

Local Government & Social Care OMBUDSMAN

9 July 2025

By email

Ms Daothong
Acting Chief Executive
London Borough of Lewisham

Dear Ms Daothong

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 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 we [issued a report](#) about your Council after we found fault in the way it dealt with a homelessness application which left a family in unsuitable accommodation for two years. It placed the family close to a perpetrator of domestic violence and failed to have due regard for the family's human rights or duties owed under the Equality Act.

We recommended a symbolic financial remedy for the time spent in unsuitable accommodation and the impact this had on the family. In addition, we asked the Council to produce an action plan to address the faults we had identified.

I am pleased to confirm our satisfaction with the action the Council has taken to comply with the recommendations made. However, it is concerning that the Council delayed in putting the report to a relevant Committee and requested an extension to do so late in the timescale given for compliance. We have previously asked the Council to take steps to ensure timely compliance with our recommendations, so it is disappointing to raise the issue again. I urge the Council to ensure appropriate mechanisms are in place to avoid such circumstances in future.

We have also recorded concerns with your Council providing evidence of compliance with our recommendations in other cases. In one instance, we had to threaten to register a new case for non-compliance before we received the evidence we required. We received a helpful explanation from a senior officer apologising for the issues and setting out steps taken to reduce the risk of reoccurrence.

Away from this case, although responses to our enquiries have generally been timely, there was an instance where the delay meant we had to remind the Council of our power to issue a witness summons before we received the information we required. We have also had issues with the quality of several responses. There were instances where specific questions were not responded to and instead whole files sent, some dating back many years. This is inappropriate and causes delay to us and further work for officers at the Council if these responses are refused. The Council is also at risk in terms of data protection as it may inadvertently share sensitive personal information we have not requested. Please ensure we receive only the information we have requested in future.

Many of the issues I have outlined here have been raised with you in previous letters and it is concerning that any action taken has not resulted in an improved performance. I ask that you closely consider the improvements that can be made both to your responses to our enquiries and when providing evidence of compliance with recommendations. If there is any support my office can provide, please do let me know.

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,



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