

Annual Complaints Performance Report 2022/23





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Introduction

I am pleased to present South Ayrshire Council's 10th Annual Complaints Report. This provides information on customer complaints between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023, along with comparison on how we performed against our previous report of 2021/22.

Where a customer is unhappy, our "Listening to You" complaints procedure helps us to capture customer feedback. While it is always disappointing to learn that a customer is unhappy, with continuous monitoring and listening to your comments, we use this feedback to improve our services and train staff.

South Ayrshire Council recognises valuable lessons can be learnt from the complaints and comments we receive from our customers, which allows our services to continually improve service delivery.

Where it is possible, we will deal with your complaint at Stage 1, and will always try to resolve a Stage 1 complaint within five working days.

If a customer is dissatisfied with our response at Stage One, they can escalate their complaint to Stage Two. There may also be occasions where the complaint will need to be investigated at Stage 2 immediately, we will acknowledge all Stage Two complaints within three working days and provide a response to customers within 20 working days, unless there is clearly a good reason for needing more time to investigate.

Where customers are dissatisfied with our decision regarding a Stage Two complaint, they can ask the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) to consider their complaint further.

Over the course of 2022/23 476 complaints were received by the Council: 84% were closed at Stage 1, 10% were closed at Stage 2; and 6% were closed following an escalation of the

complaint from Stage 1 to Stage 2.

More information on how we analyse our complaints responses are provided within the following Report across Statutory Performance Indicators 1, 2, 3 and 4 which reflect the new performance indicators introduced by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) in April 2022.

I am delighted to see the high volume of positive feedback received from our customers. It is impossible to provide details of every compliment that is received, but a few examples are provided in the "Compliments Received" Section of this report, demonstrating the hard work and dedication of our staff.

We continuously look towards making improvements in our complaints process and use the feedback we receive from members of the public to report information to Service Leads, Heads of Service, Assistant Directors, Directors, and our Elected members, and this really does help us to shape how we can do things better.



Mike Newall,
Chief Executive, South Ayrshire Council



Our customer comments and complaints procedure

Listening to You

We regard a complaint as an expression of dissatisfaction about our action, or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by us, or on our behalf.

We take all complaints seriously. Our staff are trained in handling complaints effectively by focusing where possible on resolution at the first point of contact.

Our complaints procedure ‘Listening to you’ has two stages:

Stage 1

We will always try to resolve complaints quickly, within five working days.

Stage 2

If customers are dissatisfied with our response at Stage One, they can escalate their complaint to Stage Two. We will also look at some complaints immediately at this stage if it is clear they are complex or need detailed investigation. We will acknowledge all Stage Two complaints within three working days and provide a response to customers within 20 working days, unless there is clearly a good reason for needing more time to investigate.

Where customers are dissatisfied with our decision regarding a Stage Two complaint, they can ask the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) to consider their complaint further.

Our Performance – Key Figures

The following sections of this report provide performance information which is based on indicators outlined by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO).

Indicator 1 – The total number of complaints received

This section details the number of complaints received at Stage 1 (including escalated complaints as they were first received at Stage 1), and the number of complaints received directly at Stage 2. In 2022/23 South Ayrshire Council handled **476** complaints from customers.

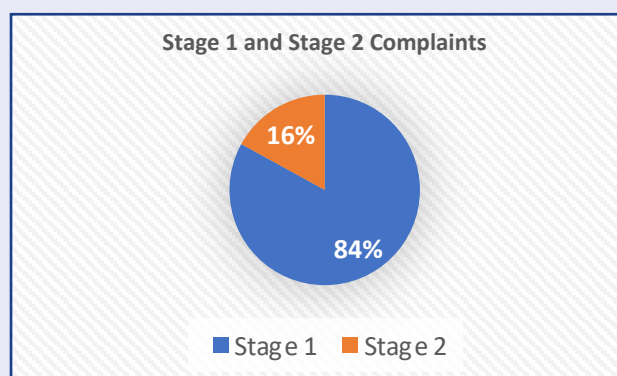
In 2021/22, the Council closed 456, showing an increase of 4%.

