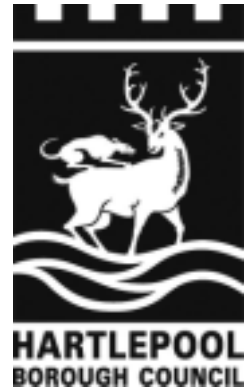


PERFORMANCE PORTFOLIO DECISION SCHEDULE



Friday , 13 August 2010

At 4.00 pm

**in Committee Room A
Civic Centre, Hartlepool**

Councillor J Brash, Cabinet Member responsible for Performance will consider the following items.

1. KEY DECISIONS

No items

2. OTHER ITEMS REQUIRING DECISION

- 2.1 Counselling Services – *Chief Customer and Workforce Services Officer*
- 2.2 Employee Sickness Absence Annual Report 2009/10 - *Chief Customer and Workforce Services Officer*

3. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

- 3.1 Complaints to the Local Government Ombudsman in 2009/10 – *Head of Performance and Partnerships*

4. REPORTS FROM OVERVIEW OF SCRUTINY FORUMS

No items

5. LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) (VARIATION) ORDER 2006

EXEMPT ITEMS

Under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraphs referred to below of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006

6. KEY DECISION

No items

7. OTHER ITEMS REQUIRING DECISION

- 7.1 Approval for Compulsory Redundancy – *Chief Customer and Workforce Services Officer* (para 4)
- 7.2 Employees in Tied Accommodation - *Chief Customer and Workforce Services Officer* (para 4)

PERFORMANCE PORTFOLIO

Report to Portfolio Holder

13 August 2010



Report of: Chief Customer & Workforce Services Officer

Subject: COUNSELLING SERVICES

SUMMARY

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To inform Portfolio Holder of the intention to procure a provider of counselling services and seek Portfolio Holder's approval to letting the contract on a price/performance basis.

2. SUMMARY OF CONTENTS

The report provides background to the planned procurement project and proposes a basis for selecting the successful contractor.

3. RELEVANCE TO PORTFOLIO MEMBER

The Portfolio Holder has responsibility for Performance Management.

4. TYPE OF DECISION

Non-key.

5. DECISION MAKING ROUTE

Performance Portfolio Holder only.

6. DECISION(S) REQUIRED

The Portfolio Holder is requested to approve the planned procurement project and approve conducting the procurement exercise on the 60:40 quality/price basis proposed.

Report of: Chief Customer & Workforce Services Officer

Subject: COUNSELLING SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform Portfolio Holder of the intention to procure a provider of counselling services and to obtain Portfolio Holder's approval for the procurement exercise and to letting the contract on a price/performance basis is also sought.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 One of the Council's strategic objectives is to improve corporate plans to promote Healthy Working and one of the ways to achieve this is by the Council taking a proactive approach to the mental, emotional, spiritual and physical health, safety and general well being of all employees and those affected by the activities of the Council. To assist the Council in this regards it requires pro-active professional advice and clear management responsibilities.
- 2.2 In addition the Council through its performance management system strives to reduce sickness levels. To assist managers and employees it aims to provide attendance management systems that are transparent and supportive to employees who want to be at work and robust for those who do not. The Council is also committed to adjusting working arrangements to support individual needs wherever it is reasonable to do so.
- 2.3 The counselling service provides support to employees to ensure that staff who have reported mental health issues do not have these conditions aggravated by the work they do on behalf of the Council. The service also provides support during periods of poor mental health, help them stay at work and, where this is not possible, to support employees to return to work.
- 2.4 Access to counselling is normally via a referral from a manager to the occupational health service who would recommend counselling as a way to progress a case. The occupational health adviser would then monitor progress in order to facilitate a return to work.
- 2.5 At the current time, the Council utilises the services of an external counselling service provider, Hartlepool Mind. The current service is now well used by managers and employees to provide support, and as

such, it allows appropriate sickness case management to help maintain people at work and provide advice on appropriate support or workplace adjustments.

