



Annual Complaints Monitoring Report

2024/2025



Contents

The year in numbers	3
Chief Executive's Foreword	4
Complaints Process	5
Introduction	6
How customers have complained	7
Complaints received by topic	8
Complaints received by type	9
Our Performance – Key Figures	10
Complaints investigated by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO)	29
Positive Feedback	30
Projected figures for 2025/26	34
Contact Us	35

The year in numbers

Received **637** complaints



30 officers have undertaken the SPSO investigation skills training course



131 compliments recorded as positive feedback



Closed **362** at Stage 1 within 5 working days; Closed **16** at Stage 2 within 20 working days and **51** escalated complaints closed within 20 working days



43 Stage 2 cases were received by the SPSO in relation to Dumfries and Galloway Council in 2024/25. Of these **4** were mature, **3** were premature, **5** enquiries, **32** cases resolved early, and **0** cases were fully investigated

Customer contact via CRM system

The Council engages with customers on a daily basis through multiple channels, such as email, telephone, and our website. During this period, the Council recorded a total of **65,941** cases in our Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, of which **637** were complaints.



637 complaints



65,941 cases created

Chief Executive's Foreword



I am pleased to present Dumfries and Galloway Council's Annual Complaints Monitoring Report for 2024/25.

The Council is committed to getting things right first time and the feedback we receive from our customers and service users provides us with an invaluable understanding as to what we are doing well and where we can improve.

This report provides information mainly relating to the Council's performance in the handling of complaints against a group of key performance indicators set out by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO), which we have been required to report on since the introduction of the national Model Complaints Handling Procedure in 2013.

In April 2024, the Council restructured departments and directorates to allow us to adopt a one-council approach to

service delivery. Our complaints management system, Lagan, is aligned with the restructured directorates which allows services to work more closely together to provide the best possible outcomes for our customers.

Although there is no statutory requirement to report on compliments we receive, the report contains an indication of the positive feedback recorded across the Council during 2024/25. I am grateful to all those who have taken the time to contact us to acknowledge the effort made by our valued workforce.

Thank you for your encouraging support. We value all feedback we receive from our customers as this helps us to improve the way we do things. Please continue to give us your feedback on any aspect of the Council's services, all of which have contributed to the production of this Annual Complaints Monitoring Report.

Dawn Roberts
Chief Executive

Complaints Process

Complaints can be either Stage 1, which are usually straightforward issues and must be dealt within 5 days or less, or Stage 2, which are usually about more complex or serious issues and can take up to 20 days for a response to be provided. If a customer is not happy with a Stage 2 response, they can refer their complaint onto the SPSO, who will look at the issues raised and can investigate the matter.

What is a complaint?

Dumfries and Galloway Council's definition of a complaint is, 'an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more members of the public about our Council action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of our Council.'

In most cases, a complaint will be made because the customer considers that the

Council has:

- Done something wrong
- Failed to live up to expectations
- Treated someone badly or unfairly

The process map to the right outlines our quick guide to our complaint's procedure.

Complaints Procedure

You can make your complaint in person, by phone, by email, or in writing. We have a **two-stage complaints procedure**. We will always try to deal with your complaint quickly. But if it is clear that the matter will need investigation, we will tell you and keep you updated on our progress. If your complaint relates to a care service, you can choose to complain to us or to the Care Inspectorate.

Stage 1: Frontline Response

We will always try to respond to your complaint quickly—within **five working days** if we can.

If you are dissatisfied with our response, you can ask us to consider your complaint at Stage 2.

Stage 2: Investigation

We will look at your complaint at this stage if you are dissatisfied with our response at Stage 1. We also look at some complaints immediately at this stage if it is clear that they need investigation.

We will acknowledge your complaint within **three working days**.

We will confirm the points of complaint to be investigated and what you want to achieve.

We will investigate the complaint and give you our decision as soon as possible—this will be within **20 working days** unless there is a clear reason for needing more time.

Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO)

If, after receiving our final decision on your complaint, you remain dissatisfied with our decision or the way we have handled your complaint, you can ask the SPSO to consider it.

There are some complaints that have an alternative route for independent review. We will tell you how to seek independent review when we give our final response on your complaint.

We will tell you how to do this when we send you our final decision.

Introduction

The Council adopted the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman's (SPSO) Model Complaint Handling Procedure (MCHP) with effect from 1 April 2013. Integral to the MCHP is the requirement that all Scottish Local Authorities monitor complaints against a range of set Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) which are used by all 32 local authorities and the publication of an annual report.

In March 2022, the SPSO published revised KPI guidance which applies to all Local Authorities. The revised set of standardised complaints KPIs are applicable for data collected from 1 April 2022.

Within the revised guidance there are four mandatory quantitative KPIs:

- Indicator One: the total number of complaints received
- Indicator Two: the number and percentage of complaints at each stage that were closed in full within the set timescales of five and 20 working days
- Indicator Three: the average time in working days for a full response to complaints at each stage
- Indicator Four: the outcome of complaints at each stage

It is a minimum requirement for all organisations to report against these mandatory KPIs in their annual complaint's performance report. The MCHP also features qualitative measures, which include a statement about learning from complaints; raising awareness among vulnerable groups; staff training and customer satisfaction, however, these are not mandatory. The deadline for publishing annual complaints reports is the end of October each year. The report reflects the revised KPI guidance.

This report provides information on customer complaints and our performance between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025, together with comparisons on how we are performing against our previous reports of 2023/24, 2022/23, 2021/22, and 2020/21.

Our aim is to 'get it right first time' with quick, simple, and streamlined complaints handling with local, early resolution by capable, well-trained staff. In 2024/25 we addressed and closed 84.2% (362 of 430) of complaints at Stage One (Frontline Response). This means that the majority of complaints were concluded at Stage One. This demonstrates a continued positive commitment to resolving matters at the earliest stage of the process.

Complaint figures are reported quarterly to the Council's Information Management Group and annually to the Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Committee. All members of the public can access the Quarterly and Annual Complaints Monitoring Reports as they are published online on our website:

<https://www.dumfriesandgalloway.gov.uk/council-elections/have-your-say/complaints-compliments/complaints-procedure>

Directorates include complaints performance in their Business Plan which are then reported to their Service committee every 6 months and annually. In addition, individual Directorates also undertake additional reporting; for example, Education and Learning Directorate provide weekly reports to the Heads of Service on any pending complaints and also share pre-complaint concerns raised by parents or staff.

How customers have complained

Customers can complain to the Council in a range of ways, including email, online via our complaints webform, by phone, letter or in person.

In 2024/25 we received 637 complaints from customers who chose the following ways to contact us with their complaint. We continue to see customers opting to contact us electronically, with most complaints received by email or via our online complaints webform.

Both the categories below are where complaints are received over the telephone, however, this has been broken down by the following categories for reporting purposes.

