Local Government & Social Care OMBUDSMAN

8 July 2026

By email

Ms Daothong
Acting Chief Executive
London Borough of Lewisham

Dear Ms Daothong

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

While the Council's responses to our investigation enquiries are generally timely, we identified concerns about the quality of information provided in seven cases. These included large volumes of unstructured documentation, missing key documents, and evidence of poor local complaint handling. Such issues can hinder our investigations, delay the resolution of complaints, and place unnecessary demands on both organisations. I encourage the Council to ensure responses are focused and supported by all relevant documentation.

Timely compliance with agreed recommendations remains a concern. The Council failed to provide evidence of compliance within agreed timescales in more than a third of cases. In some instances, delays affected personal remedies such as apologies and payments, resulting in unnecessary waiting and added frustration for complainants. Other delays related to service improvement recommendations. Where timescales for recommendations are not achievable, the Council 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.

Equally concerning was an instance of non-compliance, which resulted in us registering a new complaint. This remains a rare and disappointing step. Given that non-compliance has also been recorded in 2024, 2022 and 2021, this suggests a systemic issue in how the Council oversees our recommendations and prioritises complaints.

These issues have been raised in previous letters, and it is concerning that any actions taken to date have not led to sustained improvement. Please ensure that you consider the steps needed to ensure timely implementation of remedies and prompt provision of evidence demonstrating compliance.

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