

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN – LOCAL AUTHORITY COMPLAINT
STATISTICS**

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

- 1.1 To present the Local Government Ombudsman's (LGO) Annual Review Letter 2016 containing the annual summary of statistics on complaints made to the LGO about North Lincolnshire Council for the year ending 31 March 2016.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 The Local Government Ombudsman considers and may investigate maladministration complaints made by service users and members of the public about councils and other bodies acting on their behalves, such as school appeals panels.
- 2.2 The LGO aims to resolve cases informally where it can and determine the reasonableness of decisions of bodies being complained about. Its recommendations aim to provide redress in cases of service failure and puts complainants back in the position they were in if any maladministration was found.
- 2.3 The Annual Review Letter 2016 attached as appendix A to the report summarises (i) the complaints and enquiries received by the LGO about North Lincolnshire Council and (ii) decisions made by the LGO following any investigations or informal resolutions.
- 2.4 Comparable statistics for neighbouring councils are also attached as appendix B.

3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 3.1 The Standards Committee should consider the Annual Review Letter and its statistics for North Lincolnshire Council.

4. **ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS**

4.1 The Annual Review Letter and its statistics for North Lincolnshire Council provide the committee with valuable information on the complaints made by service users and the public to the LGO.

5. **RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCIAL, STAFFING, PROPERTY, IT)**

5.1 There are no resource implications associated with this report for Information.

6. **OUTCOMES OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT (IF APPLICABLE)**

6.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment is not required

7. **OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION AND CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS DECLARED**

7.1 Service Directors have been made aware of the information following receipt by the council's Senior Business Analyst: Customer and Commercial.

7.2 There are no conflicts of interest to declare.

8. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

8.1 That the Local Government Ombudsman's Annual Review Letter 2016, and accompanying statistics for North Lincolnshire be noted.

DIRECTOR OF POLICY AND RESOURCES

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Author: Richard Mell
Date: 31 August 2016

Background Papers used in the preparation of this report

Local Government Ombudsman Annual Review Letter 2016.

Local Government OMBUDSMAN

21 July 2016

By email

Simon Driver
Chief Executive
North Lincolnshire Council

Dear Simon Driver,

Annual Review Letter 2016

I write to you with our annual summary of statistics on the complaints made to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) about your authority for the year ended 31 March 2016.

The enclosed tables present the number of complaints and enquiries received and the decisions we made about your authority during the period. I hope that this information will prove helpful in assessing your authority's performance in handling complaints.

Last year we provided information on the number of complaints upheld and not upheld for the first time. In response to council feedback, this year we are providing additional information to focus the statistics more on the outcome from complaints rather than just the amounts received.

We provide a breakdown of the upheld investigations to show how they were remedied. This includes the number of cases where our recommendations remedied the fault and the number of cases where we decided your authority had offered a satisfactory remedy during the local complaints process. In these latter cases we provide reassurance that your authority had satisfactorily attempted to resolve the complaint before the person came to us. In addition, we provide a compliance rate for implementing our recommendations to remedy a fault.

I want to emphasise that these statistics comprise the data we hold, and may not necessarily align with the data your authority holds. For example, our numbers include enquiries from people we signpost back to the authority, but who may never contact you.

In line with usual practice, we are publishing our annual data for all authorities on our website, alongside an annual review of local government complaints. The aim of this is to be transparent and provide information that aids the scrutiny of local services.

Effective accountability for devolved authorities

Local government is going through perhaps some of the biggest changes since the LGO was set up more than 40 years ago. The creation of combined authorities and an increase in the number of elected mayors will hugely affect the way local services are held to account. We have already started working with the early combined authorities to help develop principles for effective and accessible complaints systems.

We have also reviewed how we structure our casework teams to provide insight across the emerging combined authority structures. Responding to council feedback, this included reconfirming the Assistant Ombudsman responsible for relationship management with each authority, which we recently communicated to Link Officers through distribution of our manual for working with the LGO.

Supporting local scrutiny

Our corporate strategy is based upon the twin pillars of remedying injustice and improving local public services. The numbers in our annual report demonstrate that we continue to improve the quality of our service in achieving swift redress.