- 2.6 The current service is provided on a call-off contract but the success of the service is such that in order to provide continuity of the service and to allow closer working between a service provider and the Council it is proposed that the service is procured on a longer term contract. It is proposed that this contract will be subject to open competition through a tender process, will operate for three years with the potential, subject to satisfactory performance, for an extension of a further 2 x twelve month periods.
- 2.7 Discussion has been held with other authorities within the Tees Valley regarding their services, and Middlesbrough Borough Council are in a similar position, and as such it is proposed to undertake a joint procurement exercise between the two authorities although any successful provider would have to ensure that the service was available locally.

3. PROPOSALS

- 3.1 Initial informal investigations have shown that there are some potential suppliers in the marketplace. However, the Council does not have an approved contractors list that can be used. Therefore it has been deemed necessary to invite initial expressions of interest to begin the selection process. The Public Contract Regulations 2006 (Schedule 5) determine that services categorised as “Health and Social Services” can be classed as Part B services. This means there is no requirement for any contract notice to be published in the Official Journal of the European Union.
- 3.2 It is proposed that an invitation for Expressions of Interest be advertised in the local press at the end of September 2010. It is further proposed that a restricted tendering procedure is used and a pre qualifying questionnaire is used for the initial short listing purposes.
- 3.3 Organisations that are short listed will then be invited to tender for the contract. It is anticipated that tender submissions will be available for opening at the Contract Scrutiny Panel meeting on 1st November 2010, although this date may be subject to slight change.
- 3.4 It is proposed to conduct the tender exercise using a 60% quality and 40% price assessment ratio.
- 3.5 The assessment criteria will be based upon the content of the submission and pay particular attention to the experience and competency of the provider as well as the proposed fees. The

assessment criteria will be developed in accordance with appropriate procurement rules.

4. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 It can take up to 12 weeks from GP referral for Counselling for an appointment to be provided and as such most of the cases currently referred would be absent during this time with little ability for a manager to progress or deal with the underlying cause of the ill health.

5. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1 By market testing and working in partnership with Middlesbrough Borough Council it is hoped that efficiency savings can be achieved for the cost of the service.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 That the Portfolio Holder notes the content of the report and approves the procurement exercise on the basis of 60% quality and 40% price.

7. CONTACT OFFICER

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Customer and Workforce Services Division
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PERFORMANCE PORTFOLIO

Report to Portfolio Holder

13th August 2010



Report of: Chief Customer Services & Workforce Officer

Subject: EMPLOYEE SICKNESS ABSENCE
ANNUAL REPORT 2009/10

SUMMARY

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To update the portfolio holder on the Council's performance in 2009/10 in relation to employee sickness absence, future targets and to receive endorsement of actions proposed to achieve the targets.

2. SUMMARY OF CONTENTS

The report provides details of employee sickness absence in 2009/10, future targets and the actions proposed to meet the targets.

3. RELEVANCE TO PORTFOLIO MEMBERS

Corporate issues.

4. TYPE OF DECISION

Non-key decision.

5. DECISION MAKING ROUTE

Portfolio Holder only.

6. DECISION(S) REQUIRED

Note the report and endorse the targets set and actions planned for 20010/11.

Report of: Chief Customer Services & Workforce Officer

Subject: EMPLOYEE SICKNESS ABSENCE
ANNUAL REPORT 2009/10

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To update the portfolio holder on the Council's performance in 2009/10 in relation to employee sickness absence, future targets and to receive endorsement of actions proposed to achieve the targets.

