

# NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL

## 2008-9 Statistics Tables – Explanatory Notes and Commentary

**Tables:** Attached are summary details of the contacts and complaints about your Council that the SPSO received and determined in 2008-09. Table 1 details total contacts (by our subject categories) received for your Council for 2007-08 and 2008-09, alongside the total of local authority complaints for these years. We recorded 93 complaints about the Council, compared to 106 in the previous year. Table 2 shows the outcomes of complaints determined by the SPSO in 2008-09.

**Graphs:** The first graph provides a visual representation of the information from the right side of Table 1. You'll see that in 2008-09 your Council was above the national average in terms of complaints about education and housing. Your Council was below the average for complaints about planning. We received more complaints for your Council about education and social work, and fewer complaints about housing and land & property, than in the previous year.

The second graph shows for each Council the percentage of complaints that we received and determined as premature, against the national average in 2008-9 (60%). We consider a complaint to be premature when it reaches us before the complainant has been through the full complaints process of the organisation. The graph does not reflect the number of premature complaints that we received about your Council, but shows how your Council, proportionately, compares against the average for Scottish local authorities. Your Council is number 18 on the graph, right on the average. You'll see from Table 2 that the actual number of premature complaints for your Council was 60 out of a total of 100 complaints determined (60% of the total for your Council). This was a slight increase on the previous year, where figures were 64 out of 112 (57% of the total for your Council). This doesn't, of course, represent an increase in numbers, but shows an increase in the *proportion* of complaints we determined to be premature.

*NB We don't adjust any of our figures to mitigate the impact of housing stock transfer. It's evident, however, that there's a tendency for authorities that retain housing stock to receive more complaints and 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's a disproportionately high incidence of prematurity with housing complaints.*

### Complaints and Recommendations Reported to Parliament

We reported on four complaints about your Council in 2008-09. We upheld one, partially upheld one and did not uphold two. Attached is a summary sheet showing these complaints and the recommendations made. As you are no doubt aware, in appropriate cases the Ombudsman may make recommendations where a complaint is not upheld, if he believes that there are lessons that may be learned. You will also be aware that SPSO Complaints Investigators follow 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, on which we did not report.

