

Commission for Local Administration in England

# Business Plan 2018-19

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

*Our vision is to be an exemplary ombudsman scheme and 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.*

*As the Social Care Ombudsman, we provide 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.*

*Our Corporate Strategy 2018-2021 sets out our vision over the next three years. It builds upon the excellent work already done by our staff, and proposes further innovation and modernisation in our service. However, it does that without ever losing sight of our core casework responsibilities or compromising our defining principles of independence, impartiality and fairness.*

*Over the next three years we are committed to creating even greater openness about the way we work, the processes we follow, the decisions we take, and the recommendations we make. We will support greater public and democratic scrutiny of services, including our own, by sharing more data and more*

*information on line. We will continue to move the national conversation about our work away from a simplistic focus on complaint volumes; we will instead turn the spotlight on the value we can add for the many, through our recommendations for wider service improvements and sharing learning from our investigations.*

*We have just two assets to deliver these goals – our staff and our supporting technology. We will invest in both over the next three years to create a modern, accessible service with a learning culture that helps our staff do a tough job with confidence and pride.*

*Our priorities during the first year of our corporate strategy are set out in this Business Plan. We will carefully monitor our progress over the course of the year, not only to ensure that the service we provide is as effective as it can be but also to ensure that we are beginning to embed the longer-term improvements that will help to meet the future needs of people who rely on our service.*

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**

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
- Handle 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**

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% of cases closed < 13 weeks
- 85% of cases closed < 26 weeks
- 99% of 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><b>1.3</b></p> <p><b>The Investigation Team effectively manages all complaints and incoming enquiries in line with our published standards</b></p> <p>We conduct detailed investigations, focussing on the most significant complaints we receive, in a timely 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"> <li>• 65% of cases closed &lt; 13 weeks</li> <li>• 85% of cases closed &lt; 26 weeks</li> <li>• 99% of cases closed &lt; 52 weeks</li> <li>• No more than 60 outstanding cases over 52 weeks held at one time</li> </ul>
<p><b>1.4</b></p> <p><b>Implement the actions arising from the strategic review of the Joint Working Team</b></p> <p>We develop and improve the way we work jointly with PHSO on casework.</p> <p>This initiative will focus on ensuring we have the right number of trained staff to reduce the time it takes to allocate cases for joint working investigation and the time it takes to make an investigation decision.</p> <p>We aim to close 95% of cases within 52 weeks and will actively work to achieve this.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The JWI backlog has been reduced to a level where the output of decisions matches incoming work</li> <li>• Each JWI Investigator is completing a minimum of 25 cases per year</li> <li>• Customer satisfaction data has been produced for JWT cases</li> </ul>

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**business goals and outcomes**

**measures of success**

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**1.5**

**Work with PHSO to publish both organisations' performance in the same way**

Our key aims through this initiative are that:

- We routinely benchmark specific performance measures against PHSO, to harmonise our approach and allow our respective boards to better scrutinise each organisation
- We publish this information to allow the public to better understand our performance and cost effectiveness.

The benefits include:

- A powerful mechanism for identifying areas of our performance which should be targeted for service improvement.
- A clear rationale to justify any subsequent plans for service improvement internally.
- Improved transparency and public accountability for our performance.

A greater alignment of LGSCO and PHSO practices, to support the principles and creation of a single public services ombudsman

- **We have identified, with PHSO, which specific measures will be selected, we have outlined any discrepancies that exist in how they are currently reported, and we have planned for their alignment.**
- **We have agreed, with PHSO, on common definitions for these measures and have a common format for reporting progress against them.**
- **We have secured approval, with PHSO, to adopt new measures to bring our data reporting into alignment.**
- **We have developed any new reporting that we require.**
- **We have begun reporting benchmarked measures (for board scrutiny) and publishing them (for transparency) on a routine basis.**

