

# DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY COUNCIL

## Statistics Tables – Explanatory Notes and Commentary

Attached are summary details of the enquiries and complaints about your Council that the SPSO has received and determined.

The first document attached shows (in Table 1) details of total contacts (by complaint subject) received for your Council for 2006-07 and 2007-08, along with the total of local authority complaints for 2007-08. Table 2 shows the outcomes of complaints about your Council determined by the SPSO in 2007-08.

Please note that, as the notes accompanying the tables explain, we changed our incoming logging procedures in April 2007, which has implications for comparing 2007-08 complaints data with previous years. The total numbers of contacts (enquiries plus complaints) received for each year are not affected and are therefore directly comparable. However, the figures shown as 'complaints only' in Table 1 are recorded on a different basis in each year and are, therefore, not directly comparable. Similarly, the change to our logging procedure has affected comparison of cases determined between 2006-07 and 2007-08 in Table 2.

The second document attached is a visual representation of the information from the right side of Table 1. You will see that in 2007-08 your Council was above the national average in terms of complaints about finance and social work, and below the average for complaints about planning.

### Prematurity rates

A graph is also enclosed showing for each Council the percentage of complaints that we identified as premature, and the national average for all Councils. Your Council is number 27 on that graph. We consider a complaint to be premature when it reaches us before the complainant has been through the full complaints process of the organisation concerned. Please note that the graph does not reflect the number of premature complaints that we received about your Council, but shows how your Council, proportionally, compares against the average for all Scottish local authorities. The actual number of premature complaints for your Council was 12, just over a third of the total determined, and proportionally less than in the previous year.

Please note that no adjustments have been made in the graph to estimate the impact of housing stock transfer. It is evident, however, that there is a tendency for authorities that retain housing stock to fall higher within the prematurity graph than those that have undertaken stock transfer – this is to be expected given that housing complaints are usually the largest category of complaint and that there is a disproportionately high incidence of prematurity with housing complaints.

The SPSO considers it important that organisations have the chance to resolve complaints through their own procedures and we are actively working with service providers with the aim of reducing the number of complaints that reach us prematurely. You will be aware that our Valuing Complaints website (<http://www.valuingcomplaints.org.uk/>) contains information designed to assist with such issues, and that our Outreach Team ([ask@spsso.org.uk](mailto:ask@spsso.org.uk)) are pleased to answer enquiries about how we can support your Council.

### **Investigated Complaints and Recommendations**

We investigated five complaints about your Council in 2007-08, of which we partially upheld one and did not uphold four. We have attached a summary sheet showing these complaints, and summarising any recommendations made. As you are no doubt aware, where she thinks it appropriate, the Ombudsman may make recommendations even where a complaint is not upheld, if she believes that there are lessons that may be learned. An example of this is the Ombudsman's recommendation that the Council consider whether to invoke their Unacceptable Actions Policy, given that the manner in which a complainant was approaching them contributed significantly to problems around complaint handling. You will also be aware that SPSO Complaints Investigators will be following up to find out what changes have been made as a result of recommendations.

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We hope that you find this summary information useful. If you have any enquiries about the statistics provided, please contact Annie White, SPSO Casework Knowledge Manager, on 0131 240 8843 or by emailing [awhite@spsso.org.uk](mailto:awhite@spsso.org.uk). Fuller statistical reports are available on the SPSO website at: <http://www.spsso.org.uk/statistics/index.php>.

