

Customer Satisfaction Survey

Summary of Results
2015-16



Contents

1	About this research	4
2	Who responded	5
3	Overall service satisfaction	6
4	Our complaint handling	9
5	Our decision making	11
6	The recommendations we make	13
7	What people tell us	14
8	About us	15

1 About this research

We are committed to listening to our customers' views about our service. We do this regularly and in several ways:

- > **In-house research**
We carry out our own research into customer satisfaction throughout the year. This report is about the results of that work.
- > **Independent research**
We regularly commission independent researchers to give us further insight into our customers' views.
- > **Advisory forum**
We invite people who have used our service to apply to become members of our advisory forum, which also gives feedback about our customers' experience.

Purpose

This research aims to help us:

- > understand our customers' views about our service;
- > identify what we do well and how we can improve; and
- > monitor our performance over time.

Methodology

Almost everyone whose complaint we consider is invited to give feedback about their experience of our service¹. We do this by issuing a questionnaire around six weeks after we make a decision on their complaint.

This report summarises the results from our survey between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2016. We invited 9,900 people to take part in this research and we received responses from 2,626 people (27%) whose complaints were decided within that period. A typical response rate is hard to define, but generally a rate of 15-20% is considered good.

How we use the research

We monitor feedback closely and report key results to both our Leadership Team and Commission on a quarterly basis. We also take a detailed look at a sample of cases where people report satisfaction levels that are especially high or especially low. This helps us to identify examples of good practice and poor practice so that we can take steps to improve our service for others.

¹ Any exceptions are usually because someone tells us that they do not want us to contact them.

2 Who responded

As part of our survey, we ask people questions about themselves. These questions are optional, but they help us to understand if we need to do more to ensure that our service can be accessed equally by everyone².

We compare these characteristics with those of the general population by using [population statistics](#) for England and Wales from Census 2011.

Respondents were more likely to be male (62% vs 49%), and older (29% aged 66+ years vs 16% aged 65+ years) than the general population.

In terms of ethnicity, respondents were slightly more likely to identify as White (89% vs 86%) and less likely to be Asian or Asian British (4% vs 8%).

Finally, respondents were more likely to be more highly qualified than the general population (50% have a Bachelor's degree or higher vs 27% whereas only 6% have no qualifications vs 23%).

Characteristic	Respondents	%
Total	2,626	
Sex	2,418	100
Male	1,510	62.4
Female	908	37.6
Age	2,400	100
16-25	13	0.5
26-35	143	6.0
36-45	358	14.9
46-55	558	23.3
56-65	640	26.7
66+	688	28.7
Ethnicity	2,268	100
White British	1,905	84.0
White Other	104	4.6
Asian or Asian British	82	3.6
Black or Black British	77	3.4
Mixed	25	1.1
Other	75	3.3

Characteristic	Respondents	%
Total	2,626	
Disability and Health	2,241	100
Has disability or ill health	722	32.2
No disability or ill health	1519	67.8
Education	2,160	100
Higher degree	396	18.3
Degree	692	32.0
A-levels / GNVQ Advanced	411	19.0
O-levels / 5 A*-C GCSEs	242	11.2
Less than 5 A*-C GCSEs	79	3.7
Other	212	9.8
No qualifications	128	5.9

² This gives only an indication of our service's accessibility. This is because it can only measure those who respond to our survey, not all those who use our service.

3 Overall service satisfaction

We know from previous research that service satisfaction is closely linked with outcome satisfaction: when someone receives a decision they are unhappy with, it can be very difficult for them to separate that from their views about the quality of our service.

This means that our service satisfaction level depends, to a large extent, upon whether the people who choose to take part in our survey are happy with our decision or not.

Our analysis shows that this continues to be the case. Chart 01 shows more than three quarters of respondents said they were dissatisfied with their outcome (77%).

Chart 01:
How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the outcome of your complaint?