- 399 complaints were closed at Stage One. This represents 84% of all complaints closed.
- 45 complaints were closed at Stage Two. This represents 10 % of all complaints closed.
- Of the 399 Stage One complaints, 32 were escalated to Stage Two, showing that only 8 % of our customers were dissatisfied with their Stage One outcome.

Complaints closed at Stage One and Stage Two:

-84% of complaints received in 2022/23 were closed at Stage One compared to 82% in 2021/22 representing an annual increase of 2%

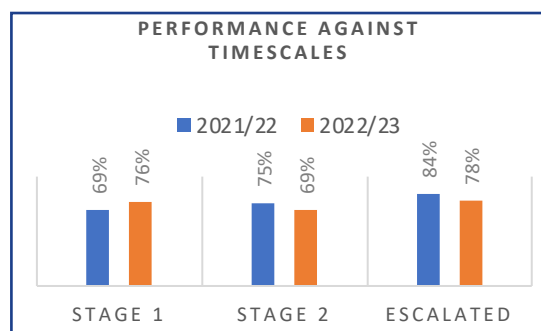
-16% of all complaints received in 2022/23 were closed at Stage Two, compared to 18% in 2021/22 representing an annual decrease of 2%



Indicator 2 – The number and percentage of complaints at each stage that were closed in full within the set timescales of five and 20 working days

This section details the number of complaints closed in full at stage 1, stage 2 and after escalation within complaint timescales and as a % of each of those complaints responded to in full. These include cases where an extension to the timescale has been agreed with the complainant.

- 303 complaints were closed at Stage One within 5 working days, representing 76 % of all Stage One complaints
- 31 complaints were closed at Stage Two within 20 working days, representing 69 % of all Stage Two complaints
- 25 escalated complaints were closed within 20 working days, representing 78 % of all complaints that were escalated from Stage One to Stage Two



Timescales Met: year-by-year comparison

Indicator 3 – The average time in working days for a full response to complaints at each stage

This section details the average (mean) time in working days to respond at stage 1, stage 2 and after escalation.

Stage One complaints

- We aim to respond to and close Stage One complaints within **5** working days
- The average time to respond to complaints at Stage One was **5** working days

Stage Two complaints

- We aim to respond to and close Stage Two complaints within **20** working days
- The average time to respond to complaints at Stage Two was **20** working days
- Complaints Escalated from Stage One to Stage Two

- The average time to respond to escalated complaints was **16** working days

-In 2022/23 we responded on average to a Stage One complaint within 5 working days, which is an improvement from 7 working days in 2021/22 and brings response timescales within the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) statutory timescale of 5 working days.

- In 2022/23 we responded to Stage 2 complaints on average within 20 working days. This is an improvement of 5 working days and is within SPSO statutory timescales.

- 2022/23 – we responded on average to escalated complaints within 16 working days. This is within the statutory 20 working day timescale and remains consistent with timescales recorded in 2021/22.

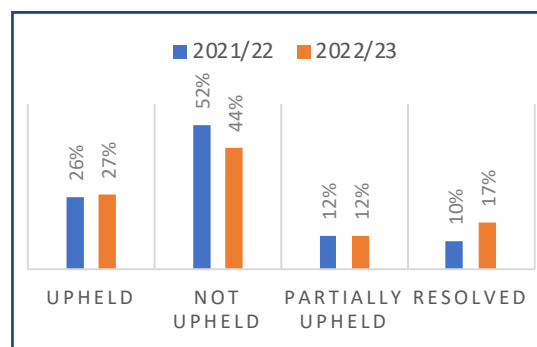
Indicator 4 – The outcome of complaints at each stage

This indicator provides information on the number of complaints upheld, partially upheld, not upheld and resolved at stage 1, stage 2 and after escalation as % of all complaints closed at stage 1, stage 2 and after escalation.

