

Annual Complaints Monitoring Report

2014-15

Agreed by Audit and Risk Management Committee
on 18 July 2015



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 2014-2015.

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 relating to the Council's performance against a set of 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.

During the course of the year, and for the first time since the Council commenced monitoring of complaints in 2010 – 2011, a reduction in the number of complaints received has been recorded. Our compliance with timescales for responding to complaints dealt with continues to improve as we make every effort toward meeting the high standards expected for responses at both the Frontline Resolution Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the procedure.

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

Please continue to give us your feedback on any aspect of the Council's services, all of which have contributed in the production of this annual report.

Gavin Stevenson
Chief Executive

Summary

- We received 364 new complaints in 2014/15 compared to 431 in 2013/14. The complaints related to the following Council services:

Service	2014/15		2013/14	
	Number	%	Number	%
Council-wide	0	0	3	1
Chief Executive Service	20	5	12	3
Community and Customer Services	123	34	166	39
DGFirst	71	20	87	20
Education	34	9	32	7
Planning and Environment Services	29	8	47	11
Social Work Services	87	24	84	19

- 85% of complaints dealt with at Stage 1 (Frontline Resolution) during the period did not progress on to Stage 2 (Investigation). It is therefore reasonable to suggest that the majority of customers were satisfied with the way their complaints were dealt with at this stage. This reflects some consistency with last year's figure of 86% and the previous year's figure of 83%, and 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 (7 working days instead of 5 at Stage 1, and 30 working days instead of 20 at Stage 2). The complexity of the issues raised in complaints require staff to prioritise the quality of a response over its expediency however on-going training and development will aim toward making improvements in this respect.
- The examples of service improvements resulting from complaints, as shown under Section 8 of this report, demonstrate our commitment to capturing the key themes of our complaints and increasing our learning.
- We report both monthly and quarterly on these same indicators to the Corporate Management Team and the Corporate Business Support Group respectively. These quarterly reports will be shared on our website for 2015/16.

Definitions:

STAGE 1 – complaints closed at Stage 1 Frontline Resolution;

STAGE 2 (DIRECT) – complaints that by-passed Stage 1 and went directly to Stage 2 Investigation (e.g. complex complaints);

STAGE 2 ESCALATED – complaints which were dealt with at Stage 1 and were subsequently escalated to Stage 2 investigation (e.g. because the customer remained dissatisfied)

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

Description	2014/15	2013/14
Number of complaints received per 1,000	2.43	2.91
Total number of complaints received	364	431

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

Description	2014/15	2013/14
Number of complaints closed at Stage One as % of all complaints	82% (299)	83% (392)
Number of complaints closed at Stage Two as % of all complaints	12% (45)	5% (25)
Number of complaints closed at Stage Two after escalation as % of all complaints	13% (46)	12% (58)

Notes:- In some cases we may be unable to issue a response to a complaint, for example, where a matter has been resolved or a complaint withdrawn part way through the process. During the period 2014/15, five complaints were withdrawn prior to a response being issued, one complaint was resolved, two were considered 'out of remit' (due to Police or legal action being taken) and four complaints are yet to receive a response (but remain within timescale). Additionally, whilst we consider anonymous complaints, we cannot issue a response without contact details. During the period 2014/15 we received eight anonymous complaints.

The escalated complaints referred to above were also responded at Stage 1 during the year.

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

Upheld

Description	2014/15	2013/14
Number of complaints upheld at Stage One as % of all complaints closed at Stage One	36% (107 of 299)	38% (151 of 392)
Number of complaints upheld at Stage Two as % of complaints closed at Stage Two	9% (4 of 45)	16% (4 of 25)
Number of escalated complaints upheld at Stage Two as % of escalated complaints closed at Stage Two	26% (12 of 46)	21% (12 of 58)

Partially Upheld

Description	2014/15	2013/14
Number of complaints partially upheld at Stage One as % of complaints closed at Stage One	20% (60 of 299)	16% (61 of 392)
Number of complaints partially upheld at Stage Two as % of complaints closed at Stage Two	24% (11 of 45)	36% (9 of 25)
Number of escalated complaints partially upheld at Stage Two as % of escalated complaints closed at Stage Two	26% (12 of 46)	33% (19 of 58)

Not Upheld

Description	2014/15	2013/14
Number of complaints not upheld at Stage One as % of complaints closed at Stage One	30% (91 of 299)	27% (105 of 392)
Number of complaints not upheld at Stage Two as % of complaints closed at Stage Two	58% (26 of 45)	28% (7 of 25)
Number of escalated complaints not upheld at Stage Two as % of escalated complaints closed at Stage Two	43% (20 of 46)	34% (20 of 58)

Notes:-

14% (41 of 299) stage one responses contained an outcome other than those above.

