

**Strategies for Success:
Insight and oversight in changing times**

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Insight and oversight in changing times

- *What can complaints and investigations tell us about the corporate health of local authorities?*
- *How can insights from complaints help improve services, scrutiny, oversight, and outcomes?*

What trends are we seeing...

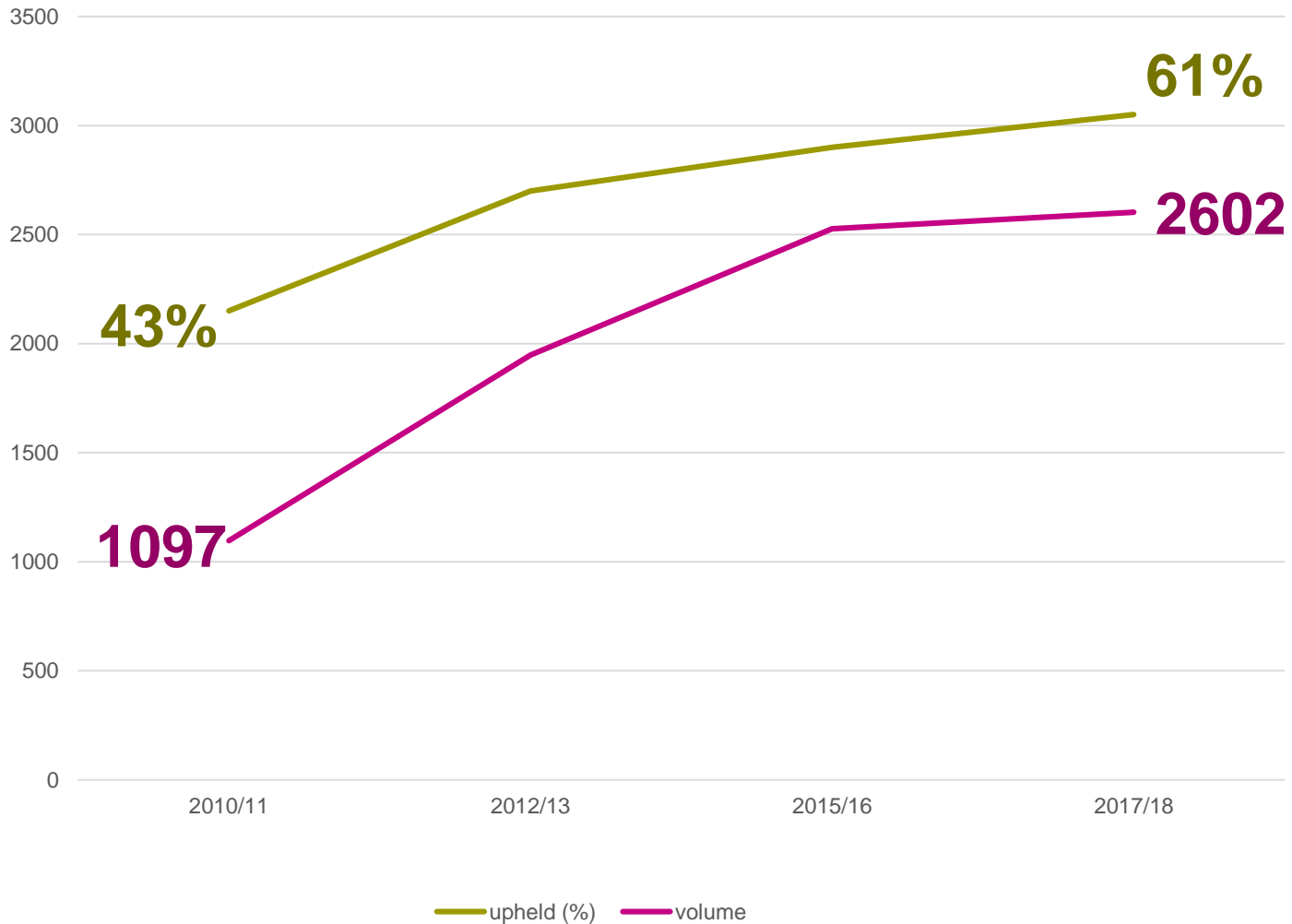
Numbers largely static, but...

- Varies between service areas -
 - The complaints mix has changed
 - Public expectations have changed
- 55% of complaints departments cut (scrutiny too!)
- 43% of people not signposted to Ombudsman by council

Key trends are:

