

Commission for Local Administration in England

Business Plan 2017-18

The Local Government Ombudsman conducts independent, impartial investigations of complaints about service failure and maladministration.

Our vision is to provide the public with the best Local Government Ombudsman service in the future which continues to remedy injustice and improve local public services.

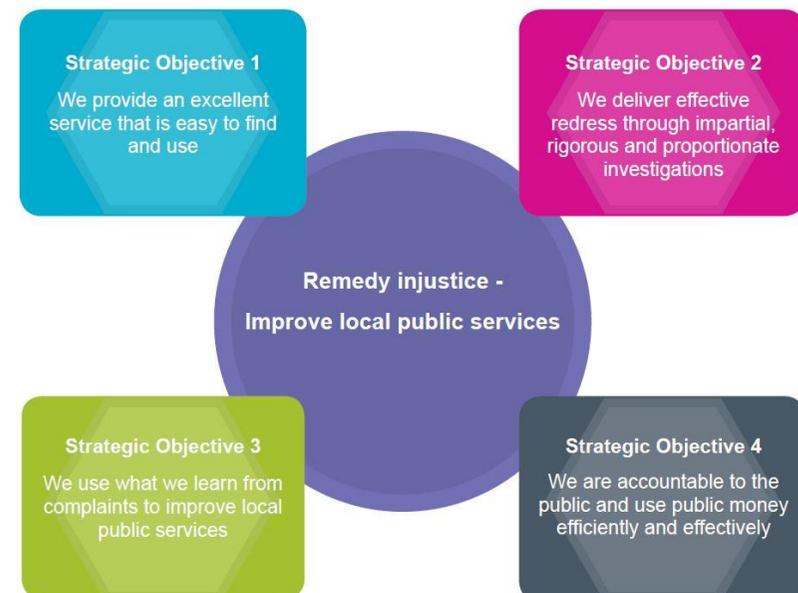
Where we find fault we make recommendations for remedy to redress injustice caused. Where the evidence supports it we also recommend changes to policy and practice to address wider systemic failures and will feed back learning from our work to improve the local resolution of complaints and service provision.

We are also the Social Care Ombudsman, providing a one-stop-shop for complaints about the service provided by all registered social care providers. Our powers to investigate extend to complaints about both publicly and privately funded social care. This means the public has a clear route for redress and do not have to navigate complex processes in what is often a confusing social care system. In this way we help to make sure that local public services and care services are accountable to the people that use them.

The initiatives in our 2017-18 Business Plan will continue to refine and enhance our core casework, ensuring it keeps pace with the changing environment we are working in and continues to provide timely and fair redress for those who have suffered injustice, whilst driving wider local service improvements for all.

Our corporate strategy for 2015-18 sets out our approach to ensure that we remain relevant to ever demanding public expectations and resilient to continuing financial pressures. We will review the strategy over the course of the year and will continue to make sure that the commitments set out in the strategy, and the steps we take to realise them, are informed by those who use our service, our staff and our stakeholders”.

Finally, we will continue to work closely with the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman to prepare for changes following the publication of the draft Public Service Ombudsman Bill.



business goals and outcomes

measures of success

1. We provide an excellent service that is easy to find and use

1.1

The Intake Team effectively manages all complaints and incoming enquiries in line with our published standards

(This initiative supports the Optimum Ombudsman Service)

We provide the public with easy access to our service and prompt advice about their enquiry in line with our service standards

All services standards for Intake, both internal and external, for our end to end service delivery model are actively monitored and achieved.

Key external service commitments are;

- 95% of calls answered within 60 seconds by Intake Team
- Answer 98% of calls that are presented to Intake Team
- Average answer time of 20 seconds or less by Intake Team
- Deal with 99% of written contacts within 24 hours of receipt by Intake Team

1.2

The Assessment Team effectively manages all complaints and incoming enquiries in line with our published standards

(This initiative supports the Optimum Ombudsman Service)

We make an early assessment of every complaint to give the public a prompt decision in line with our service standards on whether we will investigate further

All services standards for Assessment, both internal and external, for our end to end service delivery model are actively monitored and achieved.

