




End-Year complaints 2019/2020

All Scottish councils are required to record and report on a suite of complaints performance indicators to meet Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) requirements. During 2019/20 we received 1,313 complaints, which represented a marginal increase of 0.4% on the previous end-year figure of 1,280. Most complaints continue to be received by Environment Department – 64%. The data shows that we continue to perform well in terms of processing frontline complaints with an average time to respond within the 5 day target at 4.4 days which is slightly higher than the 2018/19 figure of 3.5 days. The average time to respond to direct investigation complaints was marginally above the 20 day target at 20.4 days compared with last year’s figure of 20 days. As a result of complaints monitoring over the year, a number of improvement actions have been implemented and additional resources have been put in place to help improve delivery across Council services.






1,313 complaints received
13.9 per 1,000 population 

64% received by
Environment Department 

4.4 days for frontline 
20.4 days for investigation 



38.5% upheld at frontline 
32.5% upheld at investigation 

62.5% of complaints resulted in
further information being
provided 



- Improvements**
- Amendments to housing repairs procedures were implemented.
 - The approach to footpaths and lanes maintenance was reviewed.
 - Processes for dealing with free school meals and clothing grants were streamlined.
 - A new process for granting deceased exemptions was put in place.
 - The Debt Arrangement Scheme policy was amended.
 - The Housing Benefit application process was simplified for customers.
 - A new digital process to speed up bin delivery schedules was introduced.
 - The communication of arrangements for bin collection over the festive holiday period was improved





Note – arrows indicate direction of change from 2018-19.

End Year Complaints Report 2019/20¹

Complaints Received per 1000 of the Population				
Description	2018/19	2019/20	Change	Notes
Number complaints received per 1,000 population.	13.5	13.9	+0.4	A total of 1,313 complaints were received in 2019/20, an increase of 33 from 2018/19.

Complaints Closed at Stage one and Stage two			
Description	2018/19	2019/20	Change
Number complaints closed at stage one as % of all complaints	90% (1,100)	88.9% (1,135)	-1.1% pts
Number complaints closed at stage two as % of all complaints	6.2% (76)	9.3% (119)	+3.1% pts
Number complaints closed at stage two after escalation as % of all complaints	3.8% (46)	1.8% (23)	-2% pts

Complaints Not Upheld/ Partially Upheld/Upheld			
Not Upheld	2018/19	2019/20	Change
Number complaints not upheld at stage one as % of complaints closed at stage one	51% (560)	51% (575)	same
Number complaints not upheld at stage two as % of complaints closed at stage two	47% (36)	44% (52)	-3% pts
Number escalated complaints not upheld at stage two as % of escalated complaints closed at stage two	54% (25)	65% (15)	+11% pts
Partially upheld	2018/19	2019/20	Change
Number of complaints partially upheld at stage one as % of complaints closed at stage one	12% (136)	11% (123)	-1% pts
Number complaints partially upheld at stage two as % of complaints closed at stage two	17% (13)	23.5% (28)	+6.5% pts
Number escalated complaints partially upheld at stage two as % of escalated complaints closed at stage two	22% (10)	4% (1)	-18% pts
Upheld	2018/19	2019/20	Change
Number of complaints upheld at stage one as % of all complaints closed at stage one	37% (404)	38.5% (437)	+1.5% pts
Number complaints upheld at stage two as % of complaints closed at stage two	36% (27)	32.5% (39)	-3.5% pts
Number escalated complaints upheld at stage two as % of escalated complaints closed at stage two	24% (11)	30 (7)	+6% pts

The average time in working days for a full response to complaints at each stage					
Description	2018/19	2019/20	Change	SPSO Target	Status
Average time in working days to respond to complaints at stage one (frontline resolution)	3.5	4.4	-0.9	5	
Average time in working days to respond to complaints at stage two (investigation)	20.0	20.4	+0.4	20	
Average time in working days to respond to complaints after escalation (investigation)	20.4	15.5	-4.9	20	
Average time in working days to respond to complaints at investigation (stage 2 and esc combined)	20.1	19.6	-0.5	20	

1 - Data notes: Definitions: Stage 1 - complaints closed at stage 1 Frontline Resolution; Stage 2 (direct) - complaints that bypassed stage 1 and went directly to stage 2 Investigation (e.g. complex complaints); Escalated - complaints which were dealt with at stage 1 and subsequently escalated to stage 2 (e.g. because the customer remained dissatisfied); Investigation - stage 2 and escalated complaints combined.

Complaints at each stage closed within set timescales

Description	2018/19	2019/20	Change
Number complaints closed at stage one within 5 working days as % of stage one complaints	86.6% (953)	82.6% (937)	-4% pts
Number complaints closed at stage two within 20 working days as % of stage two complaints	64.5% (49)	65% (78)	+0.5% pts
Number escalated complaints closed within 20 working days as % of escalated stage two complaints	78.3% (36)	82.6% (19)	+4.3% pts
Number investigation complaints closed within 20 working days as % of investigation complaints (stage 2 and esc combined)	69.7 (85)	67.8% (97)	-1.9% pts

Where extensions to the 5 or 20 working day timeline were authorised

Description	2018/19	2019/20	Change
% of complaints at stage one where extension was authorised	1.9% (21)	0.5% (6)	-1.4% pts
% of complaints at stage two where an extension was authorised	7.9% (6)	1.7% (2)	-6.2% pts
% of escalated complaints where extension was authorised	2.2% (1)	0 (0)	-2.2% pts

Model Complaint Handling Procedure - Core Performance Measures

The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) introduced a new Model Complaint Handling Procedure (MCHP) in April 2020 in consultation with local authorities. Councils are expected to fully implement the new procedure by the end of March 2021. Linked to this the Local Authority Complaint Handlers Network, in collaboration with the SPSO, is in the process of reviewing the core performance measures used for complaints monitoring. It is proposed that a new set of measures will also be developed and in place by April 2021.

Improvement Actions 2019/20

Complaints information is closely monitored to ensure we learn from complaints and make service improvements. In 2019/20, service improvement actions included the following:

- Amendments to housing repairs procedures were implemented.
- The approach to footpaths and lanes maintenance was reviewed.
- Processes for dealing with free school meals and clothing grants were streamlined.
- A new process for granting deceased exemptions was put in place.
- The Debt Arrangement Scheme policy was amended.
- The Housing Benefit application process was simplified for customers.
- A new digital process to speed up bin delivery schedules was introduced.
- The communication of arrangements for bin collection over the festive holiday period was improved.