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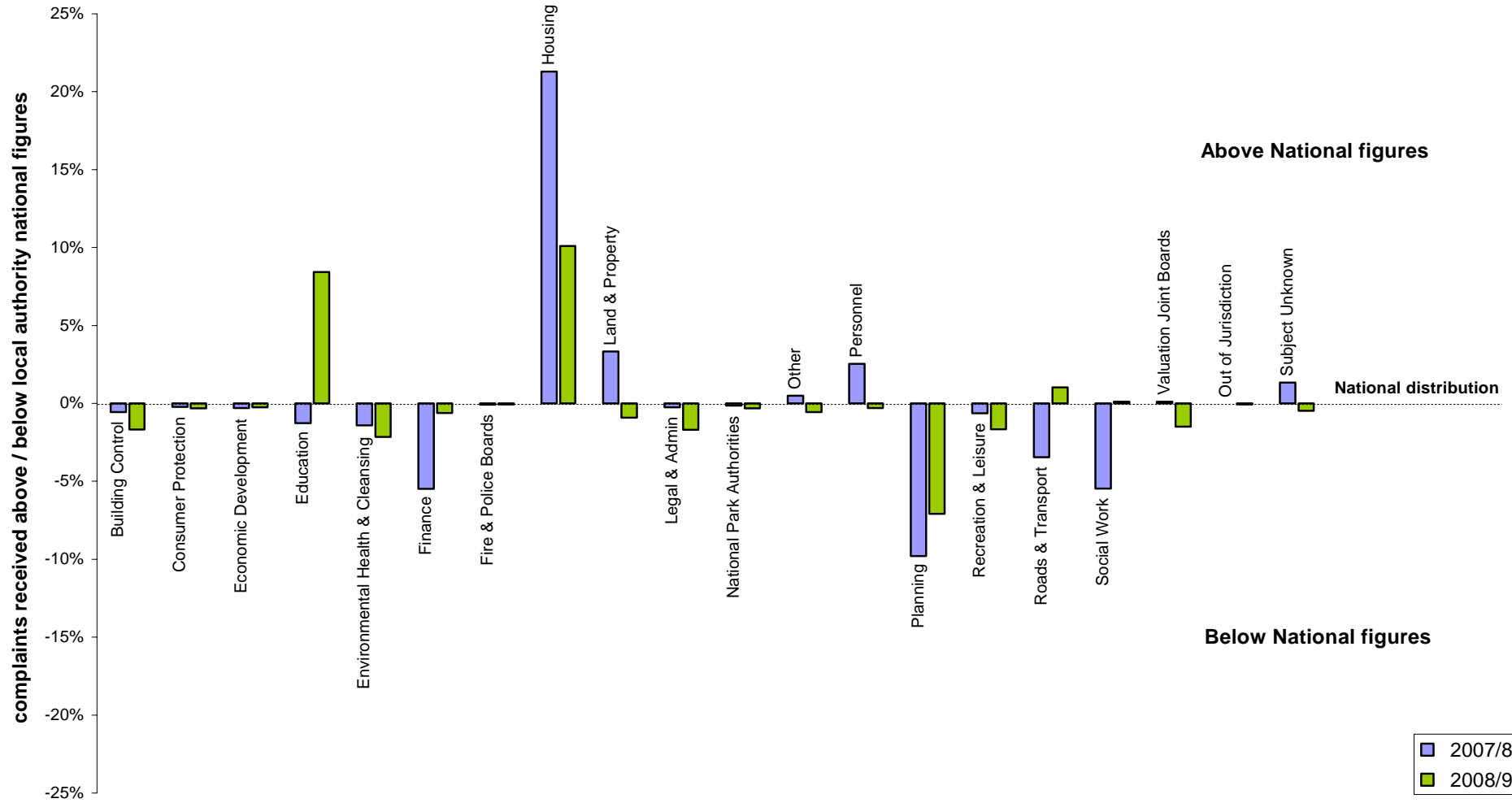
We hope that you find this summary information useful. If you have any enquiries about the statistics, please contact Annie White, SPSO Casework Knowledge Manager, on 0131 240 8843 or email [awhite@spsos.org.uk](mailto:awhite@spsos.org.uk). Fuller statistical reports are available on our website at: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

# North Lanarkshire Council

Table 1

Received by Subject	2007/8			All Local Authority Complaints			2008/9			All Local Authority Complaints		
	Total Contacts	Complaints Only	complaints as % of total	Total Contacts	Complaints Only	complaints as % of total	Total Contacts	Complaints Only	complaints as % of total	Total Contacts	Complaints Only	complaints as % of total
Building Control	1	1	1%	20	2%		0	0	0%	27	2%	
Consumer Protection	0	0	0%	3	0%		0	0	0%	5	0%	
Economic Development	0	0	0%	4	0%		0	0	0%	4	0%	
Education	4	4	4%	67	5%		13	13	14%	89	6%	
Environmental Health & Cleansing	4	4	4%	69	5%		2	2	2%	69	4%	
Finance	8	4	4%	123	9%		9	8	9%	148	9%	
Fire & Police Boards	0	0	0%	1	0%		0	0	0%	1	0%	
Housing	76	54	51%	394	30%		41	36	39%	459	29%	
Land & Property	8	6	6%	31	2%		1	1	1%	32	2%	
Legal & Admin	5	5	5%	66	5%		4	3	3%	79	5%	
National Park Authorities	0	0	0%	2	0%		0	0	0%	5	0%	
Other	2	1	1%	6	0%		0	0	0%	9	1%	
Personnel	5	5	5%	29	2%		2	1	1%	22	1%	
Planning	12	9	8%	243	18%		9	9	10%	269	17%	
Recreation & Leisure	1	1	1%	21	2%		1	1	1%	44	3%	
Roads & Transport	3	2	2%	71	5%		6	6	6%	87	5%	
Social Work	9	6	6%	148	11%		14	11	12%	188	12%	
Valuation Joint Boards	1	1	1%	11	1%		0	0	0%	24	1%	
Out of Jurisdiction	0	0	0%	0	0%		0	0	0%	1	0%	
Subject Unknown	3	3	3%	20	2%		2	2	2%	42	3%	
<b>Total</b>	<b>142</b>	<b>106</b>		<b>1,329</b>			<b>104</b>	<b>93</b>		<b>1,604</b>		