Key external service commitments are;

- 65% cases closed < 13 weeks
- 85% cases closed < 26 weeks
- 99% cases closed < 52 weeks
- 80% of all cases will be decided by Assessment or allocated to an investigator within 20 working days of receipt by Intake Team

business goals and outcomes	measures of success
<p>1.3 The Investigation Team effectively manages all complaints and incoming enquiries in line with our published standards</p> <p><i>(This initiative supports the Optimum Ombudsman Service)</i></p> <p>We conduct detailed investigations, focussing on the most significant complaints we receive, in a timey manner and in line with our service standards</p> <p>All services standards for Investigation, both internal and external, for our end to end service delivery model are actively monitored and achieved</p>	<p>Key external service commitments are;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 65% cases closed < 13 weeks • 85% cases closed < 26 weeks • 99% cases closed < 52 weeks • No more than 60 outstanding cases over 52 weeks held at one time
<p>1.4 Achieve the 20 day working target for dealing with new complaints</p> <p>We refine our working processes to more closely align Intake, Assessment and Investigation to avoid dual handling and duplication.</p> <p>We deliver on our public promise to either make a robust evidence based decision on a complaint, or allocate it to a named member of investigative staff within one of our investigation teams within 20 working days of receipt in Intake.</p> <p>We register, assess, and allocate work as quickly and as seamlessly as possible; to make efficient use of our resources and to contribute towards the drive to improve overall decision times</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80% of all casework is either decided or allocated to a member of an Investigation Team within 20 working days of receipt by Intake

business goals and outcomes	measures of success
<p>1.5</p> <p>Develop our effectiveness and efficiency in managing Joint Working cases</p> <p>We improve the effectiveness and efficiency of assessing and investigating joint complaints</p> <p>We streamline any extraneous part of the Joint Working business processes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The time taken to deal with complaints at joint working assessment and joint working investigation will improve. • The number of decisions taken by joint working assessment and joint working investigation will increase. • There is an improvement in the time taken by the Joint Working Team to allocate cases
<p>1.6</p> <p>Make a decision on our future Casework Management System (CMS)</p> <p><i>(This initiative supports the Optimum Ombudsman Service)</i></p> <p>We will consider the best long-term CMS solution that is practical, cost effective and business efficient, in the context of creating a Public Service Ombudsman</p> <p>We will ensure that we have a CMS which promotes the efficient handling and recording of complaints and which provides quality business insight.</p> <p>We will agree sufficient funding to cover any CMS development work and its implementation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have fully determined the costs and benefits of PHSO's new CMS • A decision on the new CMS is taken in the full knowledge of the financial and operational implications to the organisation • We have selected a CMS system which best meets our future needs

business goals and outcomes	measures of success
<p>1.7</p> <p>Ensure we remain relevant and responsive in an environment of public sector reforms</p> <p>We will check that existing and new combined authorities (CA) have a clear complaints handling arrangement that reflects our “Principles of complaint handling in combined authorities and devolved settings” (including signposting to LGO). We will remind those that do not of the benefits and that LGO will use the principles as a benchmark when considering complaints.</p> <p>We are clear on the jurisdictional impacts of devolution deals, combined authorities and alternative integrated health and social care models (e.g. Vanguard).</p> <p>We work with stakeholders (e.g. combined authorities, PHSO, LGA, DCLG, DH, CQC, NHSE) to assess the impact of the changes and change our working practices accordingly, jointly where appropriate.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Combined Authorities (CA) are clear about the LGO’s position on complaints handling/redress arrangements within a CA/devolved setting. • We have a clear understanding of which Combined Authorities have arrangements that are in line with our principles and adapt our approach to engaging with Combined Authorities accordingly. • We have accurate and up to date guidance on jurisdiction. Staff are aware of this and the Principles and use them when considering complaints
<p>1.8</p> <p>Develop a ‘Digital Strategy’ which reflects and anticipates the changing on-line environment and ensures we stay accessible to all complainants</p> <p><i>(This initiative supports the Optimum Ombudsman Service)</i></p> <p>Our digital strategy will aim to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define our digital vision and ambitions through to 2020; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have established a clear understanding and appreciation of our customer’ digital preferences and what best suits our users • Our digital strategy is available to all; and LGO staff understand the strategy and how it impacts them • We have a well defined and approved programme of activity which supports and delivers our digital strategy • We have delivered the specific initiatives outlined in the delivery plan for the current

business goals and outcomes	measures of success
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a framework and principles for digital delivery that we will use for all developments; and • Set out digital delivery plans for 2017-18 and 2018-19 	<p>year</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have identified any staff requirements and learning to help support and make the digital strategy a success
<p>1.9</p> <p>Implement the new business web portal</p> <p><i>(This initiative supports the Optimum Ombudsman Service)</i></p> <p>The portal will provide a safe and secure online area that enables portal users to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • View progress of the complaint(s) • Access and upload case related information. • Interact via email and potentially other methods such as live chat • Receive reminders and notifications about the status of their complaint(s) <p>Our customer experience will be simpler, more convenient and more secure.</p> <p>Our business processes will be more effective and efficient.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have introduced more efficient and safe business processes to handle complaints via the portal • Increase in the proportion of new enquiries received online • Decrease in case handling time • Increases in decision numbers • Users consider the new portal effective, convenient and easy to use

business goals and outcomes

measures of success

2. We deliver effective redress through impartial, rigorous and proportionate investigations

2.1

Improve our ability to report remedies and BinJ compliance through the better collection, management and use of our data

We report a broader range of data about the complaints we investigate, which focuses on outcomes remedies, and in particular, service improvements achieved as a result of our investigations.

