

Annual Complaints Monitoring Report



2019/20

Contents

Foreword	3
Summary	4
How customers have complained	6
Indicator 1 – Complaints received per 1000 of the population	7
Indicator 2 – Closed complaints	7
Indicator 3 – Complaints upheld, partially upheld and not upheld	8
Indicator 4 – Average times	9
Indicator 5 – Performance against timescales	9
Indicator 6 – Number of cases where an extension was authorised	10
Indicator 7 – Customer Satisfaction	10
Indicator 8 – Learning from Complaints	11
Compliments	13
Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO)	14
Conclusion	14
Contact Us	14



Foreword

I am pleased to present Dumfries and Galloway Council's Annual Complaints Monitoring Report for 2019/2020.

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 performance Indicators set out by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman, which we have been required to report on since the introduction of the national Complaints Handling Procedure in 2013. Although there is no statutory requirement to report on Compliments as the positive feedback that customers provide to us in terms of their satisfaction with particular aspects of work by staff, the report contains some indication about the number of Compliments received across the Council during 2019/20. I am grateful to all those who have taken the time to write in to acknowledge the effort made by staff.

Although, we have recorded an increase in the number of complaints received, our compliance with timescales for responding to complaints has improved at Stage 1.

Thank you for your encouraging support. We value complaints and the information they provide to help us 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.

Gavin Stevenson

Chief Executive



Summary

Since April 2013 all Scottish Councils have been required to monitor and report their performance on handling complaints under their Complaints Handling Procedure against a suite of high-level performance indicators to meet Scottish Public Services Ombudsman's (SPSO) statutory requirements. This report outlines Dumfries and Galloway Council's performance for 2019/20.

The Council has been developing and upgrading the system used for our Comments, Compliments and Complaints, 'Respond' to the latest version which went live on 1 October 2020.

Unfortunately, the old version of Respond which was in use until 1 October 2020 could not be changed to reflect the current organisational structure, so this report is based on the previous organisational structure.

- We received 456 new complaints in 2019/20 relating to the following Services, which was an increase on the 2018/19 figure of 349.

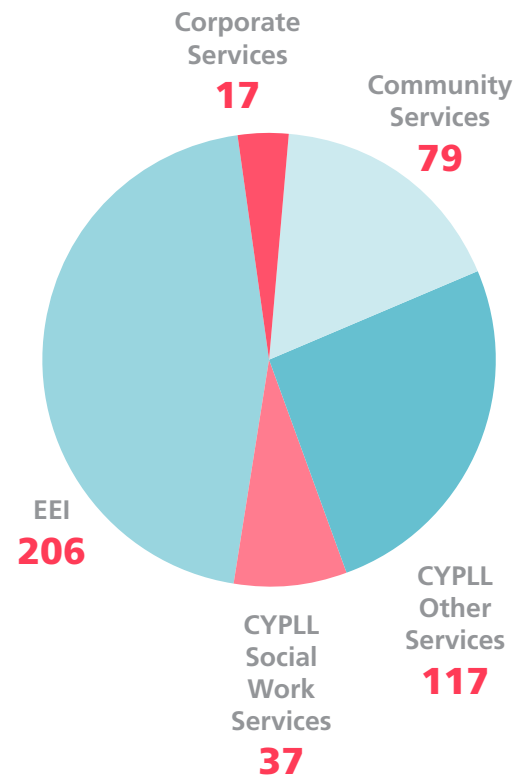


Complaints received in 2019/20 by Service

Service	Number	%
Corporate Services	17	3.73%
Community Services	79	17.32%
Children, Young People and Lifelong Learning (CYPLL) – All Other Services	117	25.66%
Children, Young People and Lifelong Learning (CYPLL) – Social Work Services (Adults & Children)	37	8.11%
Economy, Environment and Infrastructure (EEI)	206	45.18%

- 90% (312) of complaints addressed were concluded at Stage One (Frontline Resolution), where the majority of the complaints about the Council were received in 2019/20 and did not escalate to Stage 2.
- Compliance with the Stage 1 timescale continues to improve with 71% being closed within the 5-day working target, up from 66% in 2018/19. However, this is below our target of 80%. Compliance with the Stage 2 timescale target being closed within 20 working days has decreased to 29% compared to 36% in 2018/19.
- Section 8 of the report shows examples of service improvements resulting from complaints, demonstrating our commitment to capture the key themes emerging from complaints and to enhance our learning.
- Quarterly figures are provided to Information Management Group for their consideration.

