

By: Mike Hill – Cabinet Member for Customer & Communities
Amanda Honey – Corporate Director Customer & Communities

To: Governance & Audit Committee

Subject: KCC Annual Complaints, Comments and Compliments Report
2011/12

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: This report provides information about, The Local Government Ombudsman Letter & Annual Review 2011/12, a summary of the complaints, comments and compliments received by the Council and further improvements for 2012/13

STATUS FOR INFORMATION & ASSURANCE

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This is the Council's third annual report on compliments, comments and complaints. It sets out:

- The Local Government Ombudsman Letter & Annual Review 2011/12
- A summary of the compliments, comments and complaints received by the Council
- Further improvements for 2012/13

1.2 Kent County Council aims to deliver high quality services where the customer is at the heart of everything it does. The Customer Service Strategy was launched in January 2012 and places an emphasis on 'Understanding your Customers'. Compliments and complaints are vital in understanding where we are doing well and what we can do better. By striking the right balance we can improve customer experience whilst reducing the cost to serve.

1.3 The Council wants to listen to its customers' views and values their contributions. We learn from good practice as well as any mistakes and build upon past experiences to help improve our future service. We are **One Council** putting people at the heart of everything we do. KCC champions public service within Kent and our values and behaviours demonstrate staff commitment to serving the people of Kent. Our work is guided by our values - they are not just words, they underpin the decisions we take and are critical to how we approach what we do and the way we do it.

1.4 Compliments, comments and complaints tell the Council what services look like from the customers' points of view and what their experiences of accessing our services are. They are an important aspect in 'Understanding Our Customers' and can help us to shape future service delivery and improve customer experience.

2. THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT OMBUDSMAN LETTER & ANNUAL REVIEW 2011/12

2.1 Each year, in June, the Local Government Ombudsman issues an annual review to each local authority. In her letter and the summary of statistics to accompany this, she sets out the number of complaints about that authority that her office has dealt with. The purpose of the Annual Review is to:

- help Councils learn from the outcome of complaints to the Ombudsman
- underpin effective working relationships between Councils and the Ombudsman's office
- identify opportunities for the Ombudsman and his staff to provide assistance that a Council may wish to seek in bringing about improvements to its internal complaint handling
- Generally provide complaint-based information which the Ombudsman hopes Councils will find useful in assessing and reviewing their performance.

2.2 The Ombudsman's letter to the Head of Paid Service plus the Annual Review for 2011/2012 is attached as Appendix 1 to this report. The response from the Head of Paid Service can be found in Appendix 2.

2.3 This year, the Council has had great difficulty reconciling its own statistics on Ombudsman complaints received with those provided by the Ombudsman. There are several reasons for this.

2.4 Analysis of the provisional statistics provided by the Ombudsman in April, which includes a detailed list of all complaints forwarded to KCC by the Ombudsman, indicated that:

- 6 complaints (and the Ombudsman's subsequent decisions on these complaints) had never been forwarded to KCC so KCC was unaware of them.
- 4 complaints had been closed by the Ombudsman as "not valid". No notification would therefore be sent to KCC about these, but they had not been removed from the Ombudsman's database to reflect this and had still been counted as a complaint against KCC.
- 2 appearing on KCC's database but missing from the Ombudsman's list had been registered against a different authority by the Ombudsman by mistake.

2.5 During the year, the Ombudsman also changed their headings for decision groups in accordance with their new recording system, so the decision category recorded on many of their final decision letters to KCC and used by KCC in the compilation of KCC's statistics, did not correspond with the Ombudsman's year end detailed list of decisions.

2.6 When issuing the final statistics to accompany the June review letter, the Ombudsman admitted that there was an error in the summary decisions table in the provisional complaint statistics issued in April. Complaints with the decision 'no or insufficient evidence of mal/service failure' were accidentally counted in the 'Investigated: No or minor injustice & Other' group when they should have been counted as 'Investigated: Not enough evidence of fault'.

2.7 The Ombudsman also analyses KCC's response times to first enquiries and had incorrectly recorded that it had taken 200 days to respond to one complaint when in actual fact KCC had replied on day 36.

This reduced our average response time from 33.6 days to 32 days although this was still outside their expected target of a reply within 28 calendar days.

2.8 However, it is the figures provided with the June letter that are published by the Ombudsman as "the official ones"

<http://www.lgo.org.uk/documents/annualreview/2012/kent.pdf> so it is these that have been used for the purpose of this report.

