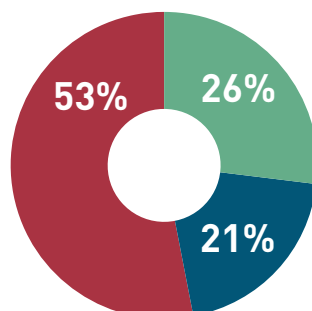
We responded to over

9,000

enquiries



Complaints completed by outcome

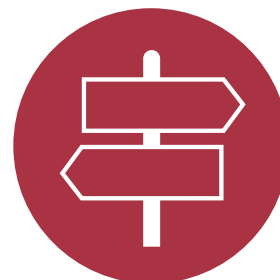


- Assistance Provided
- Upheld/Partially Upheld
- Not Upheld

Over

900

other complaints
about bodies outside
jurisdiction signposted
to correct organisation





How we received complaints



2,546

48.1%

Online



2,044

38.6%

Email



569

10.7%

Letter



122

2.3%

In person



16

0.3%

Phone

Complaints received by sector



1,793

34%

Local
Authorities



1,502

28%

Government
Departments



861

16%

Health/
Social Care



434

8%

Regulatory
Bodies



238

4%

Other
Bodies



231

4%

Education



151

3%

International
Protection



69

1%

Private Nursing
Homes



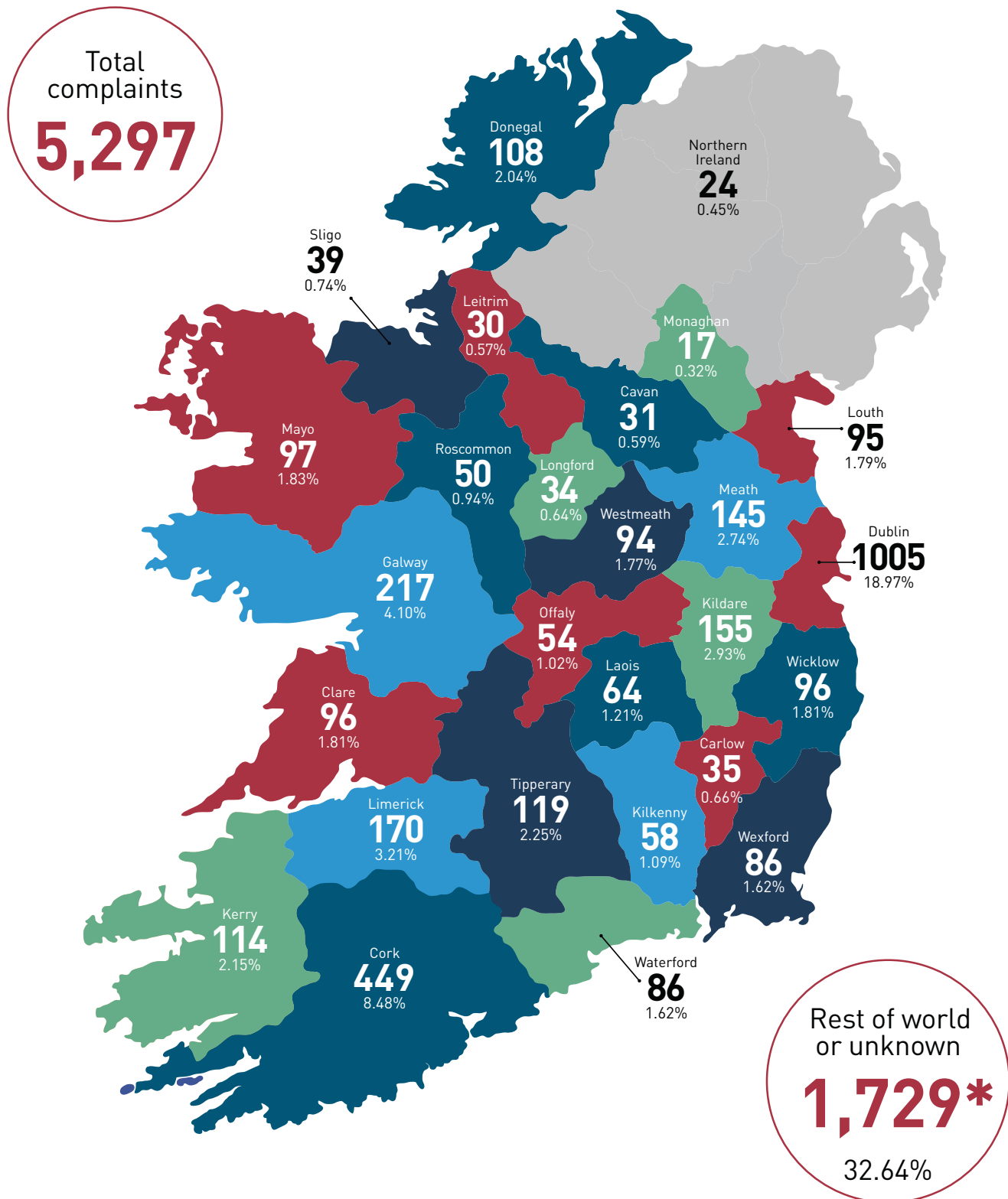
18

<1%

Disability
Act



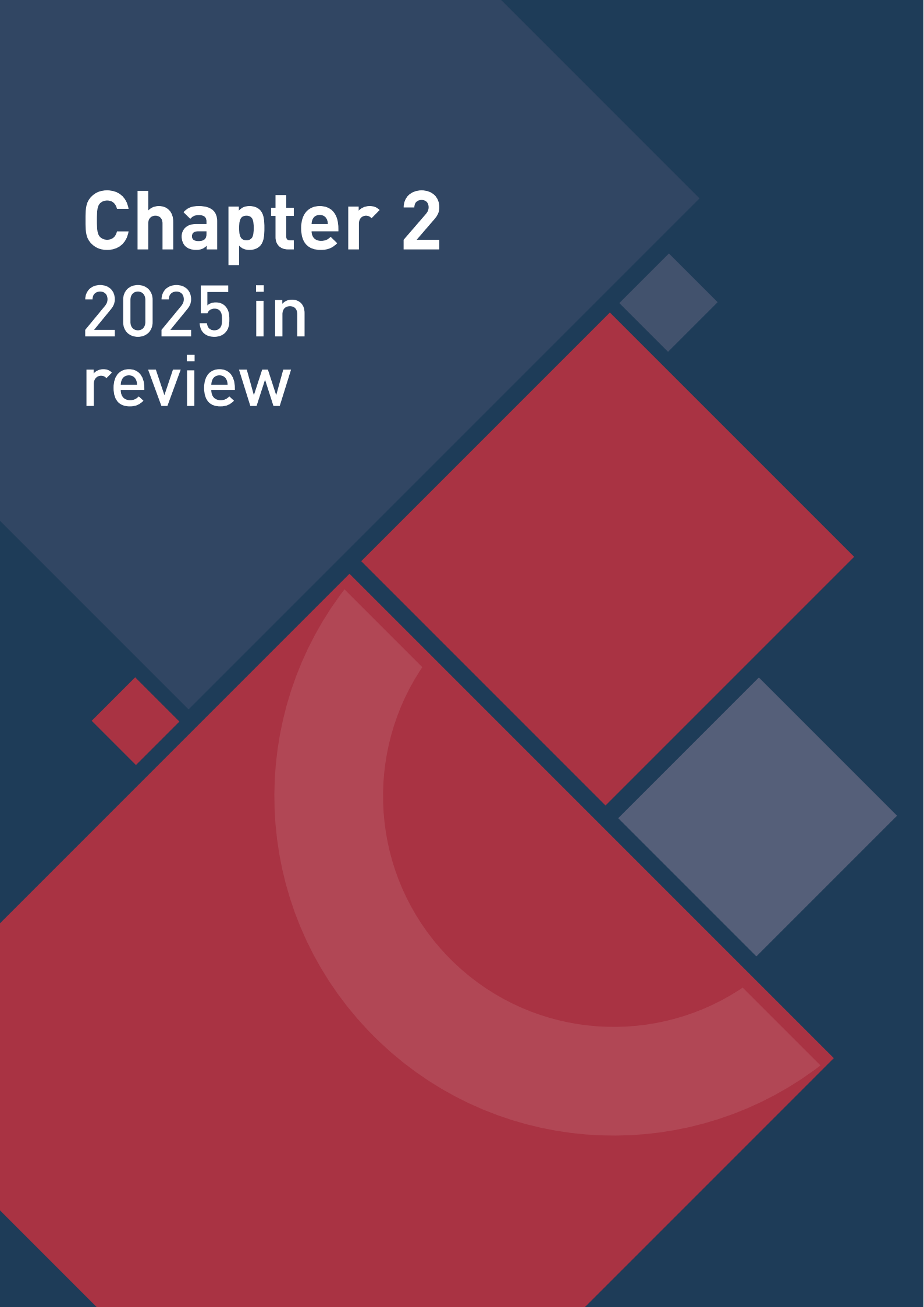
Where did the complaints come from in 2025



*Some complaints we receive by email do not contain a postal address.

