

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 below the average for complaints about social work and close to the average in other areas.

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 20 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 13, representing 43% of the total determined, and proportionally a small reduction on 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) 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 three and did not uphold two. 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. 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.

We discontinued one complaint about your Council at the investigation stage; this complaint was not reported on.

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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. Fuller statistical reports are available on the SPSO website at: <http://www.spsso.org.uk/statistics/index.php>.

Stirling Council

Table 1

Received by Subject	2006/7		2007/8		complaints as % of total	All Local Authority		complaints as % of total
	Total Contacts	Complaints Only	Total Contacts	Complaints Only		Complaints		
Building Control	0	0	0	0	0%	20	2%	
Consumer protection	0	0	1	1	4%	3	0%	
Economic development	1	1	0	0	0%	4	0%	
Education	4	3	2	2	9%	67	5%	
Env Health & Cleansing	6	5	5	2	9%	69	5%	
Finance	1	1	4	3	13%	123	9%	
Fire & police boards	0	0	0	0	0%	1	0%	
Housing	11	3	11	7	30%	394	30%	
Land & Property	3	1	0	0	0%	31	2%	
Legal & admin	5	5	2	1	4%	66	5%	
National Park Authorities	0	0	0	0	0%	2	0%	
Other	0	0	0	0	0%	6	0%	
Personnel	1	0	0	0	0%	29	2%	
Planning	4	1	8	5	22%	243	18%	
Recreation & Leisure	1	0	0	0	0%	21	2%	
Roads	4	2	1	1	4%	71	5%	
Social Work	1	1	1	1	4%	148	11%	
Valuation Joint Boards	0	0	0	0	0%	11	1%	
Out of jurisdiction	1	0	0	0	0%	0	0%	
Subject unknown	0	0	0	0	0%	20	2%	
Total	43	23	35	23		1,329		

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.spsso.org.uk/statistics>.

Table 2

Complaints Determined by Outcome		2006/7	2007/8
Assessment	Premature	10	13
	Out of jurisdiction	5	3
	Discontinued or suspended before investigation	0	2
	Withdrawn / Failed to provide information before investigation	1	0
Examination	Determined after detailed consideration	1	6
	Report Issued - Not Upheld	4	2
Investigation	Report Issued - Partially Upheld	0	3
	Report Issued - Fully Upheld	0	0
	Discontinued during investigation	0	1
	Withdrawn / Failed to provide information during investigation	0	0
Total		21	30

