Local Government & Social Care OMBUDSMAN

8 July 2026

By email

Ms Johnson
Chief Executive
Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council

Dear Ms Johnson

Annual Review Letter 2025–26

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 2026. 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 details of the decisions we have made about your organisation, read the reports we have issued, and view the service improvements your organisation 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 15 July 2026.

Your organisation's performance

Last year, I highlighted our concerns about your Council's complaint handling performance, so it is disappointing to note a further deterioration this year.

Responses to our enquiries were late in six cases, three of which related to Environmental Services. In one case, the Council requested an extension only after the initial deadline had passed. Although we agreed to this, it then failed to meet this date too. More concerningly, in two cases, the delays were such that we took the unusual step of threatening to issue a witness summons before we received the information we required.

We recorded compliance outcomes in seven cases during the year; in six of those cases compliance with the agreed recommendations was delayed. In most cases, delays affected personal remedies such as apologies and payments, resulting in unnecessary waiting and added frustration for complainants. Such actions should be straightforward to carry out.

Please take action to ensure responses to our requests for information are provided on time and that there is effective oversight of agreed recommendations, so they are delivered without delay. Where delays are anticipated, these should be communicated in advance.

I know that officers have met with my staff to address these concerns. These meetings demonstrate positive engagement and a willingness on the part of the Council to improve its complaint handling. I hope this engagement continues and leads to improved performance in the coming year.

Supporting complaints and service improvement

We remain committed to supporting the sector to embed effective systems of redress. Where authorities are navigating reorganisation and devolution, we are ready to help ensure that robust complaint handling is built into new arrangements from the outset. Please do get in touch if your organisation would benefit from our advice and guidance.

Our Complaint Handling Code, in force since April 2025, is now applied in our casework and offers structure and support to your local complaint system. Our training programme provides a flexible, expert-led route to building complaints capability across your teams, with courses open for individual delegates to book. Contact training@lgo.org.uk for more information.

Our Annual Review of Local Government Complaints will be published next week, setting out the national picture of complaints, trends across service areas, and emerging systemic issues. We encourage you to read it alongside your own organisation's data.

Yours sincerely,



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