Chapter 2

2025 in review

The background of the slide features an abstract geometric design. It consists of several overlapping shapes in two main colors: a dark blue and a red. The dark blue shapes include a large triangle in the upper left, a smaller square in the upper right, and a larger square in the lower right. The red shapes include a large triangle in the lower left, a smaller square in the lower right, and a large, semi-transparent circular arc in the center. The overall composition is modern and minimalist.



Role of the Ombudsman

The role of the Ombudsman is to investigate complaints from people who feel they have been unfairly treated by certain providers of public services, including:

- + government departments
- + local authorities
- + the Health Service Executive (HSE)
- + public hospitals
- + publicly funded third level education institutions
- + public and private nursing homes, and
- + international protection bodies and accommodation centres.

The services of the Office of the Ombudsman are free to use. We investigate complaints in a fair and impartial way.

Before bringing a complaint to our Office the person who has been adversely affected must usually have tried to resolve the complaint with the service provider complained about.

In practice, many complaints that come to us are resolved informally after we bring the complaint to the attention of the public service provider concerned. If we uphold a complaint, we will recommend appropriate redress. We may also make recommendations which aim to reduce the likelihood of others being adversely affected in the future.

The Ombudsman can also investigate complaints under the Disability Act 2005. These complaints relate to access to information and services by people with disabilities. We report on complaints under the Disability Act later in this Chapter.

The Ombudsman is appointed by the President and reports to the Oireachtas.



Complaints received in 2025: Analysis

Over recent years we have seen a steady increase in the number of complaints we receive. That trend continued in 2025 when we received a record high number of 5,297 complaints*. This figure represents an increase of 11% on the number of complaints received in 2024.

Despite the rise in complaints received, we also increased the number of complaints that we dealt with - 4,996 - a 6 % increase on 2024.

2025 was another busy year for enquiries with our staff dealing with, on average, 750 enquiries a month. This equates to around 9,000 enquiries over the course of the year, a smaller rise on our 2024 figure of 8,890.

Some complaints do not proceed to a full investigation. In 2025, 1,255 complaints were made to us prematurely, which should have been made to a public body in the first instance. When closing these complaints, we advise the complainant on the next steps to take and invite them to re-engage with us if they remain dissatisfied with the response they receive from the public body. Another 727 complaints were either discontinued - as they were otherwise resolved, or withdrawn by the complainant themselves.

With regard to the complaints that we investigate, we categorise the outcomes in a number of ways.

Sometimes we uphold or partially uphold complaints. This means that our investigation has found substance to either some or all aspects of the complaint. In such cases, we may make recommendations to resolve any issues identified. In 2025, we upheld or partially upheld around 21% of our investigated complaints. These outcomes benefit complainants, but also the public bodies themselves, providing opportunity to address aspects of their services which may have fallen short of the standards required.

These are not the only positive outcomes arising from Ombudsman investigations. In 2025, around 26% of the complaints we investigated were closed as what we call 'assistance provided'. These are investigations where the substantive complaint was not upheld, but we were in a position to provide better explanations, further information, or simply assist the complainant in some other way.

In short, members of the public directly benefitted from contacting the Office in around 47% of cases.

The remainder of the cases that we investigated in 2025 were not upheld. While complainants may not directly benefit from this type of outcome, these investigations provide us with essential feedback, learning and understanding on how our stakeholders are handling complaints, what they are getting right, and what issues the public are experiencing when trying to access services.

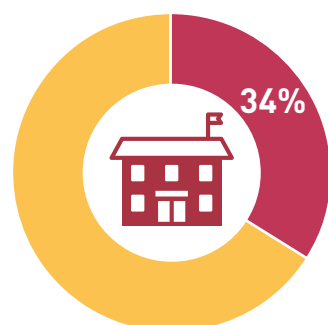
*The figures quoted in this report account for cases received or closed up until 8 December 2025.



Analysis by sector

Local Authorities

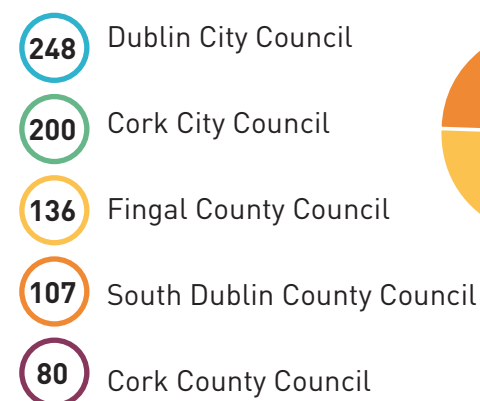
Local authorities represent:



of all complaints



The top 5 bodies complained about are:



We received 1,793 complaints about local authorities (city and county councils) in 2025. This represents an increase of 20% on the 2024 figure of 1,497 complaints received. We dealt with 1,630 complaints in 2025. Housing related complaints made up the majority of complaints we received about local authorities (58%).

The second largest complaint type was planning enforcement / planning administration which made up almost 15% of complaints. When added to the third largest complaint type of 'road related' complaints, these three categories together made up 78% of the total complaints last year in the sector.

We received six complaints about accommodation for the Traveller community in 2025, which was a slight decrease on the nine such complaints we received in 2024. Homeless services, which are categorised separately to housing related complaints, were significantly more than the 61 received in 2024, at 99 complaints.

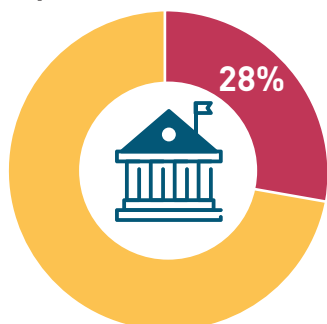
We upheld/partly upheld almost 22% of local authority complaints we investigated, and provided assistance in a further 31% of complaints. The remaining 47% of complaints were not upheld.

In 2025 we engaged with the County and City Management Association (CCMA) and other local authority colleagues to develop a standardised Local Authority Complaints Policy. It is the first time local authorities have agreed a shared, sector-wide approach to managing complaints. The policy will support a consistent approach across all local authorities, strengthen engagement with the public, and create opportunities for learning that lead to better services. The Policy was launched in January 2026 and is being rolled out across the sector.

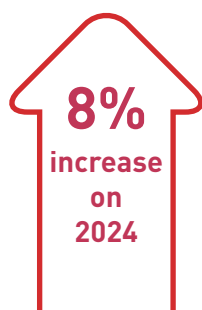
We also developed an online Complaint Handling Training course for public bodies. This user friendly one-hour course was initially made available on OneLearning- the learning centre for the civil service. In early 2026 we made this available to staff in all local authorities. It is also available to all public officials through our website: [Online Complaint Handling Training Course for Public Bodies](#). We would urge staff of all public bodies to complete it.

Government Departments and Offices

Government departments and offices represent:



of all complaints



The top 5 bodies complained about are:



There was small increase in complaints about government departments and Offices in 2025. We received a total of 1,502 complaints - 8% more than 2024.

The highest number of complaints in this sector was about the Department of Social Protection (686), followed by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (257), the Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration (143), the Social Welfare Appeals Office (97) and the Office of the Revenue Commissioners (88).

45% of complaints received were about the Department of Social Protection - an increase of 15% on the 2024 figure. Complaints concerned a variety of allowances and benefits – the highest numbers of complaints concerned Supplementary Allowance, Jobseekers Allowance and Disability Allowance.

While still accounting for a significant proportion of complaints (17%), there was a decrease in complaints about the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade - down from 380 in 2024 to 257. Once again communication issues and clarity in relation to the requirements for passport applicants were a cause of many complaints. We received a number of complaints about applications which related to a name change on a passport. We engaged with the Passport Service to resolve the issue and to improve the information provided to applicants.

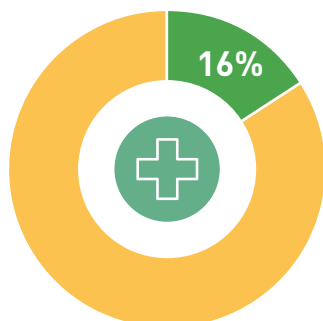
We also dealt with complaints from passport applicants whose citizenship was based on their adoption outside Ireland by an Irish citizen. Complaints concerned significant delays, some as long as three years, in processing applications, and poor communication on the progress of applications. The Passport Service agreed to notify existing and new applicants of a pathway to resolve the issue. (See case summary in Chapter 5)

Overall, of the complaints received in this sector which we investigated, we upheld or partly upheld 20% and provided some form of assistance in a further 24% of cases. 56% of cases were not upheld.

