

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 education and social work, and well below the average for complaints about housing.

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 22 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 15, almost 40% of the total determined, which was proportionally a reduction from 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 seven complaints about your Council in 2007-08, of which we partially upheld two and did not uphold five. 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.

In two of the complaints investigated, recommendations were made about information provided to and communication with members of the public.

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>.

Dundee City 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		Authority Complaints	complaints as % of total	
Building Control	0	0	1	1	3%	20	2%	
Consumer protection	0	0	0	0	0%	3	0%	
Economic development	0	0	0	0	0%	4	0%	
Education	1	1	4	4	13%	67	5%	
Env Health & Cleansing	3	2	1	1	3%	69	5%	
Finance	10	3	2	1	3%	123	9%	
Fire & police boards	0	0	0	0	0%	1	0%	
Housing	11	8	8	4	13%	394	30%	
Land & Property	3	2	4	2	7%	31	2%	
Legal & admin	2	1	3	2	7%	66	5%	
National Park Authorities	0	0	0	0	0%	2	0%	
Other	0	0	0	0	0%	6	0%	
Personnel	0	0	1	1	3%	29	2%	
Planning	7	4	4	4	13%	243	18%	
Recreation & Leisure	0	0	2	1	3%	21	2%	
Roads	3	1	0	0	0%	71	5%	
Social Work	7	5	10	7	23%	148	11%	
Valuation Joint Boards	0	0	0	0	0%	11	1%	
Out of jurisdiction	1	1	0	0	0%	0	0%	
Subject unknown	0	0	2	2	7%	20	2%	
Total	48	28	42	30		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.spsa.org.uk/statistics>.

Table 2

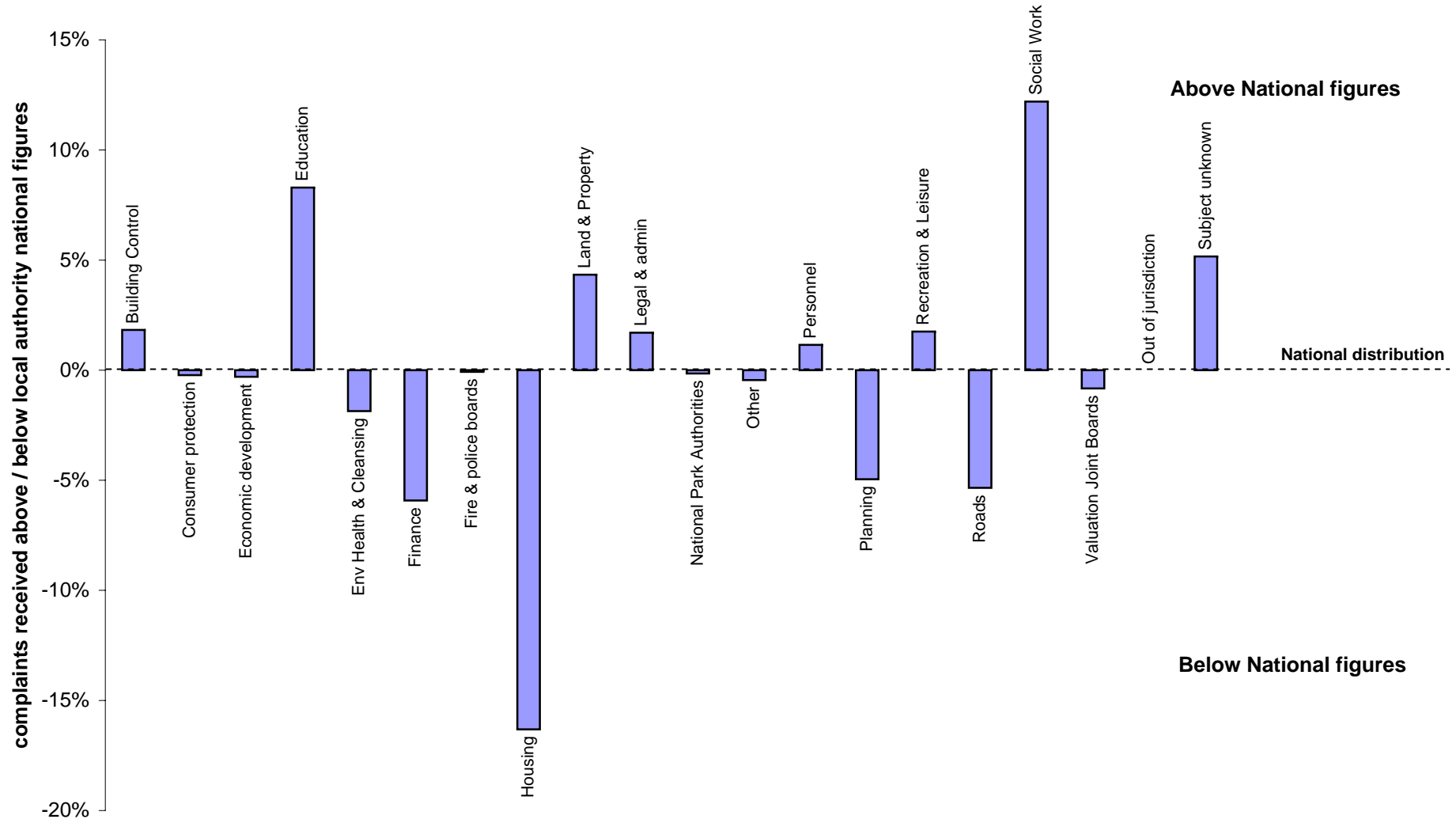
Complaints Determined by Outcome		2006/7	2007/8
Assessment	Premature	11	15
	Out of jurisdiction	4	7
	Discontinued or suspended before investigation	0	4
	Withdrawn / Failed to provide information before investigation	4	0
Examination	Determined after detailed consideration	2	4
Investigation	Report Issued - Not Upheld	1	5
	Report Issued - Partially Upheld	1	2
	Report Issued - Fully Upheld	1	0
	Discontinued during investigation	0	1
	Withdrawn / Failed to provide information during investigation	0	0
Total		24	38