2. BACKGROUND

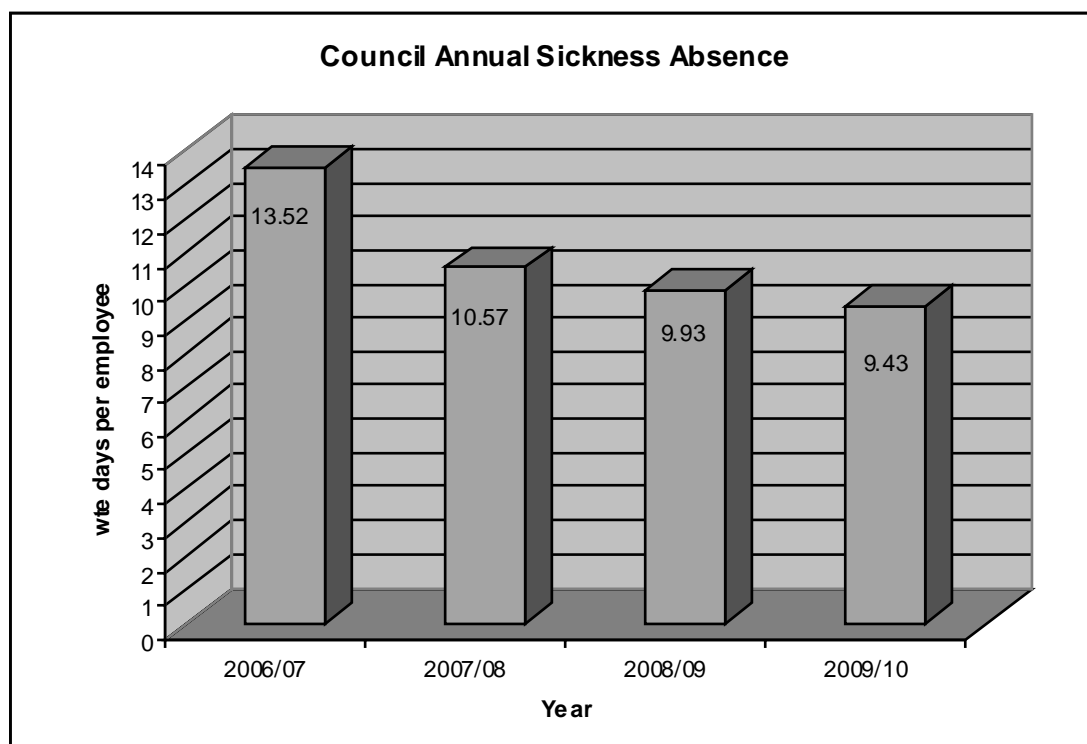
The extent to which employees are absent from work due to illness has a direct impact on the quality, level and cost of the provision of services. As such the Council have included this as a Local Performance Indicator (HRPI 5A) – The number of working days/shifts lost due to sickness absence in its group of Corporate Health Performance Indicators.

3. PROPOSALS

3.1 Sickness Absence Performance 2009/10

The target figure for 2009/10 for the Council is 9.50 days absence per wte employee (whole time equivalent). The end of year figure shows a much improved figure of 9.43 days per wte per employee per annum as illustrated in Figure 1 below.