9% (4 of 45) of stage two responses contained an outcome other than those above.

4% (2 of 46) of stage two (escalated) responses contained an outcome other than those above.

‘Other’ includes matters where a resolution has been agreed or the complaint has progressed on to alternative appropriate procedures such as internal management or insurance claims (but a response still issued).

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

Description	2014/15	2013/14	Target
Average time in working days to respond to complaints at Stage One	7 w/ds	6 w/ds	5 working days
Average time in working days to respond to complaints at Stage Two	35 w/ds	33 w/ds	20 working days
Average time in working days to respond to complaints after escalation	26 w/ds	31 w/ds	20 working days
Average time in working days to respond to complaints at investigation (Stage Two and escalated combined)	30 w/ds	32 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	2014/15	2013/14	Target
Number of complaints closed at Stage One within 5 working days as % of Stage One complaints	48% (145 of 299)	53% (207 of 392)	80%
Number of complaints closed at Stage Two within 20 working days as % of Stage Two complaints	35% (16 of 45)	16% (4 of 25)	80%
Number of escalated complaints closed within 20 working days as % of escalated Stage Two complaints	41% (19 of 46)	40% (23 of 58)	80%
Number of complaints closed at investigation stage within 20 working days as % of investigation complaints (Stage Two and escalated combined)	38% (35 of 91)	33% (27 of 83)	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	2014/15	2013/14
% of complaints at Stage One where extension was authorised	14% (43 of 299)	8% (33 of 392)
% of complaints at Stage Two where extension was authorised	42% (19 of 45)	16% (4 of 25)
% of escalated complaints where extension was authorised	26% (12 of 46)	36% (21 of 58)

7 Customer satisfaction with the complaints service provided

Description	2014/15
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Exit surveys for all complainants will begin in quarter one of 2015/16. Results from these surveys will be published on our website at the end of each quarter. We will also be running an annual complaints survey of both customers and staff which is scheduled for quarter three of 2015/2016.

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

- 1 As the result of a complaint and subsequent appeal by an individual who had been subject to a restriction, the Council has completely revised its corporate review and appeals process under the Unacceptable Actions Policy to ensure fairness and natural justice are offered to any appellants.
- 2 Community and Customer Services introduced a new staff rota and operational procedure as a result of a complaint about the provision of the Rainbow Swim Scheme at a local swimming pool which highlighted issues of inconsistencies in the staff delivering swimming lessons.

- 3 A complaint regarding inconsistency of Leisure and Sport facility timetables in relation to a local swimming pool has resulted in changes being made to the Facebook page for that facility in line with our Council's policy on Social Media. Community and Customer Services have also adopted a procedure to ensure that any changes to the current timetable are cascaded to the relevant department for updating.
- 4 Community and Customer Services have made improvements to the scripts used in the Lagan Customer Relationship Management tool following feedback received through a customer complaint.
- 5 DGFirst took on board customer complaints received following the cessation of grass cutting of certain areas following agreed budget reductions and have consequently amended their working practices to appease these complaints.
- 6 Following a complaint received from a parent regarding the unavailability of documentation held in relation to their child, Education Services' material has been reviewed. An example of this is the Service conducted an audit of all school handbooks on the Council website, ensuring their currency. It was established that 50% of handbooks were not up to date. School Link Education Officers were informed where handbooks were lacking to ensure Headteachers met expectations. Processes have now been implemented within Education Services to ensure all relevant documents are available to parents.
- 7 Planning and Environment Services have made operational amendments to their processes and procedures to ensure that individuals requesting action under Environmental Health legislation are advised of the outcome of their request, regardless of the outcome of the services findings. This stems from feedback received from the SPSO in respect of a case which was progressed to them regarding alleged failure to take action in relation to Environmental Health concerns raised by a member of public.
- 8 Following the investigation of a complaint, Social Work Services noted that a service user's Frameworki record had been closed appropriately however that there was no supporting information or notes to explain why this action had been taken. Consequently, Social Work Services operational staff were reminded of the importance of including information about the service closure when completing the Closure Record screen on Frameworki.

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