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.spsa.org.uk/statistics>.

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



Dundee City Council

	Case Ref	Summary	Finding	Recs	Recommendation(s)
19/09/07	200600542	the Social Work Department divulged personal information about Ms C to her child, contrary to her request and their assurances (not upheld).	Not upheld	NONE	The Ombudsman has no recommendations to make.
19/09/07	200602830	(a) the Council failed to advise Miss C, in advance, of her liability to pay an inspection levy and blamed a monumental mason for not informing her about it (not upheld); and (b) the Council delayed in responding to Miss C's request for details about the inspection and the information she was given was incorrect (partially upheld).	Partially upheld	YES	(i) in responding to queries, ensure that care is taken when making a response and that all issues are addressed. Similarly, when internal information is passed to members of the public, it should be clearly understandable; and (ii) apologise to Miss C for their errors and oversight. The Council have accepted the recommendations and will act on them accordingly.
19/12/07	200602029	the Council did not take action to ensure that building works would not harm the integrity of the listed building (not upheld).	Not upheld	NONE	The Ombudsman has no recommendations to make.
19/12/07	200402036 200402211	(a) a flawed report relating to the proposed development was submitted to the Development Quality Committee (not upheld); and (b) the Council failed to facilitate discussion between the applicant and neighbours (not upheld).	Not upheld	YES	develops a written protocol that sets out the Council position and guides the actions of officials following deferral of a planning application to allow discussion between the parties involved.
20/02/08	200401636	(a) the extenuating circumstances relating to Mrs A should have resulted in consideration outwith the Council's Decant Policy and the Council failed to provide adequate compensation for the period of absence from the property (partially upheld); (b) the cost of replacing damaged carpets exceeded the level of compensation provided by the Council (not upheld); (c) the property was uninhabitable on completion of the works (upheld); and (d) the Council failed to respond adequately to issues raised in correspondence by Mr C (upheld).	Partially upheld	YES	(i) apologises to Mr C for their failure to provide a copy of the relevant Policy on request; (ii) gives consideration to the individual and particular circumstances relating to Mrs A and her decant situation; (iii) provides Mrs A with a decision in writing in relation to her individual and particular decant situation; (iv) apologises to Mr C for their failure to respond fully and appropriately to his letter of 21 December 2004; and (v) provides a written response to Mr C that either addresses the questions raised in his 21 December 2004 letter or explains why such a response will not be forthcoming.
20/02/08	200603214	the delay by the Council in notifying Mrs C of a council tax debt (not upheld).	Not upheld	YES	apologise to Mrs C for the delay in pursuing the debt between June 2002 and August 2005 and consider an appropriate payment arrangement to recover the debt properly due. The Council have accepted the recommendation and will act on it accordingly.