

Annual Complaints Monitoring Report



2021/22

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Foreword

I am pleased to present Dumfries and Galloway Council's Annual Complaints Monitoring Report for 2021/2022.

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 key performance indicators set out by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO), which we have been required to report on since the introduction of the national Model 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 an indication of the number of compliments recorded across the Council during 2021/22. I am grateful to all those who have taken the time to contact us to acknowledge the effort made by staff.

Thank you for your encouraging support. We value all feedback we receive from our customers as this helps us to 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.

Dawn Roberts

Chief Executive



Introduction

The Council adopted the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman's (SPSO) Model Complaint Handling Procedure (MCHP) with effect from 1 April 2013. Integral to the MCHP is the requirement that all Scottish Local Authorities monitor complaints against a range of 8 set Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) which are used by all 32 Local Authorities and the publication of an annual report.

This report provides information on customer complaints and our performance between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2022, together with comparisons on how we are performing against our previous reports of 2020/21 and 2019/20.

The Council's definition of a complaint is, "an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more members of the public about the organisation's action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of the organisation."

On 1 April 2021, the Council fully implemented the SPSO's revised MCHP. The new MCHP includes a core text which is consistent across all public services in Scotland. The previously separate MCHPs for Local Authorities and Social Work Services have been merged into a single MCHP. The revised MCHP includes a new complaints outcome of '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 on whether to uphold / not uphold.

To support the implementation of the revised CHP, we developed and delivered a programme of training and awareness raising for all staff to support them to confidently deal with complaints. We also ran a social media campaign to raise awareness of the revised CHP and advise customers how they can make a complaint.



In 2021/22 we received 534 new complaints. This is a significant increase on the 2020/21 figure of 281 new complaints. The low figures for 2020/21 can likely be attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic and the disruption to public services due to national lockdown. As lockdown restrictions eased, we saw a return to normal levels of complaints.

Our aim is to 'get it right first time' with quick, simple and streamlined complaints handling with local, early resolution by capable, well-trained staff. In 2021/22 we addressed and closed 86.8% (393 of 453) of complaints at Stage One (Frontline Response). This means that the majority of complaints were concluded at Stage One. This demonstrates a positive commitment to resolving matters at the earliest stage of the process.

We have seen an improvement in performance in average times to respond to complaints, and percentage of complaints closed within the set timescales, when compared to the last two years. This is something that we have been working hard to improve. A weekly report on complaints performance is provided to the Chair and Vice Chair of the Communities Committee. This is also shared with Directors and Heads of Service for their awareness and scrutiny. Where responses are issued out with the set timescales, Services are asked to provide detail on the reason for the delay and any actions to be taken to improve complaints performance.

Complaint figures are reported quarterly to the Council's Information Management Group and annually to the Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Committee. Quarterly and Annual Complaints Monitoring Reports are published online on our website: <https://www.dumgal.gov.uk/complaintsprocedure>

Individual Directorates also undertake additional reporting for example Education and Learning Directorate provide weekly reports to the Heads of Service on any pending complaints and also share pre-complaint concerns raised by parents or staff.

How customers have complained

Customers can complain to the Council in a range of ways, including email, online via our complaints webform, by phone, letter or in person.

In 2021/22 we received 534 complaints from customers who chose the following ways to contact us with their complaint. We continue to see customers contacting us electronically with most complaints received via our online complaints webform or by email.

Breakdown of the way people got in touch 2021/22



41%
Web Form



35%
By Email



13%
Telephone



7%
Contact Centre



4%
By Letter

Complaints received by topic

We have developed a list of 'topics' which complaint handlers are prompted to select from when recording the details of a complaint. This classification allows us to run reports about a specific topic area and identify themes of complaints received and identify any trends.

Between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2022, the most common customer complaints related to the following topic areas across all services. Please note that the topic captured relies on the professional judgement of the complaint handler managing the case.

