

PERFORMANCE AUDIT

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 1999/2000

Benefits, Finance and Corporate issues  
Comparing the performance of Scottish Councils



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## Introduction

Each year, councils publish a range of information to show people how well they are providing their services and how they compare with other councils.

This leaflet contains information on seven indicators relating to councils' benefits, finance and corporate indicators in 1999/2000. They are:

- housing and council tax benefit costs
- processing benefits applications
- council tax collection
- council tax collection costs
- payment of invoices
- employee sickness absenteeism levels
- complaints to the Ombudsman.

### Other pamphlets published by the Commission cover:

- Fire and Police services
- Social work services
- Housing services
- Leisure and Library services
- Education services
- Environmental services
- Regulatory services

The Commission also publishes:

- a comprehensive compendium of the information for all the services for which there are performance indicators
- council 'profiles' analysing indicators on a council-by-council basis.

## Using the information

For each activity we have set out why some of the differences in performance may have arisen. We also highlight particular features of the information – for example, the range in performance achieved by different councils or the overall change in councils' performance over time.

Several factors affect the way a council performs its activities. You need to be aware of these in order to understand why results may vary. Some of these factors are outwith the control of the council – for example, population size and density, geographical area, and the mix between urban and rural settlements. Others may be specific to a particular service or the groups of people it serves. These **local factors may mean that a council with a performance which, at first sight, appears to be worse than that of another has, in fact, done better** given the circumstances it faces.

In this pamphlet we have shown information for councils for 1999/2000, and where appropriate made comparison with previous years.

## Key

Auditors appointed by the Accounts Commission have reviewed councils' arrangements for producing the performance information. In the tables and charts shown in this pamphlet, an asterisk (\*) against a council's name indicates that the auditor expressed doubts about the reliability of the council's arrangements for producing the information.

Overall, the average cost per housing and council tax benefit case was £39, which is a significant increase (14%) compared with the previous year.

see indicator 1

Sixteen of the 29 councils where comparison could be made reported reductions in the percentage of benefit applications processed within 14 days.

see indicator 2

Across Scotland, councils collected over 88% of council tax by the end of the year (around £13 million more compared with the previous year), which is the highest percentage collection rate since reorganisation in 1996.

see indicator 3

The average cost of collecting council tax per chargeable dwelling was £11.77, an increase of 76p per chargeable dwelling compared with the previous year.

see indicator 4

Councils paid, on average, almost three out of every four invoices within time, a small increase on last year.

see indicator 5

The percentages of time lost due to sickness absence for the following groups of council employees were:

- 4.9% for chief officers, administrative, professional, technical and clerical employees
- 6.7% for craft and manual employees
- 3.9% for teachers

see indicator 6

There were seven cases of maladministration against councils. Argyll & Bute, Dundee, East Dunbartonshire, Edinburgh, North Ayrshire, Perth & Kinross and South Lanarkshire each had one case.

see indicator 7

## INDICATOR 1: HOUSING AND COUNCIL TAX BENEFIT COSTS

The gross administration cost per case for housing and council tax benefit.

This indicator shows the average administration cost in each council for dealing with housing and council tax benefit.

A council may choose to provide a high level of advice and counselling to claimants. The costs of such services will add to the cost to be reported in this indicator.

### Points to bear in mind

Benefit claims may be more numerous or more complicated in areas where:

- there is a high proportion of applications from people who live at two or more addresses during the year
- there is a higher proportion of applications from people in privately rented accommodation, where the application process is more complex
- there are more people in shared accommodation.

The cost per case may be affected by:

- the time taken to collect all the information needed to process a claim
- the allocation of overhead costs to this function, which may vary among councils.

During 1999/2000 a further five councils (Argyll & Bute, Clackmannanshire, Inverclyde, North Lanarkshire, and South Ayrshire implemented the Department of Social Security verification framework. Dumfries & Galloway, East Lothian, and South Lanarkshire implemented the framework the previous year. Councils that are less well prepared to meet the minimum standards of the framework are more likely, initially, to experience higher benefits administration costs.

### Commentary

Thirty councils reported this information. The number of council tax and housing benefit cases dealt with by these councils was almost 1 million, two authorities (Fife and Glasgow) accounted for almost one-third of the total (Table 1).

