

Annual Complaints Monitoring Report

2015-16

Agreed by Audit and Risk Management Committee
on 22 September 2016



Help us to better understand what we are doing well
and where we can improve

Foreword

I am pleased to present Dumfries and Galloway Council's Annual Complaints Monitoring Report for 2015-2016.

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 set of performance Indicators set out by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman, which it is required to report on since the introduction of the national Complaints Handling Procedure on 1 April 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 2015-16. I am grateful to all those who have taken the time to write in to acknowledge the effort made by staff.

For the second year in a row, we have recorded a reduction in the number of complaints received. Our compliance with timescales for responding to complaints dealt with, continues to improve as we make every effort toward meeting the high standards complainants expect for responses at both the Frontline Resolution Stage 1 of the Complaints Handling Procedure, which is the initial first point of contact when staff attempts to resolve most of our customer concerns or complaints, within a very short period of 5 working days, and Stage 2 of the Procedure, which is reserved for the investigation of a complaint, that has either been escalated to that stage as a result of the complainant being dissatisfied with the response provided at Stage 1, or one that has been admitted directly to that stage for an investigation because of the complexity and severity of the issues raised.

Our focus remains on achieving a high level of positive outcomes for complainants at the Frontline Resolution Stage 1, where the decisions to uphold their complaints have successfully helped us to resolve matters early, learn from any mistakes and to make necessary improvements to services and business operations.

Thank you for your encouraging support. 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

Dumfries and Galloway Council Annual Complaints Monitoring Report 2015/16

From April 2013 all Scottish Councils are required to monitor and report their performance on the handling of complaints under their Complaints Handling Procedure against a suite of high level performance indicators to meet the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman’s (SPSO) statutory requirements. This report outlines in this respect Dumfries and Galloway Council’s performance for the period 2015/16.

Summary

- We received 329 new complaints in 2015/16 compared to 364 in 2014/15. The complaints related to the following Council services:

Service	2015/16		2014/15	
	Number	%	Number	%
Council-wide	-	-	-	-
Chief Executive Service	11	3	20	5
Community and Customer Services	109	33	123	34
DGFirst	74	23	71	20
Education	36	11	34	9
Planning and Environment Services	31	9	29	8
Social Work Services	68	21	87	24

- 87% (285) of complaints which were dealt with at Stage One (Frontline Resolution), where the majority of complaints about the Council were received, during the period 2015/16 did not escalate or progress on to Stage Two. We reasonably concluded on that basis that the majority of customers were satisfied with the way their complaints had been dealt with at this early and initial Stage. This reflects some consistency with last year’s figure of 82% (299) and the previous year’s figure of 83% (392) and it demonstrates our on-going commitment and efforts to resolving matters at the earliest stage possible.
- On average, we are just outside of the SPSO’s timescales for responding to complaints (it took us 7 working days instead of the standard 5 working days at Stage One, and 22 working days instead of the standard 20 working days at the investigation Stage Two). The training and development work undertaken over the last 18 months has improved our compliance particularly with Stage Two timescales significantly, from an average response time of 30 working days in 2014/2015. This is an improvement that we are keen to continue to build upon.
- The examples of service improvements resulting from complaints, as shown under Section 8 of the report, demonstrate our commitment to capture the key themes of our complaints and to increase our learning.

- We report both monthly and quarterly on these same performance indicators to the Corporate Management Team and the Corporate Business Support Group, respectively. These quarterly reports will be shared on our website for 2016/2017.

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 2 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)

Compliments

Compliments are expressions of praise, encouragement or gratitude about services provided or managed by the Council. They provide valuable feedback about the level of satisfaction with service delivery.

They provide:

- 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
- acknowledgement of excellence to boost morale.

