

Quarterly Complaints Monitoring Report Quarter 2 2023/24: 1 July to 30 September

This report outlines Dumfries and Galloway Council's performance for Quarter 2 in 2023/24. It provides information relating to the Council's quarterly performance in the handling of complaints against a group of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) set out by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). Regularly reporting the analysis of complaints information helps to inform management of where services need to improve.

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 (as detailed below). It is a minimum requirement for all organisations to:

- report at least quarterly to senior management on the KPIs and analysis of the trends and outcomes of complaints
- publish on a quarterly basis information on complaints outcomes and actions taken to improve services, i.e. good practice and lessons learned
- publish an annual complaints performance report on their website that includes performance statistics in line with the KPIs, complaint trends and actions that have been taken or will be taken to improve services as a result.

Our quarterly and annual complaints monitoring reports are published on the Council website available here: <https://www.dumgal.gov.uk/complaintsprocedure>

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

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Definitions:

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.'

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.

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Key Performance Indicators

The following section details our performance against the set of standardised complaints KPIs outlined by the SPSO.

Indicator One: the total number of complaints received

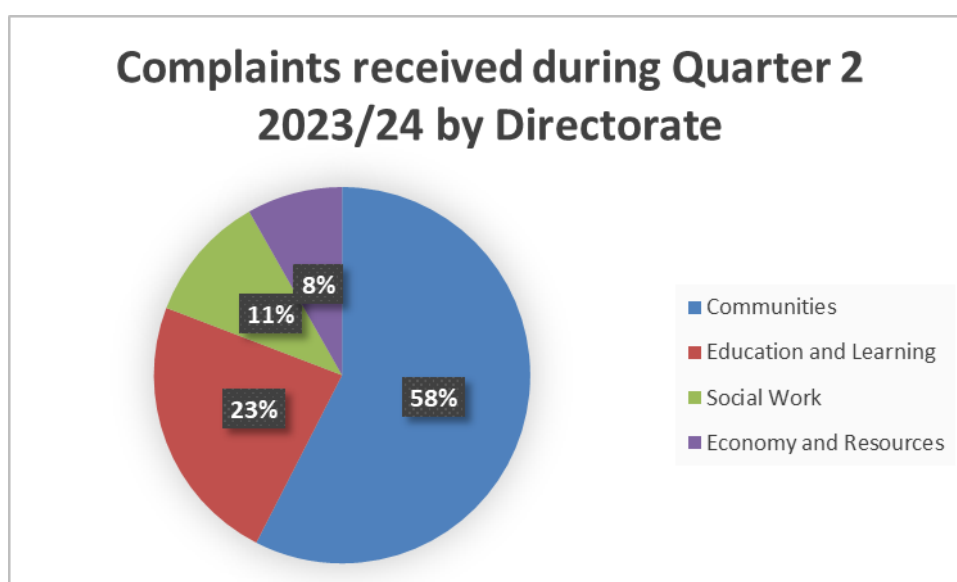
This indicator records the total number of complaints received by Dumfries and Galloway Council in the reporting period. This is the sum of the number of complaints received at Stage 1 (this includes escalated complaints, as they were first received at Stage 1), and the number of complaints received directly at Stage 2.

Description	Q2 1 July to 30 September
The total number of complaints received per 1,000 population	1.0
Total number of complaints received	146

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

The 146 new complaints we received during Quarter 2 related to the following Directorates.

Complaints received in Quarter 2 2023/24 by Service		
Directorate	Number	Percentage
Communities	84	58%
Education and Learning	34	23%
Social Work	16	11%
Economy and Resources	12	8%



Between 1 July to 30 September 2023, we closed 134 complaints. 115 of these were closed at Stage One (85.8%), 9 at Stage Two (6.7%) and 10 after escalation to Stage Two (7.5%).