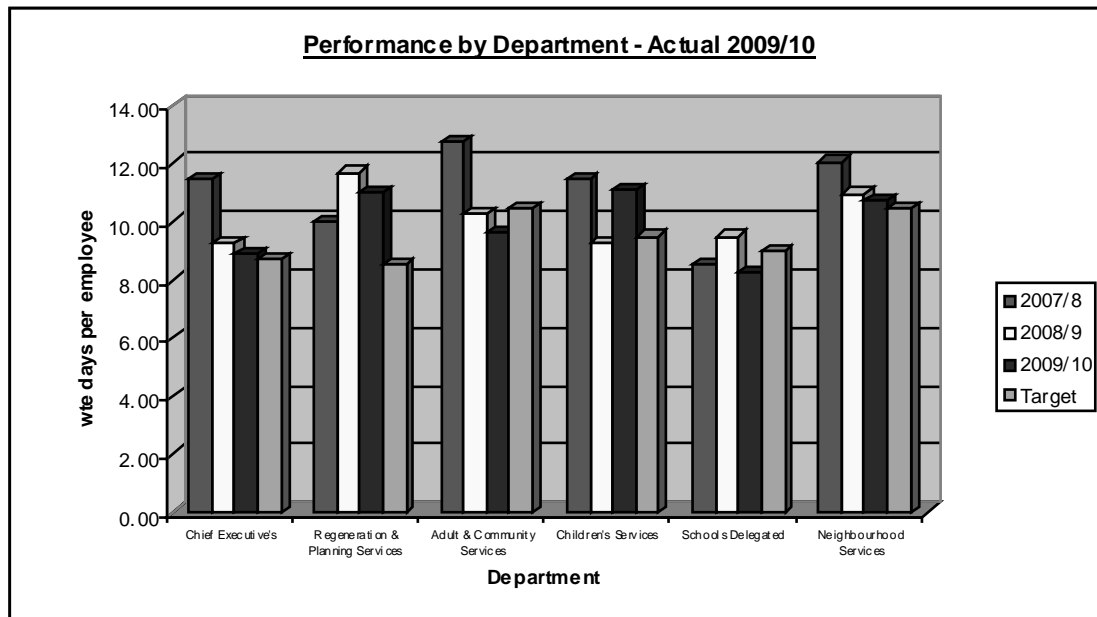
This shows a continued improvement for the third year running. The Council continues to focus on sickness absence management to enable the Council to achieve, and improve on, which is demonstrated in the more challenging target figures shown in a later section.

Figure 1

3.2 Figure 2 below illustrates the actual performance for each Department and Schools as at 31 March 2010. This can be compared to performance over the last two years. The final column shows the 2009/10 annual target set by each Department and Schools.

The figure identifies that there is a continued overall downward trend in sickness absence rates across the Council, as compared with the last two years. However, as the overall sickness absence drops then the rate of expected decline reduces also, therefore the decrease in the rate of absence has slowed down.

Figure 2



In every department, except Children's Services, there is a reduction in the rate of sickness absence when compared with 2008/9, which is very positive. In Children's services there has been an increase in long term ill health cases which is being managed and is expected to fall in 2010/11.

This overall decline is largely due to the work of the Human Resources operational team in supporting managers to manage their attendance within teams, and also the focus of senior officers to highlight sickness absence management as a priority across the Council.

- 3.3 The latest employee sickness absence survey undertaken by Local Government Employers in 2008/9 highlights the average wte days per employee per annum lost due to sickness absence for English Unitary Authorities as 9.3 wte. The average for the North East is 10.9 wte. Hartlepool Borough Council therefore reflects the national average and are lower than the average rate for the North East.

National Employers information (for 2005/6) indicates that the north east region has the third worse sickness record (after the north west and west midlands). The North East also has a higher rate of general ill health nationally and this is expected to reflect on the overall health of the workforce and the number of sickness absence days taken.

Sickness absence figures for 2009/10 from neighbouring authorities are as follows:

Darlington	8.46 wte
Redcar	8.64 wte
Stockton	9.07 wte
Hartlepool	9.43 wte
Middlesbrough	9.61 wte

- 3.4 According to LGE reports in 2008/9, relating to local government sickness absence there has been no change to the recent trends for the causes of absence for both long and short terms sickness. The most important single cause of absence was stress, depression, anxiety, mental health and fatigue (18.4%); the other major causes are infections (13.6%); musculo skeletal problems (excluding back) 13.5%; back and neck (7.3%); kidney, stomach and liver problems (8.3%).

The reasons for absence in Hartlepool Borough Council have not been collated for 2009/10 due to a redirection of resources to the business transformation programme priorities but there is no reason to suggest we deviate from the national averages. The new Human Resource Information System is being implemented in 2010 which will lead to an improved availability to data for reporting.

3.5 2009/10 to 2010/11 Sickness Absence Targets

Each Department has set their average sickness absence targets for 2010-11 as detailed in Table 1 below. The first two columns show the target and actual sickness for 2009/10 and the final column shows the proposed targets for 2010/11 with the new structure of the Councils Departments.

