

Commission for Local Administration in England

Business Plan 2019-20

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 everyone who relies on these services has a clear route for redress and does 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 strategy 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.

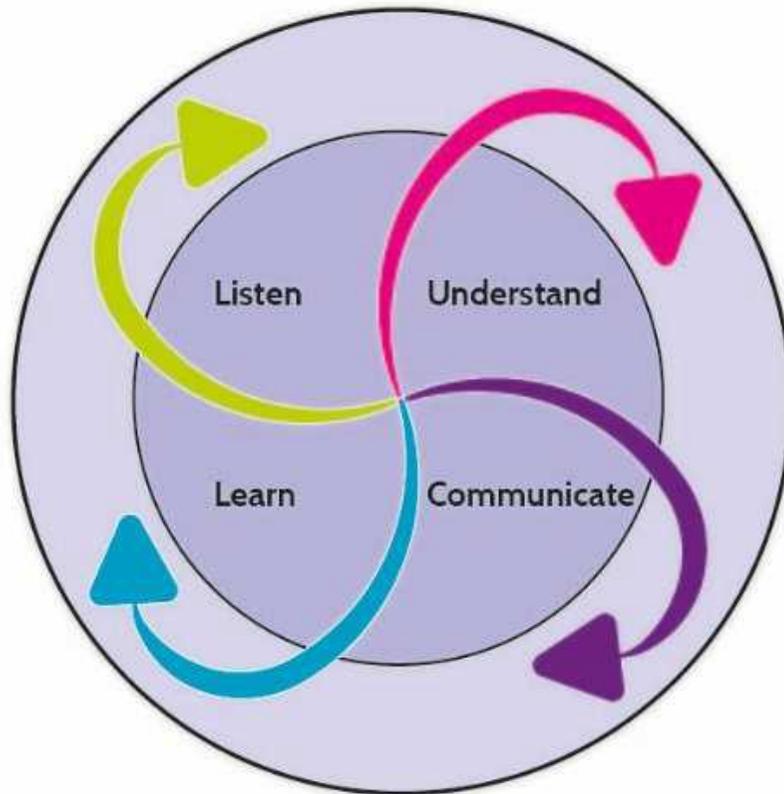
Over the coming years we are committed to creating even greater openness about the way we work, the processes we follow, the decisions we take, and the recommendations we

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 are investing in both 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 second year of our corporate strategy are set out in this Business Plan for 2019-20. 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 embedding the longer-term improvements that will help to meet the future needs of people who rely on our service

our values



The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman is a values driven organisation committed to achieving its service standards and meeting its strategic objectives.

our strategic objectives



Our priorities for the next three years are set out in our Corporate Plan 2018 – 21, along with a summary of how we will measure our success.

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 service commitments are;

- 80% of all cases will be decided by Assessment or allocated to an investigator within 20 working days of receipt by Intake Team

Key external service commitments which the Assessment team contribute to are;

- 65% cases closed < 13 weeks
- 85% cases closed < 26 weeks
- 99% cases closed < 52 weeks

business goals and outcomes

measures of success

**1.3
The Investigation Team effectively manages all complaints and incoming enquiries in line with our published standards**

We conduct detailed investigations, focussing on the most significant complaints we receive, in a timely manner and in line with our service standards

All services standards for Investigation, 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
- No more than 60 outstanding cases over 52 weeks held at one time

**1.4
Improve our online complaints service**

We will develop an online service area (OSA) that will enhance:

1. The customer experience
2. Our data security
3. The LGSCO's business processes.

The OSA will enable service users to safely and securely:

- Submit new complaints
- View progress of their complaint(s)
- Access and upload case related information
- Interact via email and potentially other methods such as live chat
- Receive automated reminders and notifications about the status of their complaint(s)

- We have introduced efficient and safe business processes to handle new complaints via the OSA
- Service users consider the OSA effective, convenient and easy to use
- Increase in percentage of OSA users

business goals and outcomes

measures of success

1.5

Improve how we manage complaints involving the SEND Tribunal

We will conduct a pilot scheme with the SEND Tribunal to:

- achieve a shared understanding between those working in the SEND tribunal and LGSCO of our respective roles
- ensure the 'customer journey' is straightforward and efficient when involving both jurisdictions
- improve how we share learning

Our aim is to improve both the efficiency and access to our service by developing better understand of and arrangements with SEND.

The longer-term aim is to create a system for passing cases between the two organisations, if the jurisdiction of the other body better fits the issues.

- **The Academic Panel provides a positive evaluation of the arrangements; confirming easier access and complaint/appeal journey for complainants/appellants**
- **There is increased understanding amongst our caseworkers of how they should work effectively with the SEND Tribunal**
- **We have established a agreed, joint protocol for the efficient, effective and GDPR compliant way to share information between the two organisations**

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 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

business goals and outcomes

measures of success

focus on recommended remedies and supports local accountability by providing a resource for local scrutineers to utilise.

- The LGSCO’s role is more open to scrutiny.