2.9 The Ombudsman received 228 complaints about KCC in 2011/12 (including 47 where advice was given to the complainant and 36 that were deemed premature). This is an increase on previous year's figures:

- 194 complaints in 2010/11 (including 44 where advice was given to the complainant and 21 that were deemed premature)
- 161 complaints in 2009/10 (including 43 that were deemed premature)

2.10 Of the 145 complaints that the Ombudsman investigated in 2011/12, 101 of them (69.6%) related to Education & Children's Services and over half of these (55) related Education Appeal Panels, a process that is not unique to Kent but is not an issue that majority of other councils have to contend with. This is one reason why Kent & Buckinghamshire CC (who also has a similar appeals process) seem to have disproportionately more complaints than other county and unitary authorities.

2.11 Of the 147 decisions issued, there was one report of maladministration. The Ombudsman considered that the conduct of admission appeals organised by Kent County Council on behalf of Tunbridge Wells Girls Grammar School was seriously flawed because the Council had:

- provided the School's Governors with a clerk and an appeal panel who proved incapable of fulfilling the requirements of the statutory School Admission Appeals Code 2009
- contravened the Code by sending decision letters from its Legal and Democratic Services Section with the facsimile signature of the panel clerk, and
- substituted standard decision letters chosen by its Legal and Democratic Services section for those agreed by the panel.

The 25-page report together with KCC's reply and comments to the responses are available from the Local Government Ombudsman's website

<http://www.lgo.org.uk/complaint-outcomes/education/education-archive-2011-12/kent-county-council-amp-tunbridge-wells-girls-gram/> or from the Information Resilience & Transparency Team.

2.12 For 17 of the 45 complaints categorised as "injustice remedied during enquiries" (formally known as "local settlement"), Kent County Council agreed to pay a total of £26,604.81 in compensation to resolve these complaints. For other complaints in this category, the settlement would have been either a formal letter of apology or an agreement to rehear the complainant's Education Appeal.

2.13 To conclude on a positive note, the remaining 100 complaints that the Ombudsman issued a decision on couldn't have been avoided. KCC had done nothing wrong; the complainant was simply unhappy with a decision or policy that went against them.

3. Changes to the Local Government Ombudsman's Service

3.1 The main change to the Local Government Ombudsman's service that will affect Kent County Council is the launch of an open publication scheme. This means that the LGO will be publishing on their website the final decision statements on all complaints.

3.2 Making more information publicly available will increase openness and transparency, and enhance accountability for both the LGO and the Council.

3.3 This will also facilitate the provision of a comprehensive picture of complaint decisions and reasons for councils and the public. This will help inform citizens about local services and create a new source of information on maladministration, service failure and injustice.

4 DEVELOPMENTS IN KCC COMPLIMENTS, COMMENTS & COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT

4.1 KCC continues to have a devolved approach to compliments, comments and complaints management. Work over the next 12 months will focus on making a corporate complaints system a reality. This system will enable all staff to log complaints and compliments on one system, the data will then be available for directorates to pull off reports to assess performance, reducing the need for manual reporting which currently takes place. This means we will be able to understand how we are performing in real time as opposed to three months behind. For the first time we will have the ability to have an organisation overview which can be used to understand the customer experience of our services.

We are looking at how to make the KCC complaints handling approach more responsive to customer needs. This will include:

- One contact telephone number, postal address and e-form
- One leaflet for the council informing the public how to contact us regarding their feedback
- One initial complaints response team based in the Contact Centre; this team will:
 - Log complaints arriving via the three central points (mail, web and phone)
 - Acknowledge receipt of complaint meeting 3 day requirements
 - Answer 'simple' enquiries
 - Divert complex complaints to 'specialist' directorate leads to answer within 20 days (with exception of statutory children's complaints)

4.2 This year work has been focused on understanding the customer journey and capturing the experience of customers with the intention of improving services and reducing complaints. By improving reporting we can help the authority to take action earlier and put in changes that can make a difference.

5. MONITORING

5.1 As part of our move towards changing the way in which we log customer feedback, we will also be changing how we log and monitor complaints. The new system will enable us to report on feedback including complaints in real time. This will mean that staff will no longer need to fill in secondary excel spreadsheets or local databases on a quarterly basis; the information will be available via a web platform for designated staff to track progress and run reports for their directorate or service. We will be able to be more responsive and have a greater overview of how KCC is performing at a given point in time.

6. NUMBER OF COMPLIMENTS, COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS

6.1 A **compliment** is an expression of thanks or congratulations or any other positive remark. (Internal compliments are excluded from this process).

