

Annual Complaints Performance Report 2018/2019





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Chief Executive's Introduction

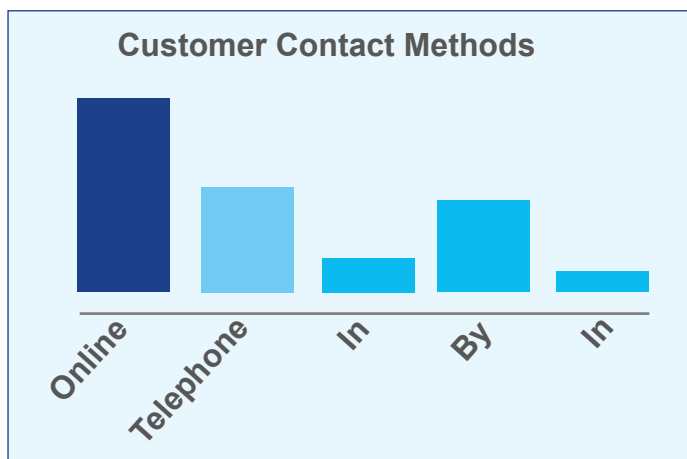


I am pleased to present South Ayrshire Council's sixth annual Complaints Report. This report provides information on customer complaints between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019, together with

comparison on how we are performing against our previous report of 2017/18.

South Ayrshire Council recognise valuable lessons can be learnt from the complaints and comments we receive from our customers, allowing us to continue to improve our services. Where a customer has been 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, through continuous monitoring and listening to your comments we use this feedback to improve our services and train our staff.

In 2018/19 64% of our 759 complaints were received either via our online [Complaints Form](#) or by email - a significant increase of 12% from 2017/18. The use of online communication allows customers to contact us with their concerns 24 hours a day, in an efficient and effective manner. Of course, complaints are also received by letter, telephone and in person.



All complaints received are processed by trained frontline and complaints staff, such as Customer Services Advisors and Complaints Officers. To ensure we are providing our customers with the help and support that is needed, we will use complaints information and learning to form key parts of staff training and induction. We also employ complaints co-ordinators, investigators and administrators to make sure we have all the information we need to investigate a complaint and respond within designated timescales.

Despite the increase of 33 complaints between 2017/18 and 2018/19 it is encouraging to see that, taking into account authorised extensions, 90% of complaints escalated from Stage 1 to Stage 2, and 90% of complaints administered directly at stage 2 were responded to within required timescales.

We continuously look towards making improvements in our complaints process and contact our customers who have made a complaint to gauge their views and establish where improvements can be made. We also continue to monitor complaints to establish where we can improve the delivery of services and customer engagement. This vital feedback is reported to Managers, Heads of Service, Directors and our Elected Members and really does help to shape how we can do things better.

As always, I am delighted to note the high level of positive feedback we have received from our customers. It is impossible to provide details of all the compliments given but a few examples are provided in the "Compliments Received" section that demonstrates the hard work and dedication of our staff. Compliments and suggestions can be made online using our website [Compliments or Suggestions](#)

Eileen Howat
Chief Executive

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




How customers have complained

Customers can complain to, or comment about the Council, in a range of ways, including:

 In person, at any of our five centrally located Customer Services Centres in Ayr, Girvan, Maybole, Troon and Prestwick

 In person to any Council employee

 By phone on 0300 123 0900

 By letter

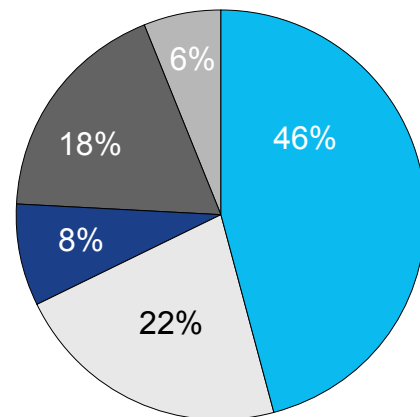
 Online

 By email

In 2018/19 we received 759 complaints from customers who chose the following ways to contact us with a complaint:

Breakdown of the ways people got in touch in 2018/19:

- Online
- Telephone
- In Person
- By Email
- By Letter



- In 2018/19 we received 759 complaints, compared to 726 in 2017/18, a 4.5% increase (33 complaints) in the past year.

