



Annual Complaints Performance Report 2015-2016

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Chief Executive's Introduction

I am pleased to be able to present Argyll and Bute Council's second Annual Complaints Report. This report provides information on customer complaints handled between 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016.



Argyll and Bute Council is committed to providing high quality services for the people in Argyll and Bute. However, sometimes things can go wrong and when they do, we need to know so we can put them right and learn from them.

We welcome and value complaints because this feedback helps us improve our services and ensures our customers are treated fairly.

We use this feedback to train our staff, identify trends and to drive service delivery improvements, and we aim to be thorough, objective and fair in our approach.

Customers can complain in a number of ways, from the telephone or in person, to email and through our website. A single complaint can result in big changes on how we do things, some examples of which we have detailed in this report.

Cleland Sneddon
Chief Executive – Argyll and Bute Council

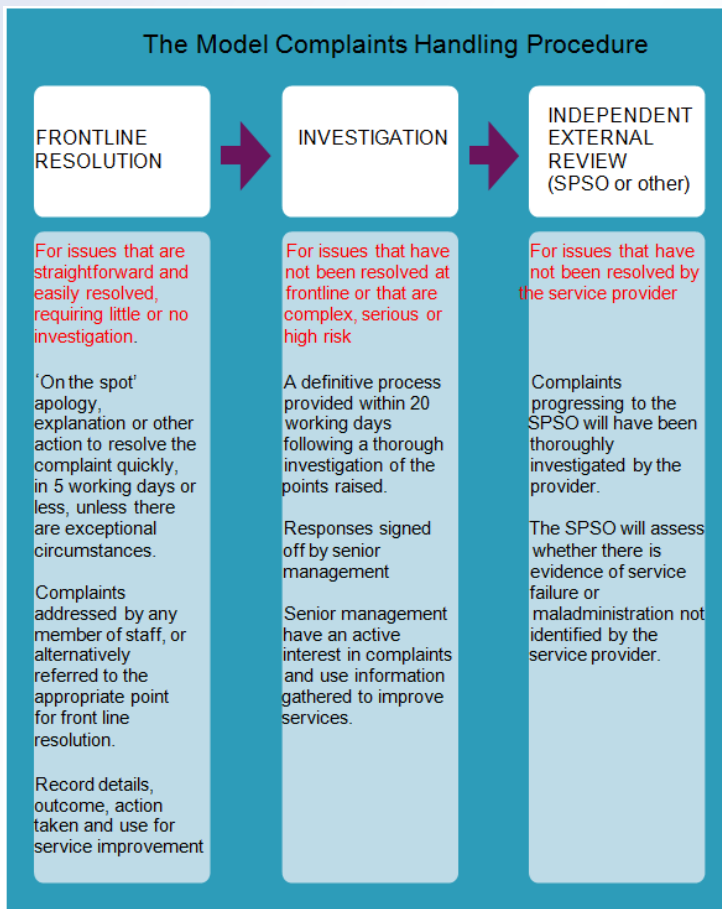
Our Complaints Procedure

A complaint is ‘**an expression of dissatisfaction about the Council’s action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of the Council**’

Customers must normally notify their complaint to a member of staff within six months of the date they first knew of the problem, unless there are special circumstances which would cause this timescale to be extended. Clarification on relevant factors can be obtained from Iain Jackson, our Corporate Complaints Officer.

In most cases a complaint will be made because the customer considers that the Council has:

- Done something wrong
- Failed to live up to expectations
- Treated someone badly or unfairly.



The Model Complaints Procedure has two stages.

Stage 1: We always try to resolve Stage 1 complaints in 5 working days.

Stage 2: If a customer is not satisfied with a Stage 1 resolution, we can escalate their complaint to Stage 2. Some complaints will also start here if they require detailed investigation. All Stage 2 complaints are acknowledged in 3 working days and we aim for a resolution within 20 days.

If the customer is still dissatisfied they can ask the SPSO to review it.

Our Performance – Key Figures

The following sections of this report provide information on complaints based on various performance indicators as described by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO).



Indicator 1 – Complaints Received per 1,000 of Population

This section details the total number of complaints handled by Argyll and Bute Council between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2016. So a fair comparison can be made across all 32 Scottish councils, the figure of complaints per 1,000 of population is used.