- Telephone – this is when the customer has telephoned the Service or the Information Governance Team (IGT) direct to make a complaint.
- Via the Contact Centre – this is when the customer has telephoned the Contact Centre to make a complaint. The contact centre will either direct the call through to the IGT, direct to the Service or complete the complaint form online on behalf of the customer.

Although there are low numbers for complaints received in person, there are examples of good practice. Within the Waste Collection Service staff who are customer facing issue a Waste Collection Service calling card. This directs the customers to Waste Services to discuss an issue or, when they have expressed a dissatisfaction with the Council, to the complaints handling procedure.



40%
By Email



37%
Web Form



13%
Telephone



4%
Via the Contact Centre



4%
By Letter



2%
In Person



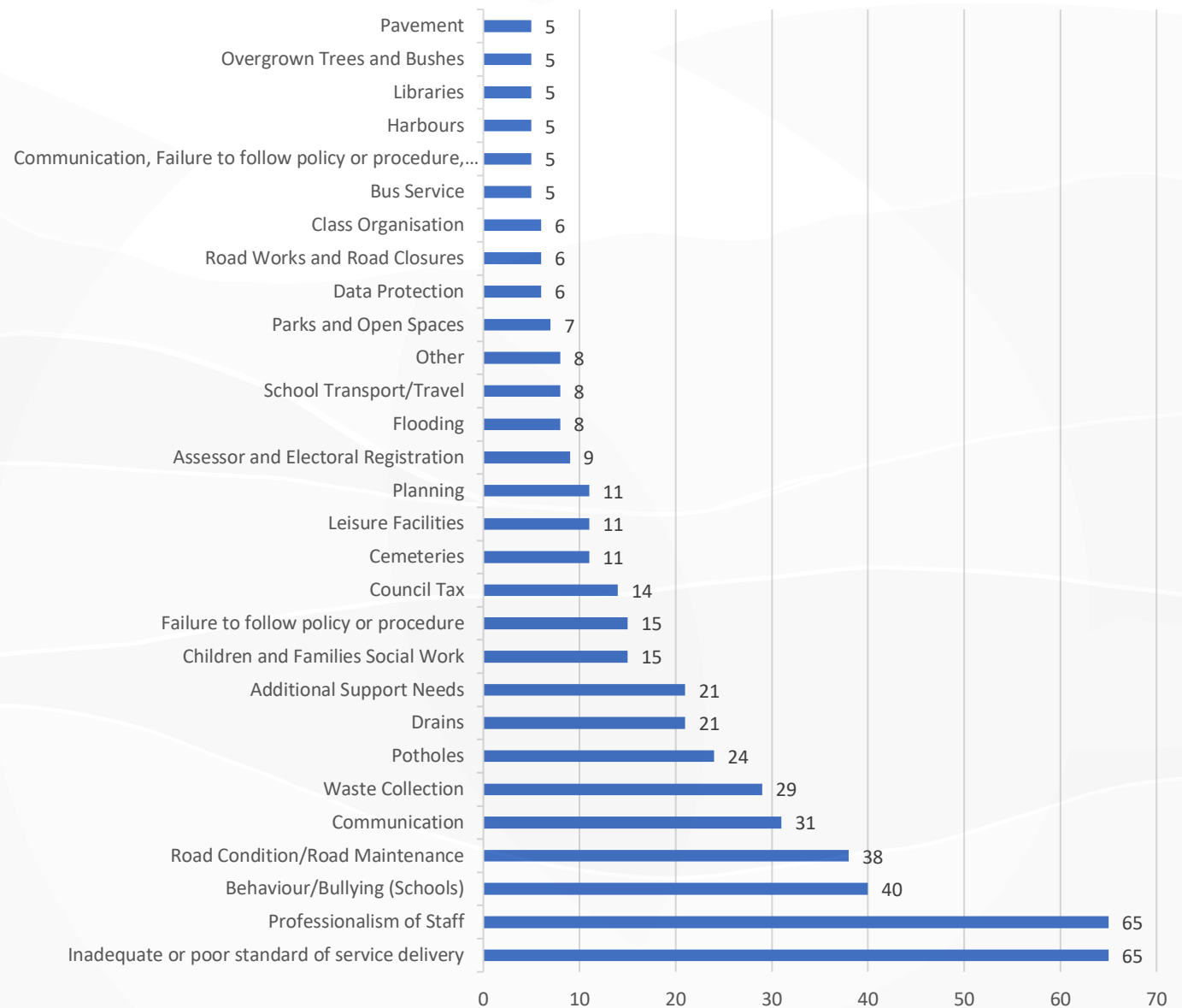
0%
SMS/TEXT

Complaints received by topic

We have developed a list of 'topics' which complaint handlers are prompted to select from when recording the details of a complaint. This classification allows us to run reports about a specific topic area and identify themes of complaints received and identify any trends.

Between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025, the most common customer complaints related to the following topic areas across all Services. The chart below shows the main issues we have received complaints about. It includes all complaints where we received 5 or more in connection with a particular issue. **Please note that the topic captured relies on the professional judgement of the complaint handler managing the case.**