Complaints received in 2019/20 by Service



Definitions

Stage One - complaints received and closed at Stage One Frontline Resolution

Stage Two (direct) - complaints that by-passed Stage One and went directly to Stage Two Investigation (e.g. complex complaints)

Stage Two Escalated - complaints which were dealt with initially at Stage One and were subsequently escalated to Stage Two investigation (e.g. because the customer remained dissatisfied)

How customers have complained

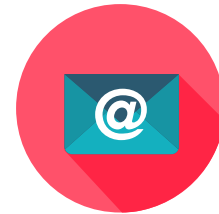
Customers can complain to, or comment about the Council, in a range of ways, including

- **In person**
- **By phone 030 33 33 3000**
- **By Letter**
- **Online**
- **By email**
- **By complaints leaflet**

In 2019/20 we received 456 complaints from customers who chose the following ways to contact us with a complaint.

- In 2019/20 we received 456 complaints, compared to 349 in 2018/19, an 8.78% increase (107 complaints) in the past year.
- Of these complaints, 50% of customers contacted us electronically, either via email or through our website

Breakdown of the way people got in touch 2019/20



39%
By Email



38%
Telephone



11%
Web Form



8%
By Letter



3%
Leaflet



1%
In Person

Our Performance

Key Figures

Indicator 1 Complaints Received Per 1,000 of the Population

This indicator details the total number of complaints handled by Dumfries and Galloway Council in the reporting period 2019/20

Description	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
Number of complaints received per 1,000	3.1	2.3	2.83
Total number of complaints received	456	349	419

Indicator 2 Closed Complaints

This indicator provides information on the number of complaints closed at Stage One and Stage Two as a percentage of all complaints closed.

The term "closed" refers to a complaint that has been responded to and at the time no further action is required.

Description	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
Number complaints closed at Stage One as % of all complaints	90% (312)	83% (261)	79% (262)
Number complaints closed at Stage Two as % of all complaints	4% (14)	8% (25)	10% (35)
Number complaints closed at Stage Two after escalation as % of all complaints	6% (20)	9% (29)	11% (36)



Indicator 3 Complaints Upheld, Partially Upheld and Not Upheld

When responding to customers complaints we explain whether their complaint has been upheld, partially upheld or not upheld and explain why.

This indicator provides information on the number of complaints which were upheld, partially upheld or not upheld at each stage as a percentage of complaints closed (responded to) in full at each stage.

Upheld

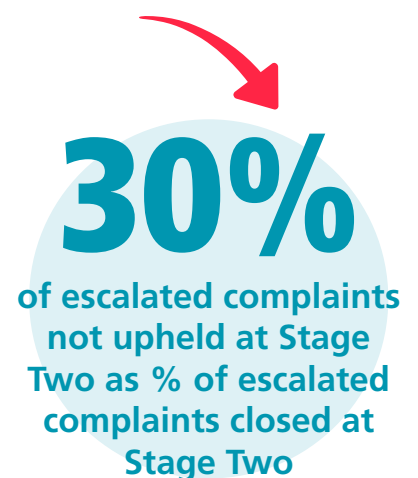
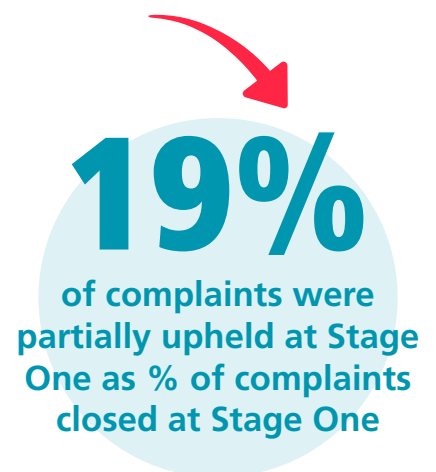
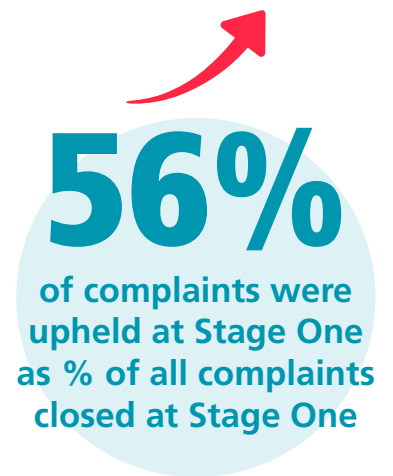
Description	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
Number of complaints upheld at Stage One as % of all complaints closed at Stage One	56% (176 of 312)	42% (111 of 261)	42% (111 of 262)
Number complaints upheld at Stage Two as % of complaints closed at Stage Two	21% (3 of 14)	24% (6 of 25)	31% (11 of 35)
Number escalated complaints upheld at Stage Two as % of escalated complaints closed at Stage Two	25% (5 of 20)	24% (7 of 29)	31% (11 of 36)