6.2 Compliments across the council decreased with **4,092** recorded compliments from April 2011 to March 2012 compared to the same time period in the previous year when **5,513** compliments were recorded.

6.3 Compliments are equally important to record and have provided a valuable source of learning and can act as an indicator to reveal best practice or areas where we are getting things right across the Council.

6.4 A **comment** is a general statement about policies, practices or a service as a whole, which have an impact on everyone and not just one individual. A comment can be positive or negative in nature. Comments may question policies and practices, make suggestions for new services or for improving existing services.

6.5 This year we received **1,143** comments compared with **2,080** last year. This is also a reduction on the previous year. The council actively encourages customers to give opinions about services and we are making it easier to make a comment about a council service. A new e-form will be launched in the autumn enabling more people to offer us feedback. This will help us to understand the customer experience of our services and enable us to pin point where and how to improve our services.

6.6 A **complaint** is an expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not and however made, about the standard of or the delivery of service, the actions or lack of action by the Council or its staff which affects an individual service user or group of users. This is consistent with the definitions used by other local authorities.

6.7 The emphasis in the complaints procedure is to ensure that staff are equipped and empowered to act decisively to resolve complaints at a local level. The aim is that we work harder to resolve issues at the first point of contact. By recording accurately where things went wrong, we can use that information to improve service delivery and ensure that customers receive consistently good service regardless of how they choose to access them.

6.8 In 2011/12, **3,456** complaints were recorded compared with **4,373** for 2010/11, this equates to a **decrease** of 21% in complaints recorded.

6.9 There was however an increase in complaints received in Libraries & Archives (483%), Commercial Services (76%) Children Services (12%) and Gateways/Contact

Centre (8%). The increase in library complaints related to a number of key changes in service delivery including availability of stock due to the refurbishment and opening of new libraries including Beaney Centre in Canterbury, Broadstairs, Gravesham and the Kent Library and History Centre in Maidstone, the Registration Service moving into Library operations and the introduction of the self-serve Library machines which offers customers the opportunity to return book more quickly and efficiently within Libraries. Whilst this initially generated complaints it has since received numerous compliments and has a take-up rate across the county of 83.6%.

6.10 It is important to be able to identify where there is an increase in the number of complaints received for a particular service, and investigate trends. This will help us to identify areas for improvement and learn from previous complaints to ensure that mistakes are not repeated.

6.11 A breakdown of complaints and comments by Directorate can be found in Appendix 3.

7. REASONS FOR COMPLAINTS

7.1 The main grounds for complaints during 2011/12 tend to fall under one of the following themes (not in order of prevalence):

- Quality of service
- Delivery of service
- Poor communications
- Changes to service delivery due to cost saving measures
- Policy decisions
- Opening time of KCC services
- Staff behaviour
- Timeliness

8. COMPLIANCE WITH STANDARDS

8.1 New corporate standards for complaints handling were introduced from April 2009 as follows: 3 working days to acknowledge a complaint (reduced from 5 days) and 20 working days to give a formal response (reduced from 25 - 28 days).

8.2 The percentage of complaints meeting KCC response standards is shown in Table 6, Appendix 1.

8.3 Families & Social Care - Adult Social Care

8.4 There is only one statutory timescale for adult social care complaints within the new complaints process and this is the acknowledgement of the complaint, which must be provided to the complainant within three working days of receipt. The period for responding to the complaint is agreed with the complainant on a case by case basis depending on the nature and complexity of the complaint and the desired outcome. This can be anything from 5 to 65 days.

8.5 The legislation allows for the timescales to be agreed with the complainant, however in 2011- 2012 the Divisional Management Team took a decision to set an

internal target of 20 working days for straightforward complaints that do not require off-line investigation or work with health colleagues. The average response time for statutory complaints regarding Adult Social Care for the County is 17 working days, for these straightforward complaints.

8.6 The current legislation allows the revision of timescales, if the complainant is in agreement the Customer Care Teams liaise with the complainant if the need arises. This requires communication from the operational staff investigating the complaint.

8.7 **366** (85.9%) were acknowledged within the statutory time scale and **287** (67.4%) were responded to within the time scale agreed with the complainant.

8.8 Families & Social Care - Children's Social Services

8.9 The Local Authority must consider and try to resolve Stage One complaints within 10 working days of the start date for Children's Social Services complaints. This can be extended by a further 10 working days where the complaint is considered to be complex.

8.10 Timescales have been extended for particularly difficult or complex cases, for example when more than one agency or service is involved or when complaints are bound up with other processes such as court proceedings and safeguarding procedures.