Topic	Number of complaints	Percentage of the total complaints received
Professionalism of Staff	55	10%
Communication	53	10%
Waste Collection	39	7%
Behaviour/Bullying*	35	7%
Other	33	6%
Recycling Bins	27	6%
Road Condition/Road Maintenance	23	4%
Council Tax	15	3%
Learning and Teaching	14	3%
Planning	14	3%
Potholes	13	2%

**Behaviour/bullying: 31 of the 35 complaints relating to this topic area were from Education and Learning Directorate and related to the handling of alleged bullying/behaviour between peers in schools. Of these, 5 complaints were later withdrawn, 8 were not upheld and 13 were resolved in school by staff, pupils and parents whilst adhering to our Anti-Bullying policies*

Complaints received by type

Type	Number of complaints
Inadequate quality or standard of service, or an unreasonable delay in providing a service	181
Conduct, treatment by or attitude of member of staff or contractor	95
Failure to respond to correspondence/telephone call	67
Failure or refusal to provide a service	47
Disagreement with a decision	46
Dissatisfaction with one of our policies or its impact on the individual	30
Other	23
Failure to properly apply law, procedure or guidance when delivering services	20
Accuracy of information	12
Lack of information	11
Failure to follow the appropriate administrative process	2

Our Performance – Key Figures

The following sections detail our performance against the set of standardised complaints KPIs outlined by the SPSO. The KPIs outlined below, apply to all Local Authorities that have a statutory duty to comply with the SPSO's MCHP.

Definitions:

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 not satisfied with their Stage One response.

281

new complaints in
2020 - 2021

534

new complaints in
2021 - 2022

Indicator 1 – Complaints Received Per 1,000 of the Population

This indicator details 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 one, (frontline resolution) and the number of complaints received directly at stage two (investigation).

Description	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20
The total number of complaints received per 1,000 population	3.6	1.9	3.1
Total number of complaints received	534	281	456

Complaints received in 2021/22 by Service

Service	Number	%
Communities	318	59%
Education and Learning	111	21%
Social Work	57	11%
Economy and Resources	48	9%

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

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 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	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20
Number complaints closed at Stage One as % of all complaints	86.8% (393)	77.7% (160)	90% (312)
Number complaints closed at Stage Two as % of all complaints	5.1% (23)	12.6% (26)	4% (14)
Number complaints closed at Stage Two after escalation as % of all complaints	8.2% (37)	9.7% (20)	6% (20)
Total number of complaints closed	453	206	346

Indicator 3 – Complaints Resolved, Upheld, Partially Upheld and Not Upheld

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

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.

Definitions of the 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

Resolved

Description	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20
Number of complaints resolved at Stage One as % of all complaints closed at Stage One	31% (122 of 393)	N/A	N/A
Number complaints resolved at Stage Two as % of complaints closed at Stage Two	0% (0 of 23)	N/A	N/A
Number escalated complaints resolved at Stage Two as % of escalated complaints closed at Stage Two	5.4% (2 of 37)	N/A	N/A

Upheld			
Description	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20
Number of complaints upheld at Stage One as % of all complaints closed at Stage One	36.6% (144 of 393)	58.1% (93 of 160)	56% (176 of 312)
Number complaints upheld at Stage Two as % of complaints closed at Stage Two	21.7% (5 of 23)	15.4% (4 of 26)	21% (3 of 14)
Number escalated complaints upheld at Stage Two as % of escalated complaints closed at Stage Two	13.5% (5 of 37)	25% (5 of 20)	25% (5 of 20)

Partially Upheld			
Description	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20
Number of complaints partially upheld at Stage One as % of complaints closed at Stage One	10.9% (43 of 393)	11.9% (19 of 160)	19% (59 of 312)
Number complaints partially upheld at Stage Two as % of complaints closed at Stage Two	26.1% (6 of 23)	34.6% (9 of 26)	36% (5 of 14)
Number escalated complaints partially upheld at Stage Two as % of escalated complaints closed at Stage Two	43.2% (16 of 37)	35% (7 of 20)	45% (9 of 20)

Not Upheld			
Description	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20
Number complaints not upheld at Stage One as % of complaints closed at Stage One	21.4% (84 of 393)	30% (48 of 160)	25% (77 of 312)
Number complaints not upheld at Stage Two as % of complaints closed at Stage Two	52.2% (12 of 23)	50% (13 of 26)	43% (6 of 14)
Number escalated complaints not upheld at Stage Two as % of escalated complaints closed at Stage Two	37.8% (14 of 37)	40% (8 of 20)	30% (6 of 20)