The way we report our data allows for a more meaningful comparison between BinJs on key data - through improved annual letters and reports, and through an enhanced geographical interface on the website.

We have more accurate input, efficient storage and reporting of our data.

There is improved transparency of the LGO's work by placing greater focus on recommended remedies and supports local accountability by providing a resource for local scrutinisers to utilise.

Provide increased recognition to BinJs of the changes and improvements they have made.

- We can report a broader range of data about the complaints we investigate, which focuses on outcomes remedies, and in particular, service improvements achieved as a result of our investigations
- The way we report our data allows for a more meaningful comparison between BinJs on key data through an enhanced geographical interface on the website

Note: This is a two year project. The benefits and measures noted will be realised once the project has been completed.

business goals and outcomes

measures of success

2.2

Develop and refine our approach to quality and best practice

(This initiative supports the Optimum Ombudsman Service)

We will establish methods of evaluating the customer service quality by using information gained from our customer survey.

We will introduce a more streamlined approach to our public interest reports.

We will consider integrating the quality standards framework proposed by the Ombudsman Association into our business processes. This would allow us to benchmark our approach to quality against other Ombudsman services.

- **We have evidence from the methodology review to decide if this exercise is worthwhile, how we might amend the method, and whether the information can help us to improve the quality of contact with complainants**
- **There is an increase in number of public reports we issue in 2017/18 compared to the previous year**
- **After implementation of the new reports procedure, anecdotal feedback and feedback from the working group will show an increased level of staff satisfaction with the new procedure**
- **If adopted; We comply with the Ombudsman Association Service Standards Framework throughout our current and future monitoring and reporting systems**
- **We have produced an annual report on our compliance against the Ombudsman Service standards**

business goals and outcomes

measures of success

3. We use what we learn from complaints to improve local public services

3.1

Maximise the impact of our casework

(This initiative supports the Optimum Ombudsman Service)

We want to deliver a systematic approach to our casework impact, maximise that impact, and ensure it is fully integrated with our core business.

The Casework Impact Group (CIG) will continue to promote and progress this work and to ensure a co-ordinated approach which maximises the impact from our casework activity.

We will set out our planning assumptions and targets for casework impact activities, which will inform individual performance objectives across the organisation.

- We have delivered effective communication in accordance with the key priorities and targets in the External Communications Strategy
- We have identified all complaints suitable to be public interest reports and maximise the impact of these by publicising our findings.
- Our staff are aware of our external communications work, know where to look for information about it and understand its importance
- We have delivered the full range of reports and publications in line with our planning targets and schedule. Our commitment in 2017-18 is as follows:

Press Coverage

- Maintain 98% positive/ neutral press coverage
- Opinion pieces/ interviews – local government press - 4 items
- Opinion pieces/ interviews – social care press - 4 items
- Opinion pieces/ interviews- national press 3 items
- Specialist technical journals - 3 additional items in addition to our regular column (6 in total)

Public Reports

- Review objectives and provide staff with clear guidelines
- Dependent on casework, but envisage 40 reports

Focus Reports

- At least 4 reports, subjects agreed by CIG

business goals and outcomes

measures of success

E-newsletter

- Complete business case for new software to effectively deliver newsletters
- Review offer (and subject to procuring new software) increase frequency to bi-monthly edition

Annual Review of Social Care

- Publish document; deliver communications plan

Annual Letters

- Deliver project – aim to maintain no. of tailored letters
- Deliver local media campaign – improve quality of coverage on last year

Local Government complaint stats bulletin

- Deliver bulletin, and evaluate media coverage

business goals and outcomes

measures of success

3.2

Promote and embed our work as the Social Care Ombudsman

(This initiative supports the Optimum Ombudsman Service)

We will experience an increase in complaints made from self funders; based on the outcomes of our investigations being more widely shared.

We want to have a greater level of engagement in national discussions on adult social care.

By raising our profile with key players in the social care field we will gain credibility and improve our reputation enabling us to comment on adult social care matters

We will increase delivery of our training offer to care providers whilst maintaining our cost neutral delivery model.