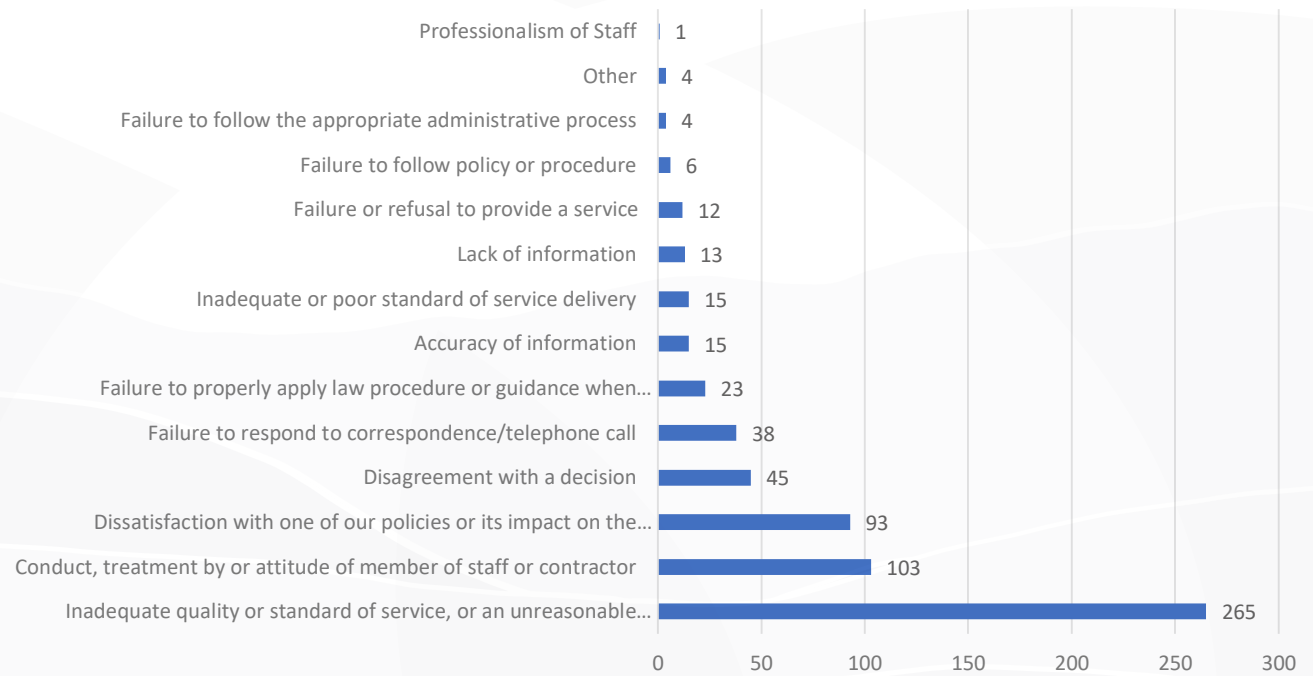
No. of complaints by topic



Complaints received by type

When recording the details of a complaint, complaint handlers are prompted to select from a list of complaint 'type'. This classification is based on what the complaint refers to from 'What is a complaint?' set out in the MCHP. This classification allows us to run reports about a specific area and identify themes of complaints received and identify any trends.

No. of complaints by type/nature



Our Performance – Key Figures

The following sections detail our performance against the set of standardised complaints KPIs outlined by the SPSO. The KPIs outlined below, apply to all Local Authorities that have a statutory duty to comply with the SPSO's MCHP.

Stages:

Stage One – complaints received and closed at Stage One (Frontline Response)

Stage Two (direct) – complaints that by-passed Stage One and went directly to Stage Two (Investigation). This could be complex complaints, complaints that relate to serious, high-risk or high profile issues or the customer refuses to engage at Stage One (Frontline Response).

Stage Two Escalated – complaints which were dealt with initially at Stage One and were subsequently escalated to Stage Two (Investigation). This is usually because the customer is dissatisfied with their Stage one response.

Outcomes:

Resolved - A complaint is resolved when both the organisation and the customer agree what action (if any) will be taken to provide full and final resolution for the customer, without making a decision about whether the complaint is upheld or not upheld

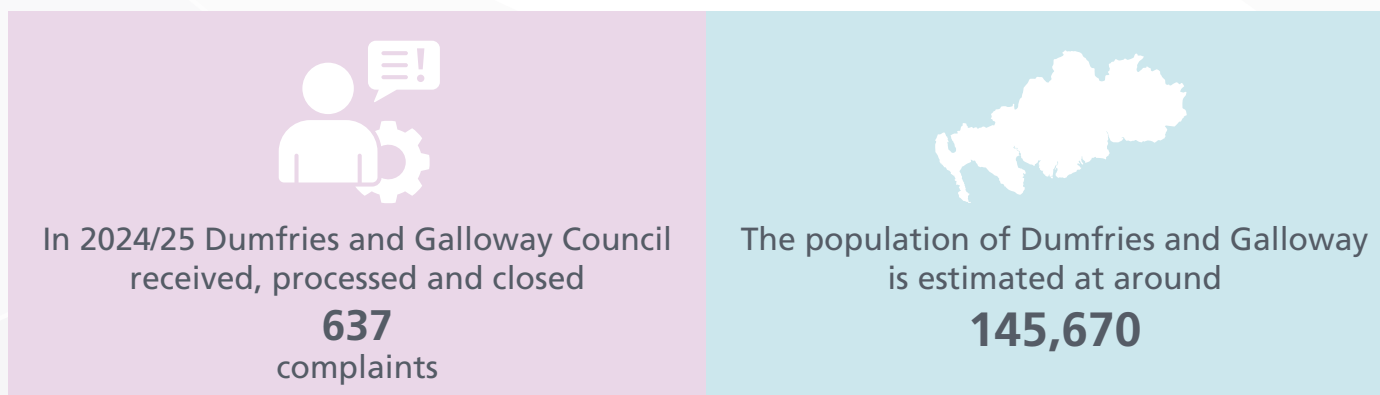
Upheld - Means the service did not reach the standard that is expected. (Something has gone wrong)

Partially Upheld - This would be used where the organisation found that there was evidence of service failure in one or more elements of the complaint, even if other parts of the complaint were not upheld

Not Upheld - Means that the service provided was of a standard that is expected.

Indicator One: the total number of complaints received

This indicator records the total number of complaints received by Dumfries and Galloway Council in the reporting period. This is the sum of the number of complaints received at Stage 1 (this includes escalated complaints, as they were first received at Stage 1), and the number of complaints received directly at Stage 2. To allow a fair comparison to be made across all 32 Scottish councils, this indicator looks at the figure of “complaints per 1,000 of population”.

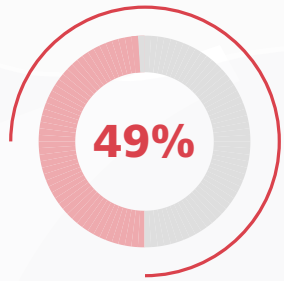


This means there were **4.4 complaints per 1,000 population**, or roughly **1 resident in 229** made a complaint about our services. A comparison of this indicator over the past 5 years is shown in the table below.

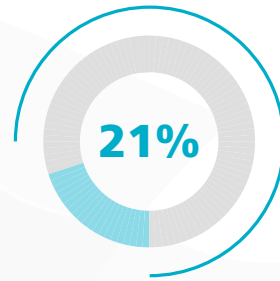
Description	2020/21*	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Total number of complaints received	281	534	581	631	637
The total number of complaints received per 1,000 population	1.9	3.6	3.9	4.2	4.4

**The low figures for 2020/21 were attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic and the disruption to public services due to national lockdown. As lockdown restrictions eased, we saw a return to normal levels of complaints.*

Complaints received in 2024/25 by Directorate



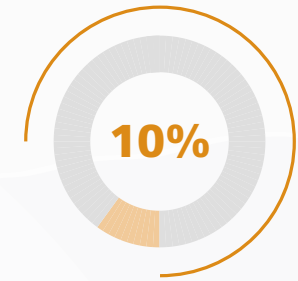
**Economy and
Infrastructure**



**Education, Skills and
Community Wellbeing**



**Social Work
Services**



**Enabling and
Customer Services**

Please note: complaints received includes complaints that may have been later withdrawn by the customer or determined out of remit.

Indicator Two: the number and percentage of complaints at each stage that were closed in full within the set timescales of five and 20 working days

The CHP requires complaints to be closed within five working days at stage 1 and 20 working days at stage 2. The term “closed” refers to a complaint that has had a response sent to the customer and at the time no further action is required (regardless at which stage it is processed and whether any further escalation takes place).

