

20 July 2022

By email

Mr Donald
Interim Chief Executive
London Borough of Haringey

Dear Mr Donald

Annual Review letter 2022

I write to you with your annual summary of complaint statistics from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman for the year ending 31 March 2022. The information offers valuable insight about your organisation's approach to complaints. As such, I have sought to share this letter with the Leader of your Council and Chair of the appropriate Scrutiny Committee, to encourage effective ownership and oversight of complaint outcomes, which offer such valuable opportunities to learn and improve.

Complaint statistics

Our statistics focus on three key areas that help to assess your organisation's commitment to putting things right when they go wrong:

Complaints upheld - We uphold complaints when we find fault in an organisation's actions, including where the organisation accepted fault before we investigated. We include the total number of investigations completed to provide important context for the statistic.

Compliance with recommendations - We recommend ways for organisations to put things right when faults have caused injustice and monitor their compliance with our recommendations. Failure to comply is rare and a compliance rate below 100% is a cause for concern.

Satisfactory remedy provided by the authority - In these cases, the organisation upheld the complaint and we agreed with how it offered to put things right. We encourage the early resolution of complaints and credit organisations that accept fault and find appropriate ways to put things right.

Finally, we compare the three key annual statistics for your organisation with similar authorities to provide an average marker of performance. We do this for County Councils, District Councils, Metropolitan Boroughs, Unitary Councils, and London Boroughs.

Your annual data, and a copy of this letter, will be uploaded to our interactive map, [Your council's performance](#), on 27 July 2022. This useful tool places all our data and information about councils in one place. You can find the detail of the decisions we have made about your

Council, read the public reports we have issued, and view the service improvements your Council has agreed to make as a result of our investigations, as well as previous annual review letters.

Your organisation's performance

During the year, we issued two public reports about your Council. The first involved the Council's handling of a disabled facilities grant-funded adaptation for a disabled child. Our investigation found the Council took too long to carry out the works, changed the specification without agreement, did not offer suitable interim provision and did not properly consult with the child's parents about what they needed for their growing son, as so much time had passed since the initial assessment. The failure to provide adaptations caused significant distress and inconvenience to the whole family.

To remedy this injustice, we recommended the Council should apologise, make a payment to the complainants and liaise with them to complete the adaptation. We also asked the Council to review its procedures to prevent similar failures. The Council agreed and I am pleased with the extensive work carried out to improve its disabled facilities grant procedures and resources.

While I welcome the Council's eventual acceptance of our recommendations and findings, there was significant delay in this case caused by the Council's failure to provide an adequate response to our initial enquiries. Only after our first draft decision was published, were relevant case records produced. This meant the case had to be effectively re-investigated.

A second public report detailed the Council's handling of the possible purchase of a complainant's home related to the development of a neighbouring site. Our investigation found the Council failed to undertake proper scrutiny and analysis when deciding not to include the terrace of houses in the scheme. We also found the Council had not been even-handed in its dealings with the complainant and had failed to keep in touch. We also considered the Council had not presented accurate information to its scrutiny committee.

To remedy the injustice, we recommended the Council should apologise and pay the complainant £1,000. We also asked the Council to reconsider the proposals.

In the report, we referred to the Council's failure to provide information on negotiations and contact with the neighbouring property owner. We did not pursue this further because we were able to make a decision on the complaint, but it was unsatisfactory that the Council was unable, or unwilling, to provide this information. The lack of transparency added to our concerns about the case.

I am, however, satisfied with the action the Council has taken in its reconsideration of the matter.

Disappointingly, there was one instance during the year where the Council failed to comply with the recommendations we made to remedy fault. In this instance, the Council agreed to complete a new Care Act assessment following a previously flawed one. However, it failed to provide an adequate explanation for why it would not back date the payments to the original flawed assessment. We have registered a new complaint to consider if the Council's reasons in refusing to do this are sound and reasonable.

