

Notes to assist interpretation of the statistics 2011/12

Table 1. LGO Advice Team: Enquiries and complaints received

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

Advice given: These are enquiries where the LGO Advice Team has given advice on why the LGO would not be able to consider the complaint, other than the complaint is premature. For example, the complaint may clearly be outside the LGO's jurisdiction.

Premature complaints: The LGO does not normally consider a complaint unless a council has first had a reasonable 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 either refer it back to the council as a 'premature complaint' to see if the council can itself resolve the matter, or advise the enquirer.

Forwarded to the investigative team (resubmitted premature and new): These are complaints forwarded to the Investigative Team for further consideration and complaints where the complainant has resubmitted their complaint to the LGO after it has been put to the council.

Table 2. Investigative Team: Decisions

The number of decisions made by the LGO Investigative Team, by outcome. **This number will not be the same as the number of complaints forwarded from the LGO Advice Team** because some complaints decided in 2011/12 will have been received the previous year, and some forwarded to the Investigative Team during 2011/12 will still be in hand at the end of the year. The outcomes mean:

Not investigated: where the LGO has decided not to investigate for one of the following reasons:

No power to investigate: complaints that the law does not allow the LGO to investigate.

No reason to use exceptional power to investigate: complaints that the law says the LGOs should generally not investigate but gives an exceptional power to do so.

Investigation not justified & Other: complaints where we have used the LGO's general power and not pursued the complaint. This can be for a variety of reasons, including that the injustice claimed does not warrant the public expense of the LGO's involvement or that another organisation could deal with the matter better.

Investigated: where the LGO has discontinued an investigation for one of the following reasons:

Not enough evidence of fault: decisions where the LGO found insufficient evidence that the council was at fault.

Injustice remedied during enquiries: decisions where the council remedied or agreed to remedy any injustice to the LGO's satisfaction during the investigation.

No or minor injustice & Other: decisions where we have used the LGO's general power to discontinue the investigation. This can be for a variety of reasons, but the most common is that any injustice caused does not justify the public expense of pursuing the matter further.

Report issued: where the LGO has issued a report on a completed investigation. These are generally published in the *Complaint outcomes* section of our website, www.lgo.org.uk.

In all the cases except one that resulted in a report in 2011/12, the LGO issued found fault, and all except two of those found that this fault caused injustice.

Table 3. 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, since they are likely to be recorded from the date the council receives our letter until the despatch of its response.