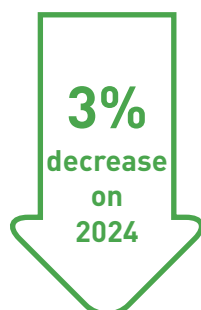


Health and social care

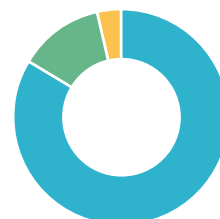
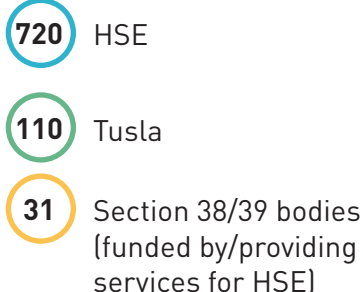
Health and social care represents:



of all complaints



The top 3 bodies complained about are:



Public bodies in the health and social care sector include the HSE, Tusla and public hospitals.

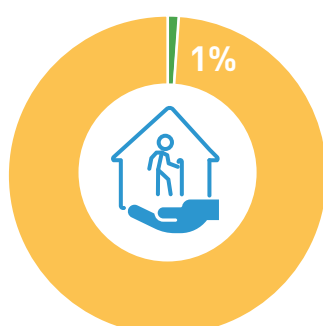
We received 861 complaints about public bodies in this sector in 2025. This is a decrease of 26 cases from 2024. 720 complaints were about the HSE, 110 complaints related to Tusla, and 31 complaints related to bodies funded by, or providing services on behalf of, the HSE (section 38/39 bodies).

The complaints received in 2025 are broadly similar to other years, with a significant number received about the HSE relating to matters of clinical judgement, which is outside the remit of our Office.

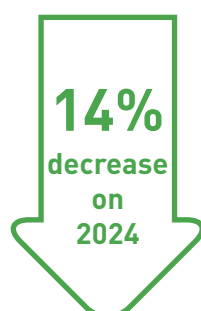
Of the complaints we investigated, 17% were upheld, 9% partially upheld and 48% were not upheld. In 26% of complaints we provided some assistance or benefit to the complainant.

Nursing homes

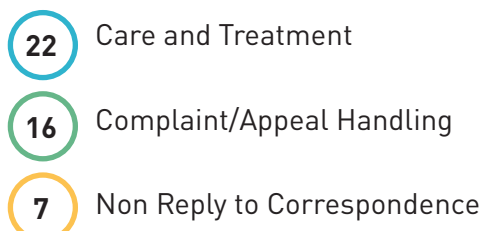
Nursing homes represent:



of all complaints



The top 3 types of complaint:



We received 69 complaints about private nursing homes in 2025. This is a 14% decrease on 2024's figure of 80 complaints received. Most complaints concerned the care and treatment of a resident or how the nursing home handled a complaint. 31% of the complaints we investigated were either upheld or partially upheld.

In 2025 we also continued to monitor the HSE's implementation of the recommendations arising out of the "Wasted Lives" investigation into the placement of individuals with disabilities who were



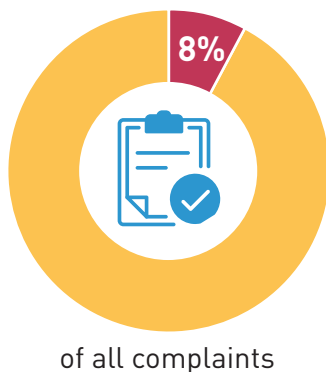
under the age of 65 years into residential facilities for older people. An update can be found in Chapter 3 of this report.

It has been over ten years since the Ombudsman's remit was extended to include the private nursing home sector. As part of the Office's lookback over developments during those years, we hosted a number of online webinars, attended by over 200 representatives from private nursing homes across the country. The webinars focused on the content and accessibility of nursing home complaints policies and the role of the Ombudsman in nursing home complaints. We will continue this project in 2026.

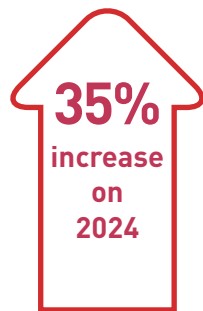
In addition, in August 2025, our team attended the launch of a new human rights resource, 'Placing Human Rights at the Heart of Nursing Home Care in Ireland', developed by Nursing Home Ireland and the Faculty of Nursing and Midwifery at RCSI University of Medicine and Health Services. This followed on from the publication of our own guide, supporting Ombudsman staff in applying a Human Rights lens to our investigations.

Regulatory

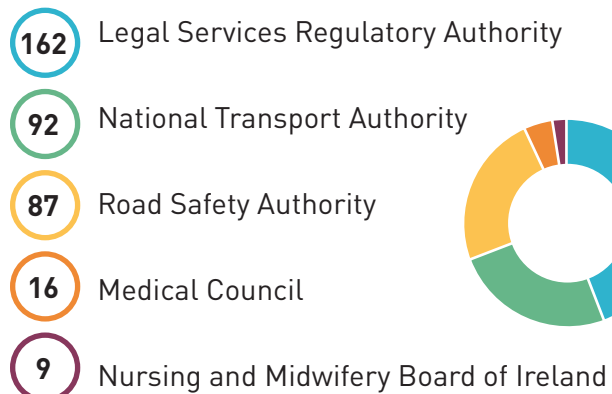
Regulatory represents:



of all complaints



The top 5 bodies complained about are:



We received 434 complaints in 2025 about bodies in the regulatory sector. This was an increase of 35% on 2024.

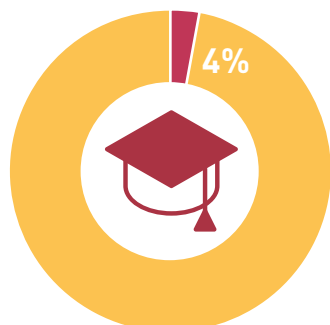
The highest number of complaints we received was about the Legal Services Regulatory Authority (LSRA - 162). Complaints mainly concerned the LSRA's handling of complaints about legal practitioners. We received 92 complaints about the National Transport Authority (NTA) and 87 about the Road Safety Authority (RSA). Among the NTA issues were general complaint handling and the administration of licences and grants. Among the RSA matters complained about were difficulties applying for, renewing and exchanging driving licences, and issues around arranging and taking driving tests.

Given the provisions of the Ombudsman Act 1980 (as amended), and the nature of regulatory bodies and their remit over private companies and individuals, the role of the Ombudsman in complaints in this sector is often limited to considering whether a complaint has been dealt with in accordance with the relevant procedures and legislation. The impact of these limitations is reflected in the relatively low 'upheld' rate within this sector compared with some other sectors. We upheld or partially upheld 14% of the complaints we investigated and provided some form of assistance in a further 11% of cases. 75% of cases were not upheld.

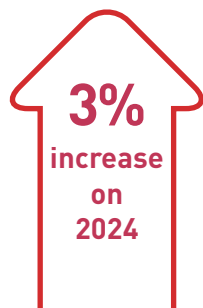


Education

Education represents:



of all complaints



The top 5 bodies complained about are:

- 49** HEAR/DARE (Higher Education Access Route/Disability Access Route to Education)
- 30** Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI)
- 18** Dublin City University
- 17** University of Limerick
- 16** Atlantic Technological University



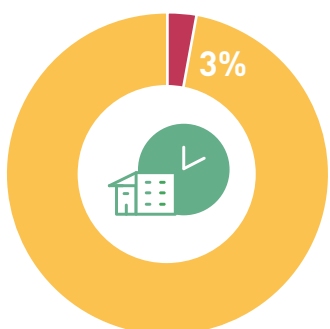
231 complaints were received in relation to bodies in the Education sector in 2025. This includes complaints about universities and Educational Training Boards. This is an increase from 225 in 2024 (up 3%).

We received 49 complaints about Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) and Disability Access Route to Education (DARE), which is an increase from 34 in 2024. Complaints about the administration of Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) schemes decreased to 30 in 2025, down from 34 in 2024. There were 18 complaints about Dublin City University in 2025, an increase from 15 in 2024. There were 17 complaints about University of Limerick in 2025. There were 16 complaints about Atlantic Technological University in 2025.

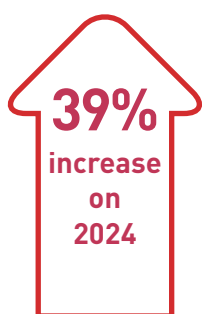
Of those complaints we investigated, we upheld or partly upheld 10% of cases and provided some form of assistance in a further 19% of complaints. 71% of complaints investigated were not upheld.

International protection

International protection represents:

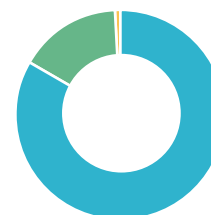


of all complaints



The top 3 bodies complained about are:

- 126** International Protection Accommodation Services - IPAS
- 24** Ukraine Crisis Temporary Accommodation Team (UCTAT)
- 1** Irish Refugee Protection Programme



In 2025, we received 151 complaints from International Protection (IP) applicants, who are living in state accommodation and receiving direct provision and related services provided by the International Protection Accommodation Service (IPAS), and Ukrainian Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection residing in serviced accommodation provided by the Ukraine Crisis Temporary



Accommodation Team (UCTAT). Both agencies transferred to the Department of Justice in May 2025. This 2025 figure represents a 39% increase on the complaints we received in 2024. The highest number of complaints was about IPAS (126).