Indicator 4 – Average Times

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

Description	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20
Average time in working days to respond to complaints at Stage One (target – 5 working days)	4.7 w/ds	6 w/ds	4 w/ds
Average time in working days to respond to complaints at Stage Two (target – 20 working days)	35.1 w/ds	38 w/ds	26 w/ds
Average time in working days to respond to complaints after escalation (target – 20 working days)	30.2 w/ds	32 w/ds	30 w/ds

Indicator 5 – Performance against Timescales

This indicator reports the 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	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20
Number complaints closed at Stage One within 5 working days as % of Stage One complaints (target – 80%)	86% (338 of 393)	69.4% (111 of 160)	71% (221 of 312)
Number complaints closed at Stage Two within 20 working days as % of Stage Two complaints (target – 80%)	43.5% (10 of 23)	30.8% (8 of 26)	29% (4 of 14)
Number escalated complaints closed within 20 working days as % of escalated Stage Two complaints (target – 80%)	45.9% (17 of 37)	40% (8 of 20)	40% (8 of 20)

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 customer 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	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20
Number and percentage of complaints at Stage One where extension was authorised	7.6% (30 of 393)	9.4% (15 of 160)	2% (5 of 312)
Number and percentage of complaints at Stage Two where extension was authorised	69.6% (16 of 23)	69.2% (18 of 26)	57% (8 of 14)
Number and percentage of escalated complaints where extension was authorised	43.2% (16 of 37)	55% (11 of 20)	40% (8 of 20)

The number of extensions being applied to complaints at Stage One of the complaints process remains low. However, we continue to see a high number of Stage Two complaints having an authorised extension applied. This is often due to the complexity of complaints raised requiring careful consideration and detailed investigation. By applying an extension this means that we are keeping customers up-to-date about the reason for the extension and when they can expect a response.

The SPSO Statement of Complaints Handling Principles states that:

“Thoroughness of investigation should not be compromised by attempts to meet timescales and flexibility may be afforded for particularly complex cases. It is vital that, in cases where timescales cannot be met for good reason, complainants are kept informed of those reasons.”

(<https://www.spsso.org.uk/sites/spsso/files/csa/principles.pdf>)

Of the 32 Stage Two complaints that were extended, a number of these were extended due to school holidays. Education and Learning have advised that extensions due to school holiday entitlements are unavoidable as teaching staff are off over the holiday period and, as an employer, we have duty to respect their contractual and working time agreements whilst responding to correspondence. However, where central non-teaching colleagues within Education and Learning can address complaints during the school holidays this is achieved.

Following a report to Council Management Team on 2 March 2022, staff were reminded that extensions should not be made unless there is an exceptional circumstance. A new process for authorising an extension to a Stage Two complaint has been introduced for 2022/23.



Indicator 7 – Customer Satisfaction

Our Complaints Customer Satisfaction Survey is based on the template developed by the Local Authority Complaints Handlers Network (LACHN) working alongside the SPSO.

The satisfaction survey is an electronic customer satisfaction survey which uses Microsoft Forms to collect responses. A link to this survey is sent out to all customers with their complaint response both at Stage One and Stage Two of the process.

Between 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022, we received 24 responses to our Complaints Customer Satisfaction Survey. Results received relies on the good will of customers taking the time to complete the survey. All responses are anonymous.

We continue to encourage customers to complete this survey so that informative data can be gathered about whether customers are satisfied with the way that their complaint has been handled. This will also enable informed decisions to be made about any improvements to the procedure that might be required.



Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not applicable
Information about the complaints procedure was easily accessible	4	14	2	3	1	0
I found it easy to make my complaint	7	9	3	3	2	0
I was happy that staff fully understood my complaint	4	10	4	2	4	0
I was given the opportunity to fully explain my complaint	4	9	2	7	2	0
Staff asked what I wanted to happen as a result of my complaint	2	10	5	4	3	0
The response to my complaint was easy to understand	4	8	2	7	3	0
Overall I was satisfied with the handling of my complaint	4	4	3	4	9	0
I was kept informed of any delays to receiving the response to my complaint	0	6	12	3	2	1

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.