business goals and outcomes	measures of success
<p><b>1.6</b></p> <p><b>Improve our online complaints service</b></p> <p>We will develop a portal that will enhance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The customer experience by ensuring digital contact with our service is simpler, more convenient and more intuitive.</li> <li>• Our data security by creating a safe and controlled digital environment and reducing the exchange of physical correspondence</li> <li>• The LGO’s business processes by improving online communication with our service users and reducing the time it takes to gather information.</li> </ul> <p>The online complaints service will enable service users to safely and securely access our service to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• View progress of the complaint(s)</li> <li>• Access and upload case related information.</li> <li>• Interact via email and potentially other methods such as live chat</li> <li>• Receive reminders and notifications about the status of their complaint(s)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have introduced efficient and safe business processes to handle complaints via the online complaints service</li> <li>• Increase in % of new enquiries received online – 2019/20</li> <li>• Users consider the new online complaints service effective, convenient and easy to use</li> </ul>

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 that 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.

The benefits include:

- More accurate input, efficient storage and reporting of our data
- Moves us away from complaint volumes and towards the outcomes and impact of remedied complaints.
- Improved ability to measure and show the impact of our work to BinJs, the public, and stakeholders
- Makes data more relevant and accessible to stakeholders
- Provides increased recognition to BinJs of the changes and improvements they have made
- Increases transparency of the LGSCO's work by placing greater

- 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 to three-year project. The benefits and measures noted will be realised once the project has been completed.***

business goals and outcomes	measures of success
<p>focus on recommended remedies and supports local accountability by providing a resource for local scrutineers to utilise.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The LSGCO's role is more open to scrutiny.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>2.2</b></p> <p><b>Ensure that our specialist knowledge is kept updated, is fully embedded in our guidance and is available to staff</b></p> <p>We improve staff confidence with managing casework; ensuring all our internal casework subject guidance (held on the intranet) is reviewed and where relevant, revised.</p> <p>The Ombudsman and CPF have confidence that staff have clear and relevant subject guidance to support them with casework.</p> <p>We maintain &amp; improve greater levels of consistency across the organisation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The CPF has agreed the programme of work to ensure all pieces of subject guidance are reviewed.</li> <li>Each piece of subject guidance scheduled for 2018-19 has been reviewed and, if necessary, revised</li> <li>Staff have been made aware of all changes and any action they need to take as a result</li> <li>Staff confidence in how their casework practice is supported is reinforced</li> </ul>

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

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 promote and progress this work, and ensure a co-ordinated approach to maximise 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
- Our staff are aware of our external communications work, know where to look for information about it and understand its importance
- We take a strategic approach to deciding what external policy consultations on issues relating to casework to respond to, to maximise the impact of our casework insights externally
- We have delivered the full range of reports and publications in line with our planning targets and schedule. Our commitment in 2018-19 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 - 3 items
- Opinion pieces/ interviews- national press 4 items
- Specialist technical journals – regular column in Benefits and Tax sector

#### Public Interest Reports

- Dependent on casework, but planning assumption is 45 - 50 reports during year

#### Focus Reports

- At least 4 reports, subjects agreed by CIG

business goals and outcomes	measures of success
	<p><b><u>Guidance for Practitioners</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 2 items produced and published</li> </ul> <p><b><u>E-newsletters</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 6 ASC providers bulletins</li> <li>○ 6 Ombudsman’s News</li> <li>○ Newly published decisions; ASC, Ed &amp;Ch Srvs, Planning, Housing</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Annual Review of Adult Social Care Complaints</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 1 Published document</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Report on our Local Government jurisdiction</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 1 Publication</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Annual Report and Accounts</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 1 Publication</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Annual Letters</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Tailored Letters – planning assumption is 50 during year</li> <li>○ Press Campaign - Maintain quality of coverage from last year</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Speaking Engagements</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Minimum of 2 targeted events</li> </ul> <p><b><u>Decision Statements</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ At least 93% published</li> </ul>

