

AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE MEETING

15 OCTOBER 2024

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT & SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN –
ANNUAL REVIEW LETTER 2024**

Report of the Governance and Assurance Manager

1.0 Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To provide the Audit and Governance Committee with the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman's (LGSCO) annual summary of statistics regarding complaints received in relation to York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority for the year ended 31 March 2024.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to note the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman's annual review letter 2024.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 The Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman provides an independent final stage of complaint for persons who have exhausted the Combined Authority's own complaints procedure.
- 3.2 Each year LGSCO issues a letter to authorities providing a summary of the complaints received by LGSCO in the previous financial year – including a summary of decisions reached in that time.
- 3.3 One of the purposes of Annual Review Letters to authorities is to help ensure that learning from complaints informs scrutiny at the local level. Sharing the learning from our investigations and supporting the democratic scrutiny of public services continues to be one of LGSCO's key priorities.
- 3.4 LGSCO has provided the Combined Authority with its letter for the period ending 31 March 2024. This covers a short time period from the Combined Authority's launch and is a nil return.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

5.0 Legal Implications

- 5.1 The Combined Authority has a statutory duty to promote and maintain high standards of conduct.

6.0 Equalities Implications

6.1 There are no equalities implications associated with this report.

7.0 Environmental Implications

7.1 There are no environmental implications associated with this report.

8.0 Combined Authority Areas Impacted (Council Areas/Wards/Divisions)

8.1 All areas.

9.0 Recommendations

9.1 That the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman's annual review letter 2024 be noted.

10.0 Reasons For Recommendations

10.1 To provide openness and transparency.

11.0 Contact Details

For further information please contact the authors of this Report.

Author

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Report approved:	Rachel Antonelli
Date:	7 October 2024

Background papers:

- [Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman](#)

Appendices –

- Appendix 1 - Annual Review Letter 2024

17 July 2024

By email

Mr Farrar
Interim Director of Economy (Head of Paid Service)
York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority

Dear Mr Farrar

Annual Review letter 2023-24

I write to you with your annual summary of complaint statistics from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman for the year ending 31 March 2024. The information offers valuable insight about your organisation's approach to complaints, and I know you will consider it as part of your corporate governance processes. As such, I have sought to share this letter with the Mayor to ensure effective ownership and oversight of complaint outcomes, which offer valuable opportunities to learn and improve. In addition, this year, we have encouraged Monitoring Officers to register to receive the letter directly, supporting their role to report the decisions we uphold to their authority.

For most of the reporting year, Paul Najsarek steered the organisation during his tenure as interim Ombudsman, and I was delighted to take up the role of Ombudsman in February 2024. I look forward to working with you and colleagues to ensure we continue to harness the value of individual complaints and drive and promote systemic change and improvement across the local government landscape.

While I know this ambition will align with your own, I am aware of the difficult financial circumstances and service demands that make continuous improvement a challenging focus for the sector. However, we will continue to hold organisations to account through our investigations and recommend proportionate actions to remedy injustice. Despite the challenges, I have great confidence that you recognise the valuable contribution and insight complaints, and their swift resolution, offer to improve services for the public.

Complaint statistics

Our statistics focus on three key areas that help to assess your organisation's commitment to putting things right when they go wrong:

Complaints upheld - We uphold complaints when we find fault in an organisation's actions, including where the organisation accepted fault before we investigated. We include the total number of investigations completed to provide important context for the statistic.

Compliance with recommendations - We recommend ways for organisations to put things right when faults have caused injustice and monitor their compliance with our recommendations. Failure to comply is rare and a compliance rate below 100% is a cause for concern.

Satisfactory remedy provided by the authority - In these cases, the organisation upheld the complaint and we agreed with how it offered to put things right. We encourage the early resolution of complaints and give credit to organisations that accept fault and find appropriate ways to put things right.

Supporting complaint and service improvement

In February, following a period of consultation, we launched the [Complaint Handling Code](#) for councils, setting out a clear process for responding to complaints effectively and fairly. Twenty councils have volunteered to take part in an implementation pilot over the next two years that will develop further guidance and best practice.

The Code is issued to councils under our powers to provide guidance about good administrative practice. We expect councils to carefully consider the Code when developing policies and procedures and will begin considering it as part of our processes from April 2026 at the earliest.

The Code is considered good practice for all organisations we investigate (except where there are statutory complaint handling processes in place), and we may decide to issue it as guidance to other organisations, such as yours, in future.

Our successful complaint handling training programme continues to develop. All our courses include practical interactive workshops that help participants develop their complaint handling skills. We delivered 126 online workshops during the year, reaching more than 1,700 people. To find out more visit www.lgo.org.uk/training or get in touch at training@lgo.org.uk.

Returning to the theme of continuous improvement, we recognise the importance of reflecting on our own performance. With that in mind I encourage you to share your view of our organisation via this survey: <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/ombudsman/>. Your responses will help us to assess our impact and improve our offer to you. We want to gather a range of views and welcome multiple responses from organisations, so please do share the link with relevant colleagues.

Yours sincerely,

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

Complaints upheld

The Ombudsman carried out no investigations in this period

Compliance with Ombudsman recommendations

No recommendations were due for compliance in this period

Satisfactory remedies provided by the authority

The Ombudsman did not uphold any complaints in this period