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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	Number	Percentage
The number of complaints closed in full at Stage 1 within five working days as % of all stage 1 complaints responded to in full (Target – 80%)	100	87.0%
The number of complaints closed in full at Stage 2 within 20 working days as % of all stage 2 complaints responded to in full (Target – 80%)	3	33.3%
The number of complaints closed in full after escalation within 20 working days as % of all complaints responded to in full after escalation (Target – 80%)	8	80.0%

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

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

Description	Working days
The average time in working days to respond to complaints at Stage 1 (target – 5 working days)	5.6 w/d
The average time in working days to respond to complaints at Stage 2 (target – 20 working days)	39.1 w/d
The average time in working days to respond to complaints after escalation (target – 20 working days)	23.7 w/d

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

There are times when an extension to the timescales may be necessary. Extensions must be agreed with an appropriate manager. 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.

Description	Number	Percentage
Number and percentage of complaints at Stage 1 where extension was applied	8	7.0%
Number and percentage of complaints at Stage 2 where extension was applied	6	66.7%
Number and percentage of escalated complaints where extension was applied	1	10%

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Of the 15 complaints where an authorised extension was applied. They were extended for the following reasons:

Reason for extension	Number of cases
Essential information unavailable due to long-term sickness, leave or professional hearings	5
Unable to obtain essential information within timescale	3
Customer has requested an extension	2
Meeting with customer	2
Lack of response from customer	1
Essential information unavailable due to long-term sickness, leave or professional hearings	1
School holidays, Unable to obtain essential information within timescale, Complexity of issue(s)	1

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

Stage 1 Complaints upheld, partially upheld, not upheld and resolved		
Description	Number	Percentage
Number of complaints upheld at Stage 1 as % of all complaints closed at Stage 1	50	43.5%
Number of complaints not upheld at Stage 1 as % of all complaints closed at Stage 1	38	33.0%
Number of complaints partially upheld at Stage 1 as % of complaints closed at Stage 1	19	16.5%
Number of complaints resolved at Stage One as % of all complaints closed at Stage One	8	7.0%
Stage 2 Complaints upheld, partially upheld, not upheld and resolved		
Number complaints upheld at Stage Two as % of complaints closed at Stage 2	4	44.4%
Number complaints not upheld at Stage 2 as % of complaints closed at Stage 2	3	33.3%
Number complaints partially upheld at Stage 2 as % of complaints closed at Stage 2	2	22.2%
Number complaints resolved at Stage 2 as % of complaints closed at Stage 2	0	0.0%
Escalated Complaints upheld, partially upheld, not upheld and resolved		
Number of complaints upheld at Stage 2 as % of escalated complaints closed after escalation	1	10.0%
Number of complaints not upheld at Stage 2 as % of escalated complaints closed after escalation	9	90.0%
Number of complaints partially upheld at Stage 2 as % of escalated complaints	0	0.0%

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Stage 1 Complaints upheld, partially upheld, not upheld and resolved

Description	Number	Percentage
closed after escalation		
Number escalated complaints resolved at Stage 2 as % of escalated complaints closed after escalation	0	0.0%

Customer Satisfaction

An electronic customer satisfaction survey is sent out to all customers with their response using Microsoft Forms. From 1 July to 30 September 2023, we received 1 response to the Complaints Customer Satisfaction Survey. Results received relies on the good will of customers taking the time to complete the survey.

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not applicable
Information about the complaint's procedure was easily accessible	0	0	0	1	0	0
I found it easy to make my complaint	0	0	0	1	0	0
I was happy that staff fully understood my complaint	0	1	0	0	0	0
I was given the opportunity to fully explain my complaint	0	1	0	0	0	0
The points of my complaint were identified and responded to	0	1	0	0	0	0
The response to my complaint was easy to understand	0	0	0	1	0	0
Overall, I was satisfied with the handling of my complaint	0	0	0	1	0	0
I was clearly told what the next stage of the complaints process was for me	0	0	1	0	0	0
I was told if the response was going to take longer than the set timescales (five working days at stage 1 and 20 working days at stage 2)	0	0	1	0	0	0

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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**

Following on from a complaint received regarding customer service at the Robert Burns Centre – all staff members working at the centre have been trained and equipped to enable them to sell cinema tickets.