Among the issues complained about were, the standard of accommodation, transfers from one IPAS accommodation centre to another, and complaints about staff.

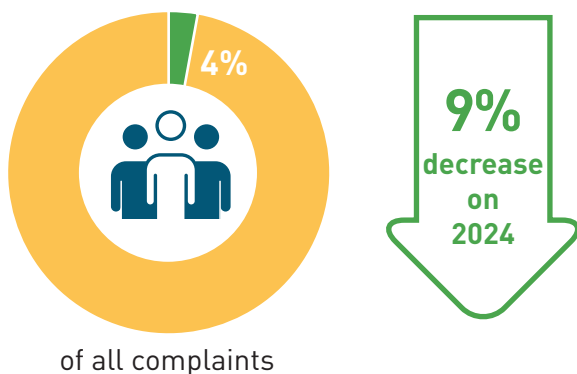
We upheld 8% of complaints in this sector and provided some form of assistance in a further 19% of complaints. 73% of complaints were not upheld.

In April 2025, members of the Ombudsman's International Protection Team visited three emergency IPAS accommodation centres in the Dublin region for outreach purposes. We ran a 'complaint clinic' in each of the centres on the day of our visit. In September 2025, the Ombudsman visited an IPAS accommodation centre in Galway. He and his team met with IP applicants living in the centre and informed them of the work the Office.

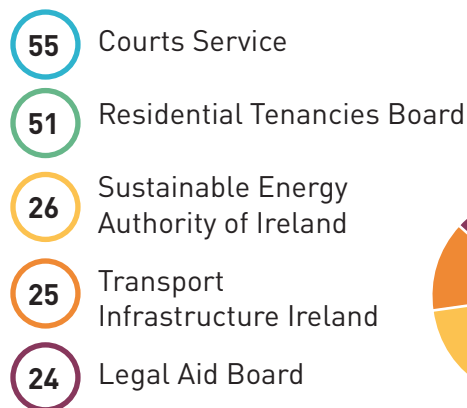
Apart from facilitating the making of a complaint 'in person', the information we receive at the clinics assists us in understanding the issues on the ground when we receive other complaints about such services. Visits and complaint clinics also help to raise awareness of the Office.

Other bodies

Other bodies represent:



The top 5 bodies complained about are:



In 2025 we received 238 complaints about public bodies in the remaining 'Other Public Bodies' sector. This was a decrease from the 269 complaints received in 2024. We upheld or partially upheld 21% of complaints investigated in this sector, and provided some form of assistance in a further 16% of cases. 63% of cases were not upheld.

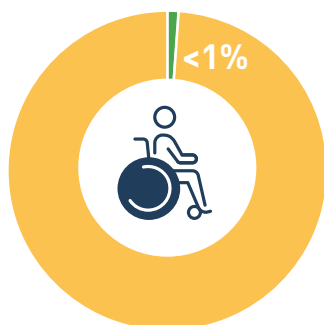
The highest number of complaints received were about the Courts Service (55). The Ombudsman's remit is restricted to only certain actions of the Courts Service and only half of the complaints received related to actions that the Ombudsman could investigate.

51 complaints were received about the Residential Tenancies Board, while Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI – 26), Transport Infrastructure Ireland (25), and the Legal Aid Board (24) accounted for the remaining 'top 5' bodies complained about in this sector. Complaints about the SEAI were down 40% on 2024.

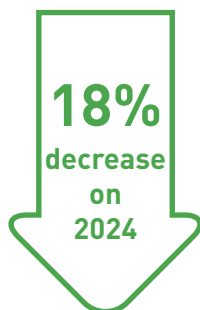


The Disability Act

The Disability Act represents:



of all complaints



The top 3 types of complaint:

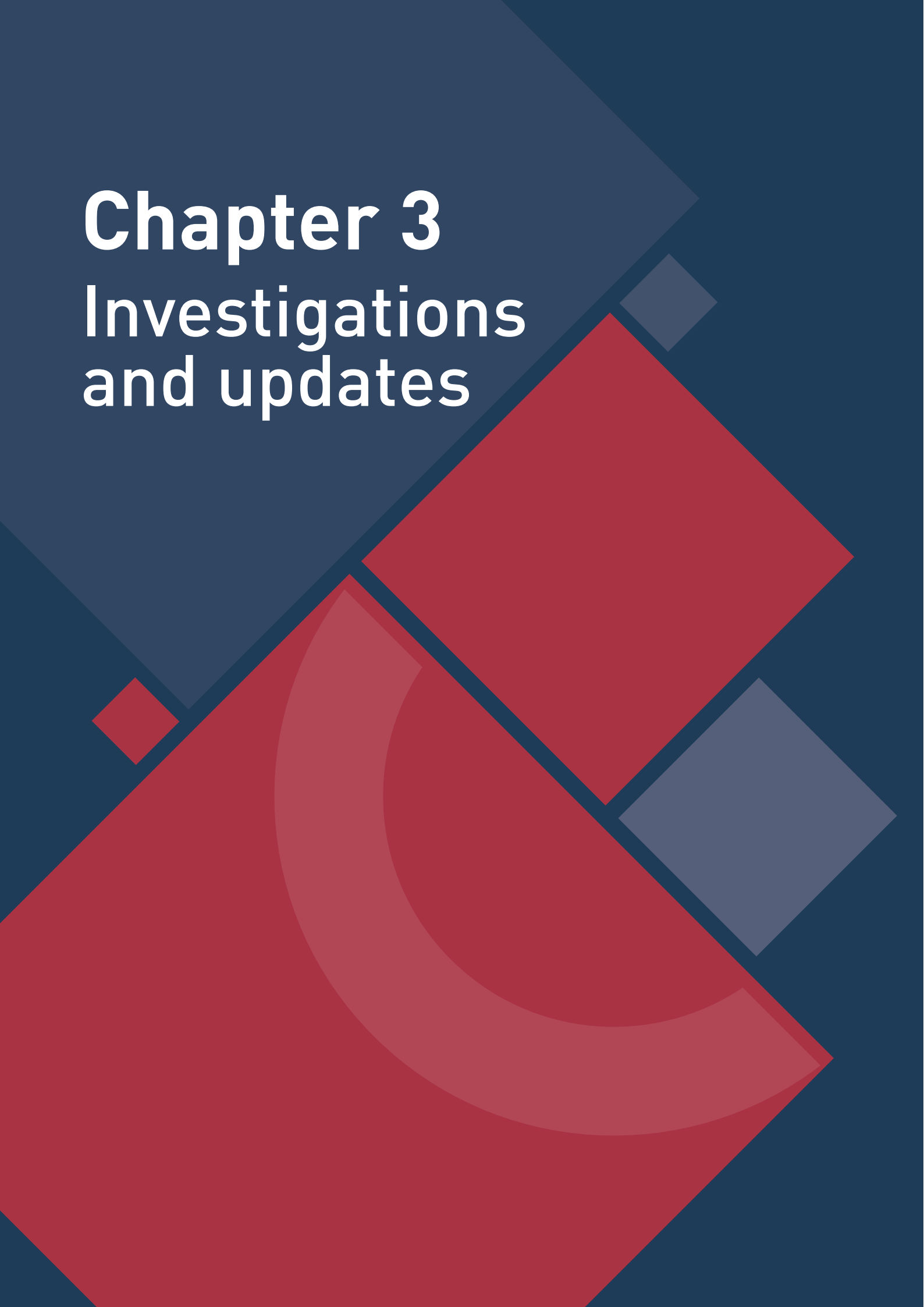


- 4 Access to Services (S.26)
- 2 Complaints Handling (S.38 to S.39)
- 1 Access to Buildings (S.25)

The Ombudsman has an investigative role under Part 3 of the Disability Act 2005. This part of the Act places a responsibility on public bodies to ensure people with disabilities have sufficient access to services and information.

To bring a complaint to the Ombudsman under the Act, a person must first have made a Disability Act complaint to the public body in question, who will appoint an inquiry officer to investigate the complaint and to issue them with a report. If the complainant is not satisfied with that report, they can then complain to the Ombudsman.

In total, in 2025, we received 18 complaints about public bodies under the Disability Act; four less complaints than in 2024. Of these, around a quarter of the complaints received related directly to Access to Information and Access to Services.



Chapter 3

Investigations and updates



Housing Assistance Payment investigation

In June 2025 we published our findings and recommendations following our investigation into the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) scheme.

This followed extensive research into how the HAP scheme operates, which involved a survey of all local authorities; in-depth consultation with seven local authorities, the Dublin Regional Homeless Executive, and HAP Shared Services; consultations with the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, representative bodies, and civil society organisations. We also considered the issues raised by HAP tenants and landlords who have contacted us in the course of our work.