- Of these complaints, 64% of customers contacted us electronically, either via email or through our website, compared to 52% in 2017/18. This increase of 12% indicates our customers are finding our online communication options efficient and easily accessible.



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 – Complaints Received Per 1,000 of the Population

This section details the total number of complaints handled by South Ayrshire Council in the reporting period 2018/19. To allow for a fair comparison across all 32 Scottish Councils the figure of complaints per 1,000 of the population is used.



The population of South Ayrshire is estimated at **112,470**



In 2018/19 South Ayrshire Council handled **759** complaints from customers



Meaning that an average of **7** complaints were received per **1,000** residents



This indicates that **1** in every **148** South Ayrshire residents have registered a complaint about our services



In 2017/18, the Council received **7** complaints per **1,000** South Ayrshire residents. This number has remained consistent in 2018/19.

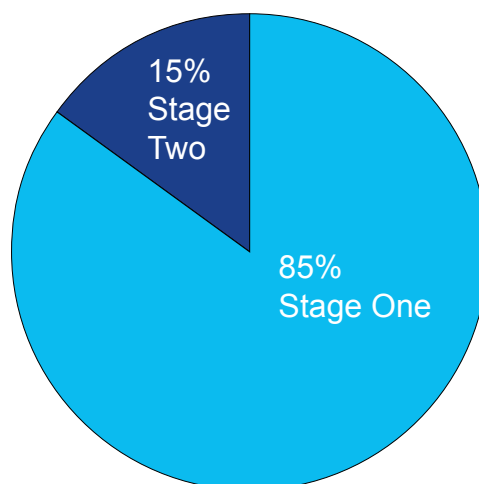
Indicator 2 – Closed Complaints

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 of which stage it is processed at and whether any further escalation takes place).

- **643** complaints were closed at Stage One. This represents **85%** of all complaints closed.
- **116** complaints were closed at Stage Two. This represents **15%** of all complaints closed.
- Of the **643** Stage One complaints, **74** were escalated to Stage Two, showing that only **11%** of our customers were dissatisfied with their Stage One outcome.

Complaints closed at Stage One and Stage Two:



-85% of complaints received in 2018/19 were closed at Stage One compared to 88% in 2017/18 representing an annual decrease of 3%

-15% of all complaints received in 2018/19 were closed at Stage Two, compared to 12% in 2017/18 representing an annual increase of 3%

Indicator 3 – Complaints Upheld, Partially Upheld and Not Upheld

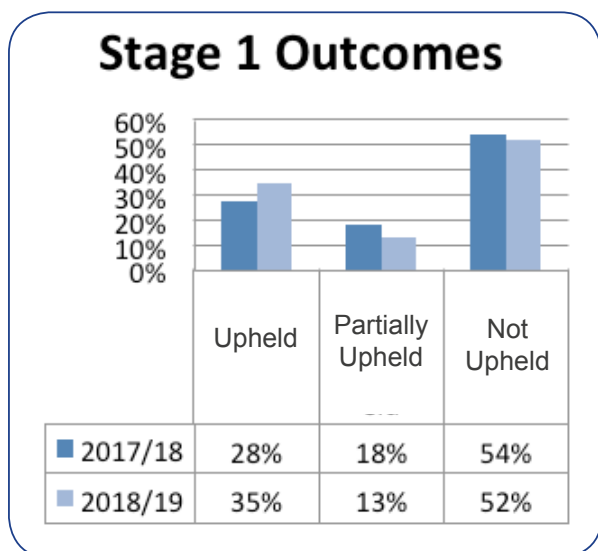
Having considered a complaint, we contact every complainant to explain whether their complaint has been upheld, not upheld or partially upheld and why.

This indicator provides information on the number and percentage of complaints which were upheld, partially upheld or not upheld at each stage.