Description	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Number complaints closed at Stage One within 5 working days as % of Stage One complaints (target – 80%)	69.4% (111 of 160)	86% (338 of 393)	88.0% (402 of 457)	87.1% (432 of 496)	84.2% (362 of 430)
Number complaints closed at Stage Two within 20 working days as % of Stage Two complaints (target – 80%)	30.8% (8 of 26)	43.5% (10 of 23)	36.4% (8 of 22)	34.3% (12 of 35)	48.5% (16 of 33)
Number escalated complaints closed within 20 working days as % of escalated Stage Two complaints (target – 80%)	40% (8 of 20)	45.9% (17 of 37)	53.7% (29 of 54)	70.6% (36 of 51)	68.9% (51 of 74)



Indicator Three: the average time in working days for a full response to complaints at each stage

Stage 1 – We aim to respond to and close all Stage 1 complaints within **5 working days**. In 2024/25, we closed **430** complaints at Stage 1, with a total sum of **2171 working days** used to close them. Our average time to close a Stage 1 complaint was **5.0 working days**.

Stage 2 – We aim to respond to and close all Stage 2 complaints within **20 working days**. In 2024/25, we closed **33** complaints at Stage 2, with a total sum of **991 working days** used to close them. Our average time to close a Stage 2 complaint was **30 working days**.

After Escalation – in 2024/2025, we closed **74** escalated complaints after Escalation, with a total sum of **1746 working days**. Our average time to close a complaint after Escalation was **23.6 working days**.

The figures for the last 5 years can be seen in the table below.

Description	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Average time in working days to respond to complaints at Stage One (target – 5 working days)	6 w/ds	4.7 w/ds	4.7 w/ds	4.9 w/ds	5.0 w/ds
Average time in working days to respond to complaints at Stage Two (target – 20 working days)	38 w/ds	35.1 w/ds	37.1 w/ds	32.9 w/ds	30 w/ds
Average time in working days to respond to complaints after escalation (target – 20 working days)	32 w/ds	30.2 w/ds	33.6 w/ds	24.1 w/ds	23.6 w/ds

Extensions to timescales

The number and percentage of complaints at each stage where an extension to be 5 or 20 working day timeline was applied.

There are times when an extension to the timescales may be necessary. Part of the complaints handling procedure includes the option to seek an extension to the usual 5-day or 20-day timescale. An extension must be authorised by a Responsible Manager (Executive Director, Assistant Director or Head of Service). We must keep the customer updated on the reason for the delay and give them a revised timescale for completion. This indicator outlines the number and percentage of complaints at each stage where an extension to the 5 or 20 working day timeline was applied.

<p style="text-align: center;">Stage 1 53 extensions agreed 12.3% of total complaints</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Stage 2 16 extensions agreed 48.5% of total complaints</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Escalated complaints 19 extensions agreed 25.7% of total complaints</p>
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Description	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Number and percentage of complaints at Stage One where extension was authorised	9.4% (15 of 160)	7.6% (30 of 393)	6.6% (30 of 457)	7.5% (37 of 496)	12.3% (53 of 430)
Number and percentage of complaints at Stage Two where extension was authorised	69.2% (18 of 26)	69.6% (16 of 23)	63.6% (14 of 22)	51.4% (18 of 35)	48.5% (16 of 33)
Number and percentage of escalated Stage Two complaints where extension was authorised	55% (11 of 20)	43.2% (16 of 37)	33.3% (18 of 54)	21.6% (11 of 51)	25.7% (19 of 74)

Extensions are often required due to the complexity of complaints raised needing careful consideration and detailed investigation, as well as the availability of staff conducting investigations due to resources and competing priorities. When applying an extension, we must keep customers up to date about the reason for the extension and when they can expect a response.

The SPSO Statement of Complaints Handling Principles states that:

“Thoroughness of investigation should not be compromised by attempts to meet timescales and flexibility may be afforded for particularly complex cases. It is vital that, in cases where timescales cannot be met for good reason, complainants are kept informed of those reasons.”

(<https://www.spsso.org.uk/sites/spsso/files/csa/principles.pdf>)

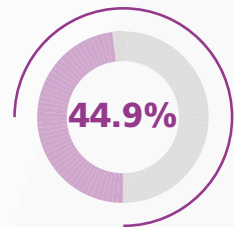
The below table provides a breakdown of the reasons why 35 Stage Two complaints had an extension applied. A number of these were extended due to the Investigating Officers being unable to obtain essential information to support their investigation within normal timescales. This can be because staff or customers are not available to provide information which is crucial to establishing the circumstances of the case.

Reason for extension	Number of cases
Unable to obtain essential information within timescale	13
Complexity of issue(s)	8
Essential information unavailable due to long-term sick, leave or professional hearings	5
School holidays	5
Lack of response from customer	2
Meeting with customer	1
Alternative resolution action in progress as agreed with customer	1

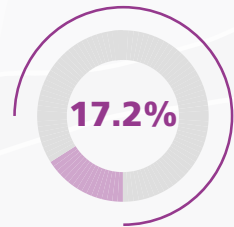
We have a process for authorising an extension to a Stage Two complaint. Staff have been reminded that extensions should not be made unless there is an exceptional circumstance. An extension must be authorised by a Responsible Manager (Head of Service or Director). We also have a procedure that should be followed when appointing an Investigation Officer to a Stage 2 Complaints. Stage 2 complaints should be investigated by someone who has received the appropriate training and has the time to undertake the investigation within the timeframe.

Indicator Four: the outcome of complaints at each stage

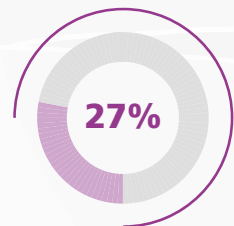
There is a requirement for the outcome to be recorded for each complaint. There are four outcome categories: resolved, upheld, partially upheld or not upheld. Where some of the points of complaint are upheld and others are not, this should be reported as 'partially upheld'. If a customer complains about two or more completely distinct topics, these should be treated as two or more complaints.



