STATES OF JERSEY



STATES OF JERSEY COMPLAINTS PANEL: REPORT FOR 2018

Presented to the States on 5th September 2019 by the Privileges and Procedures Committee

STATES GREFFE

2019 R.114

FOREWORD BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PRIVILEGES AND PROCEDURES COMMITTEE

The Privileges and Procedures Committee would like to place on record its sincere thanks to the Chairman, Deputy Chairmen and all of the members of the Panel for their honorary work dealing with complaints during this very active period. They have been most impressive.

The Committee recognises that they are extremely busy people and generously give their time freely to serve the community, for which the Committee is very appreciative. Their work mirrors that of an Ombudsman and is of great value to the Island, but has no cost to the taxpayer.

The Panel's aim is to ensure that public services are administered in accordance with accepted policies and procedures. Complaints are generally only taken forward by the Panel once a complainant has exhausted the internal complaints procedures available. It is therefore vital that every Department has a complaints procedure, which is accessible and readily publicised, and maintains a register of complaints. The Privileges and Procedures Committee is very pleased to see that informal resolution has played a greater part in the Panel's work over the last few years. It also supports the Panel's efforts to strengthen its relationship with the Executive, in order to work together to enhance complaint handling and improve the provision of public services in the Island.

The Panel consists of 12 members. This provides a broad base from which Boards can be convened, avoids any conflicts of interest which are understandably common in an Island community and ensures that complaints are assessed impartially and without bias.

The following have been members since 2009:

Mr. Bob Bonney (stepping down September 2019)

Mr. Chris Beirne (Deputy Chairman).

These members were first appointed in 2012:

Mr. David McGrath (stepping down September 2019)

Mr. Graeme Marett.

The following 4 members joined the Panel in 2013:

Mr. Stuart Catchpole, Q.C. (Deputy Chairman)

Mr. Geoffrey George Crill (Chairman)

Mrs. Janice Eden

Mr. John Moulin.

These are the 4 new members of the Panel who joined in 2017:

Mrs. Sue Cuming

Mr. David Greenwood

Mr. Gavin Fraser

Mr. Gwyn Llewellin.

The Privileges and Procedures Committee is pleased to present the report of the States of Jersey Complaints Panel for 2018.

STATES OF JERSEY COMPLAINTS PANEL: REPORT FOR 2018

Dear Chairman,

I have pleasure in forwarding to you the report for 2018, which also includes the resolution of the 7 matters outstanding at the end of 2017.

The Complaints Panel provides a service to the Public by undertaking independent investigations into complaints relating to Ministers and States Departments where it is alleged that they have not acted properly or fairly or have provided poor service.

Everyone has a right to expect a good standard of service from Government Departments and to have things put right if they go wrong. When someone believes that something has gone wrong in a decision-making process, Departments and public bodies should manage complaints properly to ensure that customers' concerns are dealt with appropriately. Good complaint handling is a fundamental part of good administration.

Complaints are a valuable source of feedback for the Government: they provide an audit trail and can be an early warning of failures in service delivery. When handled well, complaints provide an opportunity for the organisation to improve services and its reputation. Moreover, prompt and efficient complaint handling and learning from complaints, can save the Island time and money, by preventing a complaint from escalating unnecessarily and by reducing the number of complaints received in the future.

The Complaints Panel deals with complaints from across the whole Government administration, whose complaints processes are quite varied. However, certain principles should be common to all. Good complaint handling should be led from the top, focused on outcomes, fair and proportionate, and sensitive to complainants' needs. The process should be clear and straightforward and readily accessible to customers. It should be well-managed so that decisions are taken quickly, things put right where necessary, and lessons learnt for service improvement.

This report provides information about the work undertaken by the States Complaints Panel during 2018. It was an exceptionally busy year for the Panel. Seven complaints were carried forward into 2018, and there were 21 new formal complaints received during the year. This was the most ever received in one year. There were also an unprecedented 8 hearings convened during 2018 – again the most ever held in one year. Six of the 8 complaints heard were upheld, and the findings of all 8 complaints included recommendations that modifications be made to existing processes to avoid a repetition in the future.

In addition to the 21 formal complaints, the Deputy Greffier of the States received 11 enquiries regarding complaints which were not taken forward. These calls have been logged since 2016, in order to provide a more accurate indication of the level of work undertaken by the Panel. There were a number of matters resolved informally, through the minor intervention of either the Chairman, Deputy Chairmen or Deputy Greffier.

Whilst most of the formal complaints received related to decisions made by a wide variety of Ministers, there was a marked rise in complaints relating to health care matters. It should also be noted that complainants, apart from exceptional

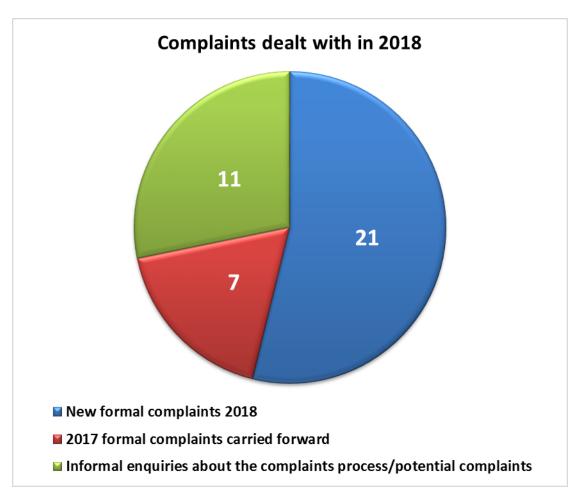
circumstances, can only make a formal complaint to the Panel when they have exhausted the appeals or complaints process within the Department concerned. Departments have their own complaints processes, but many complainants who approached the Panel during 2018 cited an insufficient level of trust in the Department concerned to have dealt with their complaint impartially, and this is troubling. People need to trust the complaints process and to feel that internal reviews will be conducted fairly and without bias. We welcome the Government's stated intention to enhance its customer feedback process and encourage the Public to comment more on the services it provides. It is heartening that the Government appears to recognise, perhaps more than it has previously, that complaints offer an opportunity for service improvement, and play a vital part in the success of an organisation.

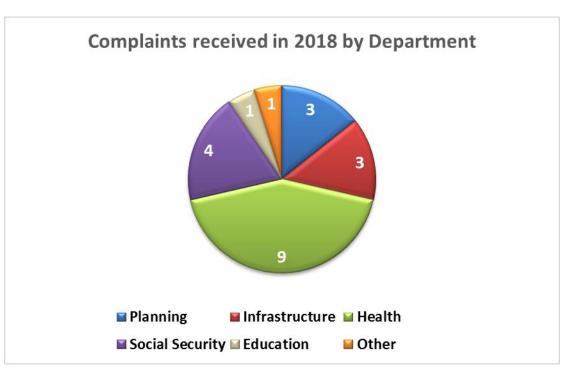
The Panel recognises the sterling work undertaken across Government Departments, and is pleased that in many of the cases dealt with during 2018, Departments have demonstrated best practice in complaint handling processes, and have acknowledged mistakes, apologised and sought to remedy guidelines and policies to ensure that such complaints are not duplicated in the future. In particular, the approach adopted by the Customer and Local Services Department (formerly the Social Security Department) should be applauded, as they actively engaged with the Panel whenever a complaint was submitted, seeking to find a resolution or undertaking a review of actions in order to try to remedy the situation. They did not regard a complaint as a threat or an act of aggression, but as an opportunity to improve upon service delivery.