**Overall, the average cost per case was £39, which is a significant increase (14%) compared with the previous year. The cost per case varied widely from slightly over £20 (Fife) to almost £80 (Edinburgh).**

Twenty-two of the 29 councils where comparison could be made reported increases in the gross administration cost per case. Angus, Argyll & Bute, Dumfries & Galloway, Moray, North Ayrshire and West Dunbartonshire increased their costs by over 50% per case.

Seven councils reduced their cost per case with Fife and East Renfrewshire reporting significant reductions.

Two councils (Clackmannanshire and South Lanarkshire) that operate the verification framework reported costs per case significantly below the Scottish average (second and third lowest costs per case in Scotland), while all the other councils that operate the verification framework were above the national average.

**Table 1: Gross administration cost per case**

COUNCIL	Number of council tax and housing benefit cases	Gross administration cost per case for housing and council tax benefit	
	1999/2000	1999/2000	1998/1999
Aberdeen City	39,610	49.77	44.64
Aberdeenshire	Not reported	Not reported	* 40.43
Angus	18,691	44.64	25.26
Argyll & Bute	14,818	* 42.79	25.34
Clackmannanshire	12,958	26.38	23.69
Dumfries & Galloway	21,919	39.81	20.92
Dundee City	54,830	* 32.14	* 27.09
East Ayrshire	29,628	40.72	28.03
East Dunbartonshire	12,718	31.51	37.20
East Lothian	11,377	58.77	Not reported
East Renfrewshire	9,925	51.18	97.39
Edinburgh, City of	62,433	78.53	58.99
Eilean Siar	Not reported	Not reported	24.28
Falkirk	28,108	* 30.43	25.33
Fife	127,743	20.64	* 57.43
Glasgow City	181,764	41.96	29.21
Highland	51,011	* 34.61	* 29.84
Inverclyde	18,938	37.54	26.87
Midlothian	15,839	* 35.76	38.50
Moray	2,949 <sup>(1)</sup>	35.03	* 19.96
North Ayrshire	21,636	44.45	29.48
North Lanarkshire	35,518	44.74	40.78
Orkney Islands	2,408	38.03	* 42.20
Perth & Kinross	16,365	45.83	* 32.01
Renfrewshire	38,936	28.24	23.53
Scottish Borders	16,557	37.67	36.09
Shetland Islands	5,251	40.32	38.70
South Ayrshire	19,461	44.63	47.57
South Lanarkshire	52,492	25.71	27.72
Stirling	14,523	* 49.19	44.26
West Dunbartonshire	29,002	31.41	18.90
West Lothian	17,718	49.71	41.70
<b>All Scotland</b>	<b>985,126</b>	<b>39.00</b>	<b>34.19</b>

<sup>(1)</sup> The Moray Council figure is for three months.

## INDICATOR 2: PROCESSING BENEFITS APPLICATIONS

The percentage of benefits applications processed within 14 days.

There is a Department of Social Security target time of 14 days for councils to process benefits applications. This indicator reports the extent to which each council achieved that target.

The time taken to process a case covers the period between the council having all the information needed to determine the claim, to the date of notifying the applicant.

### Points to bear in mind

Councils have experienced significant changes over recent years in the information required on benefits at a national level. These changes have required software solutions to be developed and partly explain why some councils reported significantly poorer performance when compared with the previous year.

During 1999/2000 a further five councils (Argyll & Bute, Clackmannanshire, Inverclyde, North Lanarkshire, and South Ayrshire) implemented the Department of Social Security verification framework. Dumfries & Galloway, East Lothian, and South Lanarkshire implemented the framework the previous year. Councils that are less well prepared to meet the minimum standards of the framework are more likely, initially, to experience poorer performance in processing applications.

### Commentary

Thirty councils reported this information. **Sixteen of the 29 councils where comparison could be made reported reductions in the percentage of benefit applications processed within 14 days.**

Of the councils which do not operate the verification framework, eleven (50%) processed 70% or more of their applications within the target time, while three (Angus, East Ayrshire, and North Ayrshire) processed less than 50% within the target time (Table 2).

Five of the seven councils that operate the verification framework, and where comparison can be made, processed fewer applications on time than last year. East Lothian and South Ayrshire processed less than one-third of applications within the target time.