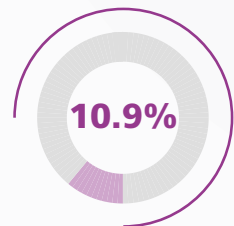
193 complaints were Upheld at Stage 1



74 complaints were Partially Upheld at Stage 1



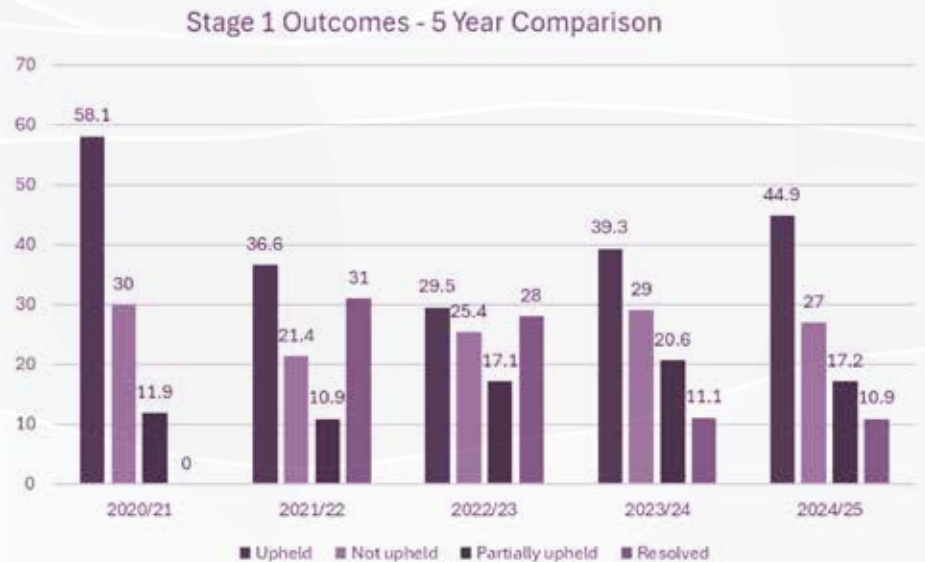
116 complaints were Not Upheld at Stage 1

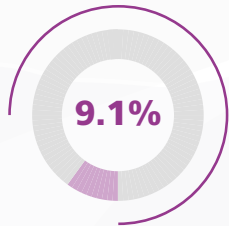


47 complaints were Resolved at Stage 1

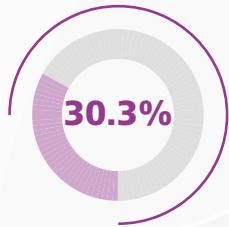
Complaint outcomes Stage 1

Complaints received and closed at Stage One (Frontline Response)

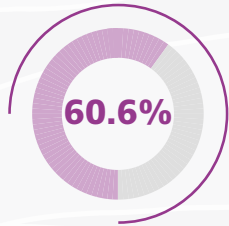




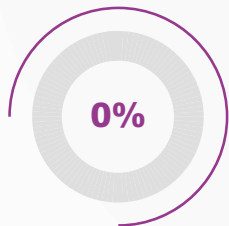
3 complaints were Upheld at Stage 2



10 complaints were Partially Upheld at Stage 2



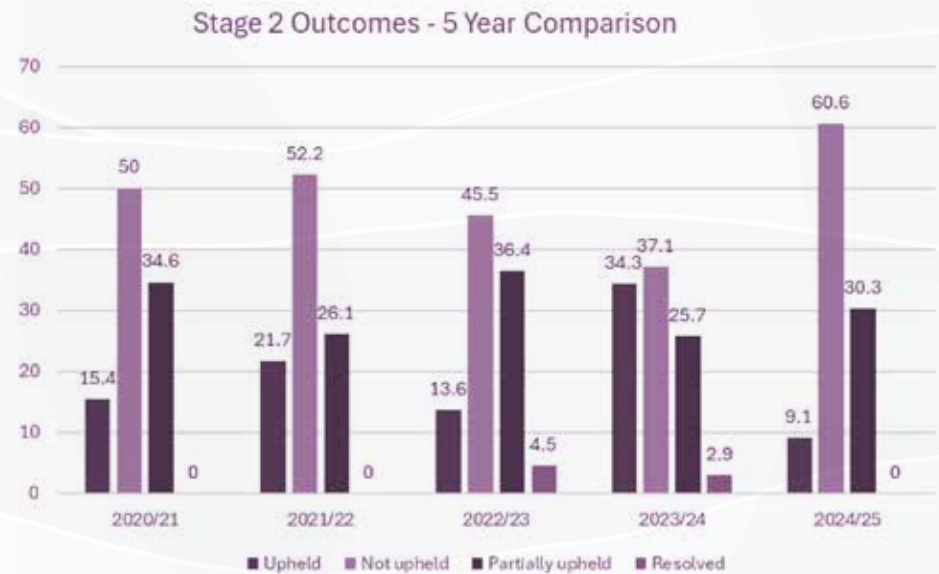
20 complaints were Not Upheld at Stage 2



0 complaints were Resolved at Stage 2

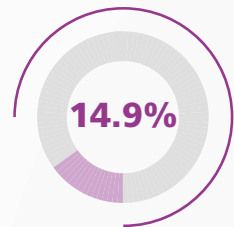
Complaint outcomes Stage 2

Complaints that by-passed Stage One and went directly to Stage Two (Investigation). This could be complex complaints, complaints that relate to serious, high-risk or high profile issues or the customer refuses to engage at Stage One (Frontline Response).

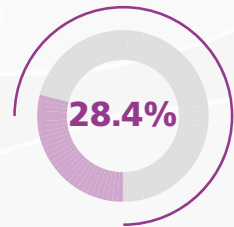


Complaint outcomes Escalated complaints

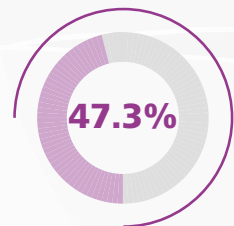
When a customer is not happy with a Stage 1 response, it is dealt with as a Stage 2 complaint — these are known as “Escalated Complaints”.



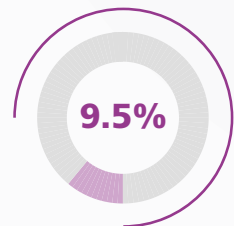
11 complaints were Upheld after escalation



21 complaints were Partially Upheld after escalation



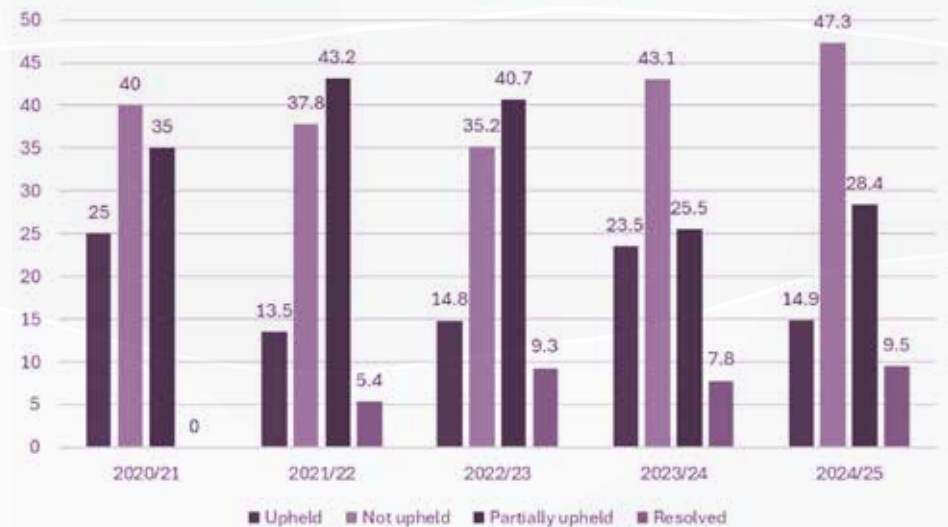
35 complaints were Not Upheld after escalation



7 complaints were Resolved after escalation

The “resolved” outcome was introduced with the new complaints handling procedure in April 2021 and is used when positive action can be taken to resolve the issue for the customer. A complaint is resolved when both the Council and the customer agree what action, if any, will be taken to provide a full and final resolution for the customer, without making a decision on whether to uphold / not uphold. A complaint can be resolved at any stage of the process and resolving complaints early creates better customer relations.