Timescales have been extended for particularly difficult or complex cases, for example when more than one agency or service is involved or when cases are involved in other processes such as court proceedings and safeguarding procedures. Performance against timescales deteriorated very slightly since the previous year when 80% of statutory complaints were completed within 20 working days.

- 71% of stage 1 acknowledgements were sent out within three working days.
- 44% of stage 1 responses met the 10 day timescale.
- 53% of stage 1 responses met the 20 day (extended) timescale.
- Overall 65% of stage 1 complaints were completed within 20 working days.

8.11 The Local Authority should consider Stage Two complaints within 25 working days of the start date (the date upon which a written record of the complaints to be investigated has been agreed) but this can be extended to 65 working days where this is not possible. The complexity of the complaints made a 25 day target unachievable, all were extended and only one Stage Two process was fully completed within 65 working days.

9. METHODS OF COMMUNICATION

9.1 Information on how to complain is available on our website and various 'Have your Say' and Complaints, Comments and Compliments leaflets. The public can give us feedback in a wide number of ways.

9.2 It is important to ensure that all channels remain open and effective so customers can choose how they contact us. It should be noted, however, that it can be more difficult for staff to record comments, compliments and complaints given face-to-face but are perhaps more likely to be able to resolve the situation there and then with the complainant.

- 24% of complaints were received by letter, 23% via email, 18% were recorded by the Contact Centre, 17% by comment card, 16% by phone and the remaining 2% by online forms, fax or face to face.
- 59% of highways complaints were recorded via the contact centre.
- The majority of FSC complaints were received by letter 52%

9.3 In 2012/13 we will be putting in place a new online e-form to capture complaints, compliments and comments from customers. We will be streamlining the current numerous methods of making complaints to one single number, one postal address and one online form. Where feedback is received directly we will be asking staff to log this using a new web system enabling us to capture and report on feedback no matter how it is received.

10. COMPENSATION

10.1 Goodwill payments of £19259.32 have been paid as part of local resolution not including payments relating to Local Ombudsman Complaints which can be found in section 2.12.

11. LEARNING THE LESSONS AND SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS

11.1 Complaints are a valuable resource helping us to understand where improvements could be made to improve the customer experience. These improvements can be changes to procedures or processes, improvements in communications or improvements to the quality of service. The text below outlines examples of where improvements have been made as a result of a complaint being received;

11.2 Improved communications

In Children Social Services, some complaints were received regarding the quality of written communications, specifically about the wrong standard letters being sent. Work is being carried out to identify good and bad practice in resolution letter-writing to help inform the content and targeting for training workshops for those staff wanting guidance.

11.3 Improvements to service experience and quality

Complaints were received following the move of Registration service to Libraries. Customers were unhappy at the lack of suitable facilities available over the transitional period. Works have now been completed to address these issues. The majority of complaints were concerning facilities available in Maidstone, which has now moved into the new Kent Library and History Centre and has a dedicated pod for Registration.

11.4 Improvements to customer feedback processes

All complaints received by Highways & Transportation are analysed with additional monitoring carried out to determine whether the complaint related directly to KCC services or has been caused by other services outside of KCC i.e. Gas companies. Monthly reporting of complaints to teams has enabled trends to be identified and direct action taken where appropriate. This analysis has enabled Highways & Transportation to focus service improvement on specific areas and has resulted in a decreasing numbers of complaints being received.

12. LEVELS OF COMPLAINTS TO THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

12.1 The Committee will be aware that responsibility for dealing with alleged breaches of the Code of Conduct by elected and co-opted Members of the Council passed from Standards for England to the local authority on 8 May 2008.

12.2 At its meeting on 22 May 2008, the Standards Committee agreed to set up two Sub Committees; one to make an initial assessment of a complaint that a Member had breached the Code of Conduct and one to review any decision by the Assessment Sub Committee to take no action, if so requested by the complainant.

12.3 The Assessment and Review Sub Committees were charged with deciding whether, on the basis of the information presented, a Member had breached the Code of Conduct and whether the matter merited investigation. Specifically, either Sub Committee could reach one of the following three decisions:

- (a) Refer the allegation to the Monitoring Officer of the Authority for investigation or some other action such as mediation or training
- (b) In exceptional cases, refer the allegation to Standards for England
- (c) Decide that no action should be taken in respect of the allegation

Decision	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
No action	4	1	2	3
Monitoring Officer for other action	2	1	0	2
Monitoring Officer for formal investigation (*)	0	2	0	1
Standards for England	0	0	0	0
Not Determined	0	0	0	0

(*) None of the three cases referred to the Monitoring Officer for formal investigation in the last four years have resulted in the subject Members being found to be in breach of the Code of Conduct.