Staff do acknowledge compliments and thank customers for their interest and 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 total number of 183 recorded Compliments for the Council during 2015/16 are detailed as follows;

2015-2016		
Service	Number	%
Unknown	3	2
Chief Executive Service	1	1
Community and Customer Services	54	30
DGFirst	43	23
Education	4	2
Planning and Environment Services	8	4
Social Work Services	70	38

Analysis of Performance on the Handling of Complaints Against SPSO Indicators

1 The total number of complaints received per 1000 of the population

Description	2015/16	2014/15
Number of complaints received per 1,000	2.19	2.43
Total number of complaints received	329	364

2 Complaints closed (responded to) at Stage One and Stage Two as a percentage of all complaints closed (responded to)

Description	2015/16	2014/15
Number of complaints closed at Stage One as % of all complaints	87% (285)	82% (299)
Number of complaints closed at Stage Two as % of all complaints	8% (28)	12% (45)
Number of complaints closed at Stage Two after escalation as % of all complaints	13% (44)	13% (46)

Notes:- At the time of preparing this report, five escalated Stage Two complaints (5%) were still awaiting a response.

In some cases we may be unable to issue a response to a complaint, for example, when the complaint is submitted anonymously. During the period 2015/16 we received sixteen such complaints.

The escalated complaints referred to above were also responded at Stage One during the year.

3 The number of complaints upheld/ partially upheld/ not upheld at each stage as a percentage of complaints closed (responded to) in full at each stage

Upheld

Description	2015/16	2014/15
Number of complaints upheld at Stage One as % of all complaints closed at Stage One	30% (87 of 285)	36% (107 of 299)
Number of complaints upheld at Stage Two as % of complaints closed at Stage Two	36% (10 of 28)	9% (4 of 45)
Number of escalated complaints upheld at Stage Two as % of escalated complaints closed at Stage Two	25% (11 of 44)	26% (12 of 46)

3 The number of complaints upheld/ partially upheld/ not upheld at each stage as a percentage of complaints closed (*responded to*) in full at each stage

Partially Upheld

Description	2015/16	2014/15
Number of complaints partially upheld at Stage One as % of complaints closed at Stage One	23% (66 of 285)	20% (60 of 299)
Number of complaints partially upheld at Stage Two as % of complaints closed at Stage Two	29% (8 of 28)	24% (11 of 45)
Number of escalated complaints partially upheld at Stage Two as % of escalated complaints closed at Stage Two	20% (9 of 44)	26% (12 of 46)

Not Upheld

Description	2015/16	2014/15
Number of complaints not upheld at Stage One as % of complaints closed at Stage One	33% (94 of 285)	30% (91 of 299)
Number of complaints not upheld at Stage Two as % of complaints closed at Stage Two	36% (10 of 28)	58% (26 of 45)
Number of escalated complaints not upheld at Stage Two as % of escalated complaints closed at Stage Two	39% (17 of 44)	43% (20 of 46)

Notes:-

13% (38 of 285) of Stage One responses contained an outcome other than those above.

16% (7 of 44) of Stage Two (escalated) responses contained an outcome other than those above, including the five which were still awaiting a response (at the time of producing this report).

'Other' includes matters where a resolution has been agreed or the complaint has been deemed out of time or jurisdiction.

4 The average time in working days for a full response to complaints at each stage

Description	2015/16	2014/15	Target
Average time in working days to respond to complaints at Stage One	7 w/ds	7 w/ds	5 working days
Average time in working days to respond to complaints at Stage Two	25 w/ds	35 w/ds	20 working days
Average time in working days to respond to complaints after escalation	21 w/ds	26 w/ds	20 working days
Average time in working days to respond to complaints at investigation (Stage Two and escalated combined)	22 w/ds	30 w/ds	20 working days

5 The number and percentage of complaints at each stage which were closed (responded to) in full within the set timescales of 5 and 20 working days

Description	2015/16	2014/15	Target
Number of complaints closed at Stage One within 5 working days as % of Stage One complaints	61% (175 of 285)	48% (145 of 299)	80%
Number of complaints closed at Stage Two within 20 working days as % of Stage Two complaints	57% (16 of 28)	35% (16 of 45)	80%
Number of escalated complaints closed within 20 working days as % of escalated Stage Two complaints	73% (32 of 44)	41% (19 of 46)	80%
Number of complaints closed at investigation stage within 20 working days as % of investigation complaints (Stage Two and escalated combined)	67% (48 of 72)	38% (35 of 91)	80%

