

Local Government & Social Care OMBUDSMAN

8 July 2026

By email

Mr Hibberd
Chief Executive
Bristol City Council

Dear Mr Hibberd

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

During the year, the Council failed to evidence its compliance with the personal and service improvement recommendations it had agreed to in a case concerning a child missing education. We therefore registered a further complaint to consider any additional injustice and made further recommendations for the Council to improve its service, including how it implements our recommendations.

Disappointingly, the Council took a further six weeks to complete these additional recommendations. In addition, there were six other cases where compliance with agreed recommendations was late. In some cases, delays affected straightforward remedies such as apologies and payments, causing unnecessary waiting and added frustration for complainants. Other delays related to service improvement recommendations. If the Council considers proposed timescales to be unachievable, it should raise this at the draft decision stage of the process. We aim to set realistic timeframes but cannot accept indefinite deadlines given the continued risk of similar issues affecting others.

Please ensure that you take action to ensure effective oversight of recommendations, so they are delivered on time, and to keep us informed where delays occur. If we can provide support, please let me know.

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,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "A. K. Clarke". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly informal style.

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