We made 19 recommendations aimed at reducing inefficiencies in the system, addressing the inequalities between HAP tenants and social housing tenants, and ensuring that vulnerable applicants are appropriately supported in the HAP system.

Some progress has been made on several of the recommendations. This includes additional training and guidance being provided to local authority staff, and information regarding already available supports, such as deposits, being made more accessible to potential applicants.

We continue to engage with the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage regarding the progress of implementing the remaining recommendations, with a view to making real improvements in the area of housing, for those who are reliant on this scheme.

Younger people in nursing homes: Update

In 2021, the then Ombudsman Peter Tyndall, published 'Wasted Lives: Time for a better future for younger people in nursing homes'. The report highlighted issues faced by younger people in nursing homes such as feeling isolated from family and friends, a lack of any meaningful social engagement and freedom, and residing with elderly patients of whom many suffered from dementia. Those impacted expressed a clear desire for more support in order to live meaningful and independent lives or to access a better quality of living, be that in their own homes or in more appropriate accommodation. The HSE's agreement to implement the findings of Wasted Lives and the establishment of the Under 65 Programme gave hope to some of these people.

The HSE initially established a dedicated funding stream with an investment of €3 million. In the first year following the Wasted Lives report, 14 adults under 65 moved from nursing homes to an appropriate living arrangement in the community. Subsequent funding streams and an investment of €8 million as part of the HSE National Service Plan (NSP 2021 and 2022) meant that by 2024 a further 67 individuals under 65 had moved from nursing homes to an appropriate living arrangement in the community and another 51 individuals were in active planning for a future move.

However, in the 2024 Annual Report the Ombudsman expressed his disappointment that, despite the HSE's work developing and putting in place a framework for dealing with people transitioning both in and out of this system, a lack of funding was keeping many people living inappropriately in nursing homes. He stated that a commitment from the Government to sustainable and annual funding was absolutely essential, both to facilitate necessary transitions for people out of nursing homes into more appropriate accommodation, and for the Enhanced Quality of Life Supports (EQLS) element of the programme which improves the daily lives of those who opt to, or simply must, remain in a nursing home setting.

At the end of 2025 the position was more positive. The scheme received €10 million in funding for 2026 including €8m for transitions, and for the very first-time ring-fenced funding for EQLS for under 65s in nursing homes. With this funding the HSE has targeted, among other actions, 45 transitions for 2026 and will extend its pilot specialised rehabilitation programme, run by Headway in Cork, to other regions.

The Ombudsman is clear that sustainable and annual funding remains absolutely essential but is encouraged that the scheme, which it was previously feared would falter due to lack of funding, will now continue and that many of those identified for moves to more suitable accommodation may now be able to do so.

Transport support schemes: Update

We have had schemes that provided assistance to people with disabilities helping them to access transport for almost sixty years. The Mobility Allowance was put in place as far back as 1968 and the Motorised Transport Grant was put in place in 1979.

In April 2011, the then Ombudsman Emily O'Reilly published the investigation report 'Too Old to be Equal?' which dealt specifically with the fact that the Mobility Allowance excluded first time applicants over the age of 66 years. The Ombudsman found that this upper age limit was a breach of the Equal Status Act 2000. The Government accepted the Ombudsman's recommendation that it complete a review of the Mobility Allowance scheme.

In September 2012, Ombudsman Emily O'Reilly undertook a separate investigation into the Motorised Transport Grant. The Ombudsman found that the interpretation of the medical criteria for eligibility was unacceptably restrictive and contrary to equal status legislation.

Rather than extend the schemes, the Government, in an extraordinary move, closed both the Mobility Allowance and the Motorised Transport Grant schemes to new applicants in 2013.

As these schemes have not been available for 13 years, a separate scheme – the Disabled Drivers and Disabled Passengers (DDDP) scheme – took on more significance for people living with a disability because it became the only potential support available to them. Successive Ombudsman Office holders have highlighted the excessively restrictive nature of this only remaining scheme.

In November 2021, then Ombudsman Peter Tyndall published 'Grounded: Unequal access for people with disabilities to personal transport schemes' which outlined our investigations into the three transport support schemes. He highlighted the continuing unfairness and inequity of these schemes.

Since the publication of Grounded, we have taken every opportunity to highlight the inequalities in these schemes and to call for fair, functional and flexible transport schemes for people with disabilities.

The current Programme for Government contains references and commitments regarding transport and mobility for those with disabilities.

In our 2024 Annual Report, Ombudsman Ger Deering reported that he had received an update from the Department of the Taoiseach to state that a new grant-based scheme would be developed and



led by the Department of Transport. He was also informed that the Department of Transport was beginning the development of this new scheme. He expressed cautious optimism that progress was, at last, imminent.

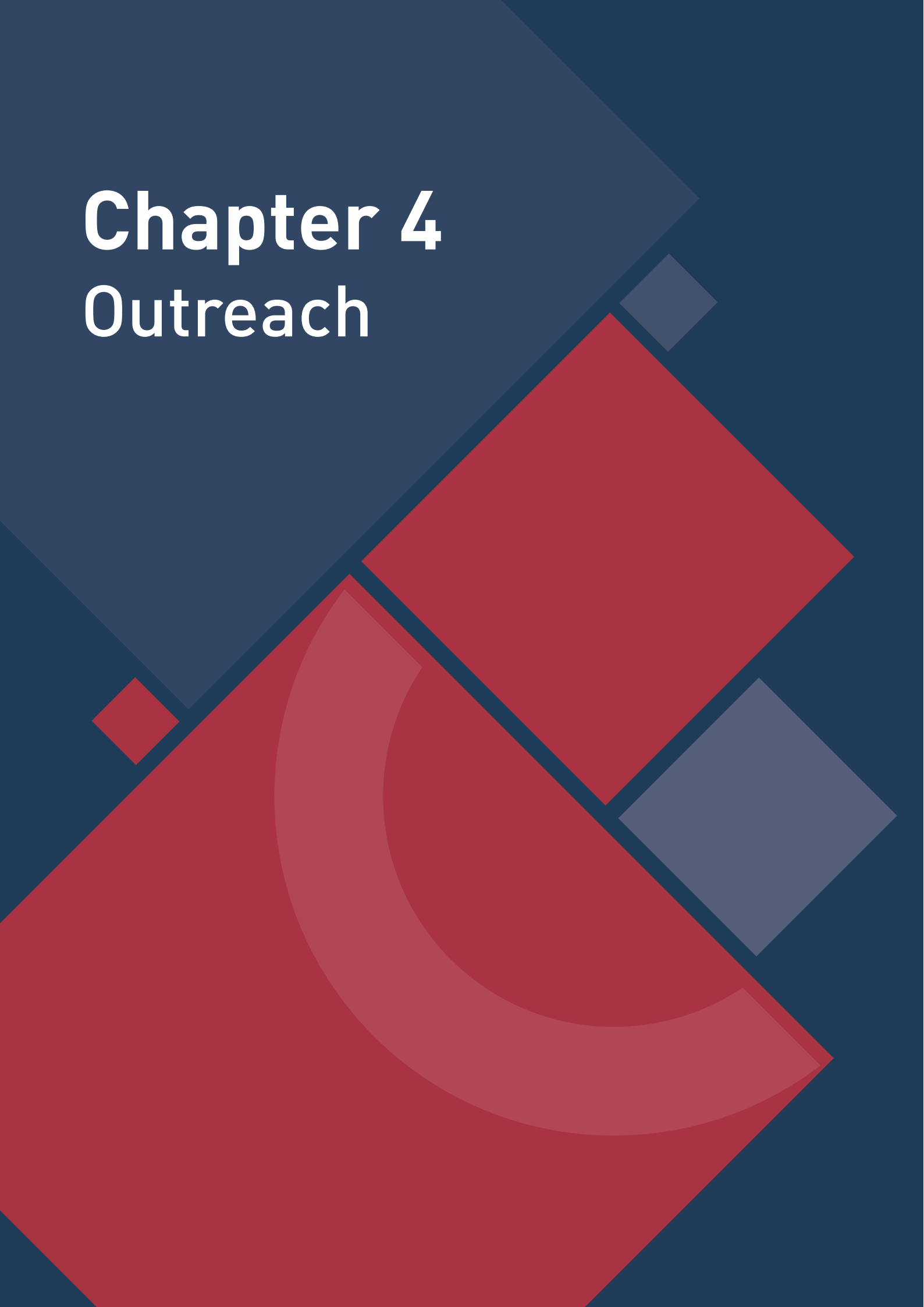
Shortly before publication of this Report, the Department of the Taoiseach informed the Ombudsman that the Department of Transport is progressing the development of the Vehicle Adaptation Scheme (VAS). It stated that a final implementation plan, including details of the Scheme, timeline and application process, will shortly be brought to Government for approval with the intention to commence the scheme in Quarter 1 of 2027. The Department also advised that the Department of Finance is continuing to work on the review of the Disabled Drivers Scheme (DDS).