Outcome of Stage One Complaints

- **106** complaints were upheld at Stage One (**27%**)
- **176** complaints were not upheld at Stage One (**44%**)
- **50** complaints were partially upheld at Stage One (**12%**)
- **67** complaints were resolved at Stage One (**17%**)

Stage 1 Outcomes: year-by-year comparison

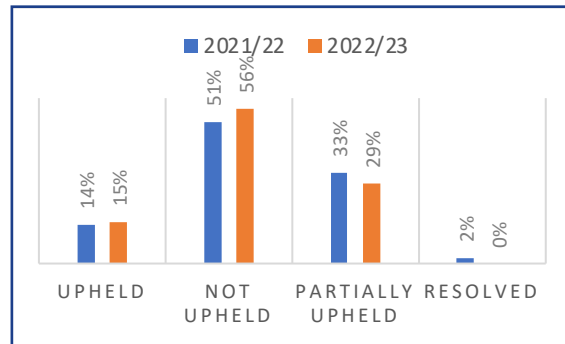


- 39% of Stage One complaints in 2022/23 were either upheld or partially upheld, compared to 38 % in 2021/22, an increase of 1%.

Outcome of Stage Two complaints

- 7 complaints were upheld at Stage Two (15%)
- 25 complaints were not upheld at Stage Two (56%)
- 13 complaints were partially upheld at Stage Two (29%)
- 0 complaints were resolved at Stage Two (0%)

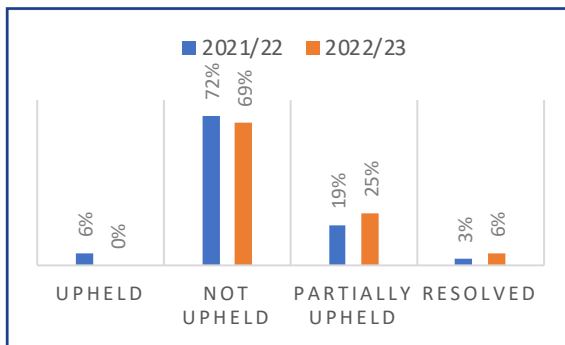
Stage 2 Outcomes: year-by-year comparison



Outcome of complaints escalated from Stage One to Stage Two

- 0 complaints were upheld (0%)
- 22 complaints were not upheld (69%)
- 8 complaints were partially upheld (25%)
- 2 complaints were resolved (6%)

Escalated Outcomes: year-by-year comparison



Additional Information - Non-Mandatory Reporting Indicators

The following section of this report provides additional information which is gathered in addition to the key performance indicators required by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO).

Complaints Received Per 1,000 of Population

This section details the total number of complaints handled by South Ayrshire Council in the reporting period 2022/23. To allow for a fair comparison across all 32 Scottish Councils the figure of complaints per 1,000 of population is used.

- The population of South Ayrshire is estimated at **112,470**
- In 2022/23 South Ayrshire Council handled **476** complaints from customers
- Meaning that an average of **4** complaints were received per **1,000** residents

-In 2021/22, the Council received 4 complaints per 1,000 South Ayrshire residents, showing that complaints per 1,000 population have remained consistent between reporting periods.

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 feasible to fully investigate the issues within the prescribed timescales. In these situations, we can agree with a complainant 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 timescale was authorised:

64 complaints closed at Stage One were granted an extension, representing 16 % of all Stage One complaints. Considering extensions 92 % of Stage One complaints met required timescales.

7 complaints closed at Stage Two were granted an extension, representing **16%** of all Stage Two complaints. Considering extensions **85%** of Stage Two complaints met required timescales.

6 complaints closed at the escalation stage were granted an extension, representing **19%** of all Stage Two complaints. Considering extensions **97%** of all escalated complaints met required timescales.

*-In 2021/22 **60** complaints were subject to an authorised extension, compared to **77** in 2022/23, an increase of **17** cases. This indicates that our complaints investigators will seek extensions where required to ensure a thorough investigation is undertaken.*



Customer Satisfaction

In conjunction with further guidance issued by the SPSO, South Ayrshire Council have recently updated our customer satisfaction survey. The link to this survey is provided on our website at: [Customer Survey – South Ayrshire Council \(south-ayrshire.gov.uk\)](https://south-ayrshire.gov.uk)

Between 1 October 2022 and 31 March 2023, 27% of customers invited to participate engaged and responded to our survey, (based on 16 customer satisfaction surveys being received as at 1st April 2023).