However, there does remain a sense, in certain Departments, that the Complaints Boards' findings are not supportable, unless they uphold the Department's position. This has been particularly evident in responses received in relation to Health and Community Services cases. It is hoped that the upholding of the Boards' findings by the Royal Court may encourage Departments to pay rather more heed to a Board's findings and recommendations in the future. It is perhaps asking much of a Minister and departmental officers to consider dispassionately the findings and recommendations of a Board in relation to a complaint in which they may have been directly involved. In accordance with the principles of OneGov, perhaps consideration should be given to the possible benefits of the response to a Board's findings and recommendations being prepared by officials not connected with the relevant Ministry or Department.

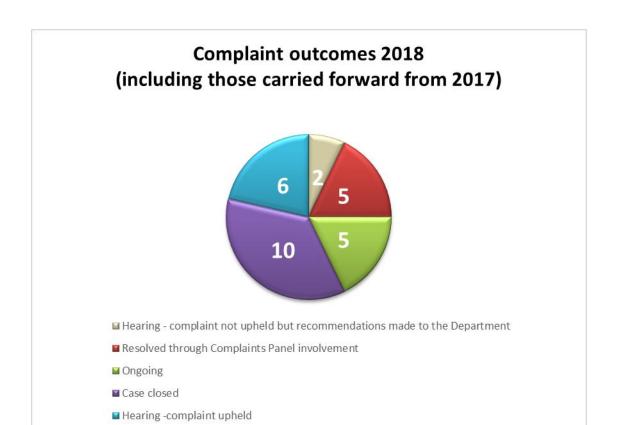
Geoffrey Crill Chairman, Complaints Panel

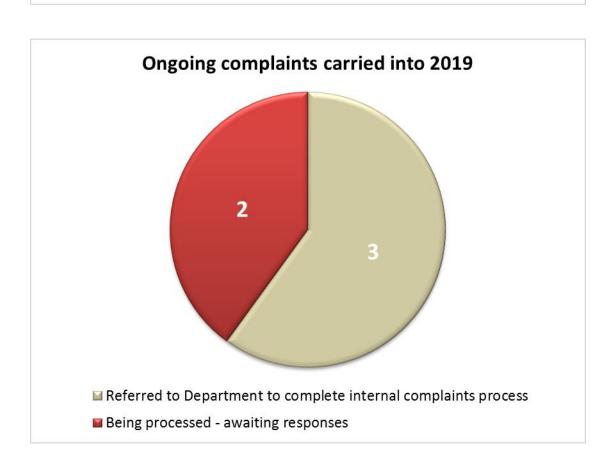
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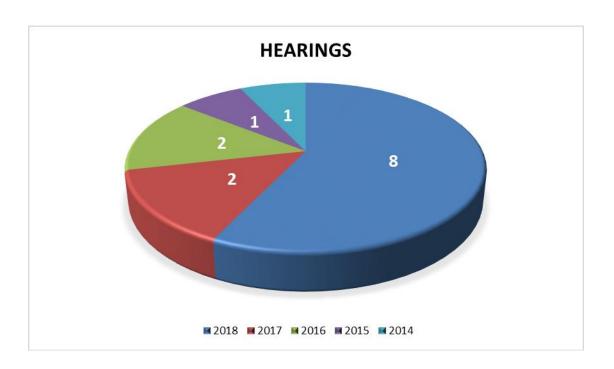


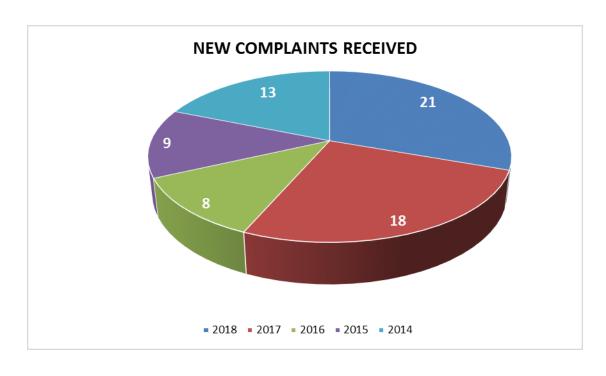


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SEVEN COMPLAINTS WERE OUTSTANDING AT THE END OF 2017 AND CARRIED FORWARD INTO 2018

(1) 1386.21.22(3) vs. SEB/Education

Complaint against the Education Department/ States Employment Board regarding the way in which Mr. X's dismissal from the Youth Service was handled

A statement of complaint was received on 19th September 2017.

A résumé was received from the Department on 12th October 2017 and referred to the Chairman, who decided that the circumstances surrounding the case justified the setting-up of a Board to hear the complaint. The hearing took place on 22nd January 2018, and the findings were presented to the States on 9th April 2018 (R.45/2018 refers).

The Complaint centred on the way in which a referral had been made to the Disclosure and Barring Service ("DBS") in the UK, following Mr. X's dismissal from the Jersey Youth Service ("the Service").

Mr. X had been employed as a Team Leader with the Service until 14th April 2014, when, after 35 years working with young people and following a disciplinary hearing, he had been dismissed from his post. It was the view of the Complaints Board that the Education Department should have made it clear to Mr. X, at the commencement of the disciplinary process, that a possible outcome of the proceedings could be a barring referral to the DBS, which would, of course, have a material detrimental effect on Mr. X's opportunities for re-employment in a sector in which he had previously led an unblemished career. The Board considered that the Education Department was at fault in failing to bring the real possibility of such a referral in the event of dismissal to Mr. X's early attention. The Board further considered that it should be a matter of standard practice in any disciplinary proceedings involving an employee's behaviour with children, or vulnerable adults, which might result in dismissal, to notify the employee at the outset of disciplinary processes that the employee might, in such event, be liable to be referred to the DBS.

A further limb of the complaint was the delay in making the referral between the conclusion of the disciplinary proceedings and the referral itself, a period of almost 2 months, which Mr. X claimed created difficulties with his new employer. The Board took the view that the delay in making the referral, whilst being symptomatic of a lack of clear policy at the time relating to referrals, and less than ideal, was not material. In the context of the protection of children being paramount, a late referral was better than no referral. Nevertheless, the Board urged the Department, in reviewing its referral policy, to ensure that consideration of a referral to the DBS follows seamlessly from the conclusion of the relevant disciplinary proceedings.