business goals and outcomes	measures of success
<p><b>3.2</b></p> <p><b>Extend the reach and effectiveness of how we share and promote the outcomes and learning from casework</b></p> <p><b>A Promote the outcomes of complaints which cut across PHSO and LGSCO jurisdictions</b></p> <p>We want to extend the reach and effectiveness of how we share and promote the outcomes and learning from casework, especially where those cases involve both health and social care elements</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have issued and publicised a focus report</li> </ul>
<p><b>B Develop how our casework connects with local scrutiny mechanisms</b></p> <p>We will identify ways to share our work with scrutiny / overview organisations, reinforcing the role scrutiny can play in using insight from complaints to support learning and help drive service improvements.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our work has greater visibility among those with a mandate to scrutinise local authorities at a local level</li> </ul>
<p><b>C Share our learning with Councils to help them better manage changes which may disrupt their services.</b></p> <p>We will work with Councils who are responding to the financial, demographic, social and technological changes affecting local government practices, resulting in transformation of service design, scope and delivery</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have engaged with council stakeholders to participate in and finalise preparation of outcomes</li> <li>• Councils we have worked with believe that the LGSCO better understand how their service delivery has evolved and been impacted by organisational changes</li> </ul>

business goals and outcomes	measures of success
<p><b>D Increase the awareness of the LGSCO with prisoners and prison charities</b></p> <p>The LGSCO has a responsibility to ensure we are accessible to vulnerable sections of society. This includes prisoners and those on remand.</p> <p>We aim to increase the number of valid complaints from prisoners and people on remand and associated charities by raising our profile within this sector.</p> <p>We will provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater links with a vulnerable group of people</li> <li>• Improved opportunities for prisoners to complain</li> <li>• More accurate recording of complaints received</li> </ul> <p>The opportunity to provide feedback to public bodies on any identified patterns</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>There is an increased number of complaints received from prisoners and prison charities, which are within our jurisdiction</b></li> <li>• <b>We have established effective arrangements for signposting prisoner and prison charities complaints, which do not fall within our remit</b></li> <li>• <b>We have promoted our service and encouraged greater external awareness of our role regards prisoners</b></li> </ul>
<p><b>3.3</b></p> <p><b>Improve the complaint handling of underperforming Bodies in Jurisdiction (BinJ)</b></p> <p>Standard training courses are offered year-round but we have identified an increasing tendency for a more cyclical nature. Bookings are tending to cluster more around the financial year-end – a likely response to local authority transformation programmes and budget pressures.</p> <p>This offers an opportunity to explore an additional way to support BinJs to learn and improve, and uses an adaptation of the model rolled out by the</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Our targeted help has improved the complaints-handling of the pilot BinJs, including if it has resulted in fewer or more efficiently-handled complaints</b></li> <li>• <b>Feedback from the BinJs to say how it has helped them</b></li> <li>• <b>There has been sufficient interest and take-up of our open course offer from both providers and local authorities in order for it to be cost-effective and for it to continue.</b></li> </ul>

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**business goals and outcomes****measures of success**

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Scottish Ombudsman.

We will continue with our current training business model, but take this opportunity to explore other ways to reach those who need help to change, and who don't necessarily turn to traditional training, by taking a more holistic approach to learning and improvement by:

- Piloting an offer of tailored help (which may include bespoke training, advice, "buddying" with more successful BinJs and/or mentoring) to up to 5 BinJs that are under-performing in complaints-handling, with a view to expanding this offer next year if the pilot is successful
- Using the existing Link Officer network (and other networks, once established) to inform our training programme, promote learning and share best practice, including holding more open courses.

Benefits include:

- Longer term aim: reduces demand on our resources, including staff time spent delivering training
  - Under-performing BinJs improve their complaint-handling, fewer complaints about those BinJs come to us, or those we receive are handled by the BinJs in a more effective way.
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business goals and outcomes

measures of success

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

### 4.1

#### Propose changes to modernise our legislative framework, through the Triennial review 2018

This initiative will review the operation of our legislation every three years as required under s.23(12) of the Local Government Act 1974

We will put forward our case for the legislative changes needed to bring us in line with how we currently operate, as well as enable us to become an exemplary ombudsman service, as set out in our corporate strategy

- The triennial review delivers on our statutory duty under the provisions of the Local Government Act 1974 and clearly sets out our tasks to modernise and update the legislative framework within which we operate

### 4.2

#### Becoming a learning organisation

We aim to improve the service we provide by identifying and disseminating learning arising from our experiences, so we can work smarter, innovate and become more efficient.