Partially Upheld

Description	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
Number of complaints partially upheld at Stage One as % of complaints closed at Stage One	19% (59 of 312)	21% (54 of 261)	22% (57 of 262)
Number complaints partially upheld at Stage Two as % of complaints closed at Stage Two	36% (5 of 14)	48% (12 of 25)	14% (5 of 35)
Number escalated complaints partially upheld at Stage Two as % of escalated complaints closed at Stage Two	45% (9 of 20)	38% (11 of 29)	17% (6 of 36)

Not Upheld

Description	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
Number complaints not upheld at Stage One as % of complaints closed at Stage One	25% (77 of 312)	37% (96 of 261)	36% (94 of 262)
Number complaints not upheld at Stage Two as % of complaints closed at Stage Two	43% (6 of 14)	28% (7 of 25)	54% (19 of 35)
Number escalated complaints not upheld at Stage Two as % of escalated complaints closed at Stage Two	30% (6 of 20)	38% (11 of 29)	53% (19 of 36)



Indicator 4 Average Times

This indicator details the average time in working days for a full response to complaints at each stage.

Description	2019/20	2018/19	2017 /18
Average time in working days to respond to complaints at Stage One (target – 5 working days)	4 w/ds	7 w/ds	8 w/ds
Average time in working days to respond to complaints at Stage Two (target – 20 working days)	26 w/ds	14 w/ds	28 w/ds
Average time in working days to respond to complaints after escalation (target – 20 working days)	30 w/ds	25 w/ds	19 w/ds
Average time in working days to respond to complaints at investigation (stage 2 and escalated combined) (target – 20 working days)	28 w/ds	19 w/ds	22 w/ds

Indicator 5 Performance against Timescales

This indicator reports number and percentage of complaints at each stage which were closed (responded to) in full within the set timescales of 5 working days for Stage 1 and 20 working days for Stage 2.

Description	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
Number complaints closed at Stage One within 5 working days as % of Stage One complaints (target – 80%)	71% (221 of 312)	66% (173 of 261)	90% (235 of 262)
Number complaints closed at Stage Two within 20 working days as % of Stage Two complaints (target – 80%)	29% (4 of 14)	36% (9 of 25)	37% (13 of 35)
Number escalated complaints closed within 20 working days as % of escalated Stage Two complaints (target – 80%)	40% (8 of 20)	59% (17 of 29)	78% (28 of 36)
Number complaints closed at investigation stage within 20 working days as % of investigation complaints (stage 2 and escalated combined) (target – 80%)	34% (12 of 34)	47% (26 of 54)	58% (41 of 71)

4 working days

JANUARY

SU	MO	TU	WE	TH	FR	SA
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	X	X	X	X	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

Average time in working days to respond to complaints at Stage One (target – 5 working days)