12.4 Under the Localism Act 2011, arrangements for the administration of the ethical standards regime have changed again. At its meeting on 19 July 2012, the County Council adopted a revised code of conduct and a revised process for the receipt, assessment and investigation of complaints that a Member or co-opted Member was in breach of the code. Standards for England have been disbanded and now all decisions relating to complaints about the conduct of Members are made by the Council's Standards Committee, having considered the advice of the Independent Person appointed to assist the Council in this process.

13. CONCLUSION

14.1 The latest Annual Review letter reflects the generally good working relationship which exists between the County Council and the Ombudsman's office. Please see appendix 2 for the Head of Paid Service's reply to the Local Government Ombudsman.

14.2 The focus in 2012/13 will be to put in place robust reporting measures, ensuring that complaints are logged on a common system countywide. Customers will find it easier to give us feedback via a single number, e-form and postal address.

14.3 We have recognised where improvements can be made to improve customer experience and have taken steps to resolve these issues.

15. RECOMMENDATIONS

15.1 Members are asked to note the contents of this report.

Pascale Blackburn-Clarke
Quality and Assurance Manager
01622 696838

Useful information:

It is a statutory requirement under the following items of legislation for local authorities to have in place a complaints and representations procedure:

- Children Act 1989 Representations Procedure (England) Regulations 2006
- The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations were published in February 2009 and came into force with effect from 1 April 2009. This procedure introduced a single approach to dealing with complaints for both the National Health Service and Adult Social Care.
- NHS & Community Care Act 1990 (section 50)
- Health & Social Care Act 2000
- Local Government Act 2000.

Local Government
OMBUDSMAN

22 June 2012

By email

Mr David Cockburn
Head of Paid Service
Kent County Council
County Hall
Maidstone
ME14 1XQ

Dear Mr Cockburn

Annual Review Letter

I am writing with our annual summary of statistics on the complaints made to me about your authority for the year ended 31 March 2012. I hope the information set out in the enclosed tables will be useful to you.

The statistics include the number of enquiries and complaints received by our Advice Team, the number forwarded by the Advice Team to my office and decisions made on complaints about your authority. The decision descriptions have been changed to more closely follow the wording in our legislation and to give greater precision. Our guidance on statistics provides further explanation ([see our website](#)).

The statistics also show the time taken by your authority to respond to written enquiries.

I am pleased to say that I have no concerns about your authority's response times.

I recently met with officers to discuss concerns about the way the Council was dealing with the report I issued about its coordination of school admission appeals. It was a constructive meeting and the Council has since considered the report and I am satisfied with its response. There are no other issues arising from the complaints that I need to mention but there are a number of draft reports currently under discussion.

Complaints about schools

For the year 2011/12, we received 235 complaints about schools in 14 pilot areas. This included 113 complaints about schools in your area. Of these, the main complaints were about bullying issues (27) curriculum and teaching concerns (18) teacher conduct (11) and special educational need issues (11). We also investigated complaints about behaviour and discipline; pupils being banned from the school site; governance; attendance; pupil safety, exam delivery; exclusions; uniform; medical issues; staffing issues; extracurricular activities and other issues.

In this period we closed 202 complaints of which 88 of these complaints were about schools in your area. Your authority agreed to investigate 48 of these complaints. Six complaints were outside my jurisdiction and nine complaints were closed at my discretion during the investigation. We found no fault in nine complaints and your authority agreed to remedy injustice during our investigation in six cases. We referred the remaining 15 cases to another agency.

Changes to our role

I am also pleased to have this opportunity to update you on changes to our role. Since April 2010 we have been exercising jurisdiction over the internal management of schools on a pilot basis in 14 local authority areas. This includes your area so you will be aware that this was repealed in the Education Act 2011 and the power restored to the Secretary of State for Education. During the short period of the pilot we believe we have had a positive impact on the way in which schools handle complaints. This was endorsed by independent research commissioned by the Department for Education which is available [on their website](#).

Our jurisdiction will end in July 2012 and all complaints about internal school matters will be completed by 31 January 2013. We intend to produce a report on the common themes and lessons that have emerged from our work in this area.

From April 2013, as a result of the Localism Act 2011, local authority tenants will take complaints about their landlord to the Independent Housing Ombudsman (IHO). We are working with the IHO to ensure a smooth transition that will include information for local authority officers and members.