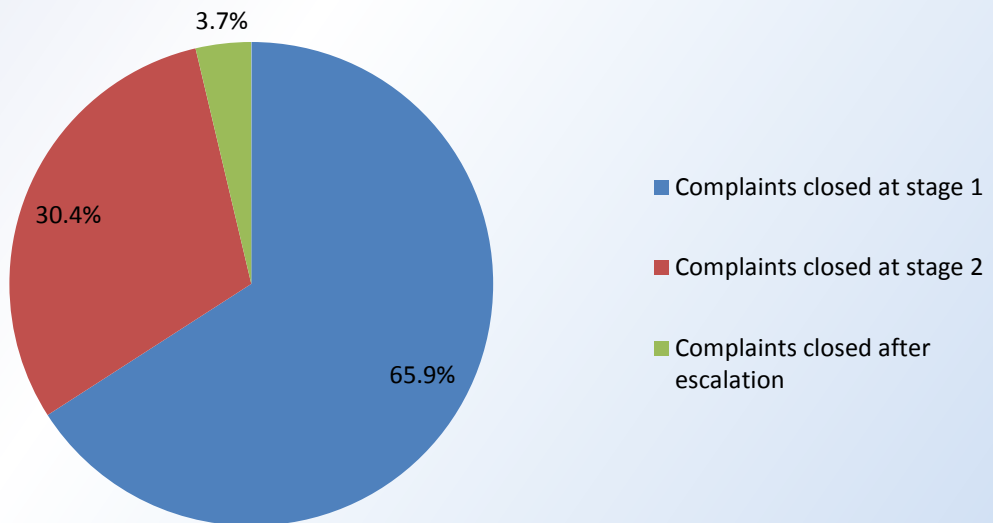
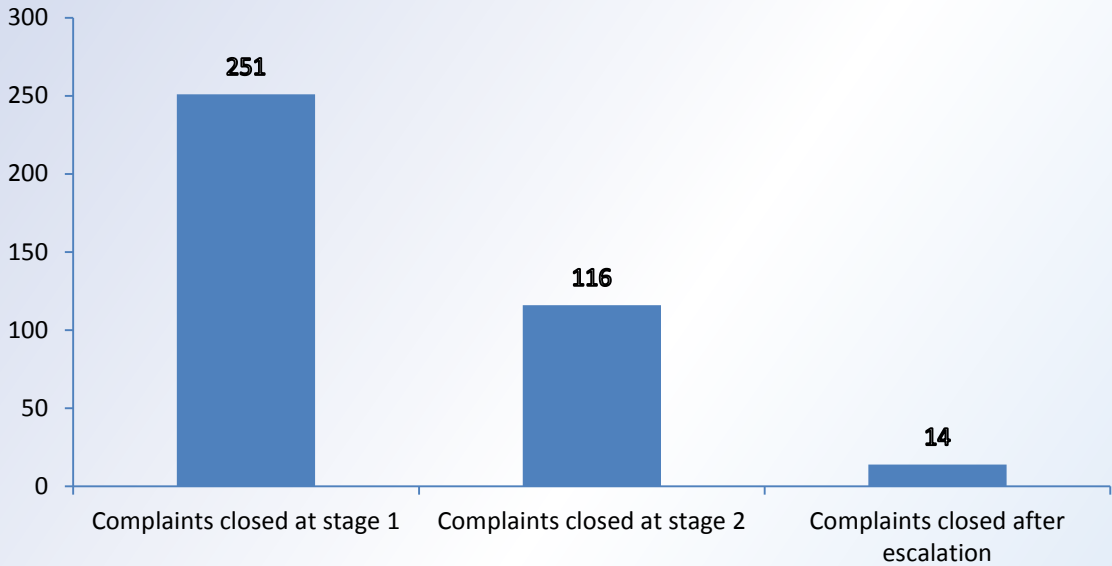
The population of Argyll and Bute is estimated at around **89,500**

In 2015/2016 Argyll and Bute received and processed **381** complaints.

