

*Prem:* The Ombudsman does not normally consider a complaint unless a council has first had an opportunity to deal with that complaint itself. So if someone complains to the Ombudsman without having taken the matter up with a council the Ombudsman will usually refer it back to the council as a 'premature complaint' to see if the council can itself resolve the matter. The figures here relate to those complaints which were made prematurely and which were referred to the council for consideration.

*Tot ex 26(5):* This is the total of all decisions, excluding those where we referred the complaint back to the council as 'premature'.

### 3. Response times

These figures record the average time a council takes to respond to our - first enquiries on a complaint. It is measured in calendar days from the date we send our letter/fax/email to the date that we receive a substantive response from the council. Councils' own figures may differ somewhat, since they tend to be recorded from the date our letter is received until the despatch of their response.

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