2.2

Ensure all our specialist subject guidance is up to date and consistent with the legal advice we receive

The key business aims we want to achieve through this work are to:

- Improve staff confidence with their casework.
- Ensure all our casework subject guidance is reviewed and where relevant, revised.
- The Ombudsman and CPF have confidence that staff have clear and relevant subject guidance to support them with casework.
- Achieve greater consistency in our casework.

Our specialist subject guidance will cover both individual casework and our approach to remedies.

- Our Remedies guidance, and each piece of subject guidance, has been reviewed and, if necessary, revised; All legal advice is linked, where appropriate, to the relevant casework advice
- Staff have a clearer understanding of the role of CPF and will know the process for taking items to CPF
- The intranet search facility has been reviewed and, if necessary, revised
- Staff know where to find the information they require and make use of legal advice on the intranet; staff are more confident and consistent in their casework practice

2.3

Identify and deliver a standardised suite of skills-based training for all investigators

Ensure all staff have access to quality skills-based training.

- A programme of skills-based programme has been agreed, confirmed and delivered across the 3 office locations
- Each caseworker has been provided with an individually tailored training package and can demonstrate its effectiveness and use in their day-to-day work

business goals and outcomes

measures of success

The training will be identified from, and mapped to, the Ombudsman Association Core Competency Framework. It will support staff in reaching timely and defensible decisions with the aim of increasing confidence.

An audit and gap analysis was conducted in 2018-19. The outcome resulted in a suite of training and development courses which underpin each of the main competencies as set out in our Behaviours Framework and the Ombudsman Associations Competency Framework.

- **Investigators report feeling increased confidence in knowledge of subject areas**

2.4

Develop our managers to lead with consistency and fairness and embrace our behaviours

*This is a Knowledge Management project on how we manage our core values and behaviours which supports our **Learning Organisation initiative***

The key aims of this work are to co-ordinate the delivery of a leadership development programme to help managers to build on their strengths, to think and learn together as a group about how their behaviours can have a positive impact across the organisation and to show consistency and fairness in the way they tackle difficult issues.

Particular areas of focus are:

- Inspiring and motivating
- Good performance and behaviours
- Earned autonomy

We will also ensure that:

- the agreed statements on '*How we manage*' and the '*Behaviours Framework*' are understood and actively used by all managers across the organisation.

- **There is a shared understanding of how we manage and expected behaviours within the organisation**
- **There is a shared understanding of how we behave as a leadership team**
- **We have adopted reflective practices within teams, including the Leadership Team. There is regular and systemic consideration of what we have learnt as an organisation – a feedback and change system – where contributions are welcomed, and innovation encouraged**
- **All staff have behaviours incorporated into their 2019 work objectives**
- **Managers who are not in the Leadership Team feel better supported in developing their leadership skills**
- **We have achieved better scores/comments regarding management/leadership behaviour and consistency**

business goals and outcomes	measures of success
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> everyone in the organisation is aware of <i>'How we manage'</i>, and the behaviours expected of them 	

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

<p>3.1</p> <p>Maximise the impact of our casework</p> <p>We aim to increase the awareness and understanding of our role by promoting the impact of our casework and the insight from peoples' experiences of using public, and adult social care, services.</p> <p>This work will be achieved through the Casework Impact Group (CIG).</p> <p>It will support or strategic objectives to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be recognised as an authoritative body in our field, which highlights the learning from complaints Report better information to the public about service improvements achieved Work closely with others to drive improvement without compromising independence Improve local complaint handling in BinJs <p>The approach and activities needed to achieve this are outlined in the revised External Communications Strategy, which will inform individual performance objectives across the organisation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 actively sought and monitored feedback from the external training courses we have delivered by asking delegates their views on the course and trainer We have delivered the full range of reports and publications in line with our planning targets and schedule
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business goals and outcomes

measures of success

3.2

Explore the benefits of a more tailored complaint handling training offer for Bodies in Jurisdiction (BinJ)

Our aim is to further improve the complaint handling of local authorities.

We intend to expand our current training offer to explore the benefits of a more tailored approach to how we support BinJs that are currently under-performing in complaint handling.

This will be achieved by:

- Running a pilot programme offering tailored support to up to five local authorities that we consider to be under performing in complaint handling.
- Reviewing the learning from the pilot programme to establish its impact and suitability as part of a toolkit for BinJ intervention.

- **Whether our support has improved the complaint handling of the pilot BinJs**
- **We have a recommendation and decision as to whether we adopt this as part of our external training offer and BinJ intervention approach**
- **If new approach is agreed; we have an approved implementation plan**

business goals and outcomes

measures of success

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

4.1

Improve and rationalise how we store and manage our non-casework records

We will rationalise corporate records by improving our file management practice.

Our corporate records will be accessible to those that need to have access to them, they will be easy to find and without any duplication of records.

It is important that the integrity of information security is maintained and if possible, improved.

The use of SharePoint will be explored as it provides the platform to better manage our files for corporate meetings and its security with collaboration functions built-in.