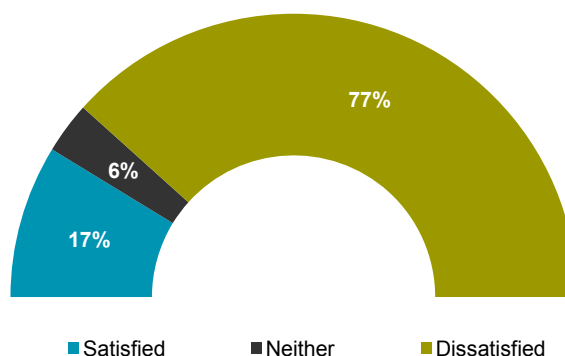


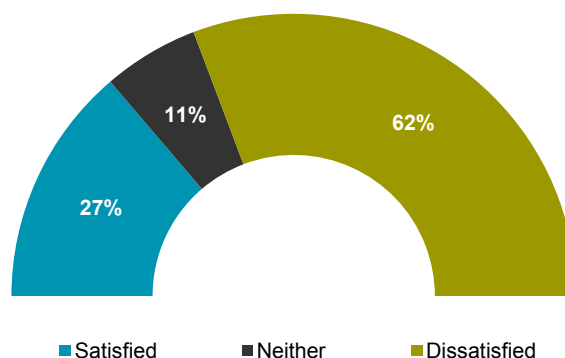
Chart 02 shows only 27% of respondents said they were satisfied with the overall service they received, while 62% said they were dissatisfied.

While low, this does show some improvement on our results for 2014-15, when service satisfaction was 24% and service dissatisfaction was 68% despite there being a very similar distribution for outcome satisfaction.

Chart 03 (page 7) combines these data to give a clearer picture about how views about our service and our decisions are related.

Those who were satisfied with their outcome were almost ten times more likely to say they were satisfied with the service (95%) than dissatisfied (10%).

Chart 02:
How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the overall service provided by the LGO?



0.77

Correlation coefficient

This is a measure of the relationship between two sets of data. A score of 0.77 shows a strong relationship between views about outcomes and views about service quality.

Chart 03:
How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the overall service provided by the LGO?



We monitor two key measures of overall service satisfaction:

- > **KPI-1**
The proportion of customers who are neutral or satisfied with the outcome of their complaint and who are neutral or satisfied with our overall service. Our target is for this figure to be 95% or above.
- > **KPI-2**
The proportion of customers who are dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint but who are neutral or satisfied with our overall service. Our target is for this figure to be 20% or above.

96%
the proportion of customers who are neutral or satisfied with the outcome of their complaint and who are neutral or satisfied with our overall service
KPI-1, 2015-16

