

Paul Reilly  
Secretary to the Accounts Commission  
18 George Street  
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Dear Mr Reilly

**Complaints report and statistics for 2013-14**

I am pleased to send you our annual local government complaints report.

As the report shows, 2013-14 saw a 16% rise in complaints about local government compared with the previous year. The issues people brought us were similar to those for previous years, with housing, social work and planning topping the list. One of these areas – social work – is of particular concern to me, because of the length of time it is taking to bring about change. Related to this is the lack of clarity about complaints processes under the integrated health and social care programme. One further policy matter that I would draw to your attention is the Scottish Government's proposal that SPSO may take on a future role as the review body for Scottish Welfare Fund decisions.

This was the first full year of operation of the model complaints handling procedure across the local government sector. All of Scotland's 32 councils now use the same accessible, simple, user-focused procedures, ensuring consistency and creating opportunities for improving standards in complaints handling.

As you will know, under the new procedures, each authority is required to report and publicise complaints information on a quarterly and annual basis, including annual reporting on how they perform against agreed performance indicators. This means that as well as benefiting customers, the procedures enable learning and improvement through increased responsiveness, transparency and oversight.

I have sent each chief executive and council leader an annual letter providing the individual authority's statistics (these are available on our website for this and previous years). I expect them to use this information, in conjunction with other the complaints data that they hold, to analyse their complaints handling performance and assure themselves that complaints are leading to tangible learning and improved services.

This report outlines this and other initiatives we are undertaking as we continue to support the local government sector to use complaints effectively to improve the services they deliver.

Yours sincerely

Jim Martin  
Ombudsman

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