To measure our progress against the objective to improve local services, in March we issued a survey to all councils. I was encouraged to find that 98% of respondents believed that our investigations have had an impact on improving local public services. I am confident that the continued publication of our decisions (alongside an improved facility to browse for them on our website), focus reports on key themes and the data in these annual review letters is helping the sector to learn from its mistakes and support better services for citizens.

The survey also demonstrated a significant proportion of councils are sharing the information we provide with elected members and scrutiny committees. I welcome this approach, and want to take this opportunity to encourage others to do so.

Complaint handling training

We recently refreshed our Effective Complaint Handling courses for local authorities and introduced a new course for independent care providers. We trained over 700 people last year and feedback shows a 96% increase in the number of participants who felt confident in dealing with complaints following the course. To find out more, visit www.lgo.org.uk/training.

Ombudsman reform

You will no doubt be aware that the government has announced the intention to produce draft legislation for the creation of a single ombudsman for public services in England. This is something we support, as it will provide the public with a clearer route to redress in an increasingly complex environment of public service delivery.

We will continue to support government in the realisation of the public service ombudsman, and are advising on the importance of maintaining our 40 years plus experience of working with local government and our understanding its unique accountability structures.

This will also be the last time I write with your annual review. My seven-year term of office as Local Government Ombudsman comes to an end in January 2017. The LGO has gone through extensive change since I took up post in 2010, becoming a much leaner and more focused organisation, and I am confident that it is well prepared for the challenges ahead.

Yours sincerely



Dr Jane Martin
Local Government Ombudsman
Chair, Commission for Local Administration in England

For further information on how to interpret our statistics, please visit our website:
<http://www.lgo.org.uk/information-centre/reports/annual-review-reports/interpreting-local-authority-statistics>

Complaints and enquiries received

Adult Care Services	Benefits and Tax	Corporate and Other Services	Education and Children's Services	Environment Services	Highways and Transport	Housing	Planning and Development	Other	Total
7	2	1	7	3	5	0	9	1	35

Decisions made

				Detailed Investigations				
Incomplete or Invalid	Advice Given	Referred back for Local Resolution	Closed After Initial Enquiries	Not Upheld	Upheld	Uphold Rate	Total	
3	0	18	5	3	3	50%	32	

Notes

Our uphold rate is calculated in relation to the total number of detailed investigations.

The number of remedied complaints may not equal the number of upheld complaints. This is because, while we may uphold a complaint because we find fault, we may not always find grounds to say that fault caused injustice that ought to be remedied.

The compliance rate is the proportion of remedied complaints where our recommendations are believed to have been implemented.

Complaints Remedied		
by LGO	Satisfactorily by Authority before LGO Involvement	Compliance Rate
3	0	100%

COMPARABLE STATISTICS – NEIGHBOURING COUNCILS 2015/16

APPENDIX B

Complaints and enquiries received

Local Authority	Adult Care Services	Benefits and Tax	Corporate and other services	Education and children's services	Environmental services and public protection and regulation	Highways and Transport	Housing	Planning and development	Other	Total
East Riding of Yorkshire	15	5	6	15	8	9	3	14	0	75
Kingston Upon Hull	11	13	5	27	13	5	8	2	2	86
Lincolnshire County Council	36	0	2	28	3	9	0	2	1	81
North East Lincolnshire	9	13	7	8	4	1	2	3	0	47
Nottinghamshire County Council	37	0	4	37	2	15	0	0	0	95
North Lincolnshire	7	2	1	7	3	5	0	9	0	35
North Lincolnshire 2014/2015	4	4	5	3	1	5	2	9	0	33

Decisions Made

Detailed Investigations carried out							
Local Authority	Upheld	Not Upheld	Advice Given	Closed after initial enquiries	Incomplete/Invalid	Referred back for local resolution	Total
East Riding of Yorkshire	10	15	1	18	2	30	76
Kingston Upon Hull	3	8	4	24	3	41	83
Lincolnshire County Council	9	13	1	14	6	38	81
North East Lincolnshire	3	4	0	20	1	18	46
Nottinghamshire County Council	9	10	0	31	8	33	91
North Lincolnshire	3	3	0	5	3	18	32
North Lincolnshire 2014/15	0	4	1	11	2	13	31