Following the Department's referral, the DBS was undecided and sought further input from the States of Jersey Police. Prior to making its submission to the DBS, the States of Jersey Police sought further information from the Education Department. Evidently, it was the Police submission that 'tipped the balance', resulting in Mr. X's inclusion on the barring register. The Police submission was independent of the Education Department's original referral, yet it clearly relied, to some extent at least, on the information provided by telephone by the Education Department. That the Education Department did not keep a record, or substantial note, of the telephone conversation(s)

with the Police in relation to Mr. X can only be described as poor practice. The Department, as immediate past employer to Mr. X, was disclosing to the Police matters relating to his employment which, as such, should have formed part of his employment record and been available to him. Whilst the Board has no reason to suppose that the Education Department made any inappropriate statements to the Police during the telephone conversation(s) concerning Mr. X, had a proper record or note been taken at the time, any speculation could have been easily answered. The Board recommended that greater diligence be shown in recording, or taking note, of material conversations relating to employees, or former employees, which should properly form part of the record of employment.

The DBS procedures are governed by English Statute, and it appeared that there was no obligation on any party to inform an individual if he or she had been referred to the DBS. Whilst the Board could not make any recommendations with regard to DBS policy or procedures, it expressed its concern that an individual may have no knowledge that a process had been initiated which could have fundamental and far-reaching professional consequences for him or her. The Board, therefore, asked that the Education Department (and any other States Department in a position to make a referral to the DBS) should consider carefully whether it was fair and equitable to inform the subject that he or she has been the subject of a referral to DBS at the time of such referral.

The Board members for this hearing were the Chairman of the Complaints Panel, Geoffrey Crill, Janice Eden and David Greenwood.

Status as at 31.12.2018:

CLOSED: FINDINGS PUBLISHED AND RECOMMENDATIONS MADE.

(2) 1386.2.1.2(334) vs. Planning

Complaint against the Minister and Department for the Environment regarding a decision relating to the use of land at a property

A statement of complaint was received on 27th September 2017. A résumé was received from the Department on 24th October 2017 and referred to the Chairman, in order that he could consider whether the matter justified a Complaints Board hearing. As the complainant was known to the Chairman, he declared a conflict of interest and therefore the case was referred to one of the Deputy Chairmen and another Panel member. They met to discuss the matter on 1st December 2017, and decided to seek an informal resolution of the case in the first instance, failing which a hearing would be convened.

The Deputy Greffier contacted the Department and discussed the case with officers. A positive formal response was received on 15th December 2017 and referred to the Deputy Chairman for further consideration. On 29th December 2017, the Deputy Greffier contacted the Department to confirm the Panel's stance and seek an agreement as to the way forward. In February 2018 the matter was resolved to both sides' satisfaction without necessitating a hearing. The complainant wrote to the Deputy Greffier afterwards in the following terms –

"Whilst very satisfied with the outcome and appreciative of the Complaint Panel's support, the episode with the department created significant stress and cost in seeking advice and support to validate what had been confirmed previously by the same department under law due process. It clearly justifies the need for an independent Complaints Board to take an impartial and independent view of government, its departments and officers to ensure what looks like the insurmountable has a route to resolution when the position and stance of a department looks unjustified".

Status as at 31.12.2018:

CLOSED: RESOLVED INFORMALLY.

(3) 1386.2.1.7(20) vs. Social Security

Complaint against Social Security Department regarding an Income Support claim

A statement of complaint was received on 19th October 2017 from Deputy G.P. Southern of St. Helier, acting on the complainant's behalf.

A résumé was requested from the Department by 10th November 2017, but in the meantime, Deputy Southern and the complainant met with Departmental officers. Unfortunately, the outcome was not satisfactory to the complainant, and therefore the case was referred on to the Chairman on 5th December 2017, in order that he could consider whether the matter justified a Complaints Board hearing. In accordance with the Panel's procedures, the papers were also sent to a member of the Panel for consideration.

Having discussed the matter with his colleague, the Chairman decided to contact the Department to seek an informal resolution to the matter, and a revised payment plan was agreed. However, this was unacceptable to the complainant, who requested that the matter be considered by the Deputy Chairmen. Having reviewed the papers sent to them, the Deputy Chairmen noted the very positive and supportive outcome achieved by way of mediation by the Chairman with Social Security in relation to the required repayment terms. The Deputy Chairmen concluded that the appropriate administrative procedures had been followed, and did not consider that there was a case made for regarding the action taken by the Department to be 'contrary to the law'.

In April 2018, the complainant was advised that the Deputy Chairmen had chosen to maintain the decision made by the Chairman that the case did not justify further review.

Status as at 31.12.2018: CLOSED.

(4) 1386.2.1.2(335) vs. Planning

A statement of complaint was received on 17th November 2017 against the Planning Department, regarding the administration of a planning application.

A résumé was received from the Department on 15th December 2017 and referred to the Chairman, in order that he could consider whether the matter justified a Complaints Board hearing. In accordance with the Panel's procedures, the papers were also sent to a member of the Panel for consideration. A hearing was held on 7th June 2018, and the findings were published on 23rd August 2018 (R.111/2018 refers).

The hearing focused on complaints made by the complainant regarding the way in which planning applications for his property were administered. The Board upheld the complaints made against the Minister for the Environment and the Planning Department that a member of the Public was treated in 'an oppressive and improperly discriminatory' manner during the planning application process.

The complainant had complained that excessive monitoring of ongoing building works at his property, by 2 Enforcement Officers, had created an atmosphere of distrust and conflict, leading to the removal and destruction of windows without permission, for which he was later prosecuted. The Board did not condone the fact that he decided to take matters into his own hands and dispose of the windows, but it did understand his rationale for doing so.

This case was a prime example of how the Government interacting with private citizens can have an enormous effect both emotionally and financially on those concerned, especially when communication breaks down, as it did in this instance. The fact that one of the Enforcement Officers had been disciplined when he was a Police Officer, following a substantiated misconduct complaint by the complainant, should have been taken into consideration by Planning; and that Officer should not have been involved in his case in any way. His continued presence in itself was provocative and antagonistic. The Board considered that every effort should be made to avoid any conflicts of interest in the future by Officers, especially in relation to compliance matters. It cannot be just, that someone who was the subject of a substantiated official complaint, can then occupy a position of power over the person who made that complaint.

The Board recommended that there should be a rigorous procedure implemented to review and monitor potential conflicts of interest in relation to those involved in the planning process, and that a senior manager should be tasked with the responsibility of having such oversight and have the power to intervene, particularly when a complaint is made. It also recommended that the complainant should receive a written apology from the Department.

The Board members for this hearing were the Deputy Chairman of the Complaints Panel, Stuart Catchpole Q.C., Janice Eden and Graeme Marett.

Status as at 31.12.2018:

CLOSED: FINDINGS PUBLISHED AND RECOMMENDATIONS MADE.