Table 1

Department	2009/10 Target (days)	2009/10 Actual	New Department Structure	2010/11 Proposed Target
Chief Executives	8.70	8.86	Chief Executives	8.00
Adult & Community Services	10.50	9.68	Child & Adult Services	9.25
Regeneration & Planning Services	8.50	11.04	Regeneration & Neighbourhoods	10.00

Childrens Services	9.50	11.10		
Schools	9.00	8.23	Schools	9.00
Neighbourhood Services	10.50	10.78		
Overall Council	9.50	9.43	Overall Council	9.30
Government Top Quartile for All Authorities	8.34			

The target set for 20010/11 is based upon individual targets set by departments and for schools. For subsequent years the targets reflects a Council wide reduction of 0.25 days year on year, subject to review. The 20010/11 target, if achieved, will represent a realistic and good improvement in sickness absence performance management for a 12 month period.

3.6 Actions Planned for 20010/11

A number of actions are ongoing for 20010/11 and they are expected to help in achieving sickness targets in the future. These are set out below:

- Continual development of the Corporate Wellbeing Group that incorporates health, safety and welfare of employees
- The ongoing implementation of a Wellbeing Strategy to promote the health, safety and general wellbeing of the Council's employees
- Review of sickness absence management arrangements in light of the Single Status Agreement
- Implementation of a Stress policy as part of a wider Mental Health strategy across the Council
- Review of statistics and monitoring information as a result of the plans for the implementation of a computerised Human Resources Information System
- A closer partnership with trade unions to work together to manage sickness absence in the Council (following job evaluation)
- Continue to proactively promote and market Occupational Health Services and employee support initiatives to positively increase the options for employees who fall ill and in turn, impact on the sickness absence rates

- Continued review of flexible working measures, including home working, may impact on the rates in the future

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the employee absence in 2009/10 is noted and future targets and proposed actions for 2010/11 be endorsed.

5. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

6. CONTACT OFFICER

Rachel Clark,
Human Resources Adviser
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Email: rachel.clark@hartlepool.gov.uk

PERFORMANCE PORTFOLIO

Report to Portfolio Holder

13th August 2010



Report of: Head of Performance and Partnerships

Subject: COMPLAINTS TO THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT
OMBUDSMAN IN 2009/10

SUMMARY

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To report to the Portfolio Holder on the content of the Local Government Ombudsman's Annual Review of complaints made against the authority in 2009/10.

2. SUMMARY OF CONTENTS

The report covers the Local Government Ombudsman's Annual Review of complaints received about Hartlepool Borough Council in 2009/10.

3. RELEVANCE TO PORTFOLIO MEMBER

The Portfolio Member has responsibility for performance management issues.

4. TYPE OF DECISION

Non-key

5. DECISION MAKING ROUTE

Portfolio Holder meeting on 13th August 2010

6. DECISION(S) REQUIRED

That the report be noted.

Report of: Head of Performance and Partnerships

Subject: COMPLAINTS TO THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT
OMBUDSMAN IN 2009/10

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To report to the Portfolio Holder on the content of the Local Government Ombudsman's Annual Review of complaints made against the authority in 2009/10.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Local Government Ombudsman provides an independent, impartial investigation of complaints against local authorities where complainants remain dissatisfied with their local Council's actions or failure to act.
- 2.2 The Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) reports complaints performance to local authorities annually. All councils receive an annual review, previously known as an annual letter, from the LGO which details:
- the complaints and enquiries received by the Ombudsman;
 - complaint outcomes;
 - comments on liaison arrangements with the Council; and
 - current developments in the Ombudsman's work.

The details of complaints handled in 2009/10 are provided in Appendix 1, as is the full text of the Ombudsman's Annual Review.

3. ANNUAL LETTER FROM THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN – 2009/10

Enquiries and complaints received

- 3.1 In the year to 31 March 2010 the Ombudsman received a total of 17 enquiries and complaints.
- In three cases simple advice was given to the complainant
 - Three complaints were judged to be premature. These complaints were either sent on to the Council with a request that the matter be put through our own complaints procedure or, alternatively, the complainant was advised to make a formal complaint themselves to the Council.
 - Of the 11 complaints considered, three were complaints initially determined by our Advice Team as premature but re-submitted by

complainants dissatisfied with the way in which the Council had dealt with their complaint.

