

Local Government & Social Care OMBUDSMAN

9 July 2025

By email

Ms Roberts-Egan
Chief Executive
London Borough of Waltham Forest

Dear Ms Roberts-Egan

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

I ask that you take action to improve responses to our enquiries and draft decisions; both in terms of timeliness and quality. It is important we are provided with the information we have asked for promptly, and that, where you encounter delays, you keep us informed.

I welcome that your Council agreed to, and implemented, the recommendations we made in 16 cases during the year. However, it is disappointing that in five of those cases recommendations were not completed within the agreed timescales. It is particularly disappointing as this is the second consecutive year we have had to raise such concerns. While there has been a slight improvement on last year, the issue of delay still needs to be addressed.

Some delays related to our recommendations to make policy changes or carry out reviews. I would encourage the Council to engage in discussion at the draft decision stage of our process if the timescales suggested for service improvement recommendations are not achievable or realistic. We are always mindful that while there remain flaws in policies or procedures, there is the continued risk others

may be similarly affected, so we will not allow indeterminate timescales for changes. But, if the timescales we propose are not achievable, the Council needs to explain why this is the case before a decision is finalised.

There were also some cases of delay in payments being made to complainants. Such actions should be straightforward to administer, but we have seen examples of complainants having to wait weeks longer than agreed before payments are received, causing them additional frustration. Such delays are unacceptable.

I invite the Council again to consider how it might reduce delays in complying with agreed recommendations. I am aware my Assistant Ombudsman met the Council's Interim Head of Complaints in May 2025; I understand the meeting was useful. If there is any further 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.

Yours sincerely,



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