

Quarterly Complaints Monitoring Report Quarter 4 2022/23: 1 January to 31 March 2023

This report outlines Dumfries and Galloway Council's performance for Quarter 4 in 2022/23. 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

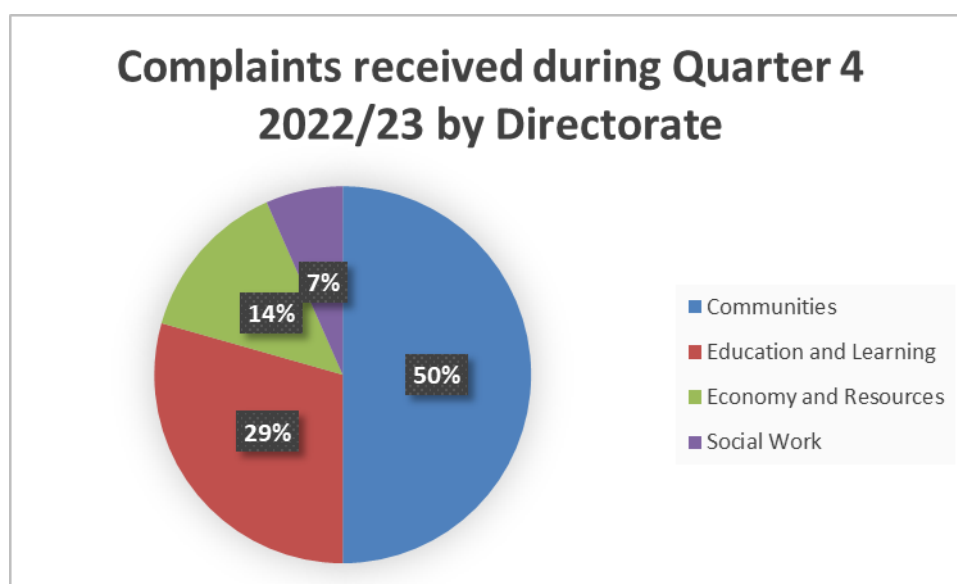
This indicator records the total number of complaints received by Dumfries and Galloway Council in the reporting period. This is the sum of the number of complaints received at Stage 1 (this includes escalated complaints, as they were first received at Stage 1), and the number of complaints received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

Description	Q4 1 January to 31 March
The total number of complaints received per 1,000 population	0.9
Total number of complaints received	136

Please note: complaints received includes complaints that may have been later withdrawn or determined out of remit.

The 136 new complaints we received during Quarter 4 related to the following Directorates.

Complaints received in Quarter 4 2022/23 by Service		
Directorate	Number	Percentage
Communities	68	50%
Education and Learning	40	29%
Economy and Resources	19	14%
Social Work	9	7%



Between 1 January to 31 March 2023, we closed 123 complaints. 97 of these were closed at Stage One (78.9%), 9 at Stage Two (7.3%) and 17 after escalation to Stage Two (13.8%).

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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%)	85	87.6%
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%)	4	44.4%
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%)	11	64.7%

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)	4.9 w/d
The average time in working days to respond to complaints at Stage 2 (target – 20 working days)	42.3 w/d
The average time in working days to respond to complaints after escalation (target – 20 working days)	44.4 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	3	3.1%
Number and percentage of complaints at Stage 2 where extension was applied	5	55.6%
Number and percentage of escalated complaints where extension was applied	4	23.5%

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Of the 12 complaints where an authorised extension was applied. They were extended for the following reasons:

Reason for extension	Number of cases
Unable to obtain essential information within timescale	6
School holidays	2
Essential information unavailable due to long-term sickness, leave or professional hearings	1
Complexity of issue(s), Essential information unavailable due to long-term sickness, leave or professional hearings, Meeting with customer, Unable to obtain essential information within timescale	1
Complexity of issue(s), Unable to obtain essential information within timescale	1
School holidays, Unable to obtain essential information within timescale	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	30	30.9%
Number of complaints not upheld at Stage 1 as % of all complaints closed at Stage 1	32	33.0%
Number of complaints partially upheld at Stage 1 as % of complaints closed at Stage 1	18	18.6%
Number of complaints resolved at Stage One as % of all complaints closed at Stage One	17	17.5%
Stage 2 Complaints upheld, partially upheld, not upheld and resolved		
Number complaints upheld at Stage Two as % of complaints closed at Stage 2	2	22.2%
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	4	44.4%
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	2	11.8%
Number of complaints not upheld at Stage 2 as % of escalated complaints closed after escalation	8	47.1%
Number of complaints partially upheld at Stage 2 as % of escalated complaints closed after escalation	6	35.3%