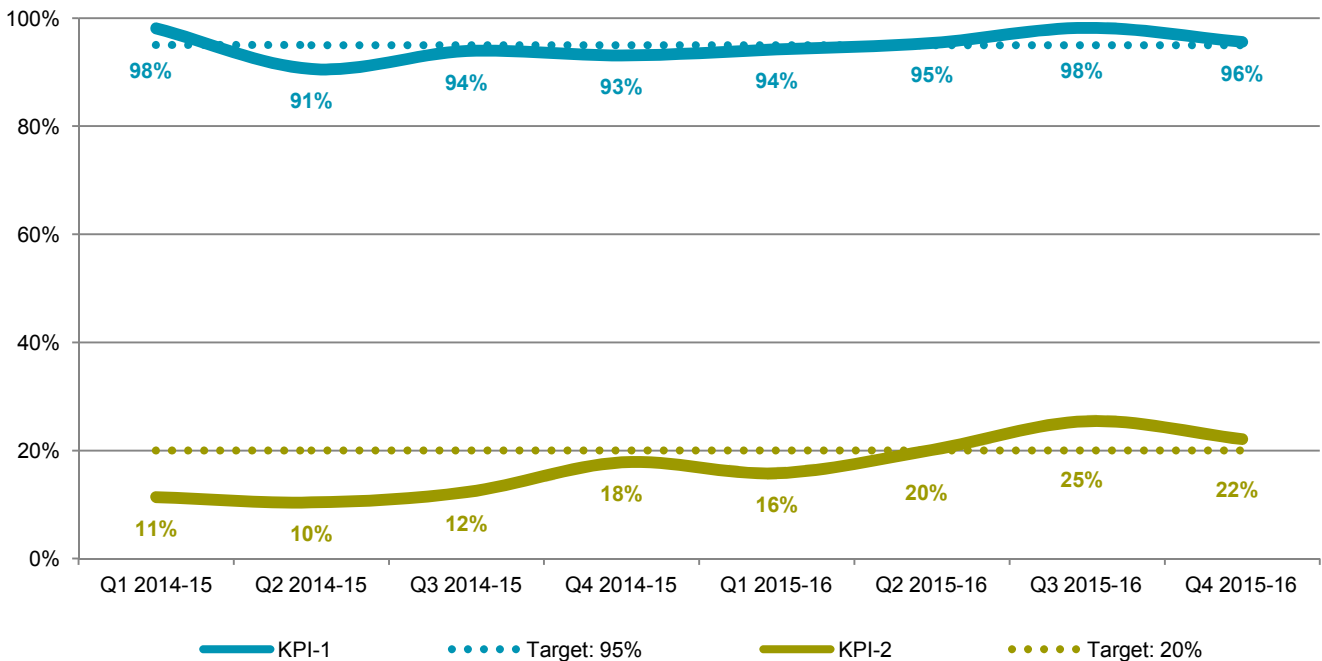
22%
the proportion of customers who are dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint but who are neutral or satisfied with our overall service
KPI-2, 2015-16

We met both key targets for overall service satisfaction in 2015-16: we recorded scores of 96% for KPI-1 and 22% for KPI-2. These figures show a marked improvement compared to our results for 2014-15, when they stood at 93% and 14% respectively.

Importantly, this shows that the increase in overall service satisfaction has been driven mainly by those who were dissatisfied with the decision on their complaint. This is particularly encouraging.

Chart 04 (below) gives a more detailed quarterly breakdown of how these two key measures of service satisfaction have changed over time.

Chart 04:
 How our satisfaction rates have changed over time



“ I consider my issue was dealt with **very well**. The process was fair, whatever the outcome. ”

“ We felt for the first time someone was **taking note** of our complaint. Although we did not get the outcome we had hoped for, we felt we had **a fair hearing**. ”