6 The number and percentage of complaints at each stage where an extension to the 5 or 20 working day timeline has been authorised

Description	2015/16	2014/15
% of complaints at Stage One where extension was authorised	11% (31 of 285)	14% (43 of 299)
% of complaints at Stage Two where extension was authorised	39% (11 of 28)	42% (19 of 45)
% of escalated complaints where extension was authorised	23% (10 of 44)	26% (12 of 46)

7 Customer satisfaction with the complaints service provided

Description	2014/15	
1. Before you made your complaint, were you aware that the Council had a Complaints Handling Procedure?	Yes	42% (5 of 12)
	No	58% (7 of 12)
2. If you raised your complaint directly, please can you tell us who you made your complaint to?	Service Concerned	50% (6 of 12)
	Contact Centre	8% (1 of 12)
	Complaints Unit	33% (4 of 12)
	Unsure	-
	Not Applicable	-
	Question Skipped	8% (1 of 12)

7 Customer satisfaction with the complaints service provided

Description	2014/15	
3. How did you make your complaint?	Telephone	17% (2 of 12)
	Face to face	-
	Using a complaints form	33% (4 of 12)
	In writing (by email, fax or letter)	42% (5 of 12)
	Online	8% (1 of 12)
	Through a representative such as an independent advocate or Elected Member	-
4. How satisfied were you that you were easily able to make your complaint?	Very Satisfied	-
	Satisfied	75% (9 of 12)
	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	17% (2 of 12)
	Dissatisfied	-
	Very Dissatisfied	8% (1 of 12)
4a. If you did not find it easy to make your complaint, please tell us why?	<i>Complaint was a waste of time.... Spoke in riddles and left out of money</i>	
5. If you spoke with a member of staff before making your complaint, how satisfied were you that this person was able to provide you with the information and advice you required about our Complaints Handling Procedure?	Very Satisfied	17% (2 of 12)
	Satisfied	8% (1 of 12)
	Neither Satisfied or Dissatisfied	17% (2 of 12)
	Dissatisfied	25% (3 of 12)
	Very Dissatisfied	17% (2 of 12)
	Question Skipped	17% (2 of 12)
6. Before making your complaint were you aware that you could ask your local advocacy services for support in raising your concerns?	Yes	0%(0 of 12)
	No	100% (12 of 12)
6a. If No, were you informed about this at any stage when your complaint was being dealt with?	Yes	0% (0 of 12)
	No	92% (11 of 12)
	Not Sure	8% (1 of 12)

7 Customer satisfaction with the complaints service provided

Description	2014/15	
7. Were you informed who was dealing with your complaint?	Yes	58% (7 of 12)
	No	42%(5 of 12)
7a. If yes, how satisfied were you that you were easily able to contact this person to discuss your complaint? <i>NB - Eight people answered despite only seven advising they had been given a contact (in the previous question)</i>	Very Satisfied	12% (1 of 8)
	Satisfied	25%(2 of 8)
	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	38%(3 of 8)
	Dissatisfied	25%(2 of 8)
	Very Dissatisfied	-
8. Did the member of staff dealing with your complaint contact you to discuss the issues you had raised before responding to you?	Yes	50% (6 of 12)
	No	50%(6 of 12)
8a. You were able to openly discuss your concerns with them:	Very Satisfied	8% (1 of 12)
	Satisfied	33% (4 of 12)
	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	33% (4 of 12)
	Dissatisfied	8% (1 of 12)
	Very Dissatisfied	-
	Question Skipped	8% (1 of 12)
9. You were treated fairly throughout the complaints process:	Very Satisfied	25% (3 of 12)
	Satisfied	8% (1 of 12)
	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	25% (3 of 12)
	Very Dissatisfied	17% (2 of 12)
	Question Skipped	8% (1 of 12)
10. Staff were polite and courteous towards you when dealing with your complaint	Very Satisfied	25% (3 of 12)
	Satisfied	25% (3 of 12)
	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	25% (3 of 12)
	Dissatisfied	8% (1 of 12)
	Very Dissatisfied	8% (1 of 12)
	Question Skipped	8% (1 of 12)