(5) 1386.2.1.3(24) vs. Education

A statement of complaint was received on 21st November 2017 against the Education Department, regarding the overpayment of student fees.

A résumé was received from the Department on 15th December 2017 and referred to the Chairman, in order that he could consider whether the matter justified a Complaints Board hearing. In accordance with the Panel's procedures, the papers were also sent to a member of the Panel for consideration.

The Chairman was extremely sympathetic to the complainant's situation, but did not see any evidence that the Department had acted outside its established procedures and policies. However, although the Chairman did not feel that there was sufficient justification for a hearing, he expressed disappointment that there appeared to have been a complete lack of any dialogue from either the Education Department or the Treasury, as to how the repayment might be effected. Whilst the Treasury referred to payment by instalments and sent a direct debit form, no consideration was given to the fact that the complainant was in receipt of Long-Term Invalidity Allowance, and it should have been obvious that repayment was going to be difficult. The Chairman, mindful that a sympathetic and understanding approach to devising a viable repayment programme might have eased the complainant's concerns even before the formal invoice was raised, requested that the Deputy Greffier write to the Education Department to highlight this.

The complainant was advised of this decision on 29th December 2017, and decided to request that the matter be reviewed by the Deputy Chairmen. Neither considered the case justified further review by a hearing – they were both sympathetic to the complainant's situation, but did not agree that the Education Department had acted outside of the policies and procedures which governed these circumstances. The complainant was informed of this outcome in March 2018.

Status as at 31.12.2018: CLOSED.

(6) 1386.2.1.20(4) vs. Minister for Infrastructure / Property Holdings Department

Complaint against the Minister for Infrastructure / Jersey Property Holdings regarding the handling of foreshore encroachment claims

A statement of complaint was received on 15th December 2017 and a résumé was requested from the Department. The Chairman determined that the matter should be reviewed, and a hearing was convened on 11th April 2018. The findings were published on 1st June 2018 (R.71/2018 refers). The hearing focused on complaints made against the Minister for Infrastructure and the Property Holdings Department ("JPH") regarding the way in which the complainants' respective properties' encroachments onto the foreshore at Grève d'Azette were administered.

Having reviewed submissions from both sides, the Board concluded that the actions of JPH (and thereby the Minister) in the cases of the complainants were 'unjust, oppressive or improperly discriminatory' and 'contrary to the generally accepted principles of

natural justice'. It considered that the sliding scale, adopted by JPH to calculate an appropriate 'discount' in relation to encroachments which had been in place for a period of time, was unfair, discriminatory and arbitrary, and did not deal with private property owners in a consistent manner. It also appeared to the Board that JPH exploited the vulnerable position that the Complainants found themselves in, as owners urgently needing to sell their respective properties.

The Board agreed that, when it was approached by a neighbouring owner seeking clarification, or ratification of a boundary, the Public had a clear duty to act fairly, promptly and transparently in its dealings with that owner. It did not consider that JPH did so in either of these cases.

The Board asked for a response to its findings from the new Minister for Infrastructure by early August 2018. In his reply to the Board's findings, the Minister appeared to consider that all property owned by the Public should be dealt with on the same basis. The Board believed that to be clearly nonsense, as some property could be held for entirely commercial purposes, some for the provision of public services, and some for more esoteric public benefit, like monuments and sites of special interest. The Board did not consider it to have been appropriate that JPH approached negotiations on an exclusively commercial basis.

The Minister had also contended that 16 months was an appropriate period within which to conclude negotiations with the Complainants. Whether it was due to workloads, or commercial transactions being given priority, the Board was of the opinion that the negotiations in these cases were unnecessarily protracted and resulted in a great deal of stress to the Complainants.

It was hoped that once a clear policy regarding the fixing of the boundary of the foreshore and the payment of compensation in relation to any encroachments had been adopted, the Minister would review the terms concluded with the Complainants, and refund them any difference between the compensation each of them paid and the amount of compensation that would be payable had the new policy been in place at the time.

The Board members who took part in the hearing were the Chairman of the Complaints Panel, Geoffrey Crill, John Moulin and Gavin Fraser.

Status as at 31.12.2018:

CLOSED: FINDINGS PUBLISHED AND RECOMMENDATIONS MADE.

(7) 1386.2.1.9(16) vs. Health and Social Services

Complaint against the Health and Social Services Department

A statement of complaint was received on 2nd February 2017.

The Deputy Greffier contacted the Department as she was uncertain whether the internal appeals process had been exhausted. Following the informal involvement of the Complaints Panel, the Chief Executive, Health and Social Services wrote to advise that the complaint would be reviewed under the second stage of the Health and Social

Services Department Complaints Policy. This was an external review conducted by the Guernsey Health and Social Services Department. The Deputy Greffier wrote to the complainant on 6th March 2017 to advise if, following the external review, she remained dissatisfied with the way in which her case had been handled, she should get back in touch and the Complaints Panel process would be continued.

The complainant contacted the Deputy Greffier in April 2018 to ask for the case to be revived. Following consideration of a résumé, the Chairman determined that the case did not warrant further review. However, the complainant requested that the matter be referred to the Deputy Chairmen, and they decided that a hearing should be convened. The hearing commenced on 18th October 2018, but was adjourned so that specific detail could be provided by the Department in relation to a number of points raised by the Chairman of the Board. The meeting resumed on 7th December 2018.

The Board members for the hearing were the Deputy Chairman of the Complaints Panel, Stuart Catchpole, Q.C., David Greenwood and Graeme Marett.

Status as at 31.12.2018: HEARING HELD – AWAITING CONFIRMATION OF FINDINGS BY THE BOARD.

TWENTY-ONE NEW FORMAL COMPLAINTS WERE RECEIVED IN 2018

(1) 1386/2/1/9(17) vs. Health

A statement of complaint was received on 12th February 2018.

A résumé was received from the Department and referred to the Chairman, in order that he could consider whether the matter justified a Complaints Board hearing. In accordance with the Panel's procedures, the papers were also sent to a member of the Panel for consideration. Having discussed the matter with his colleague, the Chairman decided that there was justification for a hearing, and this took place on 4th October 2018. The Report associated with this case was published in early January 2019 (R.4/2019 refers).

Mrs. X had been awaiting further treatment following an operation in the UK. During her initial time in the UK she had experienced both physical difficulties as a consequence of the travel requirements, and financial difficulties in meeting additional travel costs, which had not been covered by the Department. She had made it clear to the Department that she would not be able to consider further treatment outside of the Island unless full financial support was given. Furthermore, the timing of any treatment would need to take into consideration her childcare needs.

The Board believed that the Department either wilfully ignored what Mrs. X had told it, or its record-keeping was so poor that the information was not recorded and retained. On many occasions, Mrs. X was informed, or was led to believe, that she would be contacted by the Department and was continuously let down. Some of the information which she was given was unclear and confusing. The Board considered this to be unacceptable. It was of vital importance that people under the care of the Department should be communicated with in a timely and professional manner, especially when they may be very ill and therefore vulnerable.