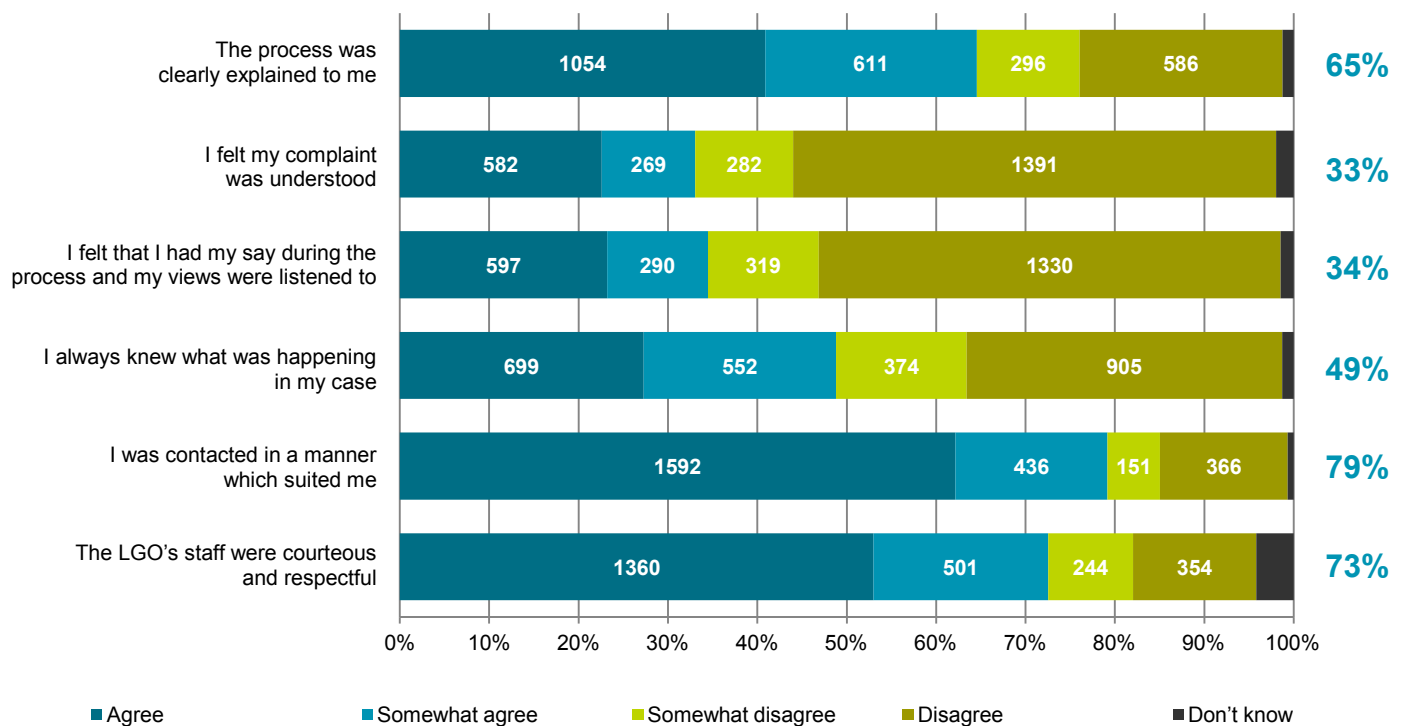
4 Our complaint handling

We list six features of good complaint handling and ask people to say how well our service performed on each of those features.

The figures on the right of the chart 05 show the proportion of people who agree or somewhat agree with each statement.

Chart 05:

Thinking about the handling of your complaint, do you agree or disagree with the following?



Almost two thirds of respondents believed that the process was clearly explained (65%) and a large majority said that our staff were courteous (73%) and made contact in a suitable manner (79%).

On the following page, we look at each of them to consider possible explanations and what we can do to improve in those areas.

These results are similar to those from 2014-15. Our results do highlight other areas for improvement; and, again, the results in these areas are similar in comparison with 2014-15.

Listening to people

Two thirds of respondents felt their complaint was not understood (65%) and a similar proportion said they did not feel their views were listened to (64%). Of those who expressed these views, 89% said they were dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint.

Unfortunately, we are not able to investigate every complaint that reaches us. For example, a complaint might include matters that happened too long ago for us to consider or may include organisations that we're not allowed to investigate. The remaining parts that we are able to consider might therefore look very different from the complaint that was originally made to us.

We should always take the time to fully explain the reasons we might not be able to consider all or part of a complaint and will consider what steps we can take to better explain our role and jurisdiction.

Keeping people informed

Only around half of respondents felt they were kept informed about how their case was progressing (49%). This figure has fallen from 54% in 2014-15.

We aim to conduct our investigations as transparently as possible to those involved. That includes sharing the evidence we look at when making our enquiries and decisions. We are currently exploring a range of additional communication channels to improve the customer experience, including a web-based portal that customers could access to get real time updates on the progression of their case.