As well as failing to comply with recommendations, there were an additional seven cases where remedies were agreed to, but not completed within the agreed timescales. In several instances, there was delay in issuing apologies or making a payment to the complainant. This is likely to

further frustrate complainants and could undermine confidence in the Council. There were also delays in implementing service improvement recommendations, leaving the Council at risk of repeated failings when the issues identified remain unaddressed.

It is very concerning that this is the third consecutive year I have reported both non-compliance and late compliance with our recommendations. **Your Council's complaint handling remains below the standards we expect, resulting in poor outcomes for those that make complaints to you. I ask you to take urgent action and write to my office setting out the steps you intend to take to improve all aspects of your complaint handling in the current year.**

Supporting complaint and service improvement

I know your organisation, like ours, will have been through a period of adaptation as the restrictions imposed by the pandemic lifted. While some pre-pandemic practices returned, many new ways of working are here to stay. It is my continued view that complaint functions have been under-resourced in recent years, a trend only exacerbated by the challenges of the pandemic. Through the lens of this recent upheaval and adjustment, I urge you to consider how your organisation prioritises complaints, particularly in terms of capacity and visibility. Properly resourced complaint functions that are well-connected and valued by service areas, management teams and elected members are capable of providing valuable insight about an organisation's performance, detecting early warning signs of problems and offering opportunities to improve service delivery.

I want to support your organisation to harness the value of complaints and we continue to develop our programme of support. Significantly, we are working in partnership with the Housing Ombudsman Service to develop a joint complaint handling code. We are aiming to consolidate our approaches and therefore simplify guidance to enable organisations to provide an effective, quality response to each and every complaint. We will keep you informed as this work develops, and expect that, once launched, we will assess your compliance with the code during our investigations and report your performance via this letter.

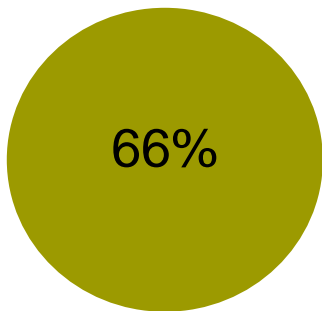
An already established tool we have for supporting improvements in local complaint handling is our successful training programme. We adapted our courses during the Covid-19 pandemic to an online format and successfully delivered 122 online workshops during the year, reaching more than 1,600 people. To find out more visit www.lgo.org.uk/training.

Yours sincerely,



Michael King
Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman
Chair, Commission for Local Administration in England

Complaints upheld



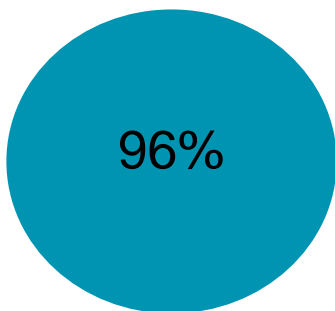
66% of complaints we investigated were upheld.

This compares to an average of **71%** in similar organisations.

29
upheld decisions

Statistics are based on a total of **44** investigations for the period between 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022

Compliance with Ombudsman recommendations



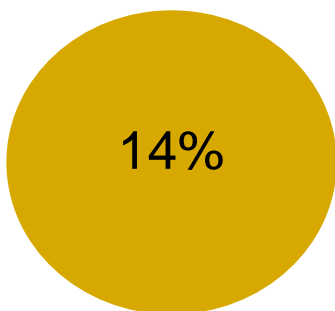
In **96%** of cases we were satisfied the organisation had successfully implemented our recommendations.

This compares to an average of **99%** in similar organisations.

Statistics are based on a total of **26** compliance outcomes for the period between 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022

- Failure to comply with our recommendations is rare. An organisation with a compliance rate below 100% should scrutinise those complaints where it failed to comply and identify any learning.

Satisfactory remedy provided by the organisation



In **14%** of upheld cases we found the organisation had provided a satisfactory remedy before the complaint reached the Ombudsman.

This compares to an average of **11%** in similar organisations.

4
satisfactory remedy decisions

Statistics are based on a total of **29** upheld decisions for the period between 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022