The Board was very disappointed to note the dismissive attitude of some of the staff in the Department, and the lack of action taken in response to the report of the independent UK investigator, who had upheld Mrs. X's complaint, regarding the inappropriate language, style and tone used by staff in electronic mail exchanges. The Department's behaviour at this time was at best extremely discourteous, and at worst cruel and potentially negligent. The Board recommended that the Department put measures in place to ensure that no other patient was ever ignored in this way again.

It is understood that since the hearing, the Department has apologised and provided Mrs. X with funding, equivalent to the cost of the treatment in the UK and associated travel and accommodation, to enable her to source her own treatment. Whilst a cash payment may have provided some sort of resolution to Mrs. X's situation, the Board was surprised and concerned that the Department should, to all intents and purposes, 'buy off' the problem which was of its own making.

The Board made a number of recommendations and asked the Minister for Health and Social Services for a response before the end of March 2019.

The Board members were the Chairman of the Complaints Panel, Geoffrey Crill, Janice Eden and David Greenwood.

Status as at 31.12.2018:

HEARING HELD: AWAITING CONFIRMATION OF FINDINGS BY THE BOARD.

(2) 1386/2/1/7(21) vs. Social Security and Health and Social Services

Complaint against the Social Security Department in relation to the processing of an application for Long-Term Care and the refusal to fund a short break service from Autism Jersey from the Community Living Fund

A statement of complaint was received on 9th February 2018, and both Departments were contacted for a résumé to be prepared. This prompted the Departments to arrange meetings with the complainant regarding the service issues that had been encountered.

It was noted that the Social Security Department had embarked on a very difficult task of implementing the quite complex Long-Term Care Benefit, and the Department had been monitoring its implementation and addressing any problems which arose. The discussion with the complainant enabled the Department to revisit some of the service issues encountered on this claim, and to confirm that processes had been improved to avoid a repeat occurrence.

The Health Department also met with the complainant to address the financial issues articulated in the complaint, and this was also resolved satisfactorily without necessitating a hearing. The complainant wrote to the Deputy Greffier afterwards in the following terms –

"I am happy to agree that this complaint has been resolved by informal resolution. I would also like to point out that I have been treated respectfully by both Departments in the handling of this complaint and I feel that my views have been listened to and that action has been taken to avoid a recurrence, not only for our family but also other families who will find themselves in a similar position."

Status as at 31.12.2018:

CLOSED: RESOLVED INFORMALLY.

(3) 1386/2/1/7(22) vs. the Social Security Department

Complaint against the Social Security Department in relation to the determination of the contribution classification for several Company Directors

A statement of complaint was received on 23rd February 2018, and the Department was contacted for a résumé, which was then referred to the Chairman and another independent Panel member for consideration.

They considered that this was really a legal matter. The Social Security Department had administered the case in accordance with the correct processes and procedures which exist; the issue the complainant had was with the definition of substantial control within the <u>Social Security (Jersey) Law 1974</u>, which was outside of the Complaints Panel's remit. The Chairman therefore decided, in accordance with Article 3(5) of the

Administrative Decisions (Review) (Jersey) Law 1982, that a review of this case was not justified. However, this was unacceptable to the complainant, who requested that the matter be considered by the Deputy Chairmen. Having reviewed the papers sent to them, the Deputy Chairmen concurred with the view expressed by the Chairman, and did not consider that there was a case made for regarding the action taken by the department to be 'contrary to the law'.

In May 2018, the complainant was advised that the Deputy Chairmen had chosen to maintain the decision made by the Chairman that the case did not justify further review.

Status as at 31.12.2018: CLOSED.

(4) 1386/2/1/3(25) vs. Education

Complaint against the Minister for Education regarding the way in which an application for student finance was administered

A statement of complaint was received on 29th March 2018, and the Department was contacted for a résumé, which was then referred to the Chairman and another independent Panel member for consideration. A hearing was convened on 19th July 2019 and the findings published on 7th August 2018 (R.106/2018 refers).

The hearing focused on complaints made by Mrs. X against the Minister for Education, regarding the way in which an application for student finance support for her daughter was administered.

In an unprecedented move, the findings document was published just a fortnight after the hearing in order that the Board's recommendations could be acted upon swiftly by the Minister.

Having reviewed submissions from both sides, the Board concluded that the actions of the Education Department's Student Finance section in withdrawing the offer of a Bursary to 'top up' the fees for a specialised course were unjust, oppressive and improperly discriminatory.

The Board accepted that the Department had placed a great deal of importance on ensuring that no student was 'worse off' under the new student funding scheme, which was approved by the States in April 2018. However, the withdrawal of the full funding to which the student had been entitled under the scheme, which existed at the time of her application, had left her undoubtedly in such a position.

The Board considered that the Department had failed to apply the provisions as they existed at the time of the application. Officers had a duty to apply what was in force at that time, rather than delaying, or 'parking', applications to await a new scheme, which was imminent. This wasn't fair, or reasonable. The adoption, or otherwise, of new funding provisions was a political matter, and not one to be assumed by administrators whose task was to administer the provisions as they exist at any given time.

The Board recognised that the complainant had made every effort to prepare the groundwork before her daughter embarked on auditions for a college place, in order to ensure that the course was affordable, and to avoid raising her daughter's expectations unfairly. Having secured a funding commitment, she had then had to endure months of anguish whilst shielding her daughter, who was concentrating on her G.C.S.E. exams, from the fact that the pursuit of her dream career could be prevented on financial grounds. The Board urged the Minister to reconsider the application urgently, in order to enable a very talented young Islander to access her studies in September 2018.

Following the publication of the findings, the Minister for Education agreed to restore the funding to the sum originally envisaged, and to ensure that adequate future funding for the entirety of the student's course was secured.

The Board members who took part in the hearing were the Chairman of the Complaints Panel, Geoffrey Crill, John Moulin and Gavin Fraser.

Status as at 31.12.2018:

CLOSED: FINDINGS PUBLISHED AND RECOMMENDATIONS MADE.

(5) 1386/2/1/7(23) vs. Social Security

Complaint against the Social Security Department regarding the way in which an Income Support claim was administered

A statement of complaint was received on 23rd April 2018, and the Department was contacted for a résumé. This prompted the Departments to arrange meetings with the complainant regarding the service issues that had been encountered, and the complaint was resolved satisfactorily without necessitating a hearing.

Status as at 31.12.2018:

CLOSED: RESOLVED INFORMALLY.

(6) 1386/2/1/2(336) vs. Planning

Complaint against the Minister for the Environment regarding failure to ensure that a development at Petit Port was completed in accordance with approved revised plans

A statement of complaint was received on 1st May 2018, and the Department was contacted for a résumé, which was then referred to the Chairman and another independent Panel member for consideration. The Chairman considered that the Minister personally, and the Department generally, appeared to be monitoring the development closely, and had obtained explanations from the developer's team where such were appropriate, and also assurances from the builder in order to remain satisfied that the development would conform to the approved scheme. On that basis, he did not consider that the complaint could be taken further.