This means there were **4.25** complaints per **1,000 population**, or roughly **1** resident in **235** made a complaint about our services.

Indicator 2 – Number of Complaints

This indicator details information on the number of complaints closed at Stages 1 and 2 and also as a percentage of all complaints received (please note there may be discrepancies due to data rounding).

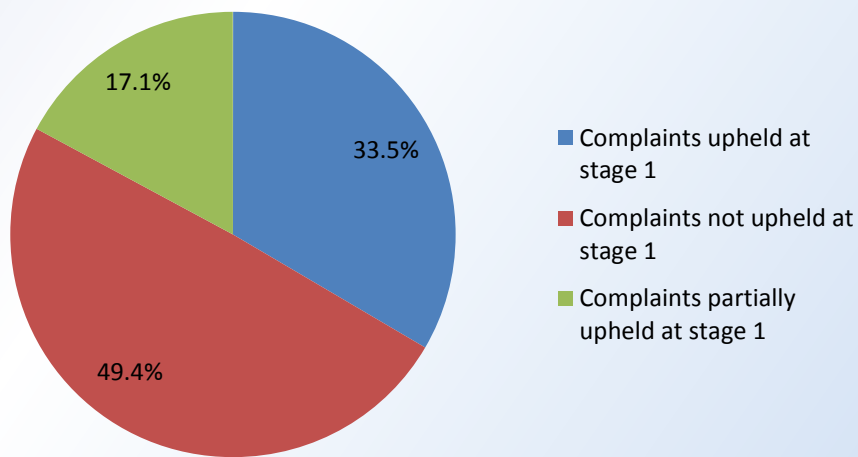
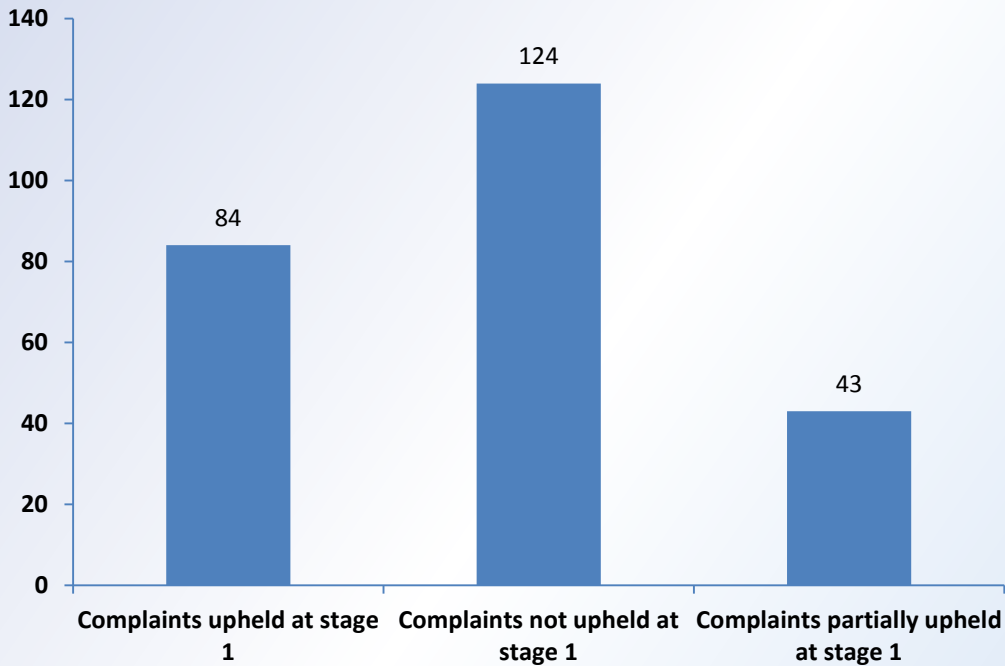


251 complaints were closed at Stage 1, or 65.9%.
116 complaints were closed at Stage 2, or 30.4%
14 complaints were closed after escalation, or 3.7%

Indicator 3, Stage 1 –Complaints Upheld, Not Upheld and Partially Upheld

With every complaint, we contact the customer and explain if their complaint was Upheld, Not Upheld or Partially Upheld, and why.

STAGE 1