Outcome of Stage One Complaints

- 221 complaints were upheld at Stage One (35%)
- 87 complaints were partially upheld at Stage One (13%)
- 335 complaints were not upheld at Stage One (52%)

Complaints made: year-by-year comparison



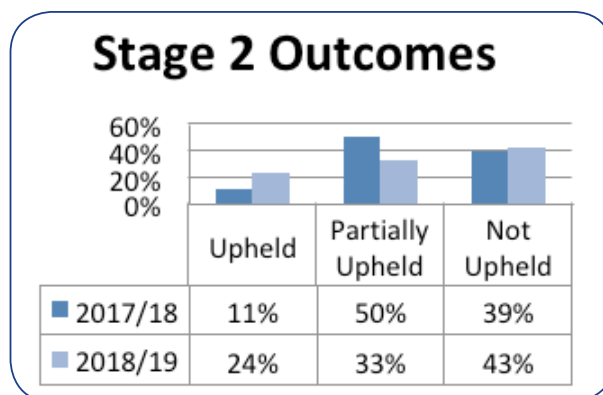
-In 2018/19, 48% of all Stage One complaints were either upheld or partially upheld indicating that almost half of our customers raised genuine concerns with our service provision. This is two percent higher than 2017/18 when 46% of Stage One complaints were upheld or partially upheld.

-In 2017/18, 54% of all Stage One complaints were not upheld. This number has decreased to 52% in 2018/19.

Outcome of Stage Two complaints

- 10 complaints were upheld at Stage Two (24%)
- 14 complaints were partially upheld (33%)
- 18 complaints were not upheld (43%)

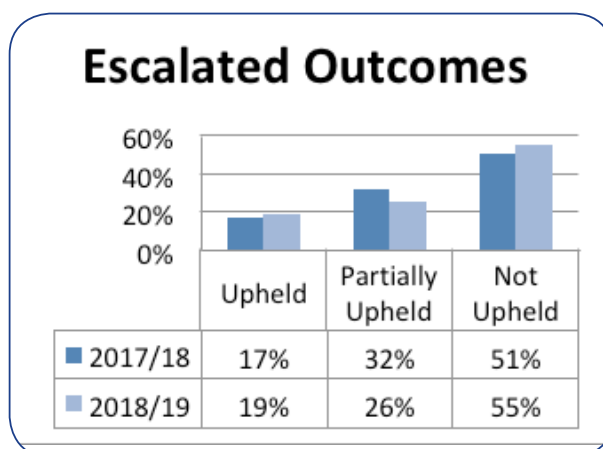
Complaints made: year-by-year comparison



Outcome of complaints escalated from Stage One to Stage Two

- 14 complaints were upheld (19%)
- 19 complaints were partially upheld (26%)
- 41 complaints were not upheld (55%)

Complaints made: year-by-year comparison



-45% of complaints escalated from Stage One to Stage Two in 2018/19 were either upheld or partially upheld, compared to 49% in 2017/18. While this is a small decrease of 4% it continues to indicate that we actively listen to our customers' concerns and work towards improving services as a result of customer feedback.

Indicator 4 – Average Times

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 **10** 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 **23** working days

Complaints Escalated from Stage One to Stage Two

- The average time to respond to escalated complaints was **33** working days

-In 2018/19 we responded on average to a Stage One complaint within 10 working days, which is double the time taken in 2017/18 and out with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) statutory time scale of 5 working days.

- This increase is attributed to the number of complaints allocated to the Health & Social Care Partnership that were significantly overdue. When these cases are removed from the analysis, the average response time is 5 working days which meets the SPSO statutory timescale.

- 2018/19 we responded to Stage 2 complaints on average within 23 working days, which is an improvement of 3 working days compared to 2017/18 when we responded on average within 26 working days

- 2018/19 – we responded on average to escalated complaints within 33 working days, which is 13 days out with the SPSO timescale of 20 working days.

- Due to the number of Social Work complaints being significantly overdue, this number is significantly higher than the 19 average days the Council achieved in 2017/18. When Social Work cases are not considered during analysis the average time taken is 22 working days.

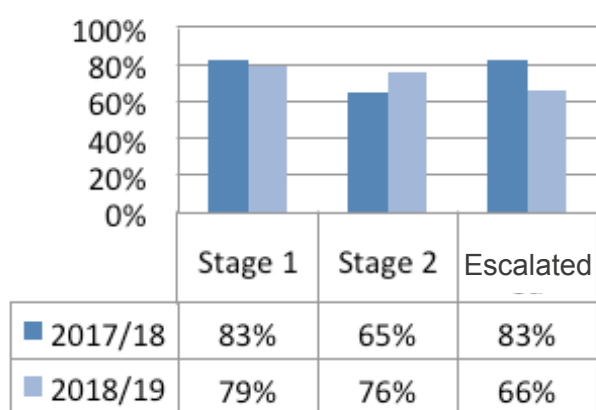


Indicator 5 – Performance against Timescales

This indicator reports the number and percentage of complaints at each stage which were closed in full within the set time scales of **5** and **20** working days. These include cases where an extension to the timescale has been agreed with the complainant.

