

# Local Government & Social Care OMBUDSMAN

22 July 2020

*By email*

Mr Bowen  
Chief Executive  
Chesterfield Borough Council

Dear Mr Bowen

## **Annual Review letter 2020**

I write to you with our annual summary of statistics on the decisions made by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman about your authority for the year ending 31 March 2020. Given the exceptional pressures under which local authorities have been working over recent months, I thought carefully about whether it was still appropriate to send you this annual update. However, now, more than ever, I believe that it is essential that the public experience of local services is at the heart of our thinking. So, I hope that this feedback, which provides unique insight into the lived experience of your Council's services, will be useful as you continue to deal with the current situation and plan for the future.

## **Complaint statistics**

This year, we continue to place our focus on the outcomes of complaints and what can be learned from them. We want to provide you with the most insightful information we can and have made several changes over recent years to improve the data we capture and report. We focus our statistics on these three key areas:

**Complaints upheld** - We uphold complaints when we find some form of fault in an authority's actions, including where the authority accepted fault before we investigated. A focus on how often things go wrong, rather than simple volumes of complaints provides a clearer indicator of performance.

**Compliance with recommendations** - We recommend ways for authorities to put things right when faults have caused injustice. Our recommendations try to put people back in the position they were before the fault and we monitor authorities to ensure they comply with our recommendations. Failure to comply with our recommendations is rare. An authority with a compliance rate below 100% should scrutinise those complaints where it failed to comply and identify any learning.

**Satisfactory remedies provided by the authority** - We want to encourage the early resolution of complaints and to credit authorities that have a positive and open approach to

resolving complaints. We recognise cases where an authority has taken steps to put things right before the complaint came to us. The authority upheld the complaint and we agreed with how it offered to put things right.

Finally, we compare the three key annual statistics for your authority with similar types of authorities to work out an average level of performance. We do this for County Councils, District Councils, Metropolitan Boroughs, Unitary Councils, and London Boroughs.

This data will be uploaded to our interactive map, [Your council's performance](#), along with a copy of this letter on 29 July 2020, and our Review of Local Government Complaints. For further information on how to interpret our statistics, please visit our [website](#).

### **Resources to help you get it right**

There are a range of resources available that can support you to place the learning from complaints, about your authority and others, at the heart of your system of corporate governance. [Your council's performance](#) launched last year and puts our data and information about councils in one place. Again, the emphasis is on learning, not numbers. You can find the decisions we have made, public reports we have issued, and the service improvements your Council has agreed to make as a result of our investigations, as well as previous annual review letters.

I would encourage you to share the tool with colleagues and elected members; the information can provide valuable insights into service areas, early warning signs of problems and is a key source of information for governance, audit, risk and scrutiny functions.

Earlier this year, we held our link officer seminars in London, Bristol, Leeds and Birmingham. Attended by 178 delegates from 143 local authorities, we focused on maximising the impact of complaints, making sure the right person is involved with complaints at the right time, and how to overcome common challenges.

We have a well-established and successful training programme supporting local authorities and independent care providers to help improve local complaint handling. During the year, we delivered 118 courses, training more than 1,400 people. This is 47 more courses than we delivered last year and included more training to adult social care providers than ever before. To find out more visit [www.lgo.org.uk/training](http://www.lgo.org.uk/training).

Yours sincerely,



Michael King  
Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman  
Chair, Commission for Local Administration in England

**Complaints upheld**

The Ombudsman carried out no detailed investigations during 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 detailed investigations during this period

Reference	Authority	Category	Received
19000565	Chesterfield Borough Council	Planning & Development	10 Apr 2019
19001795	Chesterfield Borough Council	Planning & Development	02 May 2019
19001797	Chesterfield Borough Council	Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation	02 May 2019
19004515	Chesterfield Borough Council	Benefits & Tax	19 Jun 2019
19006697	Chesterfield Borough Council	Benefits & Tax	23 Jul 2019
19006733	Chesterfield Borough Council	Corporate & Other Services	23 Jul 2019
19009321	Chesterfield Borough Council	Corporate & Other Services	04 Sep 2019
19011383	Chesterfield Borough Council	Planning & Development	07 Oct 2019
19013247	Chesterfield Borough Council	Null	06 Nov 2019
19013667	Chesterfield Borough Council	Corporate & Other Services	12 Nov 2019
19014105	Chesterfield Borough Council	Corporate & Other Services	18 Nov 2019
19014109	Chesterfield Borough Council	Corporate & Other Services	18 Nov 2019
19015738	Chesterfield Borough Council	Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation	13 Dec 2019
19020548	Chesterfield Borough Council	Benefits & Tax	13 Mar 2020
19020672	Chesterfield Borough Council	Planning & Development	09 Mar 2020

Reference	Authority	Category	Decided	Decision	Decision Reason	Remedy	Service improvement recommendations
18016721	Chesterfield Borough Council	Planning & Development	01/04/19	Closed after initial enquiries	26(6)(b) appeal to Minister		
19000565	Chesterfield Borough Council	Planning & Development	15/05/19	Referred back for local resolution	Premature Decision - referred to BinJ		
19001795	Chesterfield Borough Council	Planning & Development	02/05/19	Referred back for local resolution	Premature Decision - advice given		
19001797	Chesterfield Borough Council	Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation	19/06/19	Closed after initial enquiries	Not warranted by alleged mal/service failure		
19004515	Chesterfield Borough Council	Benefits & Tax	19/06/19	Referred back for local resolution	Premature Decision - advice given		
19006697	Chesterfield Borough Council	Benefits & Tax	17/09/19	Closed after initial enquiries	26B(2) not made in 12 months		
19006733	Chesterfield Borough Council	Corporate & Other Services	30/09/19	Closed after initial enquiries	Other reason not to investigate		
19011383	Chesterfield Borough Council	Planning & Development	11/11/19	Advice given	Previously considered and decided		
19013247	Chesterfield Borough Council	Null	06/11/19	Incomplete/Invalid	Insufficient information to proceed and PA advised		
19013667	Chesterfield Borough Council	Corporate & Other Services	12/11/19	Referred back for local resolution	Premature Decision - advice given		
19014105	Chesterfield Borough Council	Corporate & Other Services	18/11/19	Referred back for local resolution	Premature Decision - advice given		
19014109	Chesterfield Borough Council	Corporate & Other Services	18/11/19	Referred back for local resolution	Premature Decision - advice given		
19015738	Chesterfield Borough Council	Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation	13/12/19	Referred back for local resolution	Premature Decision - advice given		
19020672	Chesterfield Borough Council	Planning & Development	09/03/20	Incomplete/Invalid	Insufficient information to proceed and PA advised		