Complaints received by subject: North Lanarkshire Council proportions compared to the distribution of all local authority complaints received



## North Lanarkshire Council

Table 2

<b>Complaints Determined by Outcome</b>		<b>2007/8</b>		<b>2008/9</b>	
			<i>All Local Authority</i>		<i>All Local Authority</i>
Assessment	Premature	64	760	60	923
	Out of Jurisdiction	10	154	2	102
	Withdrawn or failed to provide information before investigation	14	178	8	158
	Discontinued or suspended before investigation	1	42	1	12
Examination	Determined after detailed consideration	12	240	24	279
Investigation	Report issued: not upheld	3	82	2	25
	Report issued: partially upheld	5	62	1	22
	Report issued: fully upheld	1	23	1	15
	Withdrawn or failed to provide information during investigation	0	4	0	1
	Discontinued or suspended during investigation	2	13	1	9
<b>Total</b>		<b>112</b>	<b>1,558</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1,546</b>

North Lanarkshire Council

Published	Case Ref.	Summary	Decision	Recommendation(s)
21/05/08	200701770	(a) the Council failed to respond appropriately to representations made about unnecessary disruption to the decoration in Ms A's home (not upheld); and (b) the Council's award of an allowance to Ms A to make good the extensively disrupted decoration in her home was inadequate (not upheld).	not upheld	Given that the Council formulated their policy on decoration/disturbance allowances some 11 years ago when they brought together the policies of the three predecessor housing authorities, the Ombudsman recommended that the Council give consideration as to whether a review of that policy should be undertaken. The Council accepted the recommendation and stated that they intend to review decoration/disturbance allowances and to report to a future meeting of the appropriate committee.
20/08/08	200603331	there was insufficient contact with Mr C before disposing of his belongings which had been held in storage (partially upheld).	partially upheld	(i) include within their new Storage Procedures, advice for applicants using the storage facilities that they should detail any valuable items on the inventory; and (ii) ensure that a copy of the signed inventory is retained on the relevant file.
22/10/08	200600638	(the Council) did not: (a) properly investigate Mr C's complaint (upheld); and (b) deal in a timely manner with Mr C's complaint and his request for a copy of the Council's investigation report and the Council's policy of response to assault in a playground (upheld).	upheld	The Ombudsman recommends that the Council: (i) apologise to Mr C for the failings identified; (ii) remind staff dealing with complaints of the importance of explaining how they have reached their decisions; and (iii) apologise to Mr C for not sending sooner the two documents he requested.
21/01/09	200700656	(a) Council 1 failed to carry out the transfer of Ms C's social work file in line with their own procedures (not upheld); (b) Council 1 withdrew Ms C's care package against her wishes (no finding); (c) Council 1 failed to carry out an adequate occupational therapy assessment at Ms C's home (not upheld); (d) Council 1 failed to carry out the recommendations made as a result of the Social Work (Complaints Review) Sub-Committee's findings (not upheld); and (e) the care package provided by Council 1 was unsuitable to meet Ms C's assessed needs (not upheld).	not upheld	(i) consider introducing formal guidance to social work staff on inter-authority case transfers and communication with incoming service users; (ii) introduce a policy of requesting written confirmation of a service user's intent to cancel their care in cases where the need for care remains; (iii) review Ms C's case and identify ways of introducing basic care quickly, whilst needs assessments are carried out; (iv) prioritise the completion of Ms C's care plan; (v) consider ways of formally recording service users' acceptance and understanding of any proposals before finalising care plans; and (vi) consider ways to record service users' non-acceptance of proposals and to escalate matters through the formal complaints procedure. Council 1 have accepted the recommendations and will act on them accordingly.