- **507** complaints were closed at Stage One within **5** working days, representing **79%** of all Stage One complaints
- **32** complaints were closed at Stage Two within **20** working days, representing **76%** of all Stage Two complaints
- **49** escalated complaints were closed within 20 working days, representing **66%** of all complaints that were escalated from Stage One to Stage Two

Complaints made: year-by-year comparison



-In 2018/19 there was an 11% increase in the number of Stage 2 complaints being issued within the statutory time scale of 20 working days, compared to 2017/18

-In 2018/19 76% of Stage 2 complaints were responded to within 20 working days, a increase of 16% compared to 2017/18. However, when authorised extensions are taken into account 90% of complaints were responded to within timescales.

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 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:

- **38** complaints closed at Stage One were granted an extension, representing **6%** of all Stage One complaints. Taking into account extensions **85%** of Stage One complaints met required timescales
- **6** complaints closed at Stage Two were granted an extension, representing **14%** of all Stage Two complaints. Taking into account extensions **90%** of Stage Two complaints met required timescales
- **18** complaints closed at the escalation stage were granted an extension, representing **24%** of all Stage Two complaints. Taking into account extensions **90%** of all escalated complaints met required timescales

-In 2017/18 51 complaints were subject to an authorised extension, compared to 62 in 2018/19, an increase of 11 cases. The council will discuss an extension with a complainant if a response cannot be provided within timescales, to ensure the Council can undertake a full investigation.

Indicator 7 – Customer Satisfaction

A customer satisfaction survey is available online for complainants who wish to comment on how satisfied they are with our complaints service. The link to this survey is provided to all complainants and is also available on the Council website at: [South Ayrshire Complaints Procedure Survey](#).

Between April 2018 and March 2019, **29%** of complainants engaged and responded to the survey (based on a total of 35 email responses received as at 1 April 2019):

	Strongly Agree or Agree	Disagree or Strongly Disagree
It was easy for me to make a complaint to the Council	62%	38%
My complaint was understood by the Council	55%	45%
My complaint was thoroughly investigated	45%	55%
My complaint was taken seriously	56%	44%
I was kept up-to-date with progress of my investigation	41%	59%
I was given a clear explanation of the decision made	46%	54%
The information was easy to understand	65%	35%
I am satisfied the investigation addressed my concern	35%	65%
My complaint was responded to within appropriate timescales	60%	40%
The procedure for taking my complaint to the next stage was clear	50%	50%

.....

● We will continue to pro-actively seek feedback from complainants to establish where our complaints procedure can be improved further to meet our customers' needs.

.....

Indicator 8 – 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. This page gives a selection of case studies showing how services have used complaints to change the way we do things.

Asset Management

Our Asset Management service received a complaint from a customer who was disappointed that she had been refused planning approval on a Council business unit she wished to rent. She felt this had been as a result of poor communication from the Asset Management team. The service investigated and although they did not uphold the complaint, they recognised improvements could be made, resulting in their procedures being updated to ensure communication on any associated Planning issues is clearly specified and the accepted type of business use class for the property will be clearly specified in documentation.

Building Standards

A complaint was made by a customer about the length of time taken to respond to a Building Warrant amendment and completion certificate application. Following an investigation it was found that an unreasonable time was taken by the service to provide a response. As a result, additional staffing resource was allocated and processes were introduced to contact applicants at early stages within the Building Warrant assessment timeframe to highlight potential delays when they are likely to occur.

Housing

A tenant complained they had experienced an unreasonable delay receiving a refund for an outstanding credit balance on their rent account. Our investigation established that whilst the Housing Service aims to issue rent credit refunds within a reasonable period of time, the timescale in this instance was excessive due to the volume of requests at the time and available resources. This has resulted in procedures being updated by Housing to

ensure the progress of rent credit refunds to tenants is monitored and reviewed, as well as an increase in the allocated staff resource at busy time periods to ensure rent credit refunds are progressed in a timely manner.