Supporting good local public administration

We launched a new series of Focus reports during 2011/12 to develop our role in supporting good local public administration and service improvement. They draw on the learning arising from our casework in specific service areas. Subjects have included school admissions, children out of school, homelessness and use of bankruptcy powers. The reports describe good practice and highlight what can go wrong and the injustice caused. They also make recommendations on priority areas for improvement.

We were pleased that a survey of local government revenue officers provided positive feedback on the bankruptcy focus report. Some 85% said they found it useful.

In July 2011, we also published a report with the Centre for Public Scrutiny about how complaints can feed into local authority scrutiny and business planning arrangements.

We support local complaint resolution as the most speedy route to remedy. Our training programme on effective complaint handling is an important part of our work in this area. In 2011/12 we delivered 76 courses to councils, reaching 1,230 individual learners.

We have developed our course evaluation to measure the impact of our training more effectively. It has shown that 87% of learners gained new skills and knowledge to help them improve complaint-handling practice, 83% made changes to complaint-handling practice after training, and 73% said the improvements they made resulted in greater efficiency.

Further details of publications and training opportunities are on our [website](#).

Publishing decisions

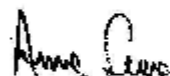
Following consultation with councils, we are planning to launch an open publication scheme during the next year where we will be publishing on our website the final decision statements on all complaints. Making more information publicly available will increase our openness and transparency, and enhance our accountability.

Our aim is to provide a comprehensive picture of complaint decisions and reasons for councils and the public. This will help inform citizens about local services and create a new source of information on maladministration, service failure and injustice.

We will publish a copy of this annual review with those of all other English local authorities on our website on 12 July 2012. This will be the same day as publication of our Annual Report 2011/12 where you will find further information about our work.

We always welcome feedback from councils and would be pleased to receive your views. If it would be helpful, I should be pleased to arrange a meeting for myself or a senior manager to discuss our work in more detail.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anne Seex', written in a cursive style.

Anne Seex
Local Government Ombudsman

Local authority report - Kent CC

for the period - 01/04/2011 to 31/03/2012

LGO advice team

Enquiries and complaints received	Adult Care Services	Benefits & Tax	Corporate & Other Services	Education & Childrens Services	Environmental Services & Public Protection & Regulation	Highways & Transport	Planning & Development	Total
Advice given	6	0	3	36	0	1	1	47
Premature complaints	11	1	2	18	2	2	0	36
Forwarded to Investigative team (resubmitted)	1	0	1	2	0	4	0	8
Forwarded to Investigative team (new)	28	0	2	99	1	6	1	137
Total	46	1	8	155	3	13	2	228

Investigative team - Decisions

Not investigated			Investigated			Report	Total
No power to investigate	No reason to use exceptional power to investigate	Investigation not justified & Other	Not enough evidence of fault	No or minor injustice & Other	Injustice remedied during enquiries		
8	11	18	45	18	46	1	147

Response times to first enquiries	No of first enquiries	Avg no of days to respond
	79	32.0



Ms A Seex
Local Government Ombudsman
10th Floor Millbank Tower
London
SW1P 4QP

Seesions House
County Hall
Maidstone
Kent ME14 1XQ

Fax: (01822) 694060
Tel: (01822) 694386

email: David.cockburn@kent.gov.uk
Date: 13th July 2012

Dear Ms Seex

Annual Review Letter

Thank you very much for your Annual Review Letter.

I am pleased that the meeting you had with Council officers regarding school admission appeals was a constructive one. Certainly the feedback I received from my officers was very positive and that your advice and the agreed outcomes will certainly assist us in the future.

I am also very pleased that you have no concerns about Kent County Council's response times to your initial enquiries. As you may or may not be aware, KCC has undergone a major reorganisation with resources stretched to the limit. As a result, Caroline Dodge, KCC's LGO Link Officer, has had to devolve her responsibilities of responding to some of your enquiries to the dedicated complaint handling teams in Adults & Children's Social Services. It is very encouraging that this has not adversely affected our performance so far. I am currently in discussions with my corporate management team regarding the creation of a centralised complaints team based within the Contact Centre. I firmly believe that this will not only streamline our complaint handling process and will facilitate the monitoring of complaints authority-wide, but will also improve service delivery not only for our customers but also for clients like yourself.