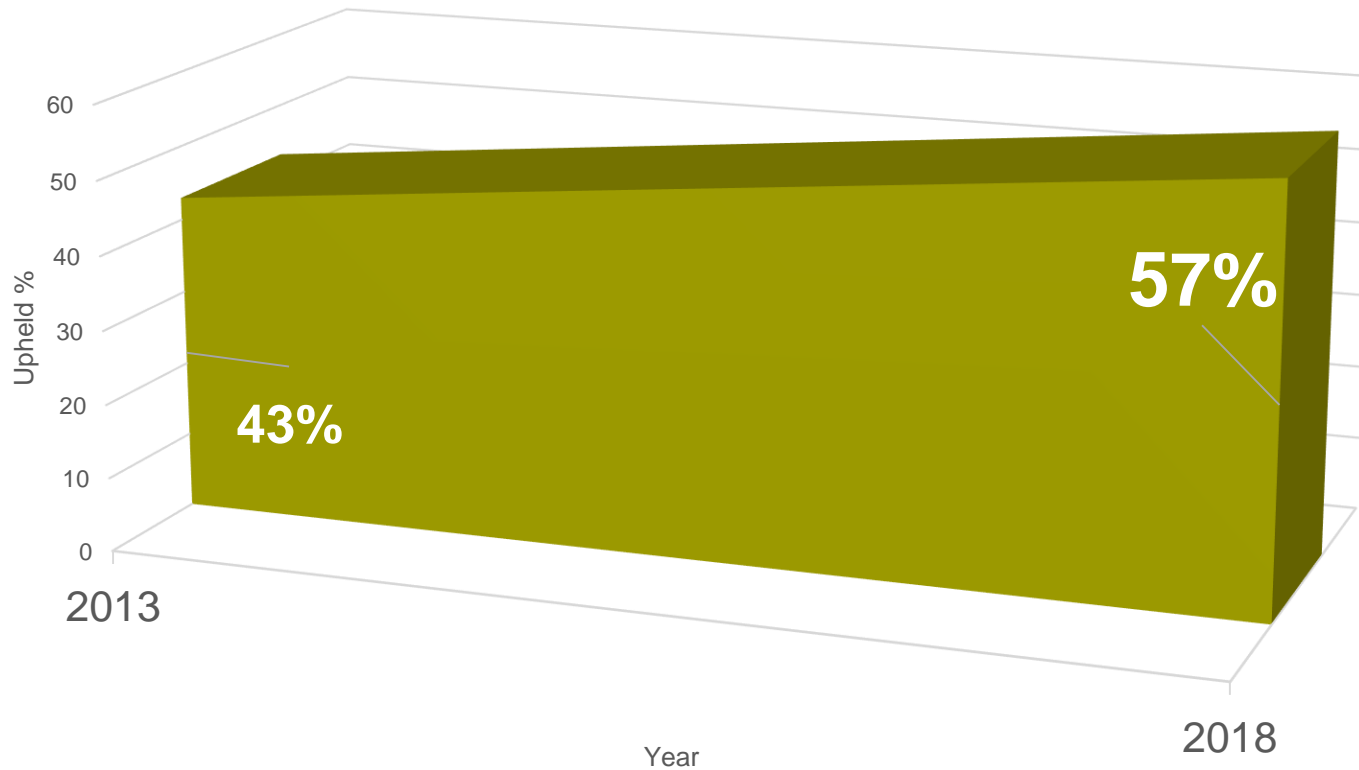
- Sustained growth in findings of fault
- Change from one-off mistakes to system + policy failure
- Increased influence of resources and change on fault

Changing outcomes in adult social care complaints 2010-18



Upward trend in maladministration

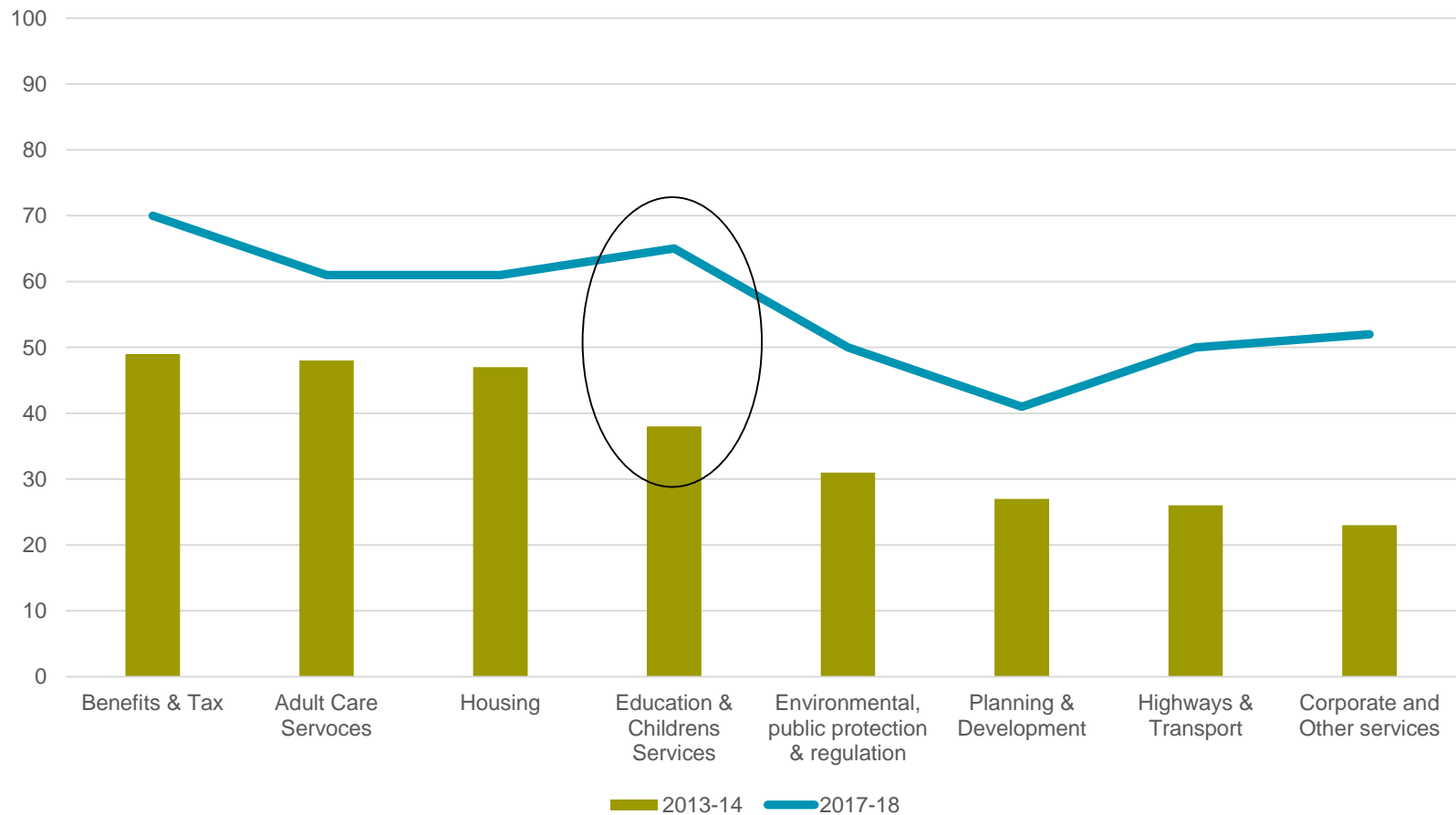
Growth in upheld complaints (%)