**Table 2: The percentage of housing and council tax benefit applications processed within 14 days**

COUNCIL	1999/2000	1998/1999
Aberdeen City	74.3	64.9
Aberdeenshire	Not reported	* 97.8
Angus	45.3	88.7
Argyll & Bute	* 55.8	60.6
Clackmannanshire	84.3	72.1
Dumfries & Galloway	43.6	71.9
Dundee City	* 65.0	* 65.0
East Ayrshire	43.3	23.1
East Dunbartonshire	88.7	63.8
East Lothian	24.7	Not reported
East Renfrewshire	59.4	62.4
Edinburgh, City of	56.7	52.1
Eilean Siar	Not reported	95.2
Falkirk	* 63.4	* 75.0
Fife	65.6	* 90.6
Glasgow City	* 70.1	* 72.7
Highland	* 82.0	* 88.0
Inverclyde	71.6	73.0
Midlothian	* 79.9	55.1
Moray	* 67.8	* 66.0
North Ayrshire	23.9	42.3
North Lanarkshire	44.5	81.1
Orkney Islands	98.5	* 96.9
Perth & Kinross	73.7	* 77.6
Renfrewshire	86.4	93.4
Scottish Borders	74.0	* 83.6
Shetland Islands	100.0	99.9
South Ayrshire	29.4	84.4
South Lanarkshire	84.8	80.6
Stirling	65.0	69.4
West Dunbartonshire	74.1	67.8
West Lothian	66.7	* 51.3
<b>All Scotland</b>	<b>65.9</b>	<b>71.7</b>

### INDICATOR 3: COUNCIL TAX COLLECTION

The percentage of council tax, excluding reliefs and rebates, due in the year, collected by the end of the year.

This indicator shows the proportion of council tax due in the financial year that was collected by 31 March 2000. This is a measure of how effective councils are at collecting the council tax due to them.

#### Points to bear in mind

The variation in collection levels of council tax between councils can be explained in part by factors such as social deprivation and population density, which are mainly outwith their control. However other factors, such as the accuracy of records and the speed with which recovery procedures are initiated, are directly within councils' control.

The Commission has grouped councils into 'families' which take account of the main factors outwith their control and allow more of a like-for-like comparison. These groupings were used in the Commission's report, *'Council tax collection'*, 1998, where more information on them can be found.

#### Commentary

In 1999/2000, the net amount of council tax billed amounted to £1.26 billion (compared with £1.20 billion for 1998/99). **Across Scotland, councils collected over 88% by the end of the year (around £13 million more compared with the previous year), which is the highest percentage collection since reorganisation in 1996.** Collection levels for individual councils varied between 79% and 96%.

Twenty-seven councils improved their collection levels compared with the previous years. The performance of each council is reported here within its family group. Across Scotland, collection levels are showing a gradual increase and councils are to be commended for their improved performance. However, the Commission remains concerned that the level of council tax collected remains significantly below the levels collected by councils in England (96.1%).

#### Group A

Ten of the thirteen councils in this group improved their collection levels. The variation in the actual level of council tax collected ranged from 89.7% (Eilean Siar) to 96.3% (Orkney Islands). Highland, Shetland Islands and Angus have improved their collection level year-on-year since reorganisation

in 1996. Dumfries & Galloway (3.9%) and East Lothian (3.6%) reported significant improvement compared with the previous year (Table 3).

### **Group B**

Nine of the ten councils in this group improved their performance. The collection levels ranged from 83.2% (East Ayrshire) to 93.7% (Stirling). South Ayrshire (3.3%) and West Lothian (4.2%) reported significant improvement compared with the previous year.

### **Group C**

Eight out of the nine councils in this group reported improved performance. The variation in collection levels ranged from 78.9% (Glasgow) to 89.7% (Aberdeen). Glasgow and Renfrewshire have improved their collection level year-on-year since reorganisation in 1996. Four councils increased their collection level by more than 2%, Inverclyde had the highest increase (4.1%).