40%

JANUARY

SU	MO	TU	WE	TH	FR	SA
	1	2	X	X	X	6
7	X	X	X	X	X	13
14	X	X	X	X	X	20
21	X	X	X	X	X	27
28	X	X	31			

Number escalated complaints closed within 20 working days as % of escalated Stage Two complaints (target – 80%)

Indicator 6 Number of Cases where an Extension is authorised

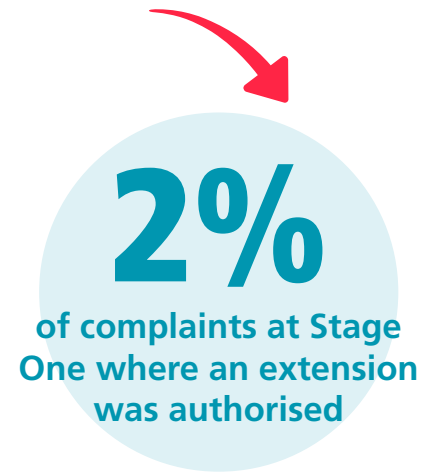
We always aim to respond to complaints as quickly as possible. However, there are times when a complaint is particularly complex and it is not possible to fully investigate the issues within the prescribed timescales. In these situations, we can agree with a complainant to extend the timescales for closing the complaint. This indicator outlines the number and percentage of complaints at each stage where an extension to the 5 or 20 working day timeline has been authorised

Description	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
% of complaints at Stage One where extension was authorised	2% (5 of 312)	8% (20 of 261)	16% (42 of 262)
% of complaints at Stage Two where extension was authorised	57% (8 of 14)	48% (12 of 25)	46% (16 of 35)
% of escalated complaints where extension was authorised	40% (8 of 20)	10% (3 of 29)	28% (10 of 36)

Indicator 7 Customer Satisfaction

In recognition that we were not receiving meaningful information from the survey that was previously in place we developed a revised survey.

From 1 October 2020 a new electronic customer satisfaction survey has been introduced using Microsoft forms. This is based on the template developed by the Local Authority Complaints Handlers Network to allow us to benchmark against other Local Authorities. This is being sent out to all customers with their response.



Indicator 8 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.

The examples below 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.

Improvement work undertaken

Communities

As a result of a complaint received changes were made to future contractual agreements with third parties providing survey arrangements to Dumfries and Galloway Council. The changes ensured that the Council were able to specify detailed requirements regarding the information gathering process and that this was clearly displayed to participants.

Communities

A complaint received resulted in a recommendation that the Council's Asset Transfer Procedure was enhanced with more information in relation to the Expressions of Interest and Application for Asset Transfer of the process so that there is greater clarity for applicants, individuals and organisations about the representations and redactions; and a further recommendation was made to consult with Scottish Government to enhance its Guidance in relation to representations and redactions.

Communities

The Directorate put in place a more robust internal follow up process to support Services to ensure that all Stage 1 complaints were dealt with within timescale. This predominately impacted on services that previously fell under the Economy, Environment and Infrastructure Directorate.

Children, Young People and Lifelong Learning – Social Work Services

As a result of a complaint, improvements have been made in recording information on our electronic information management system. A Children and Families team has introduced protected office time for their staff once a week. This ensures all staff are in the office at the same time each week, allowing them time to ensure that case notes and other important information is up-to-date on systems and shared, as appropriate, with their colleagues.



Children, Young People and Lifelong Learning – Social Work Services

A complaint received resulted in Adult Care Services updating procedures to ensure good communication with individuals. Staff have been reminded of the importance of ensuring all decisions agreed at review meetings are confirmed in writing to the individual and/or their Carer.

Children, Young People and Lifelong Learning – Education and Learning

As a consequence of the recommendations made from learning from complaints, we have produced additional parental guidance on digital learning and use of social media and positive behaviour in schools reflective of areas of complaints addressed by the directorate.

www.dumgal.gov.uk/article/17608/Parental-Involvement

Children, Young People and Lifelong Learning – Education and Learning

The Directorate have recently reviewed the management arrangements for the handling of Comments and Complaints, in line with the Information Governance Team. Monitoring of performance, quality assurance, guidance/training, correspondence with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) and service improvement sits within the Curriculum and Quality Improvement Team. The coordination and handling of complaints is undertaken by dedicated staff in this team. This model ensures that complaints are directed, coordinated and responded to by the most appropriate officer in the most effective and efficient manner.