Communities

As a result of a complaint the process and procedures regarding the exiting of Council properties will be reviewed by Property Services. A documented handover process from Lead tenant to Property Services, with completion of building inspection, which will include confirmation that confidential waste arrangements are in place before exiting the building.

Communities

Following on from a complaint regarding inadequate signage at a recycling facility new signage has been purchased to be displayed at all sites across the region.

Communities

The investigation outcome of a complaint evidenced that the development of the Roads Service defect processes needs to improve customer feedback information.

Social Work

Following a complaint made to Adult Services, staff were reminded of the need for a timely response to emails and correspondence confirming arrangements made with external care providers.

Social Work

From a complaint made to the Care and Support Service (CASS), the following actions were taken:

- Reviewed the training for staff around identifying and reporting concerns;
- Reviewed internal procedures to ensure that appropriate action and assurances happen when concerns are flagged up;
- Direct work with staff to remind them to check that contact details for family members are up-to-date within our records.

Social Work

Resulting from a complaint made to Social Work Services, it was highlighted that improvements were needed around communication between SWS and colleagues in Finance with regards to the sharing of decisions and arrangements for financial matters relating to individuals.

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Improvement work undertaken**Social Work**

Refresher training in handling complaints was arranged for staff following a complaint made to Social Work Services in relation to staff attitude and conduct.

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.

Staff training provided

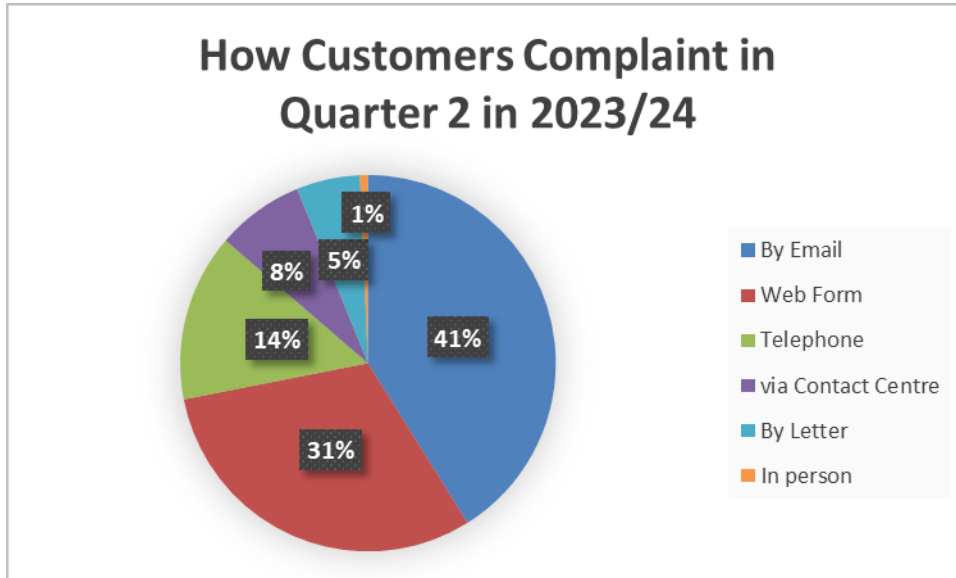
Within this quarter we have continued to work with services to update our list of Investigating Officers (IO) for the complaints process and asked them to nominate new people to attend the new SPSO Online Complaints Investigation Skills (CIS) course or identify existing IO's to undertake refresher training. This course is aimed at staff who investigate complaints at Stage 2 of the Model Council's Complaints Handling procedure (CHP). We have now broadened the pool of staff who can undertake investigations which means this workload can be shared across services so that there is more staff who have the time and the ability as well as the right skill set to undertake such investigations when required.