After 15 years of inertia, it would appear that progress is finally being made in terms righting this long-standing injustice.

We will continue to pursue this issue and monitor progress in the hope of ensuring an appropriate focus on the delivery of a fair, functional and flexible transport scheme for people with disabilities.

Chapter 4

Outreach

The background of the slide features an abstract geometric design. It consists of several overlapping shapes in two main colors: a dark blue and a red. The shapes include large triangles, squares, and a large circular arc. The red shapes are layered over the blue ones, creating a sense of depth. The overall composition is modern and minimalist.



As part of our Strategic Plan 2022-25 we actively engaged with our stakeholders to raise awareness of the role of the Ombudsman, help drive improvements in the quality of those public services within our remit, and to ensure better administration and delivery of public services.

During 2025 we engaged with groups representing various sectors of the public, continued our regional 'Complaint Clinics' so people could make their complaints to us 'in person' in their local area, and through the local authority Public Participation Networks and other events engaged with sectors of society who may need our services the most.

Engaging with those who need our service the most

We want to ensure that those who may need our services the most, or who may not be aware of the Ombudsman service, know about us and how to engage with us.

In 2025 we were delighted to again engage with the regional Public Participation Networks (PPNs) - networks of community, voluntary, social inclusion and environmental organisations in each local authority area. The Ombudsman addressed PPNs in Cavan, Cork, Fingal, Galway, Kerry, Leitrim, Mayo, Meath and Monaghan. We aim to continue this engagement in 2026.

A number of charities and volunteer groups, including Spunout, Crosscare, Macra na feirme and BelongTo met with the Ombudsman to discuss issues that young people face when interacting with public services. The Ombudsman met with AslAm, Ireland's autism charity, to hear the challenges people with autism face in dealing with public services.

In July 2025 the Ombudsman signed an updated Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Ombudsman for Children. The agreement reaffirmed our shared commitment towards working together as effectively as possible in the public interest.

In 2025 we also published a commemorative book, looking back at 40 years of the Office of the Ombudsman. This publication was made available for free download on our website. It sets out some cases and investigations the Office dealt with over 40 years, which not only reflect the development of the Office but developments in Irish society generally. The eBook is available to download for free from www.ombudsman.ie

Complaint Clinics

As in previous years, our team hosted monthly Complaint Clinics in Citizens Information Centres (CICs) in Cork, Limerick and Galway to take complaints from members of the public.

The visits provide a valuable local service, easily accessible to people living there and enabled people deal face-to-face with our Office. We thank the CIC staff at each of these centres for working with us to deliver an extremely beneficial and practical service to the local community.

Monthly Complaint Clinics are held on the following days in these Citizens Information Centres:

Limerick CIC:	Second Tuesday of the month	(10am to 1pm, 2pm to 4pm)
Cork CIC:	Third Tuesday of the month	(10am to 12pm, 2pm to 4pm)
Galway CIC:	Fourth Tuesday of the month	(10am to 1pm, 2pm to 4pm)

See www.ombudsman.ie for contact details and dates.



Press and radio

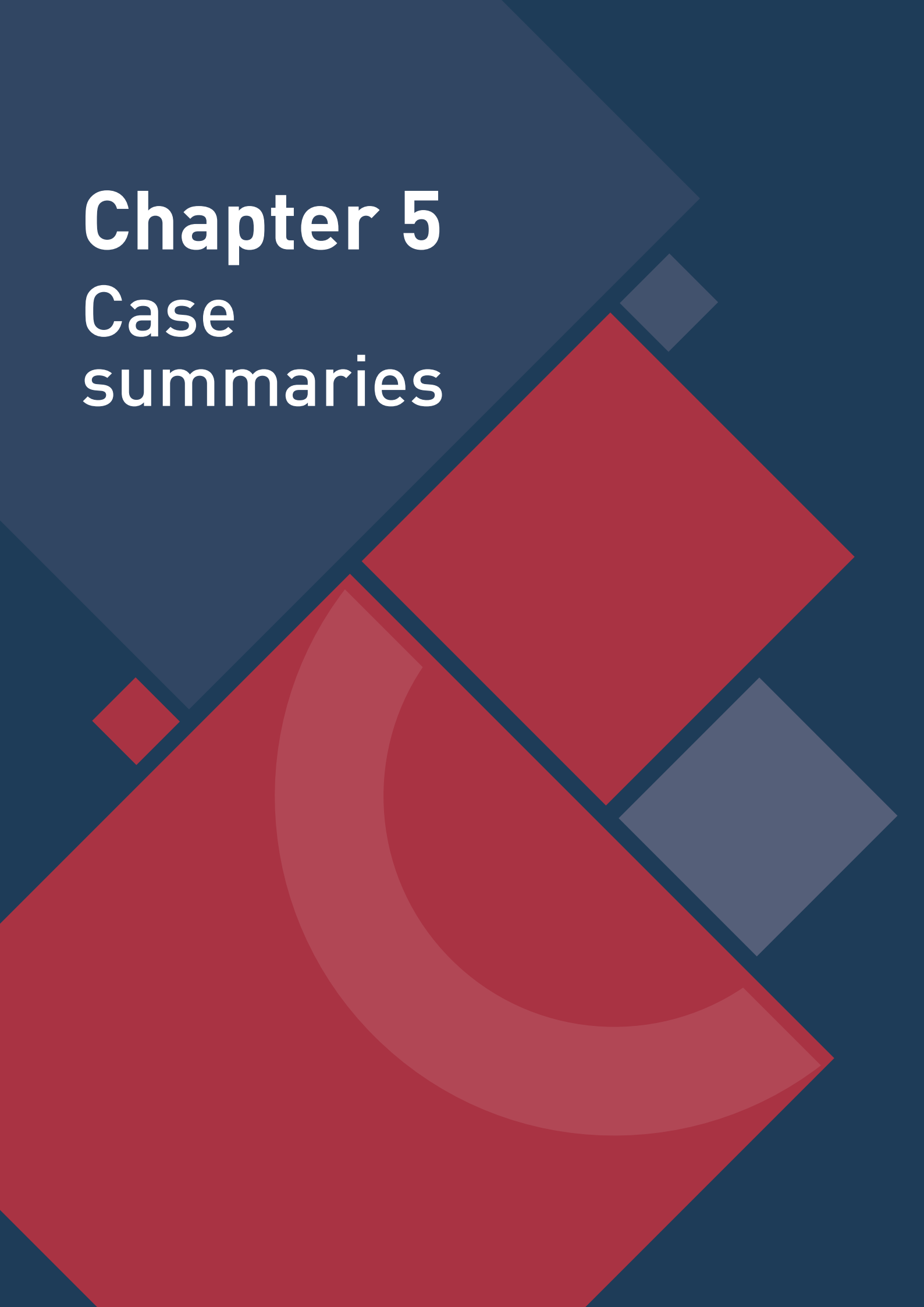
The Ombudsman highlighted the role of our Office and how people can engage with us on a number of national and local radio stations during the year.

Online ‘Complaint Training’ for public bodies

In 2025, we engaged with public bodies to further improve their understanding of the complaints process. One key pillar of this initiative was the development of a short online training module for staff of public bodies. The course builds skills for effective complaint management at all levels within an organisation with a user-centred approach. The one-hour course can be completed at a learner’s own pace and seeks to embed the principles of accountability, transparency, and service improvement. In early 2026 we made the training module available to staff of local authorities. It is also available to all public officials through our website: [Online Complaint Handling Training Course for Public Bodies](#). We would urge staff of all public bodies to complete it.

Standardised Local Authority complaints policy

In 2025 we engaged with the County and City Management Association (CCMA), Local Government Management Agency and other local authority colleagues to develop a standardised Local Authority Complaints Policy. It is the first time local authorities have agreed a shared, sector-wide approach to managing complaints. The policy will support a consistent approach across all local authorities, strengthen engagement with the public, and create opportunities for learning that lead to better services. The policy was launched in January 2026 and is being rolled out across the sector.



Chapter 5

Case summaries

Earlier in this report we described some of the complaints we received in 2025 including those upheld and not upheld. In this Chapter, we present summaries of some of the complaints that we upheld or resolved. Some of the details of the cases and the names of the complainants have been changed to protect their identity.



1. Incorrect income calculations saw family removed from housing list

Background

Pauline complained to the Ombudsman when she was told by Waterford City and County Council that her, her partner and their two children would be removed from the social housing list as they were now above the eligible household income threshold. Pauline had been on the social housing list since 2021.

Pauline's partner had a serious health condition which Pauline said could reduce his life expectancy, and they were living in a room above a business premises which she said did not have proper heating and was going to be sold within 2 years.

Investigation

The Household Means Policy determines eligibility and differential rent for local authority social housing support based on a household's net income over 12 months.