- The remaining eight complaints were new complaints.

3.2 Numbers of enquiries and complaints are broadly similar to 2008/9. For example, 25 complaints were received in 2008/09 with 7 being new complaints.

Complaints outcomes

3.3 Ten complaints were determined during the year, a figure which differs from the number of complaints received because of work in hand at the beginning and the end of the year. Of those complaints determined:

- one was closed on the basis that it was not within the jurisdiction of the Local Government Ombudsman,
- in five further complaints the Local Government Ombudsman exercised the general discretion available not to pursue the matter;
- in two cases no evidence of maladministration by the Council was sufficient to justify the Local Government Ombudsman's continued involvement;
- the Council agreed to settle the remaining two complaints accepting that something had gone wrong and that it was appropriate to provide a remedy of some description for the complainant.

Local settlements

3.4 The Local Government Ombudsman will often discontinue enquiries into a complaint when a council takes or agrees to take action that we consider to be a satisfactory response – these are called local settlements. 26.9% of all decisions on complaints in the Ombudsmen's jurisdiction were local settlements. The two complaints which the Council agreed to settle during the year amounts to 22.2% of the total number of complaints determined and which were within the LGO's jurisdiction.

3.5 Of the two complaints settled locally, the first complaint related to flooding of a domestic property from the highway. The local settlement involved a council officer visiting to assess the circumstances and offer to undertake remedial work. The second case related to the actions of a social worker and the local settlement included an apology and retraining.

Complaints handling

3.6 All authorities are asked to respond to Local Government Ombudsman enquiries within 28 calendar days. The Council took on average 21.2 days to respond to enquiries during the year, the same as in the previous 2 years. As in previous years, the Ombudsman commented favourably on this high level of performance.

Recommendations from the Ombudsman

3.7 The 2010 Annual Review by the Local Government Ombudsman is positive in tone and does not highlight any areas of concern or make any

recommendations for action. No public reports against the Council were issued.

Local Government Ombudsman developments

- 3.8 The review report also outlines some current developments in the LGO's work. These include the launch of the new schools complaints service introduced by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009, the extended LGO powers to investigate complaints about privately arranged and funded adult social care introduced by the Health act 2009 and LGO's Council First policy which ensures that all complaints are first investigated by the council before the LGO becomes involved.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the report be noted.

5. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Annual Letters from the Local Government Ombudsman for previous years.

6. CONTACT OFFICER

**Peter Turner, Performance and Consultation Manager,
Chief Executive's Department, Corporate Strategy Division
Hartlepool Borough Council
Tel No: (01429) 523648 Email: peter.turner@hartlepool.gov.uk**

Appendix 1

The Local Government Ombudsman's Annual Review Hartlepool Borough Council for the year ended 31 March 2010

**The Local Government Ombudsman's
Annual Review
Hartlepool Borough Council
for the year ended
31 March 2010**

Local Government Ombudsmen (LGOs) provide a free, independent and impartial service. We consider complaints about the administrative actions of councils and some other authorities. We cannot question what a council has done simply because someone does not agree with it. If we find something has gone wrong, such as poor service, service failure, delay or bad advice, and that a person has suffered as a result, we aim to get it put right by recommending a suitable remedy. We also use the findings from investigation work to help authorities provide better public services through initiatives such as special reports, training and annual reviews.

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Section 1: Complaints about Hartlepool Borough Council 2009/10

Introduction

This annual review provides a summary of the complaints we have dealt with about Hartlepool Borough. I hope that the review will be a useful addition to other information your authority holds on how people experience or perceive your services.

There are two appendices to the review: statistical data for 2009/10 and a note to help the interpretation of the statistics.

