

Local Government & Social Care OMBUDSMAN

9 July 2025

By email

Ms Johnson
Chief Executive
Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council

Dear Ms Johnson

Annual Review letter 2024-25

I wrote to you in May with your annual summary of complaint statistics from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman for the year ending 31 March 2025. In that letter I explained that where we had concerns about your organisation's complaint handling or to highlight exceptional performance I would write again, and I have set out our experience of your organisation's complaint handling below.

As a reminder, [your annual statistics are available here](#).

In addition, 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.

This letter will be published on our website on 16 July 2025.

Your organisation's performance

During the year, there were several occasions where our investigations were delayed by your Council's failure to respond in a timely way to our requests for information. This included late responses to our enquiries, late comments on our draft decisions, and late evidence of compliance with our recommendations. Concerningly, we noted delays in agreed apologies and payments being made to complainants. This is unacceptable. Such actions should be straightforward to administer, and any delay only further frustrates complainants.

I ask that you act to improve the timeliness of your interactions with my office. If there is anything we can do to support an effective working relationship, then please do contact us.

Supporting complaint and service improvement

In February we published [good practice guides](#) to support councils to adopt our [Complaint Handling Code](#). The guides were developed in consultation with councils that have been piloting the Code and are based on the real-life, front-line experience of people handling complaints day-to-day, including their experience of reporting to senior leaders and elected members. We issued the guides alongside free [training resources](#) councils can use to make sure front line staff understand what to do when someone raises a complaint. We will be applying the Code in our casework from April 2026 and we know a large number of councils have already adopted it into their local policies with positive results.

This year we relaunched our popular [complaint handling training](mailto:training@lgo.org.uk) programme. The training is now more interactive than ever, providing delegates with an opportunity to consider a complaint from receipt to resolution. Early feedback has been extremely positive with delegates reporting an increase in confidence in handling complaints after completing the training. To find out more contact training@lgo.org.uk.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Amerdeep' followed by a horizontal line.

Amerdeep Somal
Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman
Chair, Commission for Local Administration in England