

**Report on the Local Government and Social Care
Ombudsman and the Housing Ombudsman 2024/25**

Introduction

This report provides an overview of the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham's (LBBD) performance in relation to complaints investigated by both the Housing Ombudsman and the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) during the 2024/25 reporting period.

The Housing Ombudsman plays a vital role in ensuring tenants of social housing receive fair and consistent service, while the LGSCO oversees complaints about local authority services, including adult social care and education. Although not all 2024/25 reports were available at the time of submission, LBBD has benchmarked its performance against previous years and against comparable authorities with similar housing stock and demographic profiles.

The data reflects a positive downward trend in maladministration findings, recommendations, compensation, and orders—demonstrating improved complaint handling and service delivery. This report also highlights areas of strategic focus and outlines actions to sustain and build on this progress.

Housing Ombudsman

The Housing Ombudsman investigates complaints about social housing providers, including local authorities, ensuring tenants receive fair treatment and services. It promotes transparency and accountability by publishing decisions and identifying systemic issues across the sector. For local authorities the Ombudsman plays a critical role in driving service improvements and ensuring compliance with housing standards.

On a financial year the Housing Ombudsman produce a report specific to each authority. The table below shows our performance in the previous two financial years.

Metric	2023/24	2024/25	Change
Maladministration Findings	43	34	▼21%
Recommendations Made	26	5	▼81%
Compensation Ordered	£19,049	£14,364	▼25%
Orders Made	91	64	▼30%

It is positive to note reductions in all areas this is reflecting a significant improvement in complaint handling and service delivery. LBBD also achieved 100% compliance with all orders issued during the reporting period.

Benchmarking

As the latest reports are yet to be published, I have benchmarked our performance on the data available. In completing this exercise, I have considered our performance against those authorities who have similar numbers of council owned housing.

Authority	Maladministration Findings	Recommendations Made	Compensation Paid	Orders Made
LBBB	43	26	£19,049	91
Camden	124	59	£77,928	267
Westminster	77	37	£40,525	171
Islington	157	42	£93,690	295
Hackney	122	61	£112,114	251

Despite operating with a comparable volume of housing stock, LBBB recorded the lowest number of maladministration findings and paid significantly less in compensation. This is reflective of the strong complaint resolution practices and a proactive approach to service delivery.

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

The LGSCO is the independent body responsible for investigating complaints about local authorities and adult social care providers in England. It ensures that councils are held accountable for service failures and that residents receive fair treatment. The LGSCO promotes transparency, learning and continuous improvement in public service delivery.

As with the Housing Ombudsman the LGSCO produce on an annual basis performance relating to several key areas. The table below is our performance over the past two financial years.

Metric	2023/24	2024/25	Change
Complaints dealt with	121	134	▲12%
Not for LGSCO	65	78	▲20%
Assessed and Closed	35	37	▲6%
Investigated	11	19	▲73%

Benchmarking

Based on CIPFA who compares local authorities using socio-economic indicators the below have been chosen to benchmark our performance. These boroughs share similar characteristics in terms of population, ethnic diversity, housing tenure and levels of deprivation.

Authority	Complaints Dealt with	Not for LGSCO	Assessed and Closed	Investigated
LBB	134	78	37	19
Waltham Forest	160	71	59	30
Newham	206	96	70	40
Enfield	178	84	53	41
Hounslow	151	49	68	34

The comparison shows that LBB have handled the fewest total complaints, and the lowest number of cases escalated to full investigation suggestive of effective early resolution and triage processes.

Local Government Annual Review Report

National Trends from the Ombudsman’s 2024–25 Review: Key Insights

The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) has highlighted several national trends that resonate strongly with local experiences in LBB:

Special Educational Needs (SEN)

- Education and children’s services accounted for 27% of all complaints nationally, with 47% of those investigations upheld.
- Fault was found in 91% of these cases, rising to 94% in those involving SEN.
- LBB mirrors this trend, with a high uphold rate in SEN complaints and associated compensation due to unmet identified needs.

Housing

- 85% of housing investigations were upheld, with London experiencing particularly acute issues.
- In LBB, complaints related to temporary accommodation and housing allocations have surged. Determinations and compensation awards from the LGSCO have increased, often involving vulnerable residents, jurisdictional disputes, and service failure.

LBB-Specific Challenges and Strategic Implications

Legal, Reputational, and Compliance Risks

- Increased reputational exposure due to public access to Ombudsman reports.
- Compliance risks from unmet obligations.
- Mounting staffing pressures due to complaint volumes.

Potential Strategic Priorities

SEND

- Audit SEN Casework: Conduct root cause analysis of upheld SEN complaints to identify systemic issues and training needs.
- Improve Co-Production: Engage families and young people in designing complaint pathways and service improvements.
- Strengthen Multi-Agency Coordination: Ensure education, health, and social care teams collaborate effectively on EHCPs to prevent delays and miscommunication.
- Parent-Facing Dashboard – Development of a secure portal where parents can track the status of the process reducing inbound queries and improving transparency.
- Creation of a rapid response team – A small unit to triage and expedite overdue or complex cases especially those flagged by complaints or LGO reviews which often attract financial compensation.

Housing

- Strengthen Early Resolution: Implement a triage system to identify and resolve high-risk housing complaints. Use predictive analytics to flag cases likely to escalate to the Ombudsman based on risk indicators. E.g. repeat contact or vulnerability.
- Improve Record-Keeping: Ensure all housing case files are complete, timely, and accessible to support Ombudsman investigations and reduce delays.
- Enhance Staff Training: Provide refresher training on tenancy rights, complaint handling, and Ombudsman expectations to frontline housing officers.

Digital Transformation

- Leverage Digital Tools: Expand the use of AI and automation to reduce administrative burdens, improve data accuracy, and support root cause analysis.

Conclusion

In light of these findings, we should be taking a proactive and coordinated approach to strengthen complaints handling, particularly in high-risk areas such as housing and SEN. This includes:

- Prioritising early intervention and resolution strategies.
- Enhancing data quality and record-keeping practices.
- Building capacity through targeted training and digital innovation.
- Embedding a culture of learning and accountability across services.

By acting decisively on these insights, we can not only improve outcomes for residents but also reduce legal and reputational risks, and demonstrate a strong commitment to transparency, fairness, and continuous improvement.