However, this view was unacceptable to the complainant, who requested that the matter be considered by the Deputy Chairmen. Having reviewed the papers sent to them, the Deputy Chairmen concurred with the Chairman's view.

In August 2018, the complainant was advised that the Deputy Chairmen had chosen to maintain the decision made by the Chairman that the case did not justify further review.

Status as at 31.12.2018: CLOSED.

(7) 1386/2(94) vs. Viscounts

Administrative Decisions (Review) (Jersey) Law 1982

Complaint against the Viscount's Department regarding the incomplete adjudication of a boundary

A statement of complaint was received on 3rd May 2018, and the Department was contacted for a résumé, which was then referred to the Chairman and another independent Panel member for consideration.

The Chairman considered that that a *Vue du Vicomte* was a judicial process, governed by the Royal Court Rules, and therefore was not a matter for the Complaints Board; the appropriate course of action would be to raise an appeal before the Royal Court.

However, this view was unacceptable to the complainant, who requested that the matter be considered by the Deputy Chairmen. Having reviewed the papers sent to them, the Deputy Chairmen concurred with the Chairman's view.

In August 2018, the complainant was advised that the Deputy Chairmen had chosen to maintain the decision made by the Chairman that the case did not justify further review.

Status as at 31.12.2018: CLOSED.

(8) 1386.2.1(7) vs. Social Security

Complaint against Social Security regarding the way in which a pensions claim was administered

A statement of complaint was received on 28th May 2018, and the Department was contacted for a résumé, which was then referred to the Chairman and another independent Panel member for consideration.

The Chairman did not consider that there were sufficient grounds for a hearing; however, this view was unacceptable to the complainant, who requested that the matter be considered by the Deputy Chairmen. Having reviewed the papers sent to them, the Deputy Chairmen decided that there was justification for a hearing, and it was convened

on 8th November 2018, and the findings published on 20th December 2018 (R.156/2018 refers).

The complainant was born in 1955 and had registered with the Social Security Department before 1st January 1975. As a consequence, she was one of a relatively small group of women, who were in a position to claim an old age pension on reaching the age of 60. In March 2014, the complainant had requested a pension forecast and had been advised that she would be entitled to a pension at the age of 60 and informed how much she would receive each week. However, at around the same time, she had become aware of changes to the pension age, so had accessed the pension calculator on the gov.je website and had entered her date of birth. This had provided her with a pension age of 65 years and 2 months, which she would not reach until May 2020. The complainant had not noticed anything on the website to indicate that women who had registered with the Department before 1st January 1975 could claim their pension at 60.

In 2017, a chance encounter with a friend of the same age had led the complainant to go to the Social Security Department and subsequently make a claim in writing for her pension. Her claim was made in January 2017, some 22 months after she had become eligible to claim her pension. She complained that the Department had only backdated her claim for 6 months, and argued that she was entitled to the money that had been paid in by her former husband, which she believed would have resulted in her receiving an additional £6,500.

The Board was unable to uphold the complaint because, in accordance with legislation, the maximum period for which a pension could be backdated was 6 months, which had been paid to her. Nor did the Board find that the Department acted in a way which was discriminatory towards the complainant, because it was not required by law to proactively contact her to advise her that she would have been entitled to receive her pension from the age of 60.

However, the Board was of the view that the Department should take a more active role in providing information to alert people to the date from which they can claim their pension. Although the information about women in a similar position to the complainant was on the gov.je website, it was not easy to locate. It was recommended that this matter be addressed. As only a few hundred women were in the same situation as the complainant, and their pension age was unaffected by subsequent changes in legislation, the Board considered that the Department should take active measures to ensure they are aware of the position.

Furthermore, it considered that the Department should be more explicit in alerting people that they might lose money if they fail to claim a pension within 3 months of reaching the relevant age. The Board made recommendations to the Department that the letters sent out to people should be clearer about the age from which they could claim their pension, and the implications of not doing so. The Board felt that because the Department currently placed the onus on individuals to take action, this could be problematic for some people, and the Department should be aware of this. Whilst acknowledging that the process adopted by the Department in restricting backdated payments to 6 months might reflect the situation in other jurisdictions, the Board suggested that the Minister should determine the fairness of this rule.

Although not able to uphold the complaint, the Chairman commended the complainant for raising awareness of the situation.

The Board members for this hearing were Chris Beirne, one of the Deputy Chairmen of the Complaints Panel, Gavin Fraser and David McGrath.

Status as at 31.12.2018:

CLOSED: FINDINGS PUBLISHED AND RECOMMENDATIONS MADE.

(9) 1386/2/1/9(18) vs. Health and Social Services

Complaint against the Health and Social Services Department regarding an unresolved complaint and allegations of racism

A statement of complaint was received on 12th June 2018, and the Department was contacted for a résumé, which was then referred to the Chairman and another independent Panel member for consideration. A hearing was convened on Friday 26th October 2018, and the findings published on 8th November 2018 (R.148/2018 refers).

The hearing focused on a complaint made by the complainant that the Health and Social Services Department had failed to engage with him, or to allow him a right of reply, in respect of a decision which had been taken to refer concerns about his professional competence to the professional body with which he was affiliated and registered in Jersey. That professional body had found that there was no case to answer.

The complainant had complained that the manner in which he had been dealt with was both upsetting and disrespectful. He further believed that the actions taken by the Department had shown malicious intent, had an element of racial prejudice, and the language used by employees within the Department had left him feeling 'small' and degraded. The Department had since apologised to him and acknowledged that there had been procedural errors in dealing with his case.

The Board concluded that the manner in which the complainant was treated was 'unjust, oppressive or improperly discriminatory' and 'contrary to the generally accepted principles of natural justice'.

Whilst the Board did not determine that there had been any malicious or racist intent demonstrated towards him, it found that the references made in e-mails, where the complainant was not accorded the dignity of a title, but identified simply by his surname alone, were both disrespectful and discourteous. The Department accepted that criticism and had apologised to the complainant.

The Board concluded that the Department departed from agreed policy when dealing with this particular case, which it finds to be of great concern. There is no real point in having set procedures if they are not going to be followed.

Whilst the Board was pleased to note that the complainant had been sent a letter to apologise for the failures in the administration of the complaint brought against him, it made a number of recommendations to the Minister for Health and Social Services in respect of the handling of complaints, the importance of clearly documenting each step of the process, and proposed that each step of the complaint handling procedure should

be signed off by an independent scrutineer, who had not been part of the original decision-making process.