- The right information is being held on the M drive and there is no duplication with k drive
- Information is stored in a logical, practical manner, upholding retention and instilling confidence in M drive users that they are accessing correct information. Improved document control will also be included
- *If agreed*, we have systematically moved all our records for Committees and Groups on to SharePoint, in consultation with the relevant Chairs and members of each group

4.2

Improve our processes for staff recruitment, induction and retention

This project supports our Learning Organisation initiative

The objective of this work is to ensure our recruitment and induction processes are fit for purpose, and to describe a total reward model that works for both the individual and the organisation as a means of

- Recruitment advertising, testing and selection ensures staff are a 'best fit' for the organisation; and that they are inducted in an effective and efficient way and achieve delegation in as short a period as possible and run full caseloads
- Decisions to give delegation are clearly evidenced against the agreed revised policy
- We ensure that where there are concerns about an individual's capability; these are fully addressed prior to probation being passed

business goals and outcomes

measures of success

contributing to staff retention.

The concept of 'total' reward covers all aspects of work that employees' value, both tangible and intangible, such as personal growth and the value added through learning and development, as well as the sense of engagement that is created through identification with the organisation's culture and values.

- **Staff and job applicants recognise the total package of potential benefits including opportunities for personal development and improving skills and expertise**

4.3

Ensure great work and exceptional contribution by staff is fully recognised and rewarded

*This project supports our **Learning Organisation** initiative*

We want to ensure we encourage and promote great work and exceptional contributions made by individuals which helps us achieve our business goals.

We will do this by adopting processes which recognise and reward such behaviours in a fair, transparent and consistent way which is valued and appreciated by staff.

In addition to continuing to review the effectiveness of our Exceptional Contribution Award scheme we will introduce a system of employee recognition which ensures we focus on behaviours and achievements we truly value and that this helps us to achieve our strategic objectives.

We operate a reward and recognition scheme which is understood by managers and staff, and operated in a fair, consistent and transparent manner.

This will be characterised by:

- **A clear organisational understanding of the aims and objectives of each of the reward and recognition schemes**
- **Positive nominations have been received from all parts of the organisation**
- **Consistently approved nominations being made from across the organisation. Consultation with staff demonstrates the value of the scheme - failing which – it is either re-designed or abandoned**

business goals and outcomes

measures of success

4.4

Strengthen the resilience of our network and Casework Management System and develop our digital services and strategy

We will agree a clear plan for how to develop our digital services over the next 3-5 years, setting out our appetite for innovation, the benefits we want to see for our users and re-stating our commitment to meeting the day-to-day needs of our staff.

We will schedule and deliver a programme of technology-based activities which will:

- Ensure ECHO continues to meet the needs of users, is fit for purpose and can function effectively together with the online service area (portal).
- Roll out Windows 10 to all computers on the network
- Continue to support our business-critical applications and Business Plan initiatives

Develop our digital services

- We have a 3-5-year Plan which has been developed with input from staff and auditors

Echo Upgrade

- The business has decided if we need to upgrade Echo
- We have successfully upgraded ECHO to latest version and colleagues are able to use the new features

Echo to Cloud:

- We have considered the benefits and made a business decision on moving Echo to the cloud
- We have successfully moved ECHO to the Cloud (if agreed) and have demonstrated improvements in reliability, performance and recovery in the event of a BC issue

Windows 10 Rollout

- Windows 10 has been installed on all computers and our network security has been strengthened

business goals and outcomes

measures of success

4.5

Promote well-being at work, encouraging staff to flourish and achieve their full potential

*This project supports our **Learning Organisation** initiative*

We will better understand and then deliver a coherent and co-ordinated well-being at work programme across the whole of the organisation:

The key objectives are to:

- Build an understanding of what people want and what they think about what's already on offer.
- Have a clear focus and clear statement of intent
- Learn from best practice in other organisations, sharing positive initiatives across our own organisation in line with ideas for developing as a learning organisation.
- Staff who are fully or partly homebased are engaged and included in the well-being at work programme, and we will ensure they are working in safe environments.

The programme links with and underpins other related activities most notably, *Learning Organisation* and *How We Manage*.

- **Staff say their work is meaningful; it gives them a sense of accomplishment and personal fulfilment**
- **Staff feel inspired to perform at the highest level and motivated to achieve the organisation's objectives**
- **Staff feel that they have the support needed to do their job well**
- **Managers have an appreciation of their own well-being and that of their staff, they are confident in their roles and ensure their staff have confidence, purpose and earned autonomy**
- **Sickness absence is relatively low; across all work areas**
- **Everyone understands what we mean by well-being and why we think it's important and can identify helpful things we have done to improve well-being at work**

business goals and outcomes	measures of success
<p>4.6</p> <p>Seek additional targeted funding to support business-wide innovation projects</p> <p>We have several innovation projects which require additional supporting budget.</p> <p>These are: Joint Working; Development of the online portal (phase 2); and Undertake a pilot scheme to explore options designed to build resilience into how we manage our workflow.</p> <p>We ensure a comprehensive and persuasive business case is submitted to MHCLG at the appropriate time to feed into the spending review.</p> <p>We receive the additional funding required to support and help us deliver our strategic objectives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Business Case is submitted at the appropriate time, in accordance with MHCLG requirements • We have actively tracked and monitored progress of the Business Case, and any comments from MHCLG have been incorporated as appropriate • A final and formal decision has been made by MHCLG on the Business Case