

Local Government & Social Care OMBUDSMAN

9 July 2025

By email

Mrs Wylie
Chief Executive
North Northamptonshire Council

Dear Mrs Wylie

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

I welcome that your Council agreed to the recommendations we made in 18 cases during the year. However, it is disappointing that in six of those cases recommendations were not completed within the agreed timescales. It is particularly disappointing that this is the third consecutive year we have had to raise such concerns with your Council.

In May 2024, the Council said it would be introducing a way to track compliance with our recommendations. This appears to have had some positive impact but there are still concerns. Most of the delays involved payments being made to complainants. These should be straightforward to administer, and delay can cause additional frustration to complainants.

In another case, the Council failed to provide evidence of compliance with recommendations we made in a case about Education, Health, and Care plans. We asked it to review its record keeping policies and provide guidance and training to staff about the importance of accurate record keeping. In response to the failure to provide evidence of compliance, a new complaint was registered to investigate the non-compliance. The Council then sent us the information we had asked for.

The theme of delay continues and 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. The quality of some responses was also poor, with documents missing or questions not answered. There were also delays in the Council's response to draft decisions.

I ask that you take action to improve responses to both our enquiries and our requests for providing evidence of 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.

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