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

Description	Number	Percentage
Number escalated complaints resolved at Stage 2 as % of escalated complaints closed after escalation	1	5.9%

Customer Satisfaction

An electronic customer satisfaction survey is sent out to all customers with their response using Microsoft Forms. From 1 January to 31 March 2023, we received 2 responses 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	1	1	0	0	0	0
I found it easy to make my complaint	1	0	0	0	1	0
I was happy that staff fully understood my complaint	1	1	0	0	0	0
I was given the opportunity to fully explain my complaint	0	2	0	0	0	0
The points of my complaint were identified and responded to	0	1	0	1	0	0
The response to my complaint was easy to understand	0	1	0	0	1	0
Overall, I was satisfied with the handling of my complaint	1	0	0	0	1	0
I was clearly told what the next stage of the complaints process was for me	0	1	0	0	1	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	1	0	0	0	1

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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**Economy and Resources**

This stage 2 complaint related to the failure of the Council to fully assess a site submitted by the owner of inclusion on the Council's Vacant and Derelict Land Register submission to the Scottish Government. As a result of this, the site has now been visited and assessed, and will be included at the next opportunity. A more robust process for site assessment and prioritisation has now been created, and workload has been shared more evenly across staff with relevant responsibilities.

Economy and Resources

This stage 2 complaint related to the Council's failure to respond more timeously to a report of a breach to planning permission. It was acknowledged by the staff member involved that they had failed to deal with the report as promptly as they would have liked, although it was also recognised that this had no impact on the outcome. A review of Development Management is currently underway in an effort to reduce staff workloads, which will allow more time to be spent dealing with matters of this nature.

Social Work

The Directorate gathered significant learning from a Stage 2 complaint in this quarterly period. The complaint was both very complex and sensitive and, although only one point was upheld, there were identified areas of practice where improvements could be made. A 7-minute briefing was developed to share learning with Social Work staff, and this was circulated to all managers with a request that the document be discussed with staff and at team meetings. This briefing highlights learning which is applicable to all staff across the Service and covers areas such as case note recording, information sharing and records management.

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 worked 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.

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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

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 17 Officers have completed this online training.

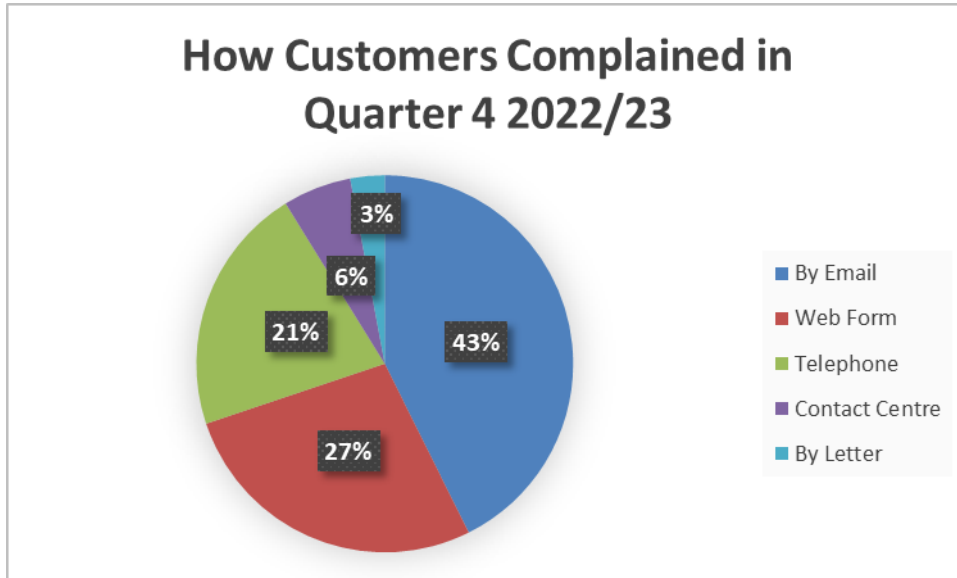
Stage 1 - SPSO Good Complaints Handling training course – 12 complaint handlers/co-ordinators have completed this online accredited course.

