

Local Government Ombudsman provisional statistics 2009/10

The deadline for queries on these figures is

Friday 7 May 2010

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List of enclosures:

- **Notes to aid interpretation of figures.**
- **Provisional Local Authority Report** – the final version of this will form part of the Annual Review to your Authority in June.
- **Complaints forwarded** – printout of new complaints forwarded to our investigative team in the year 2009/10, broken down by service area (*see note 2 attached*).
- **Decisions** – printout of complaints on which decisions were made by the LGO in the year 2009/10, broken down by type of decision (*see note 3 attached*).
- **Response times** – printout of complaints on which enquiries were made to your Authority during 2009/10, showing response times (*see notes 4 and 5 attached*).

Notes to assist interpretation of the LGO's provisional local authority statistics

1. Local authority report

This information will form an integral part of the annual review to your authority, which the Ombudsman will send to you in June 2010. Again this year, the annual review will be published on our website, at www.lgo.org.uk/CouncilsPerformance/

The detailed information in the printouts is confidential.

Since 1 April 2008 the LGO Advice Team has been the single point of contact for all enquiries and new complaints. Our advisers provide comprehensive information and advice to callers at the outset with a full explanation of the process and possible outcomes. It enables callers to make a more informed decision about whether putting their complaint to us is an appropriate course of action. Last year it meant that direct comparison with some of the previous years' statistics was difficult and could have been misleading. This year, the annual review shows figures for two years' worth of enquiries and complaints received, and for decisions taken.

2. LGO Advice Team: Enquiries and complaints received

This table includes telephone enquiries made and dealt with as well as formal complaints to the Ombudsman. These enquiries are recorded on the same database as complaints, and the authority they concern is recorded, which enables us to include them in this report.

This information shows the number of enquiries and complaints received by the LGO, broken down by service area. It also shows how these were dealt with, as follows.

Formal/informal prematures: The LGO does not normally consider a complaint unless a council has first had an opportunity to deal with that complaint itself. So if someone complains to the LGO without having taken the matter up with a council, the LGO will usually refer it back to the council as a 'premature complaint' to see if the council can itself resolve the matter. These are 'formal premature complaints'. However, we now also include 'informal' prematures here, where advice is given to the complainant making an enquiry that their complaint is premature. As we do not notify councils of these 'informal' premature cases, we are not including a print-out of premature decisions any longer, as it will not be possible for councils to reconcile the total figure for prematures. The total of prematures shown in this line *does not include* the number of resubmitted prematures (see below).

Advice given: These are enquiries where the LGO Advice Team have given advice on why the Ombudsman would not be able to consider the complaint, other than the complaint is premature. For example, the complaint may clearly be outside the Ombudsman's jurisdiction. It also includes cases where the complainant has not given enough information for clear advice to be given, but they have, in any case, decided not to pursue the complaint.

Forwarded to the investigative team (resubmitted prematures): These are cases where there was either a formal premature decision, or the complainant was given informal advice that their case was premature, and the complainant has resubmitted their complaint to the Ombudsman after it has been put to the council.

These figures need to be added to the numbers of 'formal/informal premature complaints' (see above) to get the full total number of premature complaints. They also need to be added to the 'forwarded to the investigative team (new)' to get the total number of forwarded complaints.

Forwarded to the investigative team (new): These are the complaints that have been forwarded from the LGO Advice Team to the Investigative Team for further consideration. The figures may include some complaints that the Investigative Team have received but where we have not yet contacted the council.

*The print out being supplied in relation to this table **only** covers the complaints forwarded to the Investigative Team.*

3. Investigative Team: Decisions

This information records the number of decisions made by the LGO Investigative Team, broken down by outcome, within the period given. **This number will not be the same as the number of complaints forwarded from the LGO Advice Team**, because some complaints that have been decided during 2009/10 will already have been in hand at the beginning of the year, and some will have been forwarded in 2009/10 but are not yet decided. Below we set out a key explaining the outcome categories.

MI reps: where the LGO has concluded an investigation and issued a formal report finding maladministration causing injustice.

LS (local settlements): decisions by letter discontinuing our investigation because action has been agreed by the authority and accepted by the Ombudsman as a satisfactory outcome for the complainant.

M reps: where the LGO has concluded an investigation and issued a formal report finding maladministration but causing no injustice to the complainant.

NM reps: where the LGO has concluded an investigation and issued a formal report finding no maladministration by the council.

No mal: decisions by letter discontinuing an investigation because we have found no, or insufficient, evidence of maladministration.

Omb disc: decisions by letter discontinuing an investigation in which we have exercised the Ombudsman's general discretion not to pursue the complaint. This can be for a variety of reasons, but the most common is that we have found no or insufficient injustice to warrant pursuing the matter further.

Outside jurisdiction: these are cases that were outside the Ombudsman's jurisdiction.

The print out in relation to this table will be the same as provided in previous years, except that it will not include premature decisions.

4. Response times

These figures record the average time the council takes to respond to our first enquiries on a complaint. We measure this in calendar days from the date we send our letter/fax/email to the date that we receive a substantive response from the council. The council's figures may differ somewhat, since they are likely to be recorded from the date the council receives our

letter until the despatch of its response. We give the two previous years' comparative data for this table.

5. Average local authority response times 2009/10

This table gives comparative figures for average response times by authorities in England, by type of authority, within three time bands.

6. Complaints about personnel matters (employment and pensions)

We receive some complaints from members of council staff about personnel matters. These are usually outside our jurisdiction, and our practice is now to advise you that we have received the complaint without informing you of who made it.

For that reason, any such complaints on the attached printouts will show a blank space for the complainant's name.

LGO Advice Team

Enquiries and
complaints received

2009 / 2010	Adult care services	Children and family services	Education	Housing	Benefits	Public Finance inc. Local Taxation	Planning and building control	Transport and highways	Other	Total
2009 / 2010	1	3	0	5	0	0	3	1	2	15
	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	2	2	8
	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	3
	3	3	7	9	1	0	3	0	7	33
	5	8	7	15	2	1	7	3	11	59
2008 / 2009	1	2	0	4	1	2	5	3	1	19
	0	0	2	2	1	0	0	2	5	12
	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	1	3	7
	2	1	7	5	1	0	2	0	3	21
	3	3	9	13	3	2	8	6	12	59
Total	8	11	16	28	5	3	15	9	23	118

Investigative Team

Decisions	MI reps	LS	M reps	NM reps	No mal	Omb disc	Outside jurisdiction	Total
2009 / 2010	1	8	0	0	10	12	2	33
2008 / 2009	0	11	0	0	10	8	5	34
Total	1	19	0	0	20	20	7	67

Average local authority response times 01/04/2009 to 31/03/2010

Response times	FIRST ENQUIRIES	
	No. of First Enquiries	Avg no. of days to respond
1/04/2009 / 31/03/2010	19	19.7
2008 / 2009	15	25.2
2007 / 2008	20	27.5

Types of authority	<= 28 days %	29 - 35 days %	>= 36 days %
District Councils	60	22	18
Unitary Authorities	65	26	9
Metropolitan Authorities	53	39	8
County Councils	58	32	10
London Boroughs	52	36	12
National Parks Authorities	60	20	20