

# Local Government & Social Care OMBUDSMAN

9 July 2025

*By email*

Ms Plum  
Chief Executive  
Westmorland and Furness Council

Dear Ms Plum

## **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](#).

There are a small number of cases to report about authorities abolished in April 2023. Please find statistics for [Cumbria County Council](#) and [Eden District Council](#).

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 was an occasion when one of our investigations was delayed by your Council's failure to respond in a timely way to our request for information. The delay was 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 important we are provided with the information we have asked for promptly, and that, where you encounter delays, you keep us informed.

I am pleased that since then your Council has sought support from my office and has met with us regularly. I also welcome the action your Council is planning to improve the recording and tracking of complaints with my office.

## **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](mailto:training@lgo.org.uk) 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' followed by a horizontal line.

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