	Agree/Strongly Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Information about the complaints procedure was easily accessible	50%	12%	38%
I found it easy to make my complaint	56%	6%	38%
I was happy that the Investigating Officer fully understood my complaint	50%	-	50%
I was given the opportunity to fully explain my complaint	63%	6%	31%
The points of my complaint were identified and responded to	56%	6%	38%
The response to my complaint was easy to understand	56%	6%	38%
Overall I was satisfied with the handling of my complaint	43%	7%	50%
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)	31%	31%	38%
I was clearly told what the next stage of the complaints process was for me	44%	12%	44%

Our complaints investigators continue to pro-actively work with our customers where they are dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaint, and we will continue to monitor and seek feedback from complainants to establish where we can make improvements to our Complaints Procedures.

Learning from Complaints

We take all complaints seriously and information gathered from complaints is invaluable in helping us to continuously improve our services. Since the introduction of Listening to You we have made changes to our services and procedures as a direct result of complaints we have received. Some examples of these improvements are outlined as case studies in this section.

How we report on complaints performance and trends to senior managers and staff

- We report quarterly to Senior Managers, providing them with complaints performance information and highlighting any issues and complaints trends in their service areas.
- We provide bi-annual reports to our Elected Members. These reports contain complaints performance information and provide analysis of reasons for complaints and complaint trends. Service Managers attend Panels to discuss these reports and complaints trends with Panel Members.
- Council managers use information from these reports to identify and share any learning from complaints and to inform their service planning process.
- We have dedicated web pages which employees can access to obtain information on our Listening to You process, complaint trends and patterns and learning from complaints.
- We actively train complaint co-ordinators, investigators, officers, and administrators in complaints handling procedures and provide email updates and ongoing coaching as required.
- We provide bespoke guidance to Head Teachers and school staff on the implementation of new procedures.
- We train Customer Service advisors and frontline staff on how to handle customer complaints professionally.
- We also use complaints information to coach individual staff and teams and provide in-house staff training. For example, we use information and learning from complaints as part of our Induction procedures for new Customer Services advisors, as well as ongoing Customer Services training, team briefs and individual Performance and Development Reviews.

Since the introduction of Listening to You we have made changes to our services and procedures as a direct result of complaints received. Some examples of these improvements are outlined in our case studies section.



Learning from Complaints – Case Studies

One of our key performance indicators is ensuring services are using complaints information to identify areas of improvement. Our Management Teams use complaints information to change and improve their services. The next few pages give a selection of case studies showing how services have used complaints to change the way we do things.

Libraries

A customer complained that there was poor communication regarding library opening hours over the festive season; though opening hours were displayed within the library, an apology was offered to the complainant for the delay in updating the website with the festive opening hours. As a result of this complaint measures have been put in place to ensure up-to-date hours are issued on the website for any planned closures.



Primary Schools

A parent complained that they had not received appropriate communication from their child's school following an injury sustained in the playground. Following an investigation, the school found that this was in part due to a change in staff. As a result of this and to ensure no reoccurrence, the school implemented further training for playground staff and reviewed their communication and recording procedures for all staff including supply and temporary positions, to develop a more robust system.



Housing

While undertaking a check on a tenant in temporary accommodation, our Housing service became concerned when there was no answer at the property for over two weeks. Having concerns that the property was abandoned, the Housing service contractors sought access to the property to clarify the position.

The tenant returned some-time later, having been on holiday. She raised concerns that when she returned to her property, she was unable to gain access. The tenant complained that she felt an attempt should have been made on the telephone to check her whereabouts before this action was taken.