Stage 2 - SPSO Complaints Investigation Skills training course – The Information Governance Team (IGT) have been coordinating the booking of this training for services and in this reporting period 4 Officers have completed this online training.

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How customers have complained

In Quarter 2 of 2023/24, of the 146 complaints we received, customers chose the following ways to contact us with their complaint. Within Quarter 2 we seen customer use of email is the most common way to contact us with their complaint, closely followed by Web Form.



Complaints received by topic

We have developed a list of ‘topics’ which complaint handlers are prompted to select from when the details of a new complaint are recorded within Respond. This classification allows us to run reports about a specific topic area and identify the type of complaints received and identify any trends.

Between 1 July to 30 September 2023, the most common customer complaints related to the following topic areas.

Topic	Number of complaints
Inadequate or poor standard of service delivery	13
Professionalism of Staff	10
Learning and Teaching	9
Council Tax	8
Road Condition/Road Maintenance	7
Behaviour/Bullying (Schools)	5
Communication	5
Planning	5
Waste Collection	5
Pavement	4

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Complaint type

Type	Number of complaints
Inadequate quality or standard of service, or an unreasonable delay in providing a service	57
Dissatisfaction with one of our policies or its impact on the individual	24
Conduct, treatment by or attitude of a member of staff or contractor	18
Failure to reply to correspondence/telephone calls	16
Disagreement with a decision	10
Failure or refusal to provide a service	8
Failure to properly apply law, procedure or guidance when delivering services	7
Accuracy of Information	3
Lack of Information	3

Compliments

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 aspects of work by staff, the report includes information about the number of compliments received across the Council.

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 Council recorded 43 Compliments during Quarter 2 of 2023/24.

Compliments received in Quarter 2 of 2023/24 by Directorate		
Service	Number	Percentage
Communities	32	75%
Education and Learning	7	16%
Economy and Resources	3	7%
Social Work	1	2%

One of the recurring themes of the compliments received in Quarter 2 of 2023/24 was around Museums.

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Here is what customers had to say about our museums:

“At the ATHT exhibition today I was chatting to a man who was visiting his family in Annan...he mentioned that his grandson loved the museum. He said that the staff in Annan Museum make him feel as he is the most important visitor they ever had!”

“Today xxx and I went to see the exhibition featuring Flora Murray - I felt quite emotional and very proud of her achievements and women like her. Well done Dumfries Museum.”

“Thank you and your team so much for going above and beyond for our guests today. It was so enjoyable and truly fascinating. It would be great to keep the channels of communication open and build on the Sri Lankan connection, if we can. I'm sure it would make a really interesting exhibit!”

“What an amazing visit yesterday and we really appreciated the insight from xxx on the Robert Burn's Mausoleum. It was extremely emotional for me to walk with such family history. Thank you once again...yesterday was AMAZING.”

“Thank you so very much for an excellent presentation, everyone was delighted. Also thank you for all your research and information on Sir William...”

“This Saturday was the last day of the 2023 Market of Possibility (notice the date in there!). Over the course of 2 months we worked in partnership with over 20 organisations, groups, enterprises, campaigns and CICs towards occupying a rather soulless little space in the Loreburne Centre entitled 'The Market of Possibility'. With your involvement and creativity we transformed this little space into a dynamic, creative, enterprising and connected space for everyone to take part in. It was a celebration of a united front in re-imagining the future of our town, rooted in the remarkable work each of you are doing, whether through music, history, drawing or dancing, it was a great thing to have worked with you and long may it continue.

I wanted to reach out with both a professional and personal THANK YOU.... We've a lot more work to do in understanding just what it was that made the Market so special, not to mention the countless postcards, conversations, drawings and stories written throughout its time. Once again, thank you so much. We're over the moon with the project...”

“Thank you once again for a super talk this evening. I know that everyone present really enjoyed it and there was a lot of rich discussion afterwards in and around some of the themes inherent in your presentation. To have xxx and xxx in the audience just added that extra wee something, and there was a degree of engagement and interest that we don't get with every external speaker.”