

Local Government & Social Care OMBUDSMAN

9 July 2025

By email

Ms Gbago
Chief Executive
London Borough of Newham

Dear Ms Gbago

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. We made 25 enquiries of the Council and in 14 cases responses were late. In one case the delays were such that we had to remind the Council of our power to issue a witness summons before we received the information required. This is not a step we take lightly.

In addition to the delays, there were instances of poor-quality, incomplete responses, which meant my staff spent time chasing additional information.

We also recorded failures to signpost complainants to this office in final complaint responses, as well as incorrectly signposting to the Housing Ombudsman Service.

The Council agreed to and implemented the recommendations we made in 23 cases during the year. However, it is disappointing that in eight of those cases the recommendations were completed outside of agreed timescales. We saw regular delays in processing payments to complainants. This action should be simple to administer and delay only causes further frustration to complainants.

On a more encouraging note, I would like to thank the Council for its positive response to a young person's complaint about their time in care. The Council readily agreed that it had not considered its discretion properly to investigate historic complaints from a vulnerable care-experienced young person.

Late and inadequate responses to our enquiries and late compliance with recommendations have been an ongoing concern, which we have raised with you regularly. It is essential that the situation quickly improves; I have asked my Assistant Ombudsman to contact you to arrange a meeting to discuss further.

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