7 Customer satisfaction with the complaints service provided

Description	2014/15	
11. Staff were open and transparent in how they dealt with your complaint:	Very Satisfied	17% (2 of 12)
	Satisfied	17% (2 of 12)
	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	8% (1 of 12)
	Dissatisfied	25% (3 of 12)
	Very Dissatisfied	25% (3 of 12)
	Question Skipped	8% (1 of 12)
12. You were not discriminated against as a result of making your complaint	Very Satisfied	25% (3 of 12)
	Satisfied	33% (4 of 12)
	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	25% (3 of 12)
	Dissatisfied	8% (1 of 12)
	Very Dissatisfied	-
	Question Skipped	8% (1 of 12)
13. Any written information we provided to you was clear and easy to understand	Very Satisfied	17% (2 of 12)
	Satisfied	33% (4 of 12)
	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	17% (2 of 12)
	Dissatisfied	17% (2 of 12)
	Very Dissatisfied	8% (1 of 12)
	Question Skipped	8% (1 of 12)
14. Taking into consideration our statutory timescales for responding to complaints at Stage 1 and 2 of our Complaints Handling Procedure how satisfied were you that we responded to you in a timely manner?	Very Satisfied	17% (2 of 12)
	Satisfied	33% (4 of 12)
	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	17% (2 of 12)
	Dissatisfied	17% (2 of 12)
	Very Dissatisfied	8% (1 of 12)
	Question Skipped	8% (1 of 12)

7 Customer satisfaction with the complaints service provided

Description	2014/15	
14a. If you did not receive a response within the above timescales, did we contact you to let you know there would be a delay in responding to your complaint and discuss an extension?	Yes	8% (1 of 12)
	No	50% (6 of 12)
	Question Skipped	42% (5 of 12)
15. If your complaint was about Social Work Services and this progressed to an independent Complaints Review Panel, how satisfied were with the timeliness of this process?	Very Satisfied	-
	Satisfied	8% (1 of 12)
	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	25% (3 of 12)
	Dissatisfied	-
	Very Dissatisfied	-
	Question Skipped	66% (8 of 12)
15a. How satisfied were you that you were kept informed through the independent Complaints Review Panel process?	Very Satisfied	-
	Satisfied	8% (1 of 12)
	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	33% (4 of 12)
	Dissatisfied	-
	Very Dissatisfied	8% (1 of 12)
	Question Skipped	50% (6 of 12)
16. If you can remember, what was the outcome of your complaint?	Upheld	50% (6 of 12)
	Not Upheld	17% (2 of 12)
	Partially Upheld	8% (1 of 12)
	Resolved	-
	Other	8% (1 of 12)
	Unsure	-
	Skipped Question	17% (2 of 12)
17. Did we confirm the outcome of your complaint to you in writing (by email or letter)?	Yes	66% (8 of 12)
	No	25% (3 of 12)
	Question Skipped	8% (1 of 12)

7 Customer satisfaction with the complaints service provided

Description	2014/15	
18. How satisfied were you that you were provided with a suitable solution to resolve your complaint?	Very Satisfied	17% (2 of 12)
	Satisfied	42% (5 of 12)
	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	8% (1 of 12)
	Dissatisfied	-
	Very Dissatisfied	25% (3 of 12)
	Question Skipped	8% (1 of 12)
19. Even if you did not agree with the outcome of your complaint, how satisfied were you that we had fully looked into the issues you had raised?	Very Satisfied	17% (2 of 12)
	Satisfied	33% (4 of 12)
	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	-
	Dissatisfied	17% (2 of 12)
	Very Dissatisfied	25% (3 of 12)
	Question Skipped	8% (1 of 12)
20. If your complaint was upheld or partially upheld, did we reassure you that we would take corrective action to prevent the issues you raised happening again?	Yes	42% (5 of 12)
	No	33% (4 of 12)
	Question Skipped	25% (3 of 12)
20a. If corrective action was identified, how satisfied are you that the service has done what it said it would?	Very Satisfied	-
	Satisfied	25% (3 of 12)
	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	25% (3 of 12)
	Dissatisfied	8% (1 of 12)
	Very Dissatisfied	17% (2 of 12)
	Question Skipped	25% (3 of 12)
21. Overall, how satisfied were you with our handling of your complaint?	Very Satisfied	-
	Satisfied	42% (5 of 12)
	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	8% (1 of 12)
	Dissatisfied	17% (2 of 12)
	Very Dissatisfied	25% (3 of 12)
	Question Skipped	8% (1 of 12)