“ I felt that you **never really understood.** ”

“ I had to phone in the end and it transpired that I was contacted by email **but it was spammed.** Once I added the contact, the whole procedure has been quick and easy to use. ”

“ Although staff were courteous, I was of the opinion that they **didn't understand** my complaint. ”

“ I was **not kept informed** about progress and do not know what part you played in resolving the issue. ”

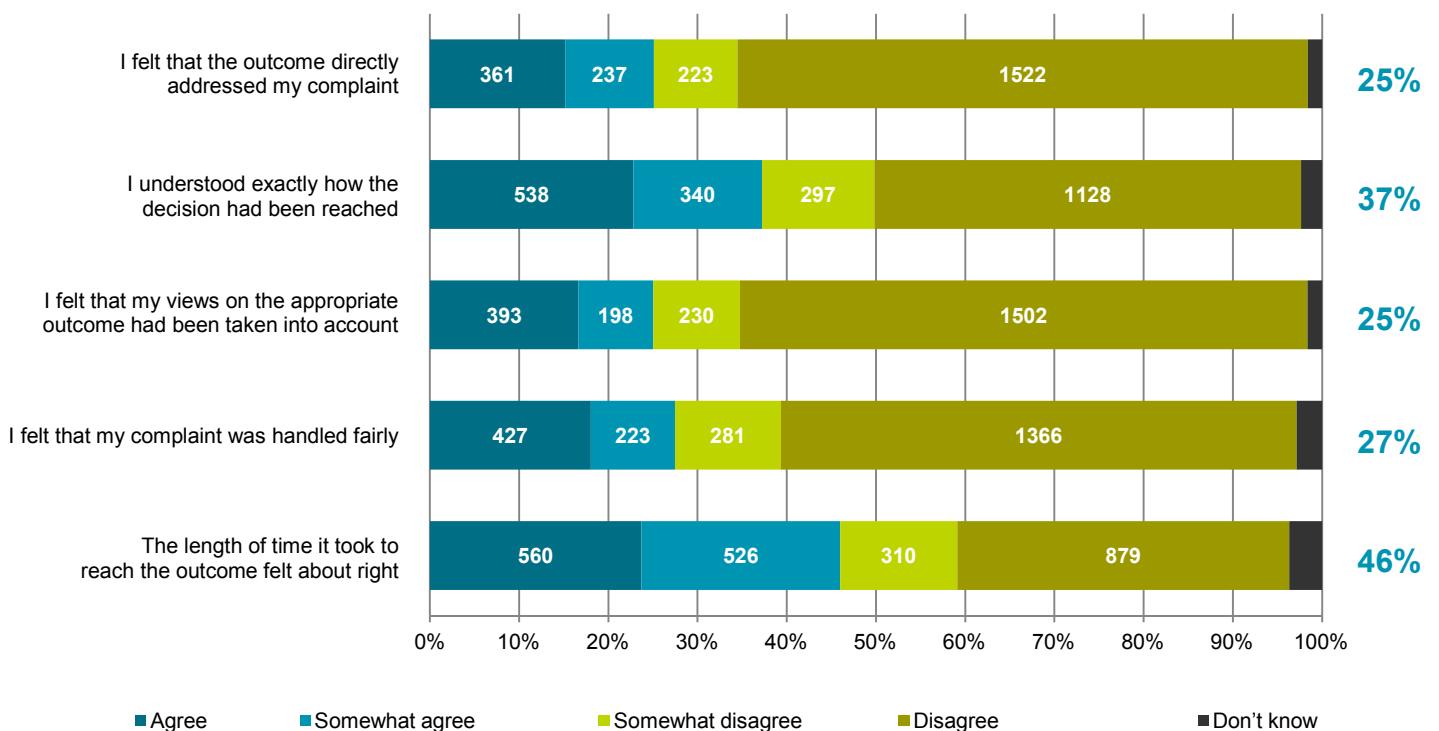
5 Our decision making

We ask detailed range of questions about our decision making and how well the final outcome was communicated.

The figures on the right of chart 06 show the proportion of people who agree or somewhat agree with each statement.