## Dumfries and Galloway Council

Table 1

Received by Subject	2006/7		2007/8		complaints as % of total	All Local Authority Complaints	complaints as % of total
	Total Contacts	Complaints Only	Total Contacts	Complaints Only			
Building Control	0	0	0	0	0%	20	2%
Consumer protection	0	0	0	0	0%	3	0%
Economic development	0	0	0	0	0%	4	0%
Education	3	1	4	2	7%	67	5%
Env Health & Cleansing	1	0	0	0	0%	69	5%
Finance	7	4	9	7	23%	123	9%
Fire & police boards	0	0	0	0	0%	1	0%
Housing	9	2	5	3	10%	394	30%
Land & Property	0	0	1	1	3%	31	2%
Legal & admin	4	2	3	2	7%	66	5%
National Park Authorities	0	0	0	0	0%	2	0%
Other	0	0	0	0	0%	6	0%
Personnel	1	1	0	0	0%	29	2%
Planning	14	7	6	3	10%	243	18%
Recreation & Leisure	0	0	2	2	7%	21	2%
Roads	1	0	3	3	10%	71	5%
Social Work	8	5	6	6	20%	148	11%
Valuation Joint Boards	0	0	1	1	3%	11	1%
Out of jurisdiction	0	0	0	0	0%	0	0%
Subject unknown	3	0	0	0	0%	20	2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>30</b>		<b>1,329</b>	

Note about comparing 2007-08 complaint numbers to the previous year:

Please note that we made a change to our logging procedures in April 2007 which has implications for comparing 2007-08 complaints data with previous years. Of the total number of local authority complaints received in 2007-08, we estimate that approximately 33% could previously have been classed as enquiries. This does not affect the number of total contacts (enquiries + complaints) received.

For more information please see the full explanation at <http://www.sps.org.uk/statistics>.

Table 2

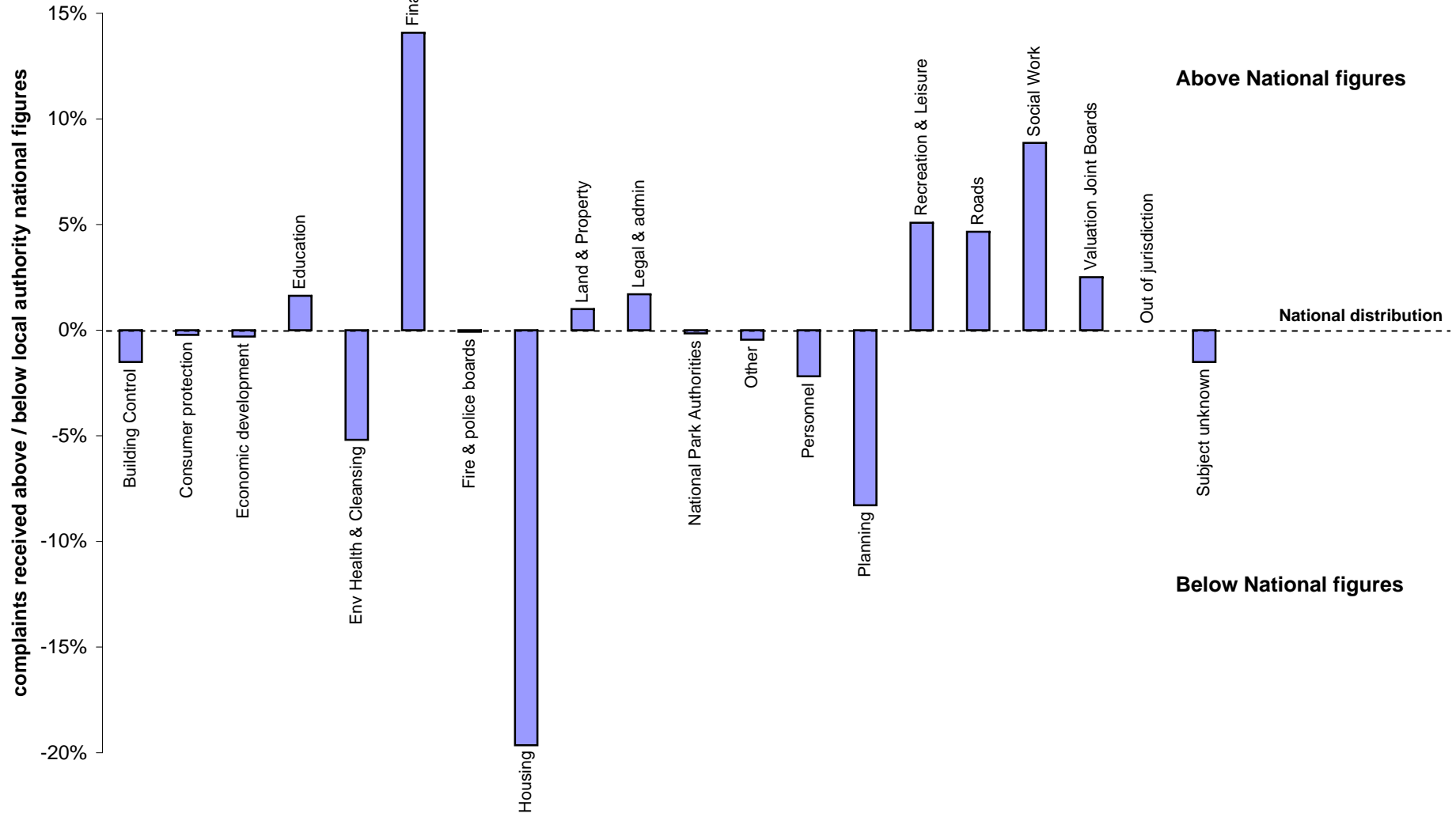
Complaints Determined by Outcome		2006/7	2007/8
Assessment	Premature	10	12
	Out of jurisdiction	5	2
	Discontinued or suspended before investigation	2	2
Examination	Withdrawn / Failed to provide information before investigation	0	4
	Determined after detailed consideration	2	9
Investigation	Report Issued - Not Upheld	1	4
	Report Issued - Partially Upheld	2	1
	Report Issued - Fully Upheld	0	0
	Discontinued during investigation	0	0
	Withdrawn / Failed to provide information during investigation	0	0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>34</b>