Enquiries and complaints received

In the year to 31 March 2010 the Commission received a total of 17 enquiries and complaints. In three cases simple advice was given to the complainant but three complaints were judged by our Advice Team to be premature. These complaints were either sent on to you with a request that the matter be put through the Council's own complaints procedure or, alternatively, the complainant was advised to make a formal complaint themselves to the Council. 11 complaints were sent to me for consideration. Of these, three were complaints initially determined by our Advice Team as premature but re-submitted to me by complainants dissatisfied with the way in which the Council had dealt with their complaint. The remaining eight complaints were new complaints.

Complaint outcomes

I determined 10 complaints during the year, a figure which differs from the number of complaints received because of work in hand at the beginning and the end of the year.

Of those complaints determined by me, one was closed on the basis that it was not within my jurisdiction while in five further complaints I exercised the general discretion available to me not to pursue the matter. In two cases I found no evidence of maladministration by the Council sufficient to justify my continued involvement. The Council agreed to settle the remaining two complaints accepting that something had gone wrong and that it was appropriate to provide a remedy of some description for the complainant.

Reports

I issued no public reports against the Council this year.

Local settlements

We will often discontinue enquiries into a complaint when a council takes or agrees to take action that we consider to be a satisfactory response – we call these local settlements. 26.9% of all decisions on complaints in the Ombudsmen's jurisdiction were local settlements. The two complaints which the Council agreed to settle during the year amounts to 22.2% of the total number of complaints I determined and which were within my jurisdiction.

Liaison with the Local Government Ombudsman

I ask all authorities to respond to my enquiries within 28 calendar days. The Council took on average 21.2 days to respond to my enquiries during the year and the Council is to be congratulated for its continued efforts.

I am pleased to note that the Council sent a representative to the Liaison Officer's Seminar held in York this year.

Training in complaint handling

Part of our role is to provide advice and guidance about good administrative practice. We offer training courses for all levels of local authority staff in complaints handling and investigation. All courses are presented by experienced investigators. They give participants the opportunity to practise the skills needed to deal with complaints positively and efficiently. We can also provide customised courses to help authorities to deal with particular issues and occasional open courses for individuals from different authorities.

I am pleased that during 2009/10 we provided training in Good Complaint Handling in Social Care and Effective Complaint Handling in Adult Social Care to staff from your authority....

We have extended the range of courses we provide and I have enclosed some information on the full range of courses available together with contact details for enquiries and bookings.

Conclusions

I hope this review provides a useful opportunity for you to reflect on how the Council deals with those complaints that residents make to my office. If there are any issues that you wish to discuss, I or one of my senior colleagues would be happy to meet with the Council.

**Mrs A Seex
Local Government Ombudsman
Beverley House
17 Shipton Road
YORK
YO30 5FZ**

June 2010

Section 2: LGO developments

Introduction

This annual review also provides an opportunity to bring councils up to date on developments in the LGO and to seek feedback.

New schools complaints service launched

In April 2010 we launched the first pilot phase of a complaints service extending our jurisdiction to consider parent and pupil complaints about state schools in four local authority areas. This power was introduced by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

The first phase involves schools in Barking and Dagenham, Cambridgeshire, Medway and Sefton. The Secretary of State no longer considers complaints about schools in these areas. In September the schools in a further 10 local authority areas are set to join the pilot phase.

We are working closely with colleagues in the pilot areas and their schools, including providing training and information sessions, to shape the design and delivery of the new service. It is intended that by September 2011 our jurisdiction will cover all state schools in England.

A new team in each office now deals with all complaints about children's services and education on behalf of the Ombudsman. Arrangements for cooperation with Ofsted on related work areas have been agreed.

For further information see the new schools pages on our website at www.lgo.org.uk/schools/

Adult social care: new powers from October

The Health Act 2009 extended the Ombudsmen's powers to investigate complaints about privately arranged and funded adult social care. These powers come into effect from 1 October 2010 (or when the Care Quality Commission has re-registered all adult care providers undertaking regulated activity). Provision of care that is arranged by an individual and funded from direct payments comes within this new jurisdiction.