However, when the Ombudsman examined the Council's calculations for Pauline's family, he discovered that the Council had not calculated the income of the family for the 12-month period correctly. The calculation had been based on just four recent payslips for Pauline's partner, which also included a Working Family Payment. The calculation had also not taken into account that Pauline's partner was on a temporary seven-month contract at the time, and that the Working Family Payment had only recently been awarded, with the family receiving just three payments to date.

Outcome

When the Ombudsman raised the calculations with the Council it agreed to reinstate the family on the social housing list and backdate it to the original application date in 2021. In light of the health condition of Pauline's partner, the Council also applied medical priority to the application.



2. Pension refused after wrong medical report sent to German authorities

Background

Clara contacted the Ombudsman after she was refused a German 'disability pension'. She applied for the German pension as she had paid PRSI in Germany for a period of time. She believed that the application was refused as the (Irish) Department of Social Protection had sent an out-of-date medical report on her to the German authorities.

Investigation

Clara had been granted an Irish Invalidity pension after a successful appeal of the Department of Social Protection's initial refusal. As part of the appeals process Clara had submitted an up-to-date medical assessment of her, to the Appeals Office.

The Department made an application for a German disability pension on Clara's behalf (as is standard practice). However, Clara believed that the Department may have sent the original medical report and not the updated one which was considered by the Appeals Office during her successful appeal.

Outcome

The Ombudsman investigated the case and pointed out the error to the Department. The Department apologised and issued an updated medical report to the German authorities which showed that she had been awarded an Invalidity Pension in Ireland which supported her claim.



3. HSE provides improved autism services after complaint to the Ombudsman

Background

Tony's son Sam, who had autism, was attending 'day services' run by a community group providing services on behalf of the HSE. Tony believed the services were not working for Sam and that his physical and mental health was deteriorating. He asked that Sam be moved during the day to a special residential autism service where Sam lived during the week. However the HSE refused Tony's request.

Investigation

The special autism service where Sam lived during the week could not provide full day time care for Sam. However following contact from the Ombudsman, the HSE convened a multidisciplinary meeting involving the two service providers involved in Sam's care, Sam and his family.

Outcome

As a result of the meeting, a full comprehensive service was approved by the HSE's Disability Service, which, among other benefits, will enable Sam attend for more hours at the special autism residential service provider.



4. Man issued with a 'late payment' fee despite paying tax bill promptly

Background

John contacted the Office of the Revenue Commissioners in advance of his tax returns to let it know that there may be a delay in him receiving any notifications from Revenue as he was living in Australia and the post may be delayed. In addition, in April 2025 he deliberately lodged an early tax return in relation to his income tax to allow Revenue extra time to contact him.

In a letter dated 14 June 2025 Revenue issued a notification of the amount of income tax due to John. However John did not receive the letter until 2 July 2025. He paid the requested amount within five working days of receiving the letter. However, he then received a Warrant Order from the Dublin Sheriff Office, demanding that he pay the full amount of tax, plus interest and fees. The Warrant Order came into effect on 1 July 2025 – the day before John received the notification from Revenue. When he contacted the Sheriff's Office to explain, it insisted that he still had to pay it their fees and interest amounting to €427. John complained to Revenue but it said there was nothing it could do.

Investigation

When John brought his case to the Ombudsman, the Ombudsman asked Revenue why John had to pay interest and fees when he paid the amount due within five working days of receiving notification and he had previously notified Revenue of the likely delay in him receiving notification of the tax due.

Revenue acknowledged John's self-assessment income tax form was received by it on 12 April 2025. However, it said it had missed John's letter explaining that there may be a delay in him paying the amount as he was living in Australia.

In addition, Revenue said that some of the information on John's tax return had not been followed up and, as a result, he should have been in credit and not owe any payment to Revenue. As a result, the demand for outstanding income tax should not have issued and a warrant to the Sheriff should not have been generated.

Outcome

Revenue apologised for the oversight. It refunded John the payment he had made including the amount paid to the Sheriff. The Sheriff's warrant was withdrawn and the fees due to the Sheriff were paid by Revenue.



5. Confusion over Czech history qualification

Background

Maria contacted the Ombudsman when her application to study at the University of Galway was refused. The university had concerns over the nature of her History qualification from the Czech Republic which was titled: 'Matura Dějepis maturitní práce obhajobou', which loosely translates to "History -extended project with defence."

Maria was concerned that the university may have thought that the qualification was a diminished version of the standard history qualification. However, the term "extended project with defence" related to an additional examination, which Maria undertook by choice.

Investigation

Maria had provided the university with a letter from her college in the Czech Republic confirming that the qualification involved sitting the same exam as the standard History Matura examination and was conducted in accordance with the relevant Czech Republic legislation. In response, the university said that it would review Maria's application at its Autumn meeting. However, Maria was concerned that a decision would not be made in time for her to start the course at the start of the academic year.

Given the time sensitivity, the Ombudsman contacted the university to see if it may have misunderstood the nature of Maria's qualification.

Outcome

The university agreed to review its decision in light of Maria's evidence and approved her application in time for her to start the course.



6. Couple granted housing transfer after grant refused

Background

Anne and Gerry were tenants of Wicklow County Council for a number of years. Gerry fell seriously ill which resulted in long term reduced mobility and the need for an oxygen tank to help him breathe. Their two-storey accommodation presented a number of issues for Gerry including accessibility and an open fire which was unsuitable for Gerry's oxygen tank. Anne and Gerry applied for a housing transfer on two occasions in 2014 and 2022. As they had not been granted a transfer they then applied for a Housing Adaptation Grant in July 2024 to make the house more suitable for Gerry. However, they received no decision from the Council and contacted the Ombudsman in January 2025.

Investigation

The Council told the Ombudsman that the household was on their transfer list and their request had been discussed at regular case review meetings.

In relation to the Housing Adaptation Grant the Ombudsman noticed from the Council's file that funding had been approved for the grant and that works were scheduled to commence in Q3 of 2025, but the couple had not been notified. The Council responded by saying that it had not awarded the grant as yet, as technical staff had to assess if the works on the house were feasible. The Ombudsman pointed out to the Council that a decision on a Housing Adaptation Grant had to be made within six weeks and that over six months had now passed.

Outcome

The Council notified the Ombudsman that the adaptation works to the house were not feasible but that it had identified a suitable bungalow for the couple to transfer to, which they subsequently accepted.



7. Complaints involving the removal from the housing list due to a failure to respond to a Social Housing Assessment survey

We received a number of complaints where local authorities had removed applicants from the social housing waiting list as they had not responded to the Social Housing Assessment (SHA) survey. The SHA is a survey to count the total number of households qualified for social housing support across the country.

Guidance provided to local authorities on the SHA provides that in addition to a letter (or letters), all other means of communication should be used before determining that a household or applicant is no longer in need of social housing support. This is particularly important in cases where someone is in need of permanent housing and therefore may be moving address from time to time.

We have summarised two of the complaints we upheld and where the local authority had not taken sufficient steps to ensure it contacted the complainant before removing them from the housing list:

(a) Council wrongly removed man from housing list

Background

Gary contacted the Ombudsman early in 2025 after he discovered that Dublin City Council had removed him from the social housing waiting list, without his knowledge, some five years earlier.

Gary believed he had been on the housing waiting list and had been in contact with one of his designated 'areas of choice' which was in a neighbouring Council area. However when he contacted the neighbouring Council again in 2024 he was told that he had been removed from the housing waiting list as Dublin City Council had closed his housing application several years before.

Gary had evidence to show that he was still able to bid on properties in the neighbouring Council after Dublin City Council closed his housing application.

He was unhappy that he was removed from the Council's social housing waiting list without being notified and wanted to be reinstated on the list.

Investigation

According to Dublin City Council, Gary had been removed from the housing list in 2020 as he had failed to return his Social Housing Assessment (SHA) survey form. It said that a number of reminder letters issued to the man.

The Council had Gary's mobile number and email address on file. However, there was no evidence presented to the Ombudsman that the Council had tried to contact Gary by email or mobile phone. The Ombudsman also noted that Gary had responded to the 2016 and 2018 surveys.

The Ombudsman asked the Council to review its decision as it was not evident that it had tried to contact the man using all means of communication available to it before removing him from the social housing waiting list, or that it had notified the neighbouring Council of its decision.

Outcome

The Council agreed to reinstate Gary on its social housing list backdated to the date of his original application.



(b) Sisters' applications for housing wrongly closed

Background

Sisters Sheila and Fiona complained to the Ombudsman at the Ombudsman's Complaint Clinic* in Limerick as they said they had been refused housing supports by Limerick City and County Council. Both sisters had been homeless for several years and had first applied for housing supports 20 years ago. The Council had made an offer of emergency accommodation, but this was rejected.

Investigation

The Council confirmed to the Ombudsman that Sheila had been on the housing waiting list since 2015, and that her first application was received in June 2006. Similarly, Fiona was on file as being approved for housing in 2017 yet first having applied in 2008. Both sisters had their applications closed by the Council, following a failure to respond to the Social Housing Assessment 2013. The sisters were not aware of the closure of their applications.

Having examined the Council's files the Ombudsman identified gaps in communication and was unable to see what efforts were made by the Council to contact both sisters regarding the SHAs. The files showed that both sisters kept in contact with the Council over the years, providing a number of addresses and explaining their circumstances, and while this may not have always been done in a timely manner, it was clear that both women continued to engage with the Council with an understanding that they remained on the housing list.

Outcome

Having considered the circumstances of this case, particularly the prolonged homelessness experienced by both sisters and the information from the Council's files, the Ombudsman recommended that the Council use its discretion to backdate the applications to when the sisters first qualified for social housing supports in 2006 and 2008, respectively. This recommendation was accepted by the Council and one of the sisters was made a housing offer very shortly after the conclusion of the Ombudsman's investigation.

* The Ombudsman case team host monthly drop-in Complaint Clinics in Cork city, Limerick city and Galway city Citizen Information Centres to allow complainants make complaints to the Ombudsman in person. Dates and more information at www.ombudsman.ie



8. Man granted full appeal of harbour development grant decision after complaint to the Ombudsman

Background

Chris complained to the Ombudsman on behalf of his company when their application relating to harbour improvements under the Brexit Blue Economy Enterprise Development Scheme (BBEEDS) was refused by Bord Iascaigh Mhara (BIM). The purpose of the scheme is to counter the adverse economic and social consequences of the withdrawal of the UK from the EU on businesses operating in the 'blue economy' and located in communities within 10km of the coastline. The scheme was delivered through an existing Fisheries Local Action Group (FLAG).

Investigation

The application was initially refused by FLAG on the grounds that there was ongoing litigation involving stakeholders in the harbour in question and no application under the scheme could be approved until all legal disputes were resolved. Chris successfully appealed the initial decision to refuse the application. However, this did not result in the application being approved. Instead, BIM decided that the application should be reconsidered by the FLAG board without reference to the legal dispute.

The application was refused again for other technical reasons. Chris then submitted a further appeal. However, BIM said that it could not overturn a FLAG Board decision with respect to its assessment of a project's consistency with the Local Development Strategy as that was exclusively a matter for the FLAG Board.

The Ombudsman was concerned that BIM had taken an overly restrictive view of its role and that as a consequence, Chris and his company was not afforded an appropriate right of appeal.

The Ombudsman pointed out that while BIM worked in partnership with FLAG Boards regarding the project, it was BIM that both authorised and paid the grants. The role of the FLAG Board was to determine compliance with its objectives and make a recommendation to BIM, but it was a matter for BIM to decide whether to accept any such recommendation and, ultimately, approve or reject an application.

Outcome

The Ombudsman asked BIM to reconsider the appeal to include full consideration of the FLAG Board's recommendation. BIM agreed to the Ombudsman's request. It undertook a fresh consideration of the appeal and Chris was satisfied with the outcome.



9. Family granted housing application on compassionate grounds

Background

Alan complained to the Ombudsman when Sligo County Council refused his and his family's application for a housing transfer. Alan had an adult son with severe disabilities and poor mobility and, due to a number of factors including the location of the house, Alan said it was extremely difficult and unsafe for his son to visit.

Investigation

The Ombudsman acknowledged that the Council had considered the needs of the family during a previous request for a transfer some years previous; and that Alan's request for a transfer to other forms of social housing support did not meet the medical/disability criteria as set out in the Allocation Scheme because his adult son was not a 'member of the household'. In the particular circumstances in this case, including the fact that due to Alan's declining health it was likely that Alan may see less of his son, the Ombudsman requested that his application be reconsidered by the Council on compassionate and human rights grounds.

The Council's file on Alan's application also included reports from medical personnel setting out their support for the application for a transfer of housing due to various risks associated with accessibility at the property.

Outcome

The Ombudsman believed that the refusal of the application for a housing transfer in this case was adversely impacting on the quality of life of the family as a whole. The Ombudsman asked the Council to consider the case further in light of the serious risks identified as regards accessibility; and to exercise its discretion to allow Alan be placed on the Council's transfer waiting list for suitable accommodation. The Council agreed to the request, and Alan and his family were placed on the waiting list for a transfer of housing.



10. Passport Service refused to make name change to passport

Background

Peter complained to the Ombudsman about the refusal of the Passport Service to issue him with a passport in his new name.

A year earlier, in 2023, Peter's passport was near its expiry date. He applied to renew his passport and also applied for a change to his new name, which he had evidence of using for around a year. The Passport Service refused to change his name as he would have to show evidence of using his new name for at least two years - a requirement under the Passport Act, 2008. As a result, Peter had to renew his passport in his old name.

Peter re-applied for a change of name on his passport in 2024. While he now had two years proof of usage of his new name, the Passport Service refused his application as it said a passport could not be issued in a new name less than two years after an applicant had received a new passport in their 'old' name. The Passport Service said that the new name could only be used once the old name had ceased to be used - in its view, two years from the date of issue of the previous passport.

Investigation

While proof of use of a new name for two years is required under the Passport Act 2008, the Ombudsman noted that the refusal of an application to change a name on the basis that they have received a passport in their old name less than two years earlier, is not provided for in legislation and could unfairly affect some applicants.

Applicants whose passports happened to expire during the two-year period prior to a 'change of name' application, were potentially subject to an extended period for proof of usage compared to other applicants - in some cases by up to an additional two years.

The Ombudsman believed that this created an inequitable situation for certain applicants. In addition, the Ombudsman was concerned that the Passport Service had failed to inform 'name change applicants' of its policy prior to application.

Outcome

While the Passport Service did not change its policy, it now recognises that there will be circumstances where it should make exceptions to the policy. It confirmed that this exception can include cases where applicants must renew their expiring passport but do not yet have the required proof of usage to allow a name change. The Passport Service has also updated the information available for applicants seeking to change their name on their passport to ensure greater clarity in relation to its policy.



11. New passport and birth certificate sent to wrong address

Background

Luke complained to the Ombudsman when his new passport and several other documents, including his birth certificate, were returned to his student accommodation address in the UK. This was despite him contacting the Passport Office twice through its webchat to inform it that he was returning to his home address in Ireland following the completion of the academic year. As he thought his birth certificate had been lost, and he needed it to apply for jobs, he had paid for a replacement birth certificate.

Investigation

The Passport Office acknowledged that, although Luke's change of address had been recorded by the Customer Service Hub, it was not then amended by staff who reviewed the application. As a result, the documentation was posted to the original address.

Outcome

As a gesture of goodwill, the Passport Office refunded the cost of the replacement birth certificate and offered Luke an apology for the inconvenience it caused.



Chapter 6

Corporate governance and case quality



Corporate governance

The Office of the Ombudsman also provides staffing and corporate services support for five other statutory Offices:

- ✦ The Office of the Information Commissioner
- ✦ The Office of the Commissioner for Environmental Information
- ✦ The Office of the Protected Disclosures Commissioner
- ✦ The Standards in Public Office Commission
- ✦ The Commission on Public Service Appointments

While the different Offices each carry out separate and distinct statutory functions, the Office functions as a single amalgamated agency in organisational terms. The Office is funded by one Vote and overseen by an Accounting Officer (Director General) who is supported by a Management Advisory Committee. In carrying out their work our staff embrace the traditional obligations of privacy and integrity in the performance of official duties while at the same time protecting and preserving the statutory independence and functions of each of the constituent offices in which they work.

Updates in relation to our Corporate governance are set out on the [Strategy and Governance page](#) on the website of the Office of the Ombudsman. This page includes information in relation to our:

- ✦ Strategic Plan 'Towards 2030'
- ✦ Corporate Governance Framework
- ✦ Public Sector Duty (the duty on public servants in relation to human rights)
- ✦ Protected Disclosures
- ✦ Green Team (including compliance with the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act)
- ✦ Compliance with the Official Languages Act
- ✦ Fraud Prevention and anti-Corruption Policy
- ✦ Policy on gifts, hospitality and entertainment
- ✦ Revolving Door Policy
- ✦ Gender Pay Gap Report

The Office of the Ombudsman is a member of the International Ombudsman Institute and the Ombudsman Association.



Case quality and customer service

We continuously aim to improve the level of services we provide and ensure that our systems and processes allow us to deliver on our strategic objectives.

To ensure the quality of our case handling we introduced quality standards, which set objectives for casework in the areas of procedures, timeliness, communications and accuracy. To ensure we meet our quality standards we have a quality assessment process in place. Every month our Quality Assessment Team examines 15% of cases closed in the previous month and assesses cases against our quality standards. The Team also identifies and suggests solutions to any process issues arising from monthly quality assessments and provides feedback to caseworkers on individual cases.

We strive to be a customer centric organisation and to provide an accessible, efficient and effective service to our customers, which includes members of the public and service providers. Our Customer Service Charter sets out what the public can expect from us when we investigate a complaint.