Communities (Quarter 1)

A complaint identified that a claim had not been clearly labelled as having a power of attorney appointed. The process was reviewed, and an additional alert was created on the system with a reason to account for cases where Power of Attorneys are present on claims so that the assessment staff can clearly identify that alternative action is required and that there is consent to discuss the claim details with the Power of Attorney.

Communities (Quarter 1)

Following a complaint received, the process for uplifting of fly-tipped items was reviewed and streamlined to ensure clear and concise communications between our Community Safety Team who investigate the fly tipping and the services responsible for the uplift and removal of the items. The existing process for handling issues raised through the fix my street website is in the process of being reviewed with the aim to implement a more robust procedure to ensure that all users receive a response within the agreed timescale and in a timely manner.

Communities (Quarter 2)

A complaint regarding a failure to uplift bulky items led to internal procedures being amended to ensure that we communicate to our customers that any items for collection should be left outside the property and to ensure customers are notified as soon as possible if an uplift is missed.

Communities (Quarter 3)

As a result of a complaint received a review of mail processes and resulting correspondence to customers has been undertaken. The review will ensure that robust processes are in place across the Service for processing mail and resulting correspondence is clear and concise.

A complaint received resulted in a review of the Registration Service's communication and procedures to customers. The changes will ensure that customers are fully aware of the procedure and information required for Civil Partnerships in advance.



Economy and Resources (Quarter 2)

The contact centre has reviewed its operations following several complaints about call wait times. We have reviewed and reduced the welcome messages on incoming lines to get callers speaking to operators quicker. We have worked with colleagues in other directorates to provide additional support during periods of high traffic. After a complaint received related to a poor response from the Contact Centre the service implemented consolidation training sessions for staff who have joined the team during the pandemic period to ensure all aspects of a normal induction were covered. Additional training and support was carried out to ensure staff have all the tools available for first contact resolution and conflict management.

Economy and Resources (Quarter 4)

As a result of a complaint the standard conditions applied to Planning approvals were reviewed and the standard planning condition placed on approvals for developments of this nature has been updated to reflect. This change will help to ensure future planning conditions meet key requirements, there will be a reduction in cases raised with the Planning Enforcement Team, and customer service will be improved by providing a clearer and more deliverable approach.

Economy and Resources (Quarter 4)

A complaint was received in relation to a planning objection from a customer being missed by the case officer. This was found to be due to a backlog of correspondence as a result of lack of staff resources. The objection had not been published online / added to the back office system as would normally be the case and so the case officer proceeded on the basis that there were no objections to the planning application. This led to learning and new procedures being put in place to ensure that if a backlog in inputting correspondence occurs in future that the case officer is made aware of the existence of the representation upon receipt by the administrator and that case officers need to note this separately in the case file so that representations are not missed in delegated reports.

Education and Learning

Recommendations from our complaint processes relate to individual schools, however, the learning from complaints outlined here from Stage 2 complaints can be applied as principals of best practice for all schools and as such are shared with all schools. Communication remains a key theme across all the learning from complaints outcomes, but by its very nature, communication is complex therefore this is not surprising. Meeting the needs of individual children and families sometimes needs a bespoke approach out with our usual formal processes.



Education and Learning (Quarter 1)

Information Sharing: As a result of a complaint, recommendations were made related to sharing of school policies on class practice, in relation to mobile phone policies for example, so that families can support schools in their strategies for class management.

Consent: Learning from a complaint led to reinforcement of the process to seek consent from parents for Option Choices for example, which takes place in the senior phase (exam years) of education.

Education and Learning (Quarter 2)

Information Sharing: Recommendations from a complaint included that as a matter of good practice schools keep a written summary of discussions with parents/carers, during face to face or telephone meetings/conversations in respect of allegations of a serious nature against a pupil by another pupil where this has been escalated to Police Scotland. In addition, that the School's Community Police Officer work alongside this approach to ensure that there is greater consistency of information sharing between all parties.

Recording and Reporting: Reinforcing the use of the Bullying and Equalities log on SEEMIS to ensure that all allegations of bullying are recorded and reported on the designated system. Education and Learning continue to address this through our regular communications with schools.

Education and Learning (Quarter 3)

Promoting Positive Behaviour: Schools should continue to share the policy for Promoting Positive Behaviour with pupils and parents so that there are clear expectations about the roles and responsibilities that the whole school community play in understanding what bullying is to help address bullying behaviour.