Children, Young People and Lifelong Learning – Education and Learning

The Directorate are focusing on delivering outcomes for complainants that are realistic, achievable and meaningful, this has allowed us to further develop our first response service, and our 'ask us to look again' strategy as highlighted on our parental involvement page -

www.dumgal.gov.uk/media/23468Ask_Us_to_Look_Again

This allows an opportunity for us to explore the areas of concern with the complainant and quickly determine whether there are simple resolutions at school level or through colleagues in the central teams. In addition, we also: (1) signpost to other services/agencies (2) provide further clarification of a decision/outcome/meeting etc. (3) share follow on responses to provide further clarification post stage 1 and stage 2 response letters

Children, Young People and Lifelong Learning – Education and Learning

Education and Learning Directorate have developed dedicated reporting and recording for Stage 2 complaint recommendations, this has enabled us to monitor and ensure that recommendations are acted upon. On occasion this involves working across teams/departments and with other agencies (voluntary and statutory). This has resulted in new parental support materials, new guidance for staff, and amendments to policy. This process has also had a positive impact on the ease and speed at which we can respond to SPSO enquiries.

Compliments

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.

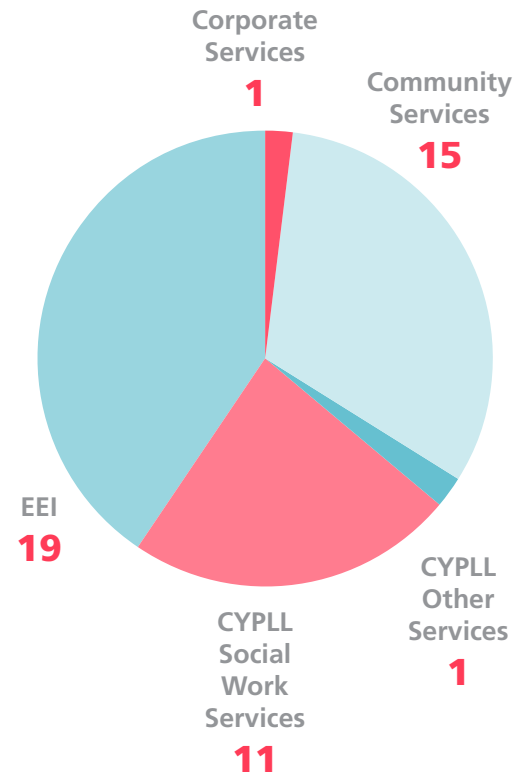
Staff acknowledge compliments and thank customers for their feedback. Where possible, customers are informed how the feedback will be used and assured that it will be passed on to the relevant staff members.

The 47 recorded Compliments for the Council during 2019/20 are detailed as follows:

Compliments received in 2019/20 by Service

Service	Number	%
Corporate Services	1	2.13%
Community Services	15	31.91%
Children, Young People and Lifelong Learning – All Other Services	1	2.13%
Children, Young People and Lifelong Learning – Social Work Services (Adults and Children)	11	23.40%
Economy, Environment and Infrastructure	19	40.43%

Compliments received in 2019/20 by Service



Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO)

The SPSO publish findings to share learning from complaints and inform improvements.

In some cases, they lay the full report of investigation before the Scottish Parliament and publish it online as an investigation report. 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.

The decisions are published on their website at www.spsso.org.uk/our-findings

This information assists our planning and enables us to use learning from the outcomes of SPSO investigations.

Conclusion

In 2019/20 Dumfries and Galloway has had an increase in the number of complaints we received against 2018/19, but has continued to show areas of improvement in our handling of customer complaints.

The Council remains committed to listening to our customers and using customer feedback to actively change and improve the way we do things.

We continue to benchmark our complaints handling with our Scottish Local Authorities and work with the SPSO to ensure best practice continues.

Contact Us

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

Phone: 030 33 33 3000

Email: commentsandcomplaints@dumgal.gov.uk