My only observation is that your final complaint statistics differ from the provisional statistics issued in April, even taking into account the adjustments that were applied following discussions between Caroline and Lesley Pettigrew. (Our own figures concurred with your provisional statistics following alterations to both our database and yours, now they don't!). Therefore it would be helpful in future if your annual review letter also included a (revised) detailed list in addition to the one page statistics summary, so we can reconcile year end figures.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Cockburn', with a stylized flourish at the end.

David Cockburn
Corporate Director Business Strategy and Support

Table 5 – 2011/12 Complaint Summary		
BUSINESS STRATEGY & SUPPORT	117	The majority of complaints received related to insurance claims with a total of 89. However this is a significant decrease on the year before when 416 complaints were received.
CUSTOMER & COMMUNITIES	1083	<p>The majority of complaints received in Customer & Communities are for Libraries. 676 complaints were received about a wide range of issues but many relating to the huge changes made in the service this year. Complaints related to the availability of stock due to the refurbishment and opening of new libraries including Ashford, Beaney Centre in Canterbury, Broadstairs, Gravesham and the Kent Library and History Centre in Maidstone. The introduction of the self-serve machines offering customers the opportunity to return books more quickly and efficiently within libraries (whilst saw initial complaints the service has received numerous compliments and has a take-up rate 83.6%).</p> <p>During 2011/12, 92.8% of complaints were acknowledged within the standard and 94.6% were responded to within the standard.</p>
EDUCATION, LEARNING & SKILLS	44	<p>Complaints data before 2010/11 is not comparable as complaints, enquiries and compliments were not recorded consistently. Since April 2010 the process has been managed by the former CFE Customer Care Team currently managed by the Families and Social Care Directorate.</p> <p>In previous years some enquiries from MPs were recorded as complaints. The higher figures in previous years appear to be mainly because a number of other issues such as statutory appeals and complaints about schools were recorded as complaints against the Local Authority.</p> <p>The number of complaints received about the Local Authority's education services is very low when viewed in the context of the number of children receiving an education in Kent however the department does not deal with complaints relating to schools which are traditionally dealt with by the schools directly.</p>
ENTERPRISE & ENVIRONMENT	1284	<p>939 of the complaints related to Highways & Transportation, complaints for this service relate to a range of issues including service delivery particularly relating to seasonal issues i.e. Winter Maintenance; poor communication and lack of information available; and about staff behaviour, including behaviour of contractors.</p> <p>Highways have seen a significant decrease in the number of complaints following a change in process of dealing with complaints and a proactive approach to resolving issues.</p> <p>In addition, 152 complaints were received relating to Commercial Service services. Commercial Services deliver a wide range of services including Kent Fleet, Landscape services, Energy Supply through LASER and Kent Top Temps.</p>

		<p>The number of complaints in each department was low, with Transport Integration receiving the majority of complaints mostly relating to policy changes to Home to School Transport provision.</p> <p>The remaining 193 complaints are mostly focused on waste management, including complaints relating to opening hours, the height barrier, restrictions on waste entering the sites and contractors' site management.</p>
<p>FAMILIES & SOCIAL CARE Adult Social Services</p>	<p>425</p>	<p>This represents decrease from the previous year when 597 complaints were recorded.</p> <p>Analysis of statutory complaints for 2010/11 shows the following breakdown by service: 60% regarding Older People's services (253) 18% regarding Learning Disability (75) 12% regarding Physical Disability (53)</p> <p>Some people complain about more than one issue covering more than one Business Unit. These issues are recorded separately and therefore the total issues add up to more than the total number of complaints. (Appendix 2, Table 1)</p> <p>Analysis of the statutory complaints indicates that 37% of the complaints received were attributed to poor communication and behaviour of staff. This is a consistent pattern each year. A separate piece of work is ongoing which details the complaints made about behaviour of KCC staff and poor communication and makes recommendations for improvement.</p>
<p>FAMILIES & SOCIAL CARE Children's Social Services</p>	<p>503</p>	<p>198 Non-Statutory complaints and 305 Statutory complaints were received.</p> <p>Despite the increase in the number of complaints from last year (406), efforts to resolve complaints early have continued and this is reflected in the data which shows a continuation in the trend of a reduction in the proportion of complaints escalating beyond the first stage. The number of Stage Two investigations carried out in 2010/11 represents 8.5% of the total number of statutory complaints received (cf 24% in 2007/8).</p> <p>KCC has a contract with Action for Children to fulfil the statutory requirement for an Independent Person to be involved in Stage Two investigations. As local staff successfully resolve complaints at an early stage, those that do escalate tend to be complaints which are more complex and difficult to resolve quickly.</p> <p>Of the investigations completed in 2011/12, seven complaints were fully upheld, six were partially upheld and one was not upheld. Six complaints were withdrawn after the process began.</p>