Following the publication of the findings, the Minister responded (<u>R.148/2018 Res</u>. refers), in which the Board considered he attempted to 'spin' his response to disguise, and even justify, what was a critical failure by the Department to follow its own written procedures. The Board subsequently responded to that response in the following terms –

"Written procedures are established for a reason, and are there to be followed because it is deemed important for due process that such procedures are followed. In this case, the procedure required that the complainant be informed as soon as the Adult Safeguarding Team had decided to refer him to his professional body. The Minister, in his response to the Board's findings, seeks to pass this failure off as a "procedural error", for which apologies have been made to the complainant. This was not a "procedural error", but a failure by the Department to observe and conform to a non-discretionary principle of its own procedure, which deprived the complainant of the basic right to be made aware of accusations made against him.

In his Response, the Minister states that the Complaints Board made "a finding that referral to the GOC was unwarranted or unjustified in all the circumstances". The Board respectfully suggests that the Minister re-reads paragraph 4.6 of its Findings, where it is stated "The Board offers no comment as to whether the outcome of the investigation by the GOC would have been different if the correct processes had been followed.". Nowhere in its Findings has the Board suggested that the referral to the GOC was inappropriate in this case. That decision was always a matter for the Adult Safeguarding Team. The Board reiterates that the procedure in making such a referral should have been followed, but was not, and as a consequence the complainant was denied natural justice.

The Board is confused by the Minister's response at paragraph 4.7, where he states "[the referral to the GOC] is not (nor does it purport to be) a disciplinary or regulatory investigation.". The Minister is referred to paragraph 2.3 of the Findings, where the Director, Community Care and Health, acknowledged that there were two separate strands to the process conducted by the Adult Safeguarding Team, the first dealing with the safeguarding of patients (whether specifically or generally), and the second dealing with professional practice, i.e. disciplinary considerations. The Director further acknowledged that a clear separation of the two distinct strands of the process was desirable. The Minister is also reminded of the evidence given at the Hearing by the Medical Officer of Health who expressed "serious concerns" about "the continuing registration" of the complainant.

Whilst the Board accepts that the Adult Safeguarding Team may have no investigatory powers which could lead to disciplinary action against a practitioner, having the power only to refer a matter to the practitioner's governing body (in this case the GOC), the decision to refer the matter was itself a disciplinary process. It may be argued that, had full details of the complaint been included in the referral to the GOC, the outcome of the GOC's investigations might have been different, but that is entirely speculative. What is certain, however, is that the Department and the MOH maintained their

"serious concerns" about the complainant's continuing registration, and that "vulnerable clients" were "quite likely" to be placed at risk. Referral to the GOC was as much as the Department could do as far as the disciplinary process was concerned, but there can be no doubt from the statements made at the Hearing by both the Director and by the MOH that the referral was made as part of a disciplinary process.

The Board finds the Minister's response at paragraph 4.8 ("The Adult Safeguarding Team have no disciplinary locus in respect of a regulated health professional") somewhat disingenuous, and directly contradicting what the Director said at the Hearing, when he acknowledged that there were two distinct threads to the referral process, namely safeguarding and professional practice. The decision to refer a practitioner is to set the disciplinary ball rolling, and is thus of itself a disciplinary process. The Board maintains its view that such a decision to refer is to move a complaint to another level with potentially farreaching consequences, and that therefore such a decision should have independent authorization before it is actioned.

While the failure of the Department to inform the complainant of the intention to refer him to the GOC was unjust as far as he was concerned, given that the Department retained concerns about the continuing risk to "vulnerable clients" from the continuing registration of the complainant, it was incumbent on the Department to ensure that the referral contained all relevant information. The MOH acknowledged that that had not been the case. It could therefore be argued that the Department had failed to address the public health risk that it perceived to exist as fully as it should have done."

The Board members for this hearing were the Chairman of the Complaints Panel, Geoffrey Crill, Bob Bonney and Sue Cuming.

Status as at 31.12.2018:

CLOSED: FINDINGS PUBLISHED AND RECOMMENDATIONS MADE.

(10) 1386/2/1/2(329) vs. Health and Social Services

Complaint against the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding discriminatory actions by staff during ongoing treatment

A statement of complaint was received on 10th June 2018, and the Department was contacted for a résumé. This prompted the Department to arrange meetings with the complainant regarding the service issues that had been encountered; apologies were forthcoming, and the complaint was resolved satisfactorily without necessitating a hearing.

Status as at 31.12.2018:

CLOSED: RESOLVED INFORMALLY.

(11) 1386.2.1.9(19) vs. Health and Community Services

Complaint against the Minister for Health and Social Services regarding charges for private facilities

A statement of complaint was received on 23rd July 2018, and the Department was contacted for a résumé, which was then referred to the Chairman and another independent Panel member for consideration. The Chairman did not consider that the complaint fell within the ambit of the Panel.

Status as at 31.12.2018: CLOSED.

(12) 1386/2/1/9(20) vs. Health and Community Services

Complaint against the staff accommodation section of the Health and Community Services Department

A statement of complaint was received on 30th July 2018, and the Department was contacted for a résumé, which was then referred to the Chairman and another independent Panel member for consideration. Having carefully considered the papers submitted, the Chairman concluded that this was not an appropriate case for a hearing by a Board. However, the Chairman contacted the Department in order to try and negotiate a reduction in the amount owed. Following discussions, they agreed to reduce the amount owed by £1,000, and the complainant was advised of this outcome on 13th September 2018.

Status as at 31.12.2018:

CLOSED: RESOLVED INFORMALLY.

(13) 1386.2.1.9(21) vs. Health and Community Services

Complaint against the Health and Community Services Department regarding the misdiagnosis of a hernia, the lack of a treatment plan for various other ailments, and prolonged delays in receiving treatment and responses to complaints

A statement of complaint was received on 1st August 2018, and the Department was contacted for a résumé, which was then referred to the Chairman and another independent Panel member for consideration. The Chairman concluded that this was not an appropriate case for a hearing by a Board. Whilst he and the independent member had considerable sympathy for the fact that the complainant had had to face day-to-day life with extensive medical problems, they did not see that the complaints were appropriate to be dealt with under the Administrative Decisions (Review) (Jersey) Law 1982 which governs the work of the Panel. The complaints of alleged misdiagnosis and treatment delay were clinical matters, not administrative decisions or matters of administrative policy, and it appeared to the Chairman that the clinical complaints had been independently assessed by the Department.

However, this view was unacceptable to the complainant, who requested that the matter be considered by the Deputy Chairmen. Having reviewed the papers sent to them, the Deputy Chairmen concurred with the Chairman's view.

In October 2018, the complainant was advised that the Deputy Chairmen had chosen to maintain the decision made by the Chairman that the case did not justify further review.

Status as at 31.12.2018: CLOSED.