Chart 06:

Thinking about the outcome of your complaint, do you agree or disagree with the following?

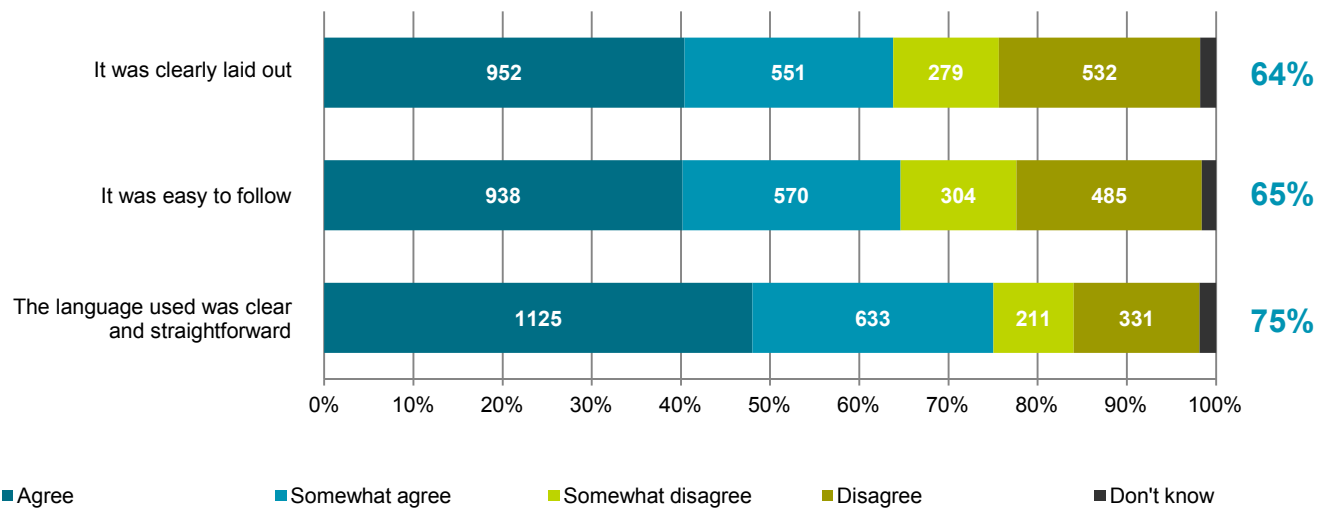


A majority of people thought their views about the outcome were not taken into account (73%), the outcome did not address their complaint (73%) and their complaint was not handled fairly (70%).

Those who were satisfied with the outcome of their complaint were ten times more likely to agree that their complaint was handled fairly (94%) than those who were dissatisfied (9%). Similarly, they were almost sixteen times more likely to agree that the outcome directly addressed their complaint (95% vs 6% respectively).

Most people agree that we communicate our decisions well. The figures on the right of chart 07 show the proportion of people who agree or somewhat agree with each statement.

Chart 07:
Thinking about the letter, statement or report that explained the outcome of your complaint, do you agree or disagree with the following?



“Some of the information documents supplied could perhaps be made more ‘reader friendly’.”

“Even though my complaint was not upheld, I felt the language used was easy to understand. It was refreshing to read correspondence I could understand.”

6 The recommendations we make

When we investigate a complaint and find fault that caused injustice to the individual we may recommend the organisation takes steps to put things right.

Of the 572 people who said the outcome of their complaint was wholly or partially in their favour, 90% said at least one recommendation was made to remedy the fault in their case.

Of those, more than three quarters said they were satisfied with our recommendations (79%).

In some cases, we may uphold a complaint but decide against making recommendations. Reasons for this include, for example:

- > while we may have found an organisation to be at fault, we might decide that no personal injustice was caused; or
- > we may decide that the organisation has already taken appropriate action to remedy the person's injustice.

Chart 08:

What recommendations, if any, were made to put right the fault that was found?