**Table 3: The percentage of council tax due and collected by 31 March in each year**

	1999/2000	1998/1999	1997/1998	1996/1997
COUNCIL	<b>FAMILY A</b>			
Eilean Siar	<b>89.7</b>	90.1	89.6	88.3
Argyll & Bute	<b>90.1</b>	88.3	89.7	88.2
Midlothian	<b>90.7</b>	88.6	87.8	88.0
East Lothian	<b>90.8</b>	87.2	85.8	88.2
Highland	<b>91.1</b>	90.1	89.1	85.1
Aberdeenshire	<b>91.8</b>	94.2	94.2	94.7
Dumfries & Galloway	<b>92.0</b>	88.1	90.8	91.0
Perth & Kinross	<b>92.1</b>	93.1	92.6	92.8
Moray	<b>92.9</b>	91.0	92.4	92.6
Angus	<b>93.6</b>	93.5	93.3	91.9
Shetland Islands	<b>94.5</b>	94.3	93.8	92.3
Scottish Borders	<b>95.7</b>	95.2	94.6	95.1
Orkney Islands	<b>96.3</b>	96.1	95.9	96.0
	<b>FAMILY B</b>			
East Ayrshire	<b>83.2</b>	81.8	83.6	82.6
North Ayrshire	<b>85.2</b>	83.8	85.4	84.8
Clackmannanshire	<b>86.7</b>	86.6	83.5	89.6
West Lothian	<b>88.5</b>	84.3	88.2	87.7
Fife	<b>90.4</b>	91.8	91.4	91.0
East Dunbartonshire	<b>91.0</b>	90.0	92.1	91.0
South Ayrshire	<b>91.5</b>	88.2	89.9	89.3
Falkirk	<b>92.3</b>	91.6	90.0	92.2
East Renfrewshire	<b>93.3</b>	91.2	93.1	93.3
Stirling	<b>93.7</b>	92.1	90.5	92.7
	<b>FAMILY C</b>			
Glasgow City	<b>78.9</b>	77.3	75.0	73.7
West Dunbartonshire	<b>80.4</b>	76.6	79.8	77.0
Inverclyde	<b>81.3</b>	77.2	80.8	83.8
North Lanarkshire	<b>86.2</b>	83.8	85.7	83.0
Dundee City	<b>86.6</b>	87.3	85.5	85.5
South Lanarkshire	<b>87.9</b>	87.1	88.7	85.2
Edinburgh, City of	<b>88.1</b>	87.7	87.1	87.6
Renfrewshire	<b>89.4</b>	87.4	85.4	84.9
Aberdeen City	<b>89.7</b>	89.6	89.7	89.8
<b>All Scotland</b>	<b>88.3</b>	<b>87.2</b>	<b>87.3</b>	<b>86.8</b>

#### INDICATOR 4: COUNCIL TAX COLLECTION COSTS

The cost of collecting council tax per chargeable dwelling.

This indicator shows the average cost per dwelling of collecting council tax. It excludes costs associated with the collection of non-domestic rates and residual community charge.

#### Points to bear in mind

The cost of collection may be affected by:

- the ability and willingness of taxpayers to pay
- the level of enforcement action taken by the council to recover tax due to it
- how efficient the council is at collecting the tax
- the allocation of overhead costs to this function, which may vary among councils.

The cost includes the net cost of collecting water and sewerage charges on behalf of the water authorities and, therefore, any profit or loss on collecting water and sewerage charges will affect this indicator.

The Commission's report, *'Council tax collection'*, February 1998, recommended that the priority for most councils should be to increase collection levels, before considering reducing costs.

The Commission has grouped councils into 'families' which take account of the main factors outwith their control and allow more of a like-for-like comparison. These groupings were used in the Commission's report, *'Council tax collection'*, 1998, where more information on them can be found.

#### Commentary

Across Scotland, the total cost to councils for collecting council tax was £26.8 million which is an increase of £2 million compared with the previous year. However, councils collected around £13 million more compared with the previous year. **The average cost of collecting council tax per chargeable dwelling was £11.77, an increase of 76p per chargeable dwelling compared with the previous year.**

Twenty-two councils increased the cost of collection per chargeable dwelling. Within each of the family groups there is significant variation in the cost per chargeable dwelling.

The performance of each council is reported here within its family group.

### **Group A**

Eight of the 13 councils in this group reported reductions in the cost per dwelling. Five councils (Perth & Kinross, Moray, Angus, Orkney Islands, and Eilean Siar) have reduced their costs year-on-year since reorganisation in 1996. Five councils had collection levels below or the same as the all Scotland average cost of £11.77 (Table 4).