■ Growth in upheld complaints (%)

Upward trend in maladministration

Growth in upheld complaints – by complaint type



How resources and change are re-shaping the public experience of councils...

- **‘We can’t do what we used to’** – non-availability of services, delays, and short staffing:
 - Education, Health and care Plans – 89% fault
 - Failure to process Housing Benefit appeals for 500 people
- **Reviewing the ‘offer’** – changing eligibility and charging policies:
 - Unforeseen impact of cuts to discretionary school transport
- **New delivery arrangements** – partnerships, outsourcing, commercialisation, and innovation:
 - Loss of access to care records when joint trust ended
- **Fundamental restructures and redesign**
 - No corporate memory of why a policy was introduced

But, wide variations in response and oversight...

Learning from complaints & investigations

It isn't about whether you make mistakes, its about how you deal with them...

- Monitoring Officer should be reporting them to you
- Free intelligence and feedback from public
- An early warning of problems in service and culture
- A key indicator of corporate health
- Intrinsic to democratic accountability of public bodies

Members and Scrutiny are key...

The role of members...

- **As a community representative**
 - In 1974 people could only complain through their councillor
- **In driving change and learning from within**
 - LB of Haringey
- **Contributing to public policy debate**
 - North Yorkshire CC
- **In Scrutiny, and wider accountability roles**
 - Use our Focus Reports, Annual Letters and decisions

We see excellent examples of all of these...

Wider resources on our website - lgo.org.uk

Local Government &
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Home > Information Centre > Reports and guidance > Advice and Guidance > Scrutiny questions




Scrutiny questions

Suggested questions to help councillors scrutinise their local services

We believe that complaints raised by the public can be an important source of information to help councillors identify issues that are affecting local people. Complaints can therefore play a key part in supporting the scrutiny of public services.

Below are range of questions that councillors could ask their local authorities on different topics. The questions are from our Focus Reports - visit the Focus Reports page for the reports in full.

Special Guardianship Orders (SGOs) 

Councils' use of bed and breakfast accommodation to house families 

Or sign up to newsletter to keep up to date with decision statements

Scrutiny questions

Annual letters

Home > Information Centre > Councils Performance > A

Councils' performance

Copies of annual review letters we send to councils

We write to councils annually to feed back on their performance in dealing with complaints that we receive about them. These annual review letters include a summary of the complaint statistics we have recorded in the year.

The aim is to provide councils with information to help them improve complaint handling, and to inform the improvement of local services for the public.

You can view the annual review letters below. We have produced supplementary guidance on interpreting local authority statistics.

In recent years we have also made available our complaint statistics for all councils and care providers in spreadsheet format - see annual review reports.

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z

Councils starting with the letter A

Adur District Council >

Allerdale District Council >

Our latest report: “Under Pressure”

Launching here today - Identifies the lessons we can learn to avoid pitfalls and better manage change

Don't throw away the rule book or ditch public sector values when under pressure – they are the answer not the problem!

Also publishing -

‘Principles of good administrative practice’

“In local government there is no substitute for doing boring really well” Max Caller CBE

Looking ahead...

- How can we help ensure complaints intelligence feeds into your scrutiny work programme?
- Is there anything additional we could do for you to help support you in your scrutiny role?

I welcome your thoughts and questions now...

Or, send your thoughts and suggestions to m.bench@lgo.org.uk