Note about comparing 2007-08 complaint numbers to the previous year:

Please note that we made a change to our logging procedures in April 2007 which has implications for comparing 2007-08 complaints data with previous years. Of the total number of local authority complaints determined at the assessment stage in 2007-08, we estimate that approximately 39% could previously have been classed as enquiries. There has been no change to cases determined at examination or investigation stages.

For more information please see the full explanation at <http://www.sps.org.uk/statistics>.

**Complaints received by subject in 2007/8: Dumfries and Galloway Council proportions compared to the distribution of all local authority complaints received**



## Dumfries and Galloway Council

	Case Ref	Summary	Finding	Recs	Recommendation(s)
22/08/07	200501957	the Council: (a) provided Ms C with a receipt that her applications for council tax benefit and housing benefit were properly documented but later asked for additional information (not upheld); (b) subsequently wrongly determined Ms C's applications stating that she had a nil entitlement because she had not completed the requisite forms (no finding); and (c) delayed unduly in responding to Mr C's letter of complaint of 14 June 2005 to the Chief Executive (upheld).	Partially upheld	NONE	The Ombudsman notes that the sum of £500 has been offered and accepted by Mr C in respect of the delay in handling the formal complaint. She accepts the personal apology tendered to herself and notes that an explanation and apology were given direct to Mr C. Finally she also notes the steps taken by the Council to avoid re-occurrence of their initial misunderstanding which happened in this case.
19/09/07	200601721	(a) the Council's refusal of Mr C's application for a repairs grant (not upheld); and (b) the Council led Mr C to believe that a repairs grant would be awarded (not upheld).	Not upheld	NONE	The Ombudsman has no recommendations to make.
21/11/07	200600349	the Council in their handling of the planning applications acted unreasonably and ignored the views submitted by the objectors (not upheld).	Not upheld	NONE	The Ombudsman has no recommendations to make.
19/12/07	200600661	the Council failed to handle Mr C's complaints in line with the Complaints Procedure (not upheld).	Not upheld	YES	the Council consider whether or not to invoke their Unacceptable Actions Policy against Mr C, given that his communication approach has significantly contributed to the problems around the handling of his complaints.
20/02/08	200600648	the Council: (a) failed to consider objections when granting approval for a planning application (not upheld); and (b) failed to handle the complaint in line with the complaints procedure (not upheld).	Not upheld	YES	repeat their initial offer of meeting reasonable legal expenses incurred by Mr and Mrs C as suggested in earlier correspondence. The Council have accepted the recommendation and will act on it accordingly.