### **Group B**

Seven of the ten councils reported increases in the cost per dwelling. Two councils (East Renfrewshire and Fife) reported a reduction in their costs per dwelling compared with 1998/99. Six councils had collection levels below the all Scotland average cost.

West Lothian and South Ayrshire have increased their costs over each of the previous four years.

### **Group C**

Eight of the nine councils reported increases in the cost per dwelling. Renfrewshire has reduced its cost per dwelling over each of the past four years. Three councils had collection costs below the all Scotland average cost.

**Table 4: Cost of collecting council tax per chargeable dwelling**

	1999/2000 £	1998/1999 £	1997/1998 £	1996/1997 £
COUNCIL	<b>FAMILY A</b>			
Midlothian	* 3.27	2.51	0.57	10.80
East Lothian	8.96	11.34	10.23	* 8.05
Dumfries & Galloway	9.09	8.01	8.80	11.14
Scottish Borders	9.84	7.33	7.02	7.45
Aberdeenshire	11.77	11.32	11.70	11.78
Argyll & Bute	12.98	10.48	9.20	6.17
Moray	13.72	14.81	17.39	17.54
Highland	13.88	11.32	10.76	20.44
Perth & Kinross	14.60	14.79	15.71	17.27
Shetland Islands	15.48	15.91	14.16	16.99
Angus	15.64	15.92	17.04	23.67
Orkney Islands	17.16	19.07	19.65	20.70
Eilean Siar	19.83	21.29	23.97	24.65
	<b>FAMILY B</b>			
East Dunbartonshire	5.16	4.59	4.55	8.17
West Lothian	7.55	4.84	3.08	1.51
Falkirk	7.97	2.96	4.61	11.60
East Renfrewshire	9.66	11.22	8.18	9.33
Fife	9.73	14.64	8.80	4.58
Clackmannanshire	10.75	9.84	8.38	Not reported
East Ayrshire	12.95	10.43	6.07	8.41
South Ayrshire	13.19	13.15	10.38	8.55
Stirling	13.70	8.69	11.87	13.92
North Ayrshire	16.24	16.03	15.89	17.51
	<b>FAMILY C</b>			
Edinburgh, City of	8.57	6.39	3.29	4.39
South Lanarkshire	11.09	9.92	10.83	11.62
Renfrewshire	11.68	12.57	12.78	12.99
Inverclyde	12.67	12.48	7.15	14.24
Aberdeen City	12.95	12.23	15.01	15.67
Glasgow City	13.12	12.07	12.36	12.44
North Lanarkshire	13.77	13.08	7.26	* 9.60
Dundee City	15.52	13.97	15.48	28.94
West Dunbartonshire	16.38	13.51	12.63	* 9.38
<b>All Scotland</b>	<b>11.77</b>	<b>11.01</b>	<b>10.01</b>	<b>12.13</b>

## INDICATOR 5: PAYMENT OF INVOICES

The number of invoices paid within 30 days of receipt, or agreed time limit if otherwise specified, as a percentage of all invoices paid.

This indicator shows the percentage of invoices paid by councils within 30 calendar days (or otherwise agreed time period). Thirty calendar days reflects the normal credit period.

### Points to bear in mind

Some invoices will not be paid within the agreed term because they are disputed. Some councils have calculated this indicator based on a statistically valid sample of invoices.

A number of councils make some payments through credit card companies and it is a council's responsibility to ensure the credit card companies makes payment within 30 calendar days.

### Commentary

Across Scotland, **on average, almost three out of every four (72%) of the 4.5 million invoices sampled by councils were paid on time**, which is an increase compared with the two previous years (Table 5). The percentage of invoices paid on time varied among councils from 44% (South Lanarkshire) to 94% (Dundee). Twenty-five councils, four more than the previous year, paid 70% or more of their invoices within 30 days or other agreed time limit.

Twenty-one councils improved the percentage of invoices paid on time compared with the previous year, while thirteen councils have improved their performance year-on-year over each of the three previous years.

In four councils (East Dunbartonshire, East Lothian, Inverclyde, and South Lanarkshire) the percentage of invoices paid on time has fallen year-on-year since 1997, with Inverclyde and South Lanarkshire paying fewer than 50% of invoices on time in 1999/2000.