DGC in house Stage 1 Good complaints handling training – IGT have developed an in-house Stage 1 Good Complaints Handling training course based on the SPSO Stage 1 training. This face-to-face course is aimed at staff who may be required to handle a complaint at Stage 1 of the CHP. We targeted Road and Infrastructure staff initially and in this reporting period 30 Officers have completed this training.

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How customers have complained

In Quarter 4 of 2022/23, of the 136 complaints we received, customers chose the following ways to contact us with their complaint. Within Quarter 4 we seen customer use of email is the most common way to contact us with their complaint.



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 January to 31 March 2023, the most common customer complaints related to the following topic areas.

Topic	Number of complaints
Professionalism of Staff	19
Planning	10
Communication	9
Behaviour/Bullying (Schools)	8
Council Tax	6
Drains	6
Road Condition/Road Maintenance	6
Learning and Teaching	5

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Complaint type

Type	Number of complaints
Inadequate quality or standard of service, or an unreasonable delay in providing a service	39
Conduct, treatment by or attitude of member of staff or contractor	24
Failure or refusal to provide a service	21
Dissatisfaction with one of our policies or its impact on the individual	20
Failure to properly apply law, procedure or guidance when delivering services	8
Failure to respond to correspondence/telephone call	8
Accuracy of information	5
Disagreement with a decision	5
Failure to follow the appropriate administrative process	4
Lack of information	2

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 30 Compliments during Quarter 4 of 2022/23.

Compliments received in Quarter 4 2022/23 by Directorate		
Service	Number	Percentage
Communities	17	57%
Social Work	12	40%
Economy and Resources	1	3%
Education and Learning	0	0%

One of the recurring themes of the compliments received in Quarter 4 of 2022/23 was around Adult Social Work.

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Here is what customers had to say about our adult social work services:

“Thanks for today. You did a really good job of communicating things to our mum, and to us!”

“The couple expressed their thanks and appreciation for the kindness, helpfulness, and patience during their call to the Social Work Access Team and ongoing referral process to the OT Team. The couple particularly wanted to highlight the service provided by OT Asst and Call Handler.”

“I would like to pass on my thanks to xxx as I can't thank her enough for the care, I have received off her from being in hospital to her coming to my home. She has helped me so much... she really does go the extra mile for her clients. I couldn't have managed without her as I didn't know which way to turn. Thank you from the bottom of my heart the world would be a better place if everyone were like you. You are a special lady and I will never forget your kindness. Thank you.”

“Thank you, phone call - The feedback received is that she is delighted with the service she received from Social Work Services. She requested grab rails last week and they have been fitted today.”

“I found xxx to be genuinely interested and caring of my mum's wellbeing and committed to ensuring she was safe and properly cared for... We are very grateful to xxx for taking her job seriously; for her outstanding and proactive approach to my mum's care.”

“... extremely impressed with the service she has received from xxx in Social Work and said that xxx always takes the time to listen and always responds to requests and emails. xxx takes concerns seriously and has often contacted her out with normal working hours when it has been agreed she will call her back.”

“Customer wished to thank Adult Services especially the Access Team and Duty Team who made contact with her during the recent floods to make sure she was ok and had everything she needed. She thanked them for their care and concern...”

“Hi just wanting to feedback on a member of your team. Just wanted to say thanks again to xxx for helping us get this sorted and for doing her job so well.”

“I am writing this email to give you feedback on a member of your team. I feel I wanted to take the time to message you about how impressed I am with xxx. He is a credit to your department and an example to up and coming social workers... he is an absolute star!”