Escalated Outcomes - 5 Year Comparison



Customer Satisfaction

Our customers are automatically issued with a short complaints process satisfaction survey once their complaint has been closed. Our Complaints Customer Satisfaction Survey is based on the template developed by the Local Authority Complaints Handlers Network (LACHN) working alongside the SPSO.

The satisfaction survey is an electronic customer satisfaction survey which uses Microsoft Forms to collect responses. A link to this survey is sent out to all customers with their complaint response both at Stage One and Stage Two of the process.

The survey asks for feedback about the complaints process and gives an opportunity to send us suggestions for improvements. The survey results are reviewed by the Information Governance Team quarterly, and the feedback can be used to improve how we handle complaints.

Between 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025, we received **20** responses to our Complaints Customer Satisfaction Survey. Results received relies on the good will of customers taking the time to complete the survey. All responses are anonymous.

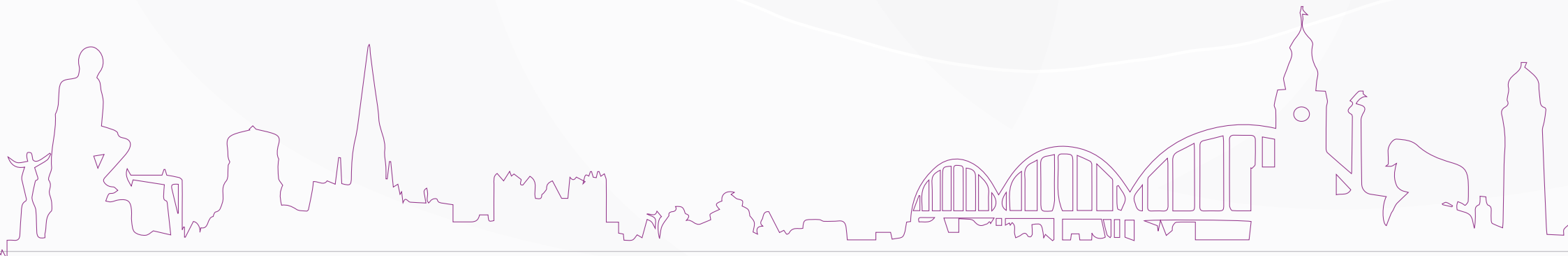
55% of customers who responded to the survey indicated that they found it easy to make a complaint

35% of customers confirmed they were told if the response was going to take longer than the set timescales

45% of customers advised that the response to their complaint was easy to understand.

40% of customers overall was satisfied with the handling of their complaint

We continue to encourage customers to complete this survey so that informative data can be gathered about whether customers are satisfied with the way that their complaint has been handled. This will also enable informed decisions to be made about any improvements to the complaints handling procedure that might be required.



Learning from Complaints

We should embrace all the feedback we receive to gain a better understanding of our customers reasons for complaining then engage with our staff on ways to improve. One of the most important aspects of the Complaints Handling Procedure is to learn from the feedback we receive from our customers.

Who looks at our complaint's figures and trends?

Information about complaints figures and corrective action taken is reported regularly to senior managers and a quarterly report is submitted to the Information Management Group (IMG). This process ensures the appropriate level of scrutiny takes place.

Quarterly performance against the performance indicators is reported to the Local Authority Complaints Handlers Network (LACHN). We are also required to report our complaints figures to the Scottish Public Service Ombudsman (SPSO) by submitting an annual return.

How we report Complaints Performance and Trends to our Customers

We publish the quarterly and annual reports on our website: <https://www.dumfriesandgalloway.gov.uk/council-elections/have-your-say/complaints-compliments/complaints-procedure>

Learning from complaints - Improvement work undertaken

The examples in the following pages demonstrate service improvements and/or changes that have been made to Council services as a result of our learning from the key themes of complaints.



Economy and Infrastructure

Following on from a complaint received regarding pavement maintenance and the location of protective barriers. Staff have been made aware to conduct weekly checks on health and safety measures put in place to ensure the integrity of the area is made safe until repairs are complete and safety measures can be removed.

The investigation outcome of a complaint on an unsatisfactory response in reporting a child being hurt whilst on play equipment at a play park. Although 2023 Annual Playground Inspection Report had evaluated signage as a low risk. To avoid future incidents appropriate signage has been put in place. Periodically review audit inspection reports to ensure that lower priority risks are assessed and if appropriate reprioritised.

Following on from a complaint received regarding dustbins not being returned to the location they were collected. Staff have been reminded of their responsibilities, collection procedure and responsibility to our customers. Regular communication on staff responsibilities when collecting bins and returning bins to be given, using different methods such as risk assessments, safe operating procedures and toolbox talks.

The investigation outcome of a complaint regarding the tone of correspondence received. A more constructive approach in communication has been brought to the attention of the team leader. Staff have been reminded of the process for processing building warrants. Any correspondence follows the standard process and is reviewed before it is submitted.

Following on from a Complaint regarding inappropriate driving by a Council employee. The Service have provided refresher training to the Team to ensure that the incident is not repeated.

Following a Complaint regarding the conduct of an employee at a HWRC. Staff received communication on the expected standards on speaking with the public, with further Customer Service Training scheduled in due time.

Following a Complaint regarding excess tar being left on a verge. Staff have been reminded of the correct procedure for disposing of excess materials to ensure these are not left in an inappropriate place.

The investigation outcome of a complaint regarding the reporting, recording and coordination of responses of complaints. Officers will be reminded to ensure that all points of complaint are responded to within a single response. The Service will review its complaints handling and consider refresher training in complaints handling for staff handling complaints.