**Table 5: Percentage of invoices paid within 30 days or other agreed time period**

COUNCIL	Percentage of invoices paid within 30 days or other agreed time period		
	1999/2000	1998/1999	1997/1998
Aberdeen City	79	74	72
Aberdeenshire	75	71	70
Angus	76	80	79
Argyll & Bute	77	70	82
Clackmannanshire	79	80	77
Dumfries & Galloway	86	81	80
Dundee City	* 94	82	65
East Ayrshire	77	73	76
East Dunbartonshire	62	63	84
East Lothian	69	82	88
East Renfrewshire	77	82	80
Edinburgh, City of	70	65	43
Eilean Siar	79	81	78
Falkirk	76	75	74
Fife	58	44	60
Glasgow City	76	72	56
Highland	88	71	80
Inverclyde	48	50	72
Midlothian	70	62	28
Moray	80	72	68
North Ayrshire	84	86	74
North Lanarkshire	64	69	64
Orkney Islands	83	83	83
Perth & Kinross	75	70	67
Renfrewshire	75	70	62
Scottish Borders	77	68	64
Shetland Islands	78	74	77
South Ayrshire	76	72	78
South Lanarkshire	44	52	75
Stirling	74	60	53
West Dunbartonshire	76	59	75
West Lothian	77	62	64
<b>Average</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>70</b>

## INDICATOR 6: SICKNESS ABSENCE LEVELS

Proportion of working time lost due to sickness absence for:

- Chief officers, administrative, professional, technical and clerical employees
- Craft and manual employees
- Teachers.

This indicator reports the amount of time lost through sickness absence for council staff. The employee groupings reflect the broad differences in the type of work undertaken.

Sickness absence includes self certification, absence supported by a doctor's certificate, long-term sickness absence, and industrial injury. It does not include compassionate leave, career leave and special leave/unpaid leave nor maternity or paternity leave.

### Points to bear in mind

The indicator excludes police and fire employees who are included in the police and fire pamphlet.

All staff directly employed by the council, which includes full-time, part-time and temporary staff and the council's direct labour organisation.

### Commentary

All 32 councils reported this information. Across all groups of employees 5.1% of time was lost due to sickness absence. The performance of each council is reported here within the employee groups. There is significant variation between groups and within groups.

#### Chief officers, administrative, professional, technical and clerical employees

Across Scotland, **4.9% of time was lost due to sickness absence** for this group of employees. This ranged from 3.1% (Eilean Siar) to 6.1% (Renfrewshire and West Dunbartonshire). Five councils (the three Islands councils along with Highland and Scottish Borders) reported absence levels of less than 4% (Table 6).

#### Craft and Manual employees

Overall for craft and manual employees, **6.7% of time was lost due to sickness absence**. There was significant variation across councils ranging between 2.3% (Eilean Siar) and 9.9% (East Dunbartonshire). Three councils (Eilean Siar, Moray, and Scottish Borders) reported absences levels of 4% or less, while eleven councils reported sickness absence levels of 7% or more.

East Dunbartonshire and North Lanarkshire reported the highest levels of sickness absence, both councils were in excess of 9%.

### Teachers

**3.9% of teachers' time was lost due to sickness absence.** This ranged from 1.8% (Orkney Islands) to 6.8% (West Dunbartonshire). The only other council to report sickness levels above 5% was East Lothian (5.8%). Eighteen councils reported sickness absence levels less than 4%.