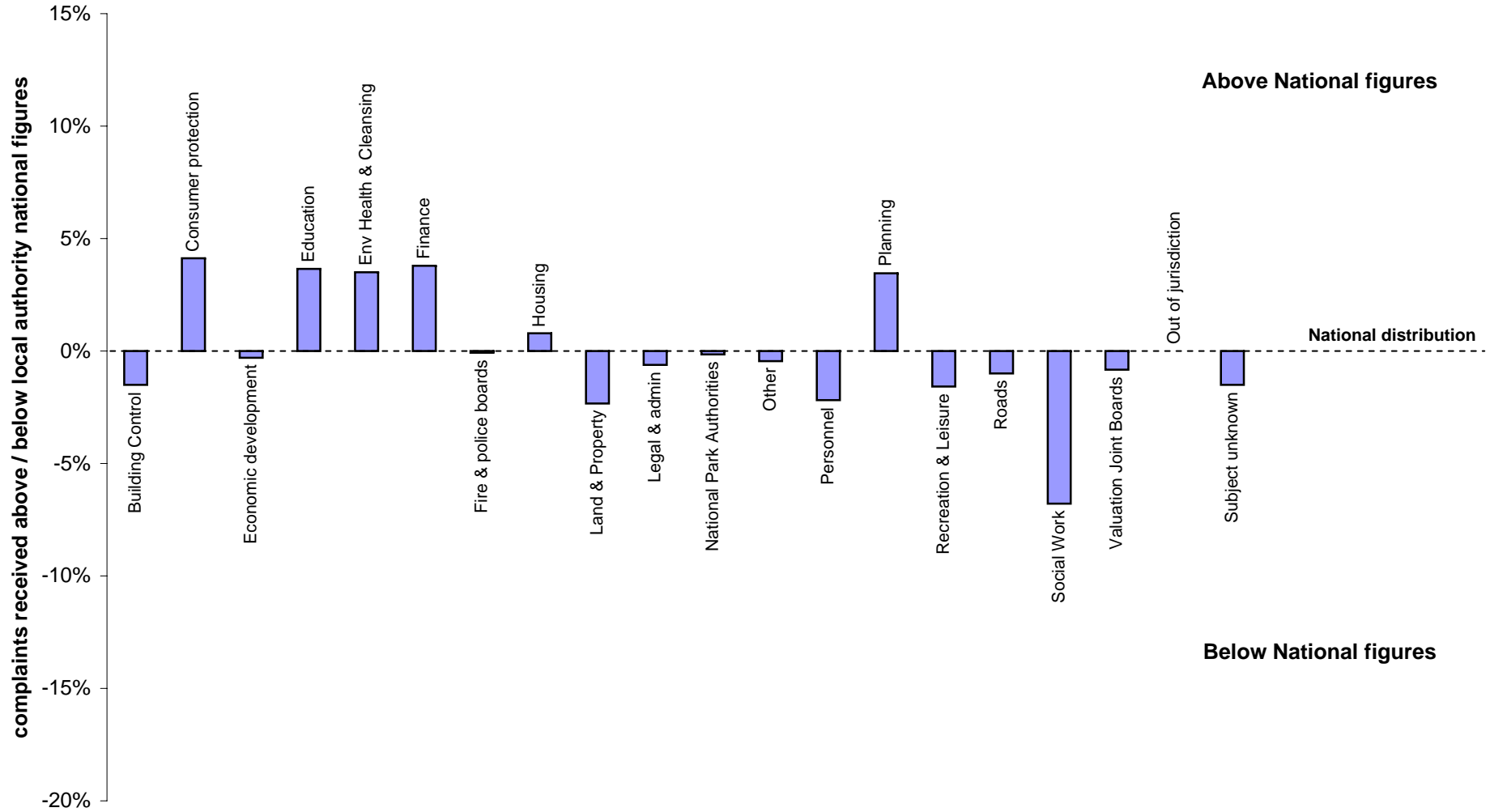
Note about comparing 2007-08 complaint numbers to the previous year:

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.spsso.org.uk/statistics>.

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



Stirling Council

	Case Ref	Summary	Finding	Recs	Recommendation(s)
21/11/07	200601593	(a) following the first incident involving Child C, the Council did not take the action they previously stated they would take against Mr Z (upheld); (b) the Council failed properly to investigate the incidents involving Mr Z and Child C (partially upheld); and (c) an internal suggestion that Mr Z be suspended and another driver be used for the run was not followed up (not upheld).	Partially upheld	YES	(i) the Council apologise to Mrs C for not following up on their officer's statement that a reprimand would be issued to Mr Z; (ii) the Council apologise to Mrs C for the way her initial complaints were handled; and (iii) should in the future the situation arise that only Mr Z's coach is used for conveying pupils home from the School to the Village, the Council offer mediation to explore the basis on which Child C could return to using the service. The Council have accepted the recommendations and will act on them accordingly.
19/12/07	200602766	the Council failed to adequately investigate and take action regarding Mrs C's complaint about the Email (not upheld)	Not upheld	NONE	The Ombudsman has no recommendations to make.
19/12/07	200603272	the Council: (a) failed to take appropriate steps to ensure that Mr C's windows are in a good state of repair (not upheld); (b) failed to check on the adequacy of repairs carried out in February 2006 (upheld); and (c) failed to accept the advice of a window contractor that the windows in Mr C's flat should be replaced and upgraded (not upheld).	Partially upheld	YES	apologise to Mr C for their failing with regard to inspection.
20/02/08	200600144	(a) acted inappropriately by changing the waste collection service (not upheld); and (b) used an arbitrary figure for the number of people required before a household could apply for a larger bin (not upheld).	Not upheld	YES	as part of their review of the service, the Council should consider how five person households are coping with the arrangements. The Council have accepted the recommendation and will act on it accordingly.
20/02/08	200601798	the Council: (a) wrongly suspended Ms A's application for housing, thereby jeopardising her chance of being allocated a house (not upheld); and (b) incorrectly awarded too many overcrowding points to Ms A (upheld).	Partially upheld	YES	(i) confirm to this office the steps taken to prevent repetition of the incorrect suspension of Ms A's housing application; (ii) confirm that work to correct the computer system error has been completed satisfactorily; and (iii) apologise to Ms A for the distress caused by the incorrect award of overcrowding points. The Council have accepted the recommendations and will act on them accordingly.