To do this we need to change the way we think and behave. To encourage our people to take ownership of their development, share learning and ideas amongst themselves and demonstrate that we value the benefits of being a learning organisation.

- Staff have an opportunity to discuss their ongoing personal development and feel equipped to undertake their roles effectively.
- We use feedback following training to inform the planning of future events.
- We identify the core skills needed to excel in different roles, so these can be used to develop a set of key professional standards
- Learning is embedded within the culture of the organisation, and our approach set out in a three-year plan

business goals and outcomes	measures of success
<p>We will support and develop our staff to ensure their skills and knowledge are up-to-date, and each individual has appropriate support to undertake their role effectively.</p> <p>We will review our system of reward and recognition to make sure we focus on behaviours and achievements that we truly value, and that this helps us to achieve our strategic objectives.</p> <p>In order to underpin this, we will agree and implement a three-year plan for learning and development across the organisation, focused on developing the key skills needed by staff to undertake their roles effectively.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We use technology (e.g. webinars, YouTube videos, Office 365) to share knowledge collaboratively across offices and teams.</li> <li>• We engage with those who use our service and other Ombudsman schemes to help us to improve the service we provide.</li> <li>• Our overall package of reward is fair and understood by staff and managers alike</li> <li>• Members of our Leadership Team lead the way by explicitly adopting new ways of working which help to share learning and innovation across the organisation</li> <li>• We take a consistent approach to performance management and intervention by way of the provision of additional support; the recognition of earned autonomy; and additional reward</li> </ul>
<p><b>4.3</b></p> <p><b>Promote our digital principles across the organisation and support our digital projects</b></p> <p>We will encourage and promote the use of our Digital Principles across the organisation.</p> <p>We will achieve this by;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Challenging governance groups to think of opportunities to solve business needs using our digital principles.</li> <li>• Undertaking several key pieces of work which together will help promote and encourage the use of digital and support all our strategic objectives.</li> </ul> <p>Projects we will deliver include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Digital Mindset</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our digital principles are widely known and are firmly embedded across the organisation; and we have procedures to manage digital ideas and proposals.</li> <li>• Support and advice has been provided to some key digital projects, which has helped them deliver their objectives.</li> </ul>

business goals and outcomes	measures of success
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Digital Champions</li> <li>○ Online Complaints Service</li> <li>○ Office 365</li> <li>○ Learning and Development plan</li> <li>○ Interactive Support</li> <li>○ Social media plans</li> <li>○ CQC transfers</li> <li>○ Remedies project</li> </ul> <p>In turn, this will help to improve efficiency, improve the service to the public and increase value for money</p>	
<p><b>4.4</b></p> <p><b>Ensure our Complaints Management System (ECHO) enables us to manage our casework in an effective way</b></p> <p>Our complaint management system, ECHO, is an integral part of our ability to deliver our core investigative work, our ability to demonstrate our performance and the performance of bodies in jurisdiction, and the way we handle people’s data. It covers all areas of our strategic objectives.</p> <p>We will draw together the essential information we need to manage and operate ECHO. It will consider the range of resources needed to manage it, and evaluate who in our organisation should hold the key information on process and delivery of the system.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>We understand and have fully documented all the key roles and responsibilities for managing ECHO</b></li> <li>● <b>We have trained additional staff who are able to undertake a range of basic ECHO tasks and provide basic cover for any ECHO administrator absences</b></li> <li>● <b>The retention of records within ECHO complies with our GDPR and DP policies and legal obligations</b></li> <li>● <b>We have an ECHO Disaster Recovery Plan</b></li> </ul>

business goals and outcomes	measures of success
<p>Our aims are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a wider pool of staff who can update and manage ECHO; this will provide increased flexibility, resilience and reduce business risk</li> <li>• Fully comply with our retention and disposal of casework records policy and the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation.</li> <li>• Better support our casework staff and ensure the reliability and resilience of the ECHO platform.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>We are clear about what we want and need ECHO to deliver to the business</b></li> </ul>