There are several reasons why people report being dissatisfied with our recommendations.

Some customers feel that we should impose significant financial penalties on organisations when we find them to be at fault. However, our role is not to punish organisations when they get things wrong but to remedy the injustice caused when they do.

Customers also commented that we should ensure that our recommendations are implemented. We do not have the legal power to force organisations to follow our recommendations, but they almost always agree to them.

However, some of the feedback we received suggests that there are times when the organisations involved are too slow to do this. For this reason, we have started to take a more proactive role in following up our recommendations to check that they have been implemented on time.

7 What people tell us

Respondents are given the opportunity to make further comments on what we did well and where they think improvements should be made. Of the 2,626 people who participated in the survey, 2,047 people answered this question (78%). Their responses have been analysed and coded into categories.

Good service (9%)

"The Investigator was exceptionally competent, thorough, fair and helpful. Although the decision went against me, I understood why and this helped me to get over it and move on."

"Thank you so much for being a non-biased agency that objectively looked at my case. I did not get everything I wanted, but without this organisation I would still be mistreated."

Expectations of service, remit or powers were not met (16%)

"What is the point of the LGO if it can't override any decision made by local government?"

"The problem with the service is that you have no legal power to enforce the recommendation."

"I felt the terms of reference of the LGO restricted effective governance over the council, but given that, the performance was excellent."

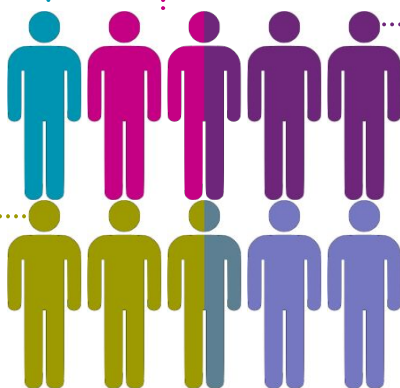
Poor service (24%)

"I felt that the whole process is geared to make it difficult for the complainant."

"I was very satisfied with the outcome although I did think the process was rather long winded."

"Poor communication, I had to chase throughout. Ignored the points I raised."

"I heard absolutely nothing and had to chase up the outcome."



Facts and/or views not taken into account; service bias (24%)

"I don't think they understood what I was complaining about."

"Did not look into my views at all."

"I felt my problems were ignored."

"It is clear to me that orders were given from above not to consider this complaint under any circumstances."

Other (6%)

"I do not believe many people are fully aware of the full service the LGO can offer."

"I think the rules regarding the Blue Badge should be looked at again."

Commented on complaint or decision (21%)

"Thank you for all the help. I am happy with the decision made in my case."

"I am dissatisfied with your wrong decision."

8 About us

The Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) is the final stage for complaints about councils, independent care providers and some other organisations that provide local public services.

Our service is free, independent and impartial – we do not take sides. We look at what happened, and what the law says should have happened, to decide whether an organisation acted with fault.

If we find an organisation did something wrong, we can ask it to take action to put things right.

What we ask an organisation to do will depend on the particular complaint, how serious the fault was and how the complainant was affected.

Some examples include:

- > apologise;
- > pay a financial payment; and
- > improve its procedures so similar problems do not happen again.

Although we do not have powers to force organisations to follow our recommendations, they almost always do.

When we receive a complaint about an organisation, we follow a process to decide whether it's something we can investigate (*see right*).

01 We check whether it is something we are allowed to look into

The law places restrictions on our work so we cannot deal with every complaint we receive.

02 We assess whether there is good reason for us to formally investigate

Our service is funded by public money and we have a responsibility to ensure it is spent wisely.

03 We investigate the facts of the matter without taking sides

When we formally investigate, our job is to find out whether the organisation did what it should have done and whether injustice was caused if it failed to do so.

04 We reach our decision

Based on our findings, we decide whether the organisation was at fault causing injustice.

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