



The Commission for  
Local Administration in England

# **The Local Government Ombudsman's Annual Letter**

## **City of London**

**for the year ended  
31 March 2007**

**The Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) investigates complaints by members of the public who consider that they have been caused injustice through administrative fault by local authorities and certain other bodies. The LGO also uses the findings from investigation work to help authorities provide better public services through initiatives such as special reports, training and annual letters.**

## **Annual Letter 2006/07 - Introduction**

The aim of the annual letter is to provide a summary of information on the complaints about your authority that we have received and try to draw any lessons learned about the authority's performance and complaint-handling arrangements. These might then be fed back into service improvement.

I hope that the letter will be a useful addition to other information your authority holds on how people experience or perceive your services.

There are two attachments which form an integral part of this letter: statistical data covering a three year period and a note to help the interpretation of the statistics.

## **Complaints received**

In 2006/7 I received just seven complaints against your authority, the same number as the previous year. Three of the complaints were about housing and four about transport and highways issues.

## **Decisions on complaints**

During the year we made decisions on eight complaints. We found no maladministration in one complaint and four others were outside my jurisdiction.

## ***Reports and local settlements***

We use the term 'local settlement' to describe the outcome of a complaint where, during the course of our investigation, the authority takes, or agrees to take, some action which we consider is a satisfactory response to the complaint and the investigation does not need to be completed. These form a significant proportion of the complaints we determine. When we complete an investigation we must issue a report.

I issued no reports against your authority this year. I settled one complaint which concerned housing matters. Your authority paid £300 compensation for delay in carrying out repairs and issued an apology. It also corrected the date of the complainant's transfer request and awarded her additional points under your housing allocation scheme.

## **Your Council's complaints procedure and handling of complaints**

My office referred two 'premature complaints' to your authority for consideration, as we did not think you had had sufficient opportunity to deal with them through your own procedures. The small number of complaints referred to me and the fact that I have only upheld one suggests that the Corporation is successful in handling complaints.

## **Training in complaint handling**

As part of our role to provide advice in good administrative practice, we offer training courses for all levels of local authority staff in complaints handling and investigation. The feedback from courses that have been delivered over the past two and a half years is very positive.

The range of courses is expanding in response to demand and in addition to the generic Good Complaint Handling (identifying and processing complaints) and Effective Complaint Handling (investigation and resolution) we now offer these courses specifically for social services staff. We have also successfully piloted a course on reviewing complaints for social services review panel members. We can run open courses for groups of staff from smaller authorities and also customise courses to meet your Council's specific requirements.

All courses are presented by an experienced investigator so participants benefit from their knowledge and expertise of complaint handling.

I have enclosed some information on the full range of courses available together with contact details for enquiries and any further bookings.

### **Liaison with the Local Government Ombudsman**

This year my staff made enquiries on just one complaint and that was by electronic mail. I was pleased to note that your officers were able to deal with the enquiry within one day. That is, of course, well within my target of 28 days. I am grateful to your staff for the promptness with which they responded.

### **LGO developments**

I thought it would be helpful to update you on a project we are implementing to improve the first contact that people have with us as part of our customer focus initiative. We are developing a new Access and Advice Service that will provide a gateway to our services for all complainants and enquirers. It will be mainly telephone-based but will also deal with email, text and letter correspondence. As the project progresses we will keep you informed about developments and expected timescales.

Changes brought about by the Local Government Bill are also expected to impact on the way that we work and again we will keep you informed as relevant.

### **Conclusions and general observations**

I welcome this opportunity to give you my reflections about the complaints my office has dealt with over the past year. I hope that you find the information and assessment provided useful when seeking improvements to your Council's services.

**Tony Redmond**  
**Local Government Ombudsman**  
**10<sup>th</sup> Floor Millbank Tower**  
**Millbank**  
**London SW1P 4QP**

**June 2007**

Enc: Statistical data  
Note on interpretation of statistics  
Leaflet on training courses (with posted copy only)

Complaints received by subject area	Housing	Other	Planning & building control	Transport and highways	Total
01/04/2006 - 31/03/2007	3	0	0	4	7
2005 / 2006	2	1	1	3	7
2004 / 2005	6	3	0	5	14

**Note:** these figures will include complaints that were made prematurely to the Ombudsman and which we referred back to the authority for consideration.

Decisions	MI reps	LS	M reps	NM reps	No mal	Omb disc	Outside jurisdiction	Premature complaints	Total excl premature	Total
01/04/2006 - 31/03/2007	0	1	0	0	1	0	4	2	6	8
2005 / 2006	0	0	0	0	3	0	2	2	5	7
2004 / 2005	0	0	0	0	2	4	6	2	12	14

See attached notes for an explanation of the headings in this table.

Response times	FIRST ENQUIRIES	
	No. of First Enquiries	Avg no. of days to respond
01/04/2006 - 31/03/2007	1	1.0
2005 / 2006	1	23.0
2004 / 2005	7	18.4

**Average local authority response times 01/04/2006 to 31/03/2007**

Types of authority	<= 28 days %	29 - 35 days %	> = 36 days %
District Councils	48.9	23.4	27.7
Unitary Authorities	30.4	37.0	32.6
Metropolitan Authorities	38.9	41.7	19.4
County Councils	47.1	32.3	20.6
London Boroughs	39.4	33.3	27.3
National Park Authorities	66.7	33.3	0.0