Property Maintenance

A tenant contacted us to complain they were experiencing water penetration at their Council property. The customer was dissatisfied that the wrong contractor had been sent to undertake the work, and that the Council had taken an excessive period of time to complete the repair. Our customer also raised concerns that despite being given an amended target date for completion our repair completion did not meet time scales.

As a result of this complaint, a new process has been put into place to ensure all water penetration works are inspected by an area Maintenance Officer to determine the scope of works required, and that all works are then allocated to the correct priority category. Tenants will also be advised of the exact date all works will start by phone and also text the day before. Additionally, if an external contractor is being appointed to carry out these works the tenant will be advised and the original target date for the works will remain consistent.

Compliments Received in 2018/19 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 2018/19.

Neighbourhood Services

One customer wrote to us to compliment a member of our Street Cleaning staff, who goes out of his way to ensure the area he attends to is kept exceptionally clean. The customer complimented the “Complete professionalism and pride your staff member takes in his work, he is a credit to the Council” and noted his conscientiousness in maintaining the area.

Community Care

Our Community Care team receives one of the highest volumes of compliments across South Ayrshire council, with many customers praising the high quality care provided to clients. A family member of a service- user’s contacted the Council to let us know that one carer went above and beyond caring for his grandmother, advising the carer, ***“Puts Gran’s needs and comfort ahead of all considerations, and her attention to detail is second to none. Every time she is in our home we hear Gran laughing and her mood is lifted.”***

Housing

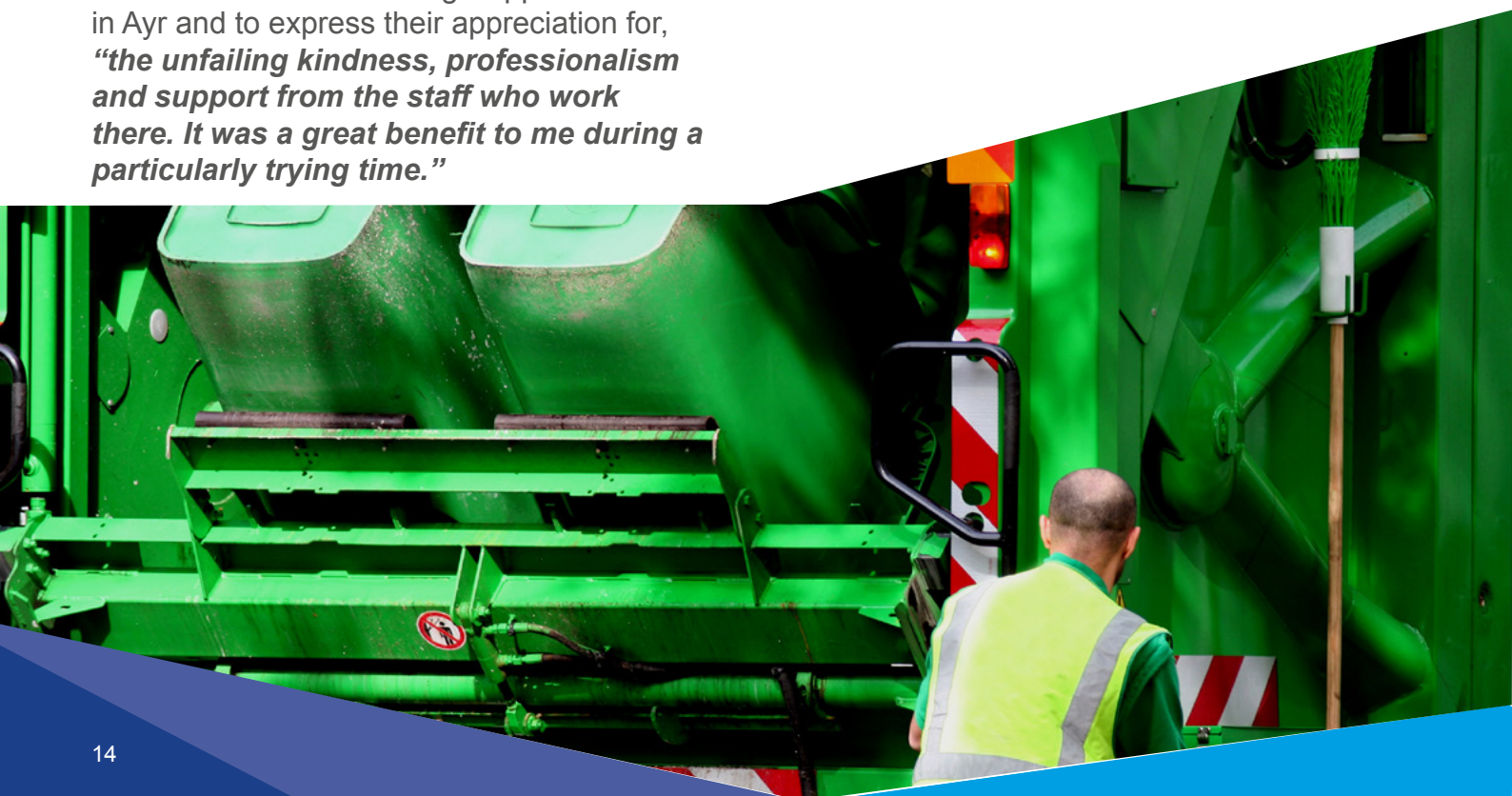
One customer got in touch to compliment the Viewfield Gate Housing Support Team in Ayr and to express their appreciation for, ***“the unfailing kindness, professionalism and support from the staff who work there. It was a great benefit to me during a particularly trying time.”***