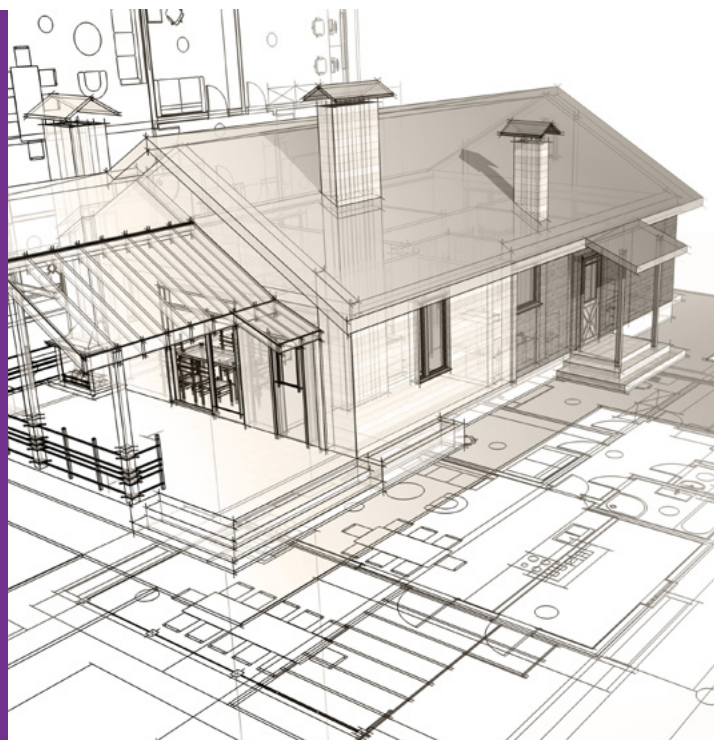
As a result of this complaint, Housing services have made a change to their process to ensure that telephone contact forms part of their standard process before temporary accommodation is accessed by staff. Additionally, Housing will also attempt to contact the tenant's next of kin where possible and will also contact the Police, Social Work and local hospitals before an attempt is made to recover a property.



Planning

A complaint was made that the Planning service failed to issue an appropriate neighbour notification prior to the granting of a planning application. The complaint investigation found that due to an administrative error, neighbour notification was not issued in relation to the planning application.

As well as apologising to the complainant for the error, the Planning service reviewed their neighbour notification procedure, and an additional step has now been added to their process to ensure a double check that the neighbour notification has been issued to mitigate the chances of this error reoccurring.



Compliments Received in 2022/23 by our Services

Compliments are recorded by our complaints team to give us an indication of when services are meeting the needs and expectations of our service users. The following are a small sample of the compliments received during 2022/23.

Neighbourhood Services

Our Neighbourhood Services team continues to receive several compliments from members of the public. We have received a number of compliments about the planting of wildflowers around the South Ayrshire area:

“Congratulations and thank you to everyone involved in the recent tree and wildflower planting.”

“We as residents can’t understate the joy these flowers have given...the tubs and hanging baskets near the station are another delight but the work at the cinema round the new path is outstanding. We are lucky to have such good council gardeners. A visit to belle Isle gardens was another revelation. Great care and great planting.”

Leisure

We received several compliments regarding our Leisure team. One service user wrote following their visit to Maybole Swimming Pool, and complimented the staff on their ability to, ***“...balance between keeping young swimmers safe and making sure they enjoy the experience and have fun.”***

Community Care

Our community care team received a compliment following a number of care visits to a client, thanking them for, ***“...all your help, information and encouragement that you gave me...I always enjoyed your visits and all of the extra visits of carers.”***

Conclusion

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 benchmark our complaints handling with other Scottish Local Authorities and work with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) to ensure best practice continues.



Contact Us

If you would like to find out more about our complaints procedure or about our annual report, please contact us.

Phone: **0300 123 0900**

Email: listeningtoyou@south-ayrshire.gov.uk

Log on to: Complaints - South Ayrshire Council (south-ayrshire.gov.uk)

In writing to:

South Ayrshire Council - Information Governance - Listening to You

County Buildings

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[south-ayrshire.gov.uk](https://www.south-ayrshire.gov.uk)

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Comhairle Siorrachd Àir a Deas
Making a Difference Every Day