Transition Information: Where complex transition information and meetings take place with parents it is important that a written record is retained, which, should be signed by both parties to ensure it reflects a common understanding of the discussion with any strategies and adjustments clearly outlined.

Education and Learning (Quarter 4)

Communication with Parents: Whether impact of Covid19 on relationships with our parents, there is a need for more effective and more frequent communication especially in relation to meeting the needs of pupils to support their wellbeing schools where additional intervention has identified.

Policy Review: The authority will review its Anti-Bullying additional guidance (issued April 2019) to ensure that consideration of the views of Parents and Children will be highlighted, and the Council will look to provide training/information sharing around this including parents/carers and/or pupils. This will be undertaken with Respectme, Scotland's anti-bullying service.



Risk Management: A complaint highlighted an overlap of policy, procedures, and guidance with regards to the Corporate Risk Management Toolkit and Education Directorate School Risk Assessments. As a result of this complaint these are being addressed for clarity and awareness.

Parental Involvement and Engagement: Highlighted to schools is the need for consistency of language used when speaking and writing to parents as this can sometimes lead to potential confusion and misunderstandings. To evidence this in this last quarter, a small number of complaints have either been withdrawn or resolved at school level, through direct communication and face to face meetings with families as Covid mitigations were removed. Improved communication reflects our priority of building positive relationships with families post Covid.

Social Work Directorate (Quarter 1)

Staff in Children and Families Social Work were reminded of the need to ensure individuals, families and relevant agencies are kept up-to-date and informed where there is a delay in allocating workers to a case due to resource issues.

Social Work Directorate (Quarter 2)

As a learning point from a Stage 2 complaint, training provided to Foster Carers has been refreshed to include the appropriate use of social media and contact with birth families.

Social Work Directorate (Quarter 3)

Staff in Adult Services were reminded of the need to ask providers for written confirmation when setting up respite placements for individuals. This is to ensure that all parties are fully informed and agree with the arrangements that have been made.

As a learning point from a Stage 2 complaint, Children and Families Social Work are looking at ways to consider the changing needs of young people as they grow older in foster care and ensure that their voices are heard and appropriate action is taken to allow improvements whilst they continue to live in their foster placements.

Social Work (Quarter 4)

As a learning point from a Stage 1 complaint, Children and Families Social Work will ensure that there are discussions with prospective adopters and carers about the level and detail of their personal information that should be shared with birth families, whilst weighing this up against identified risks and parental rights to information about future planning for the child.

Social Work (Quarter 4)

As a result of a Stage 2 complaint, managers in Children and Families Social Work were reminded that every effort must be taken to appoint an independent Chair for Child Protection Case Conferences where it has been identified that there is a link between a family and Social Work staff, regardless of the perceived depth of the relationship.



Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO)

The SPSO publish findings to share learning from complaints and inform improvements. 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. In some cases, they lay the full report of investigation before the Scottish Parliament and publish it online as an investigation report. The Decision Reports are published on their website at www.spsso.org.uk/our-findings

This information enables us to use learning from the outcomes of SPSOs findings and allows us to make service improvements.

The total number of complaints about Dumfries and Galloway Council received by the SPSO during 2021/22 was 25. The number of complaints about our Council considered and determined by the SPSO during 2021/22 was 18. The outcome of these cases are detailed in the below table:

Stage	Outcome Group	Number of cases
Advice	Premature	3
	Unable to proceed	3
	Total	6
Early Resolution	Discretion – Insufficient benefit would be achieved by investigation	1
	Discretion - Good complaint handling	5
	Discretion – referred back	1
	Total	7
Investigation	Fully upheld	3
	Not upheld	0
	Outcome not achievable	1
	Resolved	1
	Some upheld	0
	Total	5
TOTAL		18

An explanation of the above terms used by the SPSO is available on their website at <https://www.spsso.org.uk/explanation-terms>

The SPSO publish their Annual Statistic on their website at <https://www.spsso.org.uk/statistics-2021-22>

Projected figures for 2022/23

Looking ahead at projections for the 2022/23 Annual Complaints Monitoring Report, the below table shows a comparison of how many complaints were received in Quarter 1 (April/May/June) of 2021/22 compared to 2022/23.

