

Local Government & Social Care OMBUDSMAN

9 July 2025

By email

Ms Heran
Chief Executive
Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council

Dear Ms Heran

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

Disappointingly, the Council failed to evidence compliance with the recommendations it had agreed to in two related cases. Its compliance rate was 87% because of this in comparison with an average of 100% in similar authorities.

We recognise the cases were complex, protracted and we had been tracking compliance for extended periods. We had been in regular contact with the Council to try and progress matters satisfactorily. However, we considered matters were drifting and the Council had not provided us with sufficient evidence to enable us to confirm we were satisfied on the previous cases we had investigated.

We therefore registered a further complaint to enable us to consider in detail the action the Council had taken to comply with the recommendations we had made. Further investigation led us to conclude that although the Council remained at fault for its failure to act originally, it had subsequently responded appropriately even though neither we nor the Council were ultimately able to secure the outcome the complainant was seeking.

These were unusual and relatively unique circumstances, and we would hope they would not reoccur.

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](#) 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 Somal', followed by a horizontal line.

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