

Local Government & Social Care OMBUDSMAN

20 July 2022

By email

Mr Byford
Commissioner
Transport for London

Dear Mr Byford

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.

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.

Your organisation's performance

Last year, I noted my concerns about your organisation's late responses to our enquiries and draft decisions. Unfortunately, those problems have persisted in the past year. Some cases required more detailed investigation simply because your authority did not respond to our initial enquiries, indeed half of your responses to our investigation enquiries were late. There was also an example of your authority failing to respond to a draft decision despite several reminders, resulting in us sending a public interest report notification letter. We only chose not to proceed with the report as your response to that letter was prompt and satisfactory.

While I am disappointed the issues previously identified have persisted, I am encouraged to hear you have asked senior staff to meet an Assistant Ombudsman to explain the reasons for the delays and to take the necessary steps to improve your liaison with my office. I expect your

authority to significantly improve its engagement with my investigators in the current year or it is likely we will issue a public interest report to draw attention to our long-running concerns.

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.

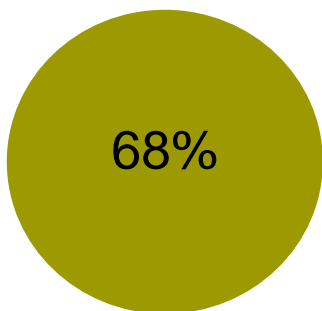
An already established tool we have for supporting improvements in local complaint handling is our successful training programme. We adapted our courses during the Covid-19 pandemic to an online format and successfully delivered 122 online workshops during the year, reaching more than 1,600 people. To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

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M King', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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

Complaints upheld

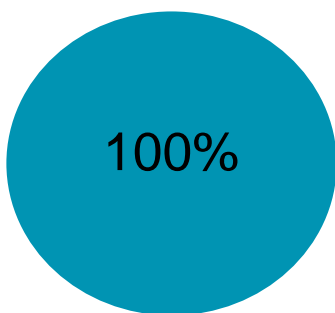


68% of complaints we investigated were upheld.

15 upheld decisions

Statistics are based on a total of **22** investigations for the period between 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022

Compliance with Ombudsman recommendations

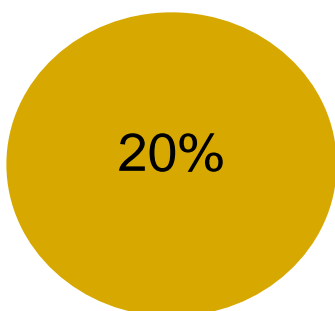


In **100%** of cases we were satisfied the organisation had successfully implemented our recommendations.

Statistics are based on a total of **8** 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 **20%** of upheld cases we found the organisation had provided a satisfactory remedy before the complaint reached the Ombudsman.

3 satisfactory remedy decisions

Statistics are based on a total of **15** upheld decisions for the period between 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022