Year	2021/22	2022/23
April	32	33
May	29	50
June	58	51
Quarter 1 Total	119	134

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.

During 2021/22 the Council recorded 141 compliments. This is extremely positive, and we continue to see a year on year increase in the number of compliments recorded. In 2020/21 we recorded 95 compliments and in 2019/20 we recorded 47.

Compliments received in 2021/22 by Service		
Service	Number	Percentage
Communities	108	77%
Social Work	19	13%
Economy and Resources	11	8%
Education and Learning	3	2%



Education and Learning note that the above figure does not accurately reflect the number of compliments received by the Directorate, as many of these are acknowledged and remain at school level. However, over the next year Education colleagues will work to encourage school staff to share the positive feedback they receive through our formal compliment reporting process so that these can be reflected within the figures.

One of the recurring themes of the compliments received in 2021/22 was the professionalism of our staff from various services.

Here is just a few of the kind words customers had to say about our staff from across all services:

"Customer asked me to pass on her grateful thanks to you for your kind and efficient service yesterday at a very hard time for her. She said you made everything much easier and she wanted you to know she thinks you are "a credit to Dumfries and Galloway Council registration service"."

"I just wanted to say thank you to X for her lovely, helpful and friendly approach. She's an absolute star. I hope you're able to pass on my very best wishes."

"I would like to say how incredibly impressed I am with the hard work and support X Social Worker has given myself and my dad during what has been a difficult journey..."

"...I would like to pass on that I have found them extremely helpful and knowledgeable... they present as very supportive and that is very much appreciated. They are both assets to their team, as I'm sure their colleagues are too."

"The lady I spoke to... could not have done more to help me and she went over and above to ensure I had all the information I needed to help me."

"I personally witnessed their professionalism in dealing with members of the public, their approachableness, along with humour and dedication to the job in hand."

"Many thanks for all your kindness and efficiency at getting this difficult job done and making the experience a lot easier for me. You have been a star, and I'm very grateful."



Conclusion

This Annual Complaints Monitoring Report for the Council complies with the SPSO's requirement to publish complaints performance information and also reiterates the Council's commitment to valuing complaints.

This year has also seen some significant changes and improvements to our complaints handling processes. On 1 April 2021 the Council fully implemented the SPSO's revised MCHP. The new MCHP includes a core text which is consistent across all public services in Scotland. The previously separate MCHPs for Local Authorities and Social Work Services have been merged into a single MCHP. The revised MCHP includes the introduction of a new complaints outcome of '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 on whether to uphold / not uphold.

The SPSO Statement of Complaints Handling Principles states that an effective complaints handling procedure aims to resolve complaints to the service user's satisfaction wherever possible and appropriate. These are fundamental elements of good complaints handling. The revised MCHP brings this focus on resolution to the forefront by providing a definition of 'resolving' a complaint. A complaint may be resolved at any point in the complaint handling process. We try to resolve complaints wherever possible, although we accept this is not always possible. Since the introduction of this new complaints outcome on the 1 April 2021 we have resolved 31% (122 of 393) of our Stage One complaints and 5.4% (2 of 37) of Stage Two complaints.

Overall, we have recorded a marked increase in the number of complaints received for 2021/22 when compared to the previous year. This could be partly attributed to better awareness of the CHP both internally and externally due to the programme of awareness raising which was put in place to support the implementation of the revised CHP. If complaint figures continue as they are from Quarter 1 2022, we may see a further increase for 2022/23.

The majority of complaints continue to be concluded at Stage One of the process which demonstrates the Council's positive commitment to resolving matters at the earliest stage of the process possible. We have also seen an improvement in performance in average times to respond to complaints, and percentage of complaints closed within the set timescales, when compared to the previous year.

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 be represented on the Local Authority Complaints Handlers Network (LACHN) to ensure best practice.

We use the above performance framework from the SPSO to assess how our organisation manages complaints, how accessible our complaints procedure is and the effectiveness of our governance and monitoring arrangements. We continue to review and challenge our processes to deliver quality services.



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

Online: www.dumgal.gov.uk/complaints

Write to Dumfries and Galloway Council, Information Governance Team, Council HQ, English Street, Dumfries, DG1 2DD