7 Customer satisfaction with the complaints service provided

Description	2014/15	
22. Overall, how satisfied were you with the outcome of your complaint?	Very Satisfied	17% (2 of 12)
	Satisfied	25% (3 of 12)
	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	17% (2 of 12)
	Dissatisfied	17% (2 of 12)
	Very Dissatisfied	17% (2 of 12)
	Question Skipped	8% (1 of 12)
23. Overall, how satisfied were you with the time taken to respond to your complaint from start to finish?	Very Satisfied	-
	Satisfied	58% (7 of 12)
	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	-
	Dissatisfied	33% (4 of 12)
	Very Dissatisfied	-
	Question Skipped	8% (1 of 12)
24. Finally, do you have any other comments about how your complaint was handled or suggestions on how we may improve our service to customers?	<p><i>Tell the truth. Provide plausible answers to complaints.</i></p> <p><i>Advise customers what will or has changed which will prevent the same thing happening again.</i></p> <p><i>With regard to your survey, provide an option not applicable as many questions above do not apply to my case. I have therefore picked the middle option on those occasions.</i></p> <p><i>The random nature of my answers is because when I sent the original email to the service in question (Leisure and Sport facility) I received no acknowledgement. I waited a month for a reply, then when I didn't receive one, I complained through another channel, at which point my complaint was well handled and upheld</i></p>	

8 Changes or improvements to services or procedures as a result of the consideration of complaints

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

Education - In light of ongoing matters of complaint which were accompanied in some cases by requests to view Pupil Personal Records. Education Services have produced guidance for schools setting out the rights and responsibilities of those wishing to view Pupil personal Records. This guidance aims to advise specifically on the legal rights of parents in accessing information.

Education - In response to a Stage 2 intervention which involved the use of third party mediation (Community Safety Team), Education services have prompted review of parking arrangements and road markings adjacent to a primary school and children's services centre. The complaint prompted the service to consider engagement with other service areas to address the issue causing concern which effectively fell out with the single remit of any one service or agency.

Community and Customer Services - A local resident complained about the impact film scheduling at the Robert Burns Centre was having on parking. As a result of the complaint, future films will be scheduled taking into consideration the parking needs of residents and peak traffic times for the area.

Community and Customer Services - In response to a complaint, Care Call have reviewed the process for how they handle death notifications, a new process has been created and the death notifications are now handled centrally through the Adult Social Work Services pod within the Contact Centre.

Community and Customer Services - As the result of a complaint, Community and Customer Services have revised its procedure in dealing with homeless clients, their support workers and council staff to ensure improved case management and communication.

Community and Customer Services - Community and Customer services introduced a new procedure for the disposal of furnishings from homeless accommodation following a complaint regarding the condition of the furnishings.

Community and Customer Services - As a result of concerns raised by a number of landlords, the service have reviewed processes in terms of landlord registration renewal notification processes and made changes to ensure improved communications.

Chief Executive Service - Following significant local flooding over the Winter period and a number of related concerns raised, the service reviewed their flood prevention and emergency response efforts and identified areas of learning and for improvement. This included developing a scheme for general staff to easily report issues during emergencies to assist the service with improved situational awareness.

Social Work Services - As a result of a Stage 2 complaint investigation, a domestic abuse training programme for all children's services staff was organised. This training can be further applied across the whole service.

Social Work Services - Our work in handling complaints has highlighted the need to ensure our communication with customers is regular and up-to-date. We recognise the importance of keeping in touch with individuals we are working with even when, at times, there can be difficulties in the sharing of personal information.

Social Work Services - As a service, Social Work are increasing its focus on early informal resolution of customers' problems and concerns rather than signposting them directly on to the formal complaints handling procedure.

Prepared by the Information Management and Complaints Unit.

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