Customer Services

Our Customer Services teams continue to receive a high number of compliments from their service users, with many acknowledging the positive attitude and efficiency of the Customer Service staff when resolving complaints and enquiries. ***“I attended the Wallace Tower to hand in a form. The advisor who saw me was super helpful, very cheerful and went out of her way to ensure my forms were filled in correctly and would be dealt with as quickly as possible. She handled my enquiries excellently!”***

Waste Management

One of our Waste Management Operatives was complimented by a South Ayrshire resident on the way he goes over-and-above to help and provide good customer service, letting us know how he ***“takes the time to be a part of the community, my grandson loves to watch the bin lorry arrive in our street and makes a point of waving to him and speaking when he sees us, which makes my grandson’s day.”***



Conclusion

In 2018/19 South Ayrshire Council has had an increase in the number of complaints we received against 2017/18, but has continued to show areas of improvement in our handling of customer complaints, by in establishing ways to listen to feedback and improving our services as a result.

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 our 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: www.south-ayrshire.gov.uk/listeningtoyou

Visit: Our Customer Service Centres in Girvan, Maybole, Ayr, Prestwick and Troon

In writing to:
South Ayrshire Council
Listening to You
Information Governance
County Buildings
Wellington Square
Ayr, KA7 1DR

This information can be made available, on request, in braille, large print or audio formats and can be translated into a range of languages. Contact details are provided below.

درخواست کرنے پر یہ معلومات نابینا افراد کے لئے اُبھرے حروف، بڑے حروف یا آڈیو میں مہیا کی جاسکتی ہے اور اس کا مختلف زبانوں میں ترجمہ بھی کیا جاسکتا ہے۔ رابطہ کی تفصیلات نیچے فراہم کی گئی ہیں۔

本信息可应要求提供盲文，大字印刷或音频格式，以及可翻译成多种语言。以下是详细联系方式。

本信息可慮應要求提供盲文，大字印刷或音频格式，以及可翻譯成多种語言。以下是詳細聯系方式。

ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਮੰਗ ਕੇ ਬੋਲ, ਵੱਡੇ ਅੱਖਰਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਸੁਣਨ ਵਾਲੇ ਰਾਹ ਵਿਚ ਵੀ ਲਈ ਜਾ ਸਕਦੀ ਹੈ, ਅਤੇ ਇਹਦਾ ਤਰਜਮਾ ਹੋਰ ਬੋਲੀਆਂ ਵਿਚ ਵੀ ਕਰਵਾਇਆ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ। ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਦਿੱਤੀ ਗਈ ਹੈ।

Niniejsze informacje mogą zostać udostępnione na życzenie, w alfabecie Braille'a, w druku powiększonym lub w formie audio oraz mogą zostać przetłumaczone na wiele języków obcych. Dane kontaktowe znajdują się poniżej.

Faodar am fiosrachadh seo fhaighinn, le iarrtas, ann am braille, clò mòr no clàr fuaim agus tha e comasach eadar-theangachadh gu grunn chànanan. Tha fiosrachadh gu h-ìosal mu bhith a' cur fios a-steach.