**Table 6: The percentage of time lost due to sickness absence**

COUNCIL	Chief officers, administrative, professional, technical and clerical employees	Craft and manual employees	Teachers
	1999/2000	1999/2000	1999/2000
Aberdeen City	5.5	7.6	4.5
Aberdeenshire *	5.2	6.6	3.3
Angus	4.3	6.7	3.7
Argyll & Bute	4.2	5.9	3.3
Clackmannanshire *	4.9	6.8	3.8
Dumfries & Galloway	4.1	4.6	4.5
Dundee City	4.7	6.3	4.6
East Ayrshire	5.0	6.2	4.3
East Dunbartonshire	5.2	9.9	3.7
East Lothian	4.7	5.9	5.8
East Renfrewshire	4.4	5.2	4.1
Edinburgh, City of	4.7	7.0	3.2
Eilean Siar	3.1	2.3	2.8
Falkirk	5.7	6.3	3.8
Fife	5.2	7.5	3.5
Glasgow City	4.7	6.0	3.1
Highland *	3.8	5.3	3.4
Inverclyde	5.1	8.1	4.7
Midlothian	4.7	7.3	3.1
Moray *	5.5	4.0	3.1
North Ayrshire	5.6	8.7	4.1
North Lanarkshire *	5.8	9.4	4.8
Orkney Islands *	3.3	4.9	1.8
Perth & Kinross	4.3	7.4	4.7
Renfrewshire	6.1	7.3	3.8
Scottish Borders *	3.5	3.5	3.2
Shetland Islands	3.6	4.6	2.7
South Ayrshire	4.8	6.8	4.1
South Lanarkshire	5.4	6.2	4.2
Stirling	5.0	6.0	4.5
West Dunbartonshire	6.1	7.9	6.8
West Lothian	5.1	6.4	3.4
<b>All Scotland</b>	<b>4.9</b>	<b>6.7</b>	<b>3.9</b>

## INDICATOR 7: COMPLAINTS TO THE OMBUDSMAN

The number of complaints which resulted in a local settlement and the number classified as maladministration.

This indicator reports the number of complaints accepted for enquiry by the Ombudsman and resolved by local settlement, and the number which were classified as maladministration.

A local settlement is where the council has taken action on a complaint which the Ombudsman regards as satisfactorily resolving the matter. A formal finding of maladministration made against the council, by the Ombudsman, is the last stage in the process of handling a complaint.

A finding of maladministration indicates that management procedures or practices within the council are not operating as they should, and that injustice has been caused to complainants.

### Points to bear in mind

The number of complaints to the ombudsman may be influenced by the extent to which the council publishes the existence and role of the Ombudsman.

Not all complaints received by the Ombudsman are accepted for enquiry, for example some will fall outside the statutory remit of the Ombudsman while others fail to specify maladministration or injustice.

### Commentary

Across all councils there were 112 complaints accepted for enquiry, by the Ombudsman which resulted in a local settlement. Eighteen (over 50%) councils had two or fewer complaints accepted for enquiry which resulted in a local settlement (Table 7).

**There were seven cases of maladministration against councils. Argyll & Bute, Dundee, East Dunbartonshire, Edinburgh, North Ayrshire, Perth & Kinross and South Lanarkshire each had one case of maladministration during the year.** The seven findings of maladministration fell into the following categories:

- three findings within Planning services (South Lanarkshire, Perth & Kinross, and Argyll & Bute)
- two findings within Housing services (East Dunbartonshire, and North Ayrshire)
- one finding within Land and Property services (Dundee City)
- one finding within Roads service (The City of Edinburgh).

**Table 7: Number of complaints accepted for enquiry**

COUNCIL	Accepted for enquiry by the Ombudsman which resulted in a local settlement	Accepted for enquiry by the Ombudsman which were classified as maladministration
	1999/2000	1999/2000
Aberdeen City	2	
Aberdeenshire	2	
Angus	5	
Argyll & Bute	1	1
Clackmannanshire	1	
Dumfries & Galloway		
Dundee City	2	1
East Ayrshire	5	
East Dunbartonshire	7	1
East Lothian	6	
East Renfrewshire	6	
Edinburgh, City of	8	1
Eilean Siar		
Falkirk	3	
Fife	7	
Glasgow City	5	
Highland	9	
Inverclyde	1	
Midlothian	1	
Moray	1	
North Ayrshire	2	1
North Lanarkshire	8	
Orkney Islands	1	
Perth & Kinross		1
Renfrewshire	15	
Scottish Borders	3	
Shetland Islands		
South Ayrshire	1	
South Lanarkshire	8	1
Stirling		
West Dunbartonshire		
West Lothian	2	

Blank cells indicate the council did not have any cases accepted for enquiry by the Ombudsman which resulted in a local settlement, or any cases classified as maladministration.

## Contacts

If you have any specific queries about the performance information, you may wish to contact your council. A contact person for each council is given below. If you have general queries about this pamphlet, you may wish to contact Alec Taylor or Jim Lakie at Audit Scotland.

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ISBN 1 903433 32 0