Table 5 - Comparison of complaints numbers for, 2009/10, 2010/11 and 2011/12

BUSINESS STRATEGY AND SUPPORT

Service	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Business Solutions & Policy	2	5	7
Finance	2	4	0
Insurance	203	416	89
Personnel (Employee Services & Schools Personnel Services)	27	29	17
Property	6	23	4
Commercial Services	144	75	-*
Strategic Procurement	1	0	0
TOTAL	385	552	117

*Commercial services moved from Business Strategy & Support in to Enterprise & Environment in April 2011.

FAMILIES & SOCIAL CARE - ADULT SOCIAL SERVICES

Service	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Support Services	130	23	-
Learning Disability:	111	104	75
Mental Health	4	26	1
Older People:	375	351	253
OT and Sensory Loss:	16	-	-
Phys Disability:	54	44	53
Specialist Services:		-	-
Adults	1	-	-
Social Economy/ Kent Supported Employment	1	-	-
Telecare	2	-	-
Telehealth	1	-	-
Training and Development	1	-	-
Voluntary Escorts	1	-	-
Other		49	43
Total	697	597	425

(Some people complain about more than one issue, therefore the total adds up to more than the total number of complaints)

FAMILIES & SOCIAL CARE - CHILDREN SOCIAL SERVICES

Service	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Children & Families non-statutory	98	139	198
Children & Families statutory	200	267	305
TOTAL	298	406	503

CUSTOMER AND COMMUNITIES

Service	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Arts Development	3	0	0
Community Engagement Managers	13	7	-
Community Learning & Skills *	118	151	117
Community Safety	8	2	8
Emergency Planning	0	0	0
KDAAT	11	4	0
Contact Centre & Gateways	38	61	66
Communication & Media Centre	12	34	4
Kent Scientific Services	31	22	10
Key Training	0	-	-
Libraries & Archives	542	116	676
Registration (& Coroners)	11	17	46
Sport, Leisure & Olympics	-	5	2
SIP *	2	4	4
Supporting People	19	32	17
Trading Standards	22	11	11
Turner Contemporary	7	-	-
Youth Offending Service	2	8	3
Youth Service	87	43	16
Country Parks	109	102	96
Countryside Access	9	8	9
TOTAL	1,044	627	1083

* New unit for Kent Adult Education and Key Training

** Transferred from Chief Executives Dept 2008/09

EDUCATION, LEARNING & SKILLS

Service	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Education	173	88	44

ENTERPRISE & ENVIRONMENT

Service	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Environment & Waste	262	210	193
Kent Highway Services	1,259	1,959	939
Strategy & Planning	2	-	-
Commercial Services	-	-	152*
Regeneration Project Delivery	0	4	0
TOTAL	1523	2173	1284

*Commercial services moved from Business Strategy & Support in to Enterprise & Environment in April 2011.

Table 6 Acknowledgement and Response Times against standards

	COMPLAINTS	COMPLIMENTS	COMMENTS	% answered within our standards	
				ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	RESPONSE
COMMUNITIES					
2009/10	1,044	2,270	1,692	87%	96%
2010/11	627	4,077	1,382	98%	96%
2011/12	1,083	2,497	582	91%	92%
EDUCATION					
2009/10	173	15	146	Not available	
2010/11	88	5	178	78%	84%
2011/12	44	137	74	55%	64%
ENTERPRISE AND ENVIRONMENT					
2009/10	1,667	605	-	95%	98%
2010/11	2,248	551	16	98%	91%
2011/12	1284	916	3	97.1%	89.2%
FAMILIES & SOCIAL CARE - CHILDRENS SOCIAL SERVICES					
2009/10	298	66	126	Not available	
2010/11	406	54	166	94%	79%
2011/12	503	59	159	71%	65%
FAMILIES & SOCIAL CARE - ADULT SOCIAL SERVICES					
2009/10	436	502	213	89%	90%
2010/11	527	598	266	88%	73%
2011/12	425	388	290	86%	67%
BUSINESS STRATEGY & SUPPORT					
2009/10	385	237	116	98%	96%
2010/11	552	228	72	78% **	83% **
2011/12	117	95	35	77%**	93%**

* The low compliance level found in Libraries has been investigated by senior managers and was traced to inconsistencies in how the complaints are recorded and reported by some front line members of staff. ** Time taken to deal with Insurance claims.

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