- **There is an increase in Part 3a complaints**
- **LGO being consulted, and mentioned, in the media on adult social care issues**
- **Increase in the number of training sessions we are requested to do for private providers**

business goals and outcomes	measures of success
<p>3.3</p> <p>Influence and shape effective policies and legislation in preparation for the new Public Service Ombudsman (PSO)</p> <p><i>(This initiative supports the Optimum Ombudsman Service)</i></p> <p>We will be actively and effectively engaged with our sponsor department, the Cabinet Office, and other departments, in supporting and influencing policy development and legislative activity.</p> <p>Be alert to changing priorities in the emerging reform agenda and adapt our approach and resources accordingly.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have provided expert input to the legislative and policy discussions in a professional and timely manner, and have fully delivered on all our PSO commitments • Staff have been informed of developments and progress in an appropriate and timely manner
<p>3.4</p> <p>Maximise the impact and effectiveness of our relationship with BinJs and Local Authority Link Officers</p> <p>We will work with BinJs and Local Authority Link Officers to improve their understanding of the LGO’s role and how to work with us.</p> <p>We will ensure that the LGO and BinJs/ Link Officers get the maximum value from our relationship.</p> <p>Our aim is to ensure we can investigate complaints as effectively as possible while maintaining our independence.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have established a network of Link Officers which will enable the sharing of learning and best practice • We have received sufficient and detailed feedback from our Link Officer network to help us maximise the impact and effectiveness of the seminars and future training events/courses we deliver • Link Officers and other contacts within BinJs are aware of and understand the role and responsibilities of the External Training and Relationship Coordinator

business goals and outcomes	measures of success
<p>3.5 Review and revise our approach to customer satisfaction</p> <p>We will review our customer satisfaction research methodology which was published in 2013.</p> <p>We will ensure that our customer satisfaction work informs business decisions in the most effective and robust way, and we have reliable data to tell us whether our customers are satisfied or not.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have an agreed, fit-for-purpose approach to our customer satisfaction research <p><i>Note: Additional measures of success will be identified should further work be commissioned in 2017-18</i></p>
<p>3.6 Strengthen our training programme, expand our commitment to sharing our learning with Bodies in Jurisdiction and develop our training for care providers</p> <p>We will expand and further develop our complaints handling training programme, particularly the training we offer to the social care sector.</p> <p>Our training programme will be placed on a sound business footing.</p> <p>We will match the training we offer with our ability to resource that training.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing satisfaction levels of delegates are maintained. • Delegates can easily access our new online learning resource centre • The number of course bookings from care providers has increased • We have not declined a training request because of an insufficient number of trainers • Deliver a minimum of 70 courses

business goals and outcomes

measures of success

4. We are accountable to the public and use public money efficiently and effectively

4.1

Prepare for the integrated Public Sector Ombudsman

(This initiative supports the Optimum Ombudsman Service)

We undertake all appropriate preparatory work, with PHSO, to ensure that the LGO is aligned with the Optimum Ombudsman model and is ready for the next stage of Ombudsman reform

- *Success measures will be provided for each project once it has been defined and agreed*

4.2

Migrate email to the cloud and upgrade Office (to Microsoft Office 365)

(This initiative supports the Optimum Ombudsman Service)

We purchase a Mail Filtering (MTA) and Endpoint protection service to improve email deliverability, security and resilience as well as protecting LGO computers from evolving Cyber threats.

We replace our out-of-date Office 2007 software with the latest version (2016) to bring us into line with PHSO and to improve security.

We replace the Exchange 2007 mail server to bring us into line with PHSO and to improve security.

- **Reports of mail being successfully delivered by our external stakeholders.**
- **Existing email is flowing through new service and is being filtered appropriately.**
- **Mail is successfully migrated and is available to staff.**
- **Staff able to use new Office 2016 software successfully; security and compatibility are improved.**

business goals and outcomes

measures of success

4.3

Prepare for the implementation of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

In May 2018 the Data Protection Act 1998 will be replaced by this European Union Regulation.

By this time we will have understood the GDPR and be 'business-ready', and able to meet our obligations;

- our policies and procedures will be updated to ensure compliance with the new Regulation with regard to information security and dealing with information requests
- documentation is in place to record our processing of personal data and our legal basis for processing that data
- our notices to the public and to staff meet the requirements of the new Regulation, and
- a Data Protection Officer will be appointed and all staff are trained.

- **Data Protection Officer appointed by 25 May 2018.**
- **All staff are aware of the new law and what will be required of them**
- **All relevant policies and procedures are updated to comply with the new law**
- **Information for the public has been updated to comply with the law, including arrangements for cookies on the website**
- **Risks have been assessed and mitigated as far as possible**
- **A procedure for carrying out privacy impact assessments is in place and used on all new projects involving personal data**