(14) 1386.2.1.21(11) vs. Infrastructure and Home Affairs

Complaint against the Department for Infrastructure in relation to the seizure of a vehicle, and the Customs Department regarding the seizure of legal tender and application of GST

A statement of complaint was received on 17th August 2018, and the Department was contacted for a résumé, which was then referred to the Chairman and another independent Panel member for consideration. The Chairman concluded that this was not an appropriate case for a hearing by a Board. He, and the independent member who considered the complaint, were entirely satisfied that Parking Control officers were entitled to seize the vehicle concerned, and would have been entitled to dispose of it had the release fee not been paid within the stipulated timescale. They also could not see that there was a case to answer by Customs, who they considered had acted in accordance with the policies and procedures governing the application of GST.

In September 2018, the complainant was advised of the Chairman's decision and did not seek further review by the Deputy Chairmen.

Status as at 31.12.2018: CLOSED.

(15) 1386/2(96) vs. Social Security Complaint against the Social Security Department against the outcome of a Social Security Tribunal

A statement of complaint was received on 22nd August 2018. The complainant was informed that the complaint, concerning his dissatisfaction with the outcome of a Social Security Tribunal and a lack of response from the Chief Minister, fell outside of the jurisdiction of the Panel. The Deputy Greffier wrote to the complainant advising that a complaint concerning the inactivity of the Chief Minister in responding to the various issues raised would need to be taken forward by the Commissioner for Standards.

Status as at 31.12.2018: CLOSED.

(16) 1386/2/1/2(336) vs. Planning Department/ Judicial Greffe Complaint against the Planning Department/ Judicial Greffe regarding poor communication in a Third Party Appeal process

A statement of complaint was received on 5th September 2018, regarding a complaint that one of the parties involved in a Third-Party Planning Appeal had not been properly communicated with during the process. The Deputy Greffier contacted the Judicial Greffe staff involved to establish the process which had been applied, and then explained the implications to the complainant and advised of the remaining options available. (Fell outside of the Panel's jurisdiction.)

Status as at 31.12.2018: CLOSED.

(17) 1386/2/1/21(12) vs. Infrastructure

Complaint against the Department for Infrastructure regarding the installation of water services connections

A statement of complaint was received on 14th September 2018, and the Department was contacted for a résumé, which was then referred to the Chairman and another independent Panel member for consideration. The Chairman concluded that this was not an appropriate case for a hearing by a Board.

However, this view was unacceptable to the complainant, who requested that the matter be considered by the Deputy Chairmen. Having reviewed the papers sent to them, the Deputy Chairmen requested further information from the Department.

Status as at 31.12.2018: ONGOING.

(18) 1386.2.1.9(19) vs. Planning Department

Complaint against the Minister for the Environment regarding the processing of Planning applications by the complainants and the various companies in which they have significant interests

A statement of complaint was received on 20th September 2018, and the Department was contacted for a résumé which was then referred to the Chairman and another independent Panel member for consideration. The Chairman concluded that this was not an appropriate case for a hearing by a Board. However, this view was unacceptable to the complainant, who requested that the matter be considered by the Deputy Chairmen. There was a slight delay as one of the Deputy Chairmen was conflicted. Having reviewed the papers sent to them, the Deputy Chairman and independent member requested that the submission be redrafted to focus solely on the administration of the applications.

Status as at 31.12.2018:

ONGOING: AWAITING REVISED SUBMISSION FOR CONSIDERATION.

(19) 1386.2.1.9(19) vs. Infrastructure/ Jersey Property Holdings

Complaint by the residents of Ville du Bocage, St. Peter against the Minister for Infrastructure regarding the management of the Hospital catering relocation project by Jersey Property Holdings

A statement of complaint was received on 2nd October 2018, and the Department was contacted for a résumé, which was then referred to the Chairman and another independent Panel member for consideration. The Chairman concluded that this was not an appropriate case for a hearing by a Board. Whilst he and the independent member appreciated that the development of the Hospital catering unit was causing considerable disturbance and, indeed, distress to neighbouring residents, the Panel was only able to consider complaints against executive decisions and administration. They considered that the complainants were essentially complaining that JPH were not managing the redevelopment contract in a manner that adequately took into account the interests of the residential neighbours. The Chairman was of the opinion that there was nothing material in the manner of the administration of the building contract by JPH, on behalf of the Minister, that warranted a hearing under the Administrative Decisions legislation.

However, this view was unacceptable to the complainants, who requested that the matter be considered by the Deputy Chairmen. Having reviewed the papers sent to them, the Deputy Chairmen concurred with the Chairman's view, but one of the Deputy Chairman then offered to chair an informal meeting, bringing all those involved around a table to discuss a way in which the various problems associated with the development and the ongoing use of St. Peter's Technical Park could be resolved.

Status as at 31.12.2018:

ONGOING: MEETINGS SCHEDULED TO INFORMALLY RESOLVE THE SITUATION.

(20) 1386/2/1/9(23) vs. Health and Community Services Complaint against the Health and Community Services Department

A statement of complaint was received on 2nd October 2018, and the Department was contacted for a résumé. This prompted the Department to respond to advise that the complainant had yet to fully exhaust the internal complaints procedure, and that steps would be taken to make contact and addressed the issues raised.

Status as at 31.12.2018:

ONGOING: DEPARTMENTAL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE TO BE COMPLETED.

(21) 1386/2/1/9(24) vs. Health and Community Services

Complaint against the Minister for Health and Community Services regarding the complainant's family's involvement with staff within the Children's Service and failings to provide accurate and timely records of meetings

A statement of complaint was received on 15th November 2018, and the Department was contacted for a résumé. This prompted the Department to respond to advise that the complainant had yet to fully exhaust the internal complaints procedure, and that steps would be taken to make contact and addressed the issues raised.

Status as at 31.12.2018:

ONGOING: DEPARTMENTAL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE TO BE COMPLETED.

TWELVE ENQUIRIES WERE LOGGED DURING 2018 WHICH DID NOT TRANSITION INTO FORMAL COMPLAINTS

1 x States Employment Board

• Complaint regarding treatment during restructuring process – referred to JACS.

2 x Health and Social Services

- Complaint regarding treatment by Children's Services no submission made
- Complaint regarding alleged misdiagnosis by clinical staff advised not a matter for Complaints Panel and referred onwards.

2 x Education

- Complaint regarding a secondary school transfer advised of appeal route
- Complaint regarding Student Funding no submission made.

4 x Planning

- Complaint regarding outcome of Planning application process advised to consider a Third Party Appeal and referred onwards
- Complaint regarding outcome of Planning application process advised to consider a Third Party Appeal and referred onwards
- Complaint regarding outcome of Planning application process advised to consider a Third Party Appeal and referred onwards
- Complaint regarding outcome of Planning application process advised to consider a Third Party Appeal and referred onwards.

1 x Housing

• Complaint regarding behaviour of neighbours – referred to Andium Homes.

1 x Department for Infrastructure

 Complaint on behalf of car retailers regarding the impact of the VRD budget amendments. Advised not a matter for the Panel and advised to seek support from States Members.

1 x Police/Law Officers

• Complaint about the sentencing of an offender – advised not a matter for the Panel and referred onwards.