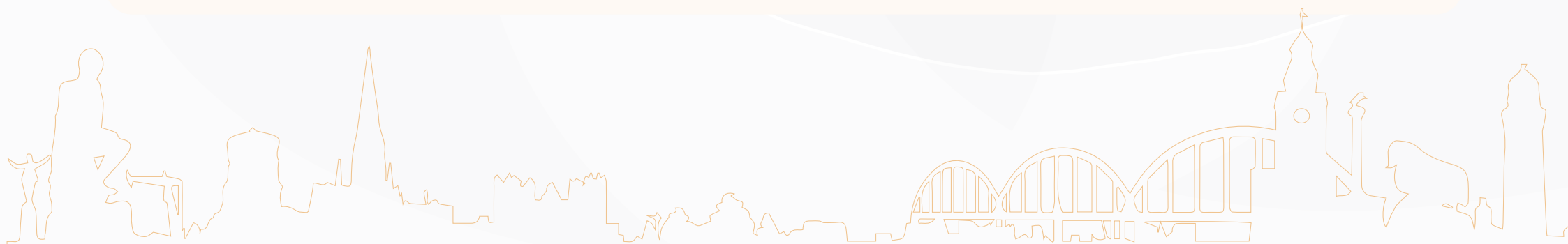


Enabling and Customer Services

As the result of a complaint, Business Support Services have revised its procedures for handling internal and external mail we have implemented a new procedure which has provided the service with a more efficient way of tracking mail.

This complaint centred around the timescales provided to a customer for the return of information for a benefit claim. An incorrect date was used which was only 7 days after the letter was generated. This meant by the time the customer would receive the letter there were only 2 days left for them to provide the information. Following the complaint officers were asked to take more care in their letter writing particularly around dates and making sure customers are advised to provide the information as soon as possible, making sure to include the legislative time frame of 1 month.

This complaint centred around information received indicating the sale of a farm. We incorrectly assumed the sale included this property and amended the account. Following the complaint the procedure for checking the properties included in farm sales was strengthened to ensure only the properties included in the sale are apportioned.



Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing

Parental awareness and understanding of how GLOW/Teams is used by schools and how this can support pupils accessing learning at home and support school attendance. To ensure that Pupils, Parents and Caregivers are aware/ reminded of the resources available on Teams/Glow for learning outside the classroom. Digital Learning Leaflet for Parents has been updated and included in Authority and school handbooks.

The Quality and Curriculum Team have created a new resource for Parents in relation to absence management. The resource for parents and carers has been shared with all school communities and can be found here: Support your Child's Attendance in Dumfries and Galloway – Website for parents/guardians in Dumfries and Galloway to support attendance and late coming.

Parental understanding of class organisation and placements continues to raise a very small number of complaints for the service therefore to address this, a new section of information will be included in the Authority and school handbook for the coming session and the Dumfries and Galloway Council site has been updated as of 01/11/2024 <https://www.dumgal.gov.uk/article/16646/School-class-sizes-and-groupings>

As part of a Stage 2 Secondary complaint the school have been reminded of the importance of implementing strategies to engage pupils in education. School will use universal and targeted support for all learners with or without a formal diagnosis in order to best meet the needs of pupils. This work is being supported by the Stages of Intervention approaches that are being embedded across all schools. In this particular case a pupil was awaiting the outcome of ADHD/Autism assessment, and no formal diagnosis had been received, the pupil was disengaging and struggling with school due in part to a lack of targeted support.
Staged intervention | Dumfries and Galloway Council

In response to a complaint related to schools reporting incidents to the Police. The policy in the school at the centre of the Stage 2 complaint was to take a restorative approach towards such incidents, however, this process is not formalised or written down in policy or procedure.

As a result, The Quality and Curriculum Team have created an [Easy-Read-Youth-Engagement-Officers.pdf](#) to help to explain the relationships between schools and the police service.

As a result of a stage 2 complaint investigation, it was recommended that a school prioritise Investment in staff time to undertake professional learning *Inclusive Practice Professional Learning*. (de-escalation/nurture*) Input from an Inclusive Practice Lead was identified and Inclusive Practice self-evaluation has been completed by staff.

As part of a complaint that was escalated to Stage 2 concerns were expressed by parents regarding curriculum offers, however the responsibility of Curriculum sits with the Head Teacher and is not something that the SPSO has a remit to investigate or make recommendations on. Irrespective of this there is a child at the centre of the complaint and processes are focused on what is best for the child. At an Authority level Education we engaged with the parent to share information regarding the significant work regarding the development and extending the digital offer through DG Schools Connect- Curriculum Alignment.

DG Schools Connect is a digital offer that will be made across all Secondary schools for S5 and S6 pupils for next session 2025-26. This is being introduced after the alignment proposals were accepted by Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing. This means starts/finish times, lunch time and period times will be the same across the region. The reasoning behind the alignment being that the elected members wanted all pupils in Dumfries & Galloway in the senior phase to have as wide a choice of subjects available as possible.

Around one third of the workforce in Dumfries and Galloway currently adopt a remote or hybrid model of working. These classes will help to equip young people with these workplace skills.

For more information visit: <https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/dg/dgschoolsconnect/>
If you have any questions then DG Schools Connect team can be contacted by email: DGSchoolsConnect@dumgal.gov.uk.

Social Work Services

From the outcome of a complaint, there was an identified need for staff training, and appropriate plans were put in place to ensure this was delivered to staff at the earliest opportunity.

In partnership with residential care providers, a new process has been introduced to ensure Social Work Services are notified at the earliest opportunity when a provider is unable to continue to effectively manage a resident's care.

Improved public information and a new process have been developed to support families who are considering a care home for their family member.

Whilst it is acknowledged that staff may be unable to share information with third parties due to data protection legislation, calls should always be returned to individuals to explain this.

Staff training on Complaints

The emphasis in our Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP) is on quicker, simpler and more streamlined complaints handling with local, early resolution by empowered and well-trained staff. Training that has been provided to staff to help drive improvements in performance is detailed below.

Stage 2 - SPSO Complaints Investigation Skills training course - Within this reporting period we have worked with Services to update our list of Investigating Officers (IO) for the complaints process. Working with the Information Governance Team, Services have nominated new staff to attend the new SPSO Online Complaints Investigation Skills course or identified existing IOs to undertake refresher training. This course is aimed at staff who investigate complaints at Stage 2 of the CHP. We have now broadened the pool of staff who can undertake investigations which means this workload can be better managed across Services so that there is more staff who have the ability, as well as the right skill set, to undertake such investigations when required. In this reporting period **30** Officers have completed this online training.



Complaints investigated by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO)

When a customer is not satisfied with our final response to a complaint, they can take it to the Scottish Public Service Ombudsman (SPSO) and ask for the complaint to be investigated. The SPSO is the final arbiter for complaints about public services

The SPSO publish findings to share learning from complaints and inform improvements. When they investigate a complaint, they usually report their findings and conclusion in a decision letter. These findings are also published online as Decision Reports. In some cases, they lay the full report of investigation before the Scottish Parliament and publish it online as an investigation report. The Decision Reports are published on their website at www.spsa.org.uk/our-findings

This information enables us to use learning from the outcomes of SPSOs findings and allows us to make service improvements.

