

# Local Government & Social Care OMBUDSMAN

9 July 2025

*By email*

Mr Davis  
Chief Executive  
London Borough of Lambeth

Dear Mr Davis

## **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**

It is disappointing to have to report the same concerns we have raised about your Council for the past four years. These include regular late responses to our enquiries, incorrect signposting, and late compliance with agreed recommendations.

In over half of the cases where we made enquiries, responses were delayed. In some cases, we had simply requested a copy of your Council's complaint response, which should be readily and easily accessible. Despite this, we had to repeatedly chase the Council before we received the information. The delays are particularly prevalent in complaints about Housing. We have had some helpful conversations with your officers where we have set out our concerns and understand the pressures of dealing with significant volumes of Housing Ombudsman enquiries alongside our own. However, enquiries from our organisations should be treated equitably and given appropriate attention to ensure deadlines are met. Delays have been so significant in some cases we needed to remind the Council of our power to issue a witness summons before we received the information we required. This is not a step we take lightly.

We have noted more delay when seeking compliance with agreed recommendations, with evidence of compliance provided late in a third of cases. There have been delays in implementing service improvements as well as personal remedies such as making apologies or payments. Such actions should be straightforward to administer and delay only causes further frustration and erosion of confidence in complainants, in particular where there is an ongoing relationship due to the provision of services.

I hope you understand the long-standing concerns we have about your Council's liaison with my office. I ask you to address the delays we and complainants have experienced during the year, in particular what action is needed to improve responses to our enquiries and ensure that recommendations are completed on time, as agreed. 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,

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