

# Local Government & Social Care OMBUDSMAN

9 July 2025

*By email*

Ms Loderick  
Chief Executive  
London Borough of Southwark

Dear Ms Loderick

## **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 when our investigations were delayed by your Council's failure to respond in a timely way to our requests for information. In one case the delays were such that we took the unusual step of threatening to issue a witness summons before we received the information we needed. This is not a step we take lightly. It is particularly disappointing that this is the second consecutive year we have had to raise such concerns about your Council.

We also recorded several housing cases where the Council had incorrectly signposted complainants to the Housing Ombudsman, adding delay to their complaint. The Council should consider advising officers dealing with these cases to refer to [our guidance on signposting for housing complaints](#).

The Council agreed to, and implemented, the recommendations we made in 42 cases during the year. However, it is disappointing that in ten of those cases recommendations were not completed within the agreed timescales. It is particularly disappointing as we had to raise the same concerns in both 2022 and 2023.

Some delays related to making agreed payments to complainants. I would encourage the Council to engage in discussion at the draft decision stage of our process if the timescales suggested for making payments are not achievable. The Council has told us it takes six to eight weeks to arrange a payment from the time it has the complainant's bank details. If the timescales we propose are not achievable, the Council needs to explain why this is before a decision is finalised.


I ask that you take action to improve your Council's responses to our enquiries and evidencing compliance with recommendations. It is important we are provided with the information we have asked for promptly, and that, where you anticipate delays, you communicate with us as soon as possible, setting out the actions for delivery, and keeping us informed throughout. If there is any support my office can provide to help improve the situation, 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](mailto:training@lgo.org.uk).

Yours sincerely,



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