Cases passed to SPSO during 2024/25

43 Stage 2 cases were received by the SPSO in relation to Dumfries and Galloway Council in 2024/25.

The majority of the cases submitted to SPSO related to Planning (12), Social Work (11), Education (6), Roads and Transport (5), Environmental Health and Cleansing (3), Housing (2), Legal and Admin (2), Land and Property (1) and Subject unknown or Out of Jurisdiction (1)

Of these, **4** were mature (complaint was out with the time period for raising the complaint), **3** were premature (the complaint was out with the time period for raising the complaint) and **5** were enquiries.

32 cases were resolved early (not investigated) - when the SPSO receives a complaint they ask the Council to provide information in connection with the complaint, and from that information the investigating officer decides whether the complaint should be pursued further. If they are satisfied that the Council dealt with the complaint appropriately, it does not proceed to the full investigation stage. The main reasons provided by the SPSO for not proceeding to an investigation were "Good Complaint Handling", "Insufficient benefit would be achieved by investigation" and "Cause and impact test not met (s 5 (3))".

0 cases were fully investigated.

The SPSO assess each complaint to identify whether it should be prioritised for immediate consideration, or whether it can be resolved or handled quickly. Not all cases can be prioritised or addressed quickly, and these are held until they can be allocated. The SPSO figures for complaints received compared to complaints determined differ because the SPSO do not look at everything they receive in the same year, so some cases roll over into the next year.

An explanation of the above terms used by the SPSO is available on their website at

<https://www.spsa.org.uk/explanation-terms>

The SPSO publish their Annual Statistic on their website at <https://www.spsa.org.uk/statistics-2024-25>

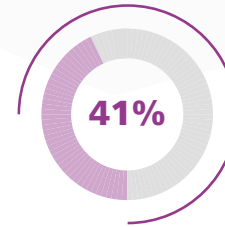
Positive Feedback

Compliments are expressions of praise, encouragement or gratitude about services provided or managed by the Council and present valuable feedback about the level of satisfaction with service delivery, highlighting:

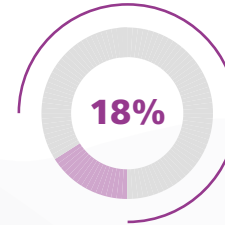
- valuable indicators of the effectiveness of a service
- useful insights about the aspects of service most meaningful to customers
- examples of good practice which can be shared throughout the Council
- an opportunity to recognise the efforts of staff
- acknowledgements of excellence to boost morale.

Staff acknowledge compliments and thank customers for their feedback. Where possible, customers are informed how the feedback will be used and assured that it will be passed on to the relevant staff members.

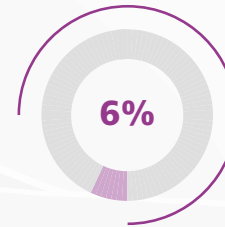
During 2024/25 the Council recorded 131 compliments.



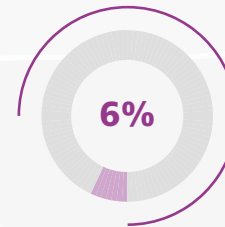
Economy and Infrastructure



Enabling and Customer Services



Social Work Services



Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing



Here is just a small extract of the positive feedback that we have received this year. One of the recurring themes of the compliments received in 2024/25 was around professionalism of staff.

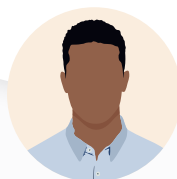
Here is just a few of the kind words customers had to say about our staff:



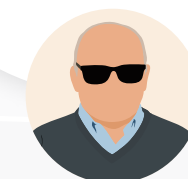
I would like to compliment the public dealing administration team within waste and recycling. Who efficiently dealt with my enquiry for new waste bins at the property we have just moved into. The process was seamless and prompt with a courteous phone conversation and follow up email. I would also like to compliment the team who arrived with the new bins and were courteous, polite and offered advice to my wife.



I have just had a handrail fitted to my staircase, courtesy of your Social Services Dept. The joiner came last week to measure up, and yesterday he came to do the job. He started at once and continued until he had finished a first-class job. He even cleaned up afterwards!! I didn't get this kind of service when I employed private contractors in the past. This lad was a credit to your department, but I never got his name, but you will know. Hang on to him.



Would like to pass on compliment for the excellent work carried out by a member of street cleaning staff in Annan. He is pleasant and takes pride in his work.





My daughter attended DG1 Leisure Complex tonight for her first ever swimming lesson. Her teacher was amazing with her, immediately putting her mind at ease and delivering an excellent lesson. My daughter really enjoyed it and is already keen to come back next week. Please pass on my thanks and praise in organising and helping to get her settled. Good job all round by the team!



Having recently had to use the Locharmoss recycling on quite a few occasions I would like to make you aware of just how helpful the crew at this site are, assisting me with removing the items from my vehicle.



Gentlemen taking calls at the call centre a compliment about him. Please can their manager acknowledge his kindness. He very kindly spent 10 minutes sorting out a problem with a bulky waste collection. He couldn't have been more helpful.

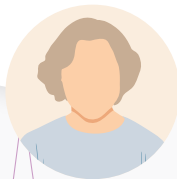


I want to thank the staff at Kirkbank House who are really on the ball. Any issues or complaints, go in and see them. They will try and help.



“

Two or three weeks ago I was in Dumfries town and realised that I was not able to cross the road without assistance. There was a Council employee dealing with a drain near me, and I asked him if I could take his arm to cross the road. He beamed at me, said "Of course", and offered me his arm. When we crossed the road, he asked me where I was going, and when I told him I was going to hire a taxi to take me home, he took me all the way to the taxi rank and made sure I was comfortable and happy before waving goodbye and going back to his work. I was so grateful and relieved to have such generosity and care from someone I didn't know. A true gentleman who deserves compliments and thanks.



“

There is a gentleman who works for the Council and cleans the streets in Dalbeattie. Credit where it is due, he does an outstanding job!



“

My neighbour put out the wrong bin for collection. The waste crew drove past her home, turned the vehicle around and came back. The man on the lorry got out of the vehicle, came up her drive and asked if she wanted him to take the correct bin out for her. She would like to thank this gentleman for his kindness and service.



Projected figures for 2025/26

Looking ahead at projections for the 2025/26 Annual Complaints Monitoring Report, the below table shows a comparison of how many complaints were received in Quarter 1 (April/May/June) of 2025/26 compared to Quarter 1 2024/25.

Year	2024/25	2025/26
April	62	34
May	65	44
June	68	60
Quarter of 1 Total	195	138



Contact Us

If you would like to find out more about our complaints procedure or about our annual report, please contact us.

Phone: 030 33 33 3000

Email: commentsandcomplaints@dumgal.gov.uk

Online: <https://www.dumfriesandgalloway.gov.uk/council-elections/have-your-say/complaints-compliments>

Write to Dumfries and Galloway Council, Information Governance Team, Council HQ, English Street, Dumfries, DG1 2DD