Each Ombudsman has set up a team to deal with all adult social care complaints on their behalf. We expect that many complaints from people who have arranged and funded their care will involve the actions of both the local authority and the care provider. We are developing information-sharing agreements with the Care Quality Commission and with councils in their roles as adult safeguarding leads and service commissioners.

Council first

We introduced our Council first procedure in April last year. With some exceptions, we require complainants to go through all stages of a council's own complaints procedure before we will consider the complaint. It aims to build on the improved handling of complaints by councils.

We are going to research the views of people whose complaints have been referred to councils as premature. We are also still keen to hear from councils about how the procedure is working, particularly on the exception categories. Details of the categories of complaint that are normally treated as exceptions are on our website at www.lgo.org.uk/guide-for-advisers/council-response

Training in complaint handling

Demand for our training in complaint handling has remained high, with 118 courses delivered over the year to 53 different authorities. Our core Effective Complaint Handling course is still the most popular – we ran some of these as open courses for groups of staff from different authorities. These are designed to assist those authorities that wish to train small numbers of staff and give them an opportunity to share ideas and experience with other authorities.

The new Effective Complaint Handling in Adult Social Care course, driven by the introduction of the new statutory complaints arrangements in health and adult social care in April 2009, was also popular. It accounted for just over a third of bookings.

Over the next year we intend to carry out a thorough review of local authority training needs to ensure that the programme continues to deliver learning outcomes that improve complaint handling by councils.

Statements of reasons

Last year we consulted councils on our broad proposals for introducing statements of reasons on the individual decisions of an Ombudsman following the investigation of a complaint. We received very supportive and constructive feedback on the proposals, which aim to provide greater transparency and increase understanding of our work. Since then we have been carrying out more detailed work, including our new powers. We intend to introduce the new arrangements in the near future.

Delivering public value

We hope this information gives you an insight into the major changes happening within the LGO, many of which will have a direct impact on your authority. We will keep you up to date through LGO Link as each development progresses, but if there is anything you wish to discuss in the meantime please let me know.

Mindful of the current economic climate, financial stringencies and our public accountability, we are determined to continue to increase the efficiency, cost-effectiveness and public value of our work.

**Mrs A Seex
Local Government Ombudsman
Beverley House
17 Shipton Road
YORK
YO30 5FZ**

June 2010

Appendix 1: Notes to assist interpretation of the statistics 2009/10

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.

Premature complaints: 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 either refer it back to the council as a 'premature complaint' to see if the council can itself resolve the matter, or give advice to the enquirer that their complaint is premature.

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.

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

Table 2. 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 decided in 2009/10 will already have been in hand at the beginning of the year, and some forwarded to the Investigative Team during 2009/10 will still be in hand at the end of the year. 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 LGO 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 LGO'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 which were outside the LGO's jurisdiction.

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

Table 4. 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.

LGO Advice Team

Enquiries and complaints received	Children and family services	Housing	Public Finance inc. Local Taxation	Planning and building control	Transport and highways	Other	Total
Formal/informal premature complaints	0	0	0	2	0	1	3
Advice given	0	0	0	1	0	2	3
Forwarded to investigative team (resubmitted prematures)	0	0	1	0	1	1	3
Forwarded to investigative team (new)	2	3	0	1	2	0	8
Total	2	3	1	4	3	4	17

Investigative Team

Decisions	MI reps	LS	M reps	NM reps	No mal	Omb disc	Outside jurisdiction	Total
2009 / 2010	0	2	0	0	2	5	1	10

Response times	FIRST ENQUIRIES	
	No. of First Enquiries	Avg no. of days to respond
2008 / 2009	5	21.2
2007 / 2008	8	25.9

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

Types of authority	<= 28 days %	29 - 35 days %	> = 36 days %
District Councils	61	22	17
Unitary Authorities	68	26	6
Metropolitan Authorities	70	22	8
County Councils	58	32	10
London Boroughs	52	36	12
National Parks Authorities	60	20	20