

Press release



Ombudsmen plan service improvements

Further improvements to the complaints handling service provided by the Local Government Ombudsmen (LGO) are planned following an independent customer research survey. The Ombudsmen handle around 19,000 complaints a year from the public about local authorities in England, finding a remedy or settlement for the complainant in more than a quarter of cases investigated. Last year councils paid compensation of £1.1m to complainants as a result of the Ombudsmen's recommendations.

One of the main improvements planned by the Ombudsmen is to expand their Advice Service. This mainly telephone-based service provides information to the public and their advisers, and helps people with submitting their complaint to the Ombudsman.

Overall, the research shows that the outcome of the complaint is very strongly linked to satisfaction with the Ombudsmen's service, but it provides useful feedback which will help the Ombudsmen to make improvements. The survey showed the need to explain the role of the Ombudsmen more clearly, particularly what they can and cannot do, and what might be the outcome of an investigation. The Ombudsmen are also reviewing their website and printed literature.

A small sample of people (45 complainants, 14 local authority staff and 13 LGO staff) took part in the customer satisfaction survey through focus groups. The aim was to build on the findings from previous customer research of large samples of services users to get more in-depth views.

The Ombudsmen's staff were praised for their efficiency and helpfulness, and the local authority staff gave positive feedback about the usefulness of advice from the Ombudsmen.

"We recognise the value of customer research in making improvements to our service," said LGO Chairman Tony Redmond, "and that's why we commissioned the survey. We have

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already taken action in some areas and we will use the findings to further develop our service to meet the needs of our customers and their reasonable expectations.

“There are constraints on what we can do to meet some of the concerns, particularly about the limitations of our role, but ultimately we want the experience of bringing a complaint to the Ombudsmen to be a positive one for complainants.”

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Media enquiries

We have a photograph of Tony Redmond that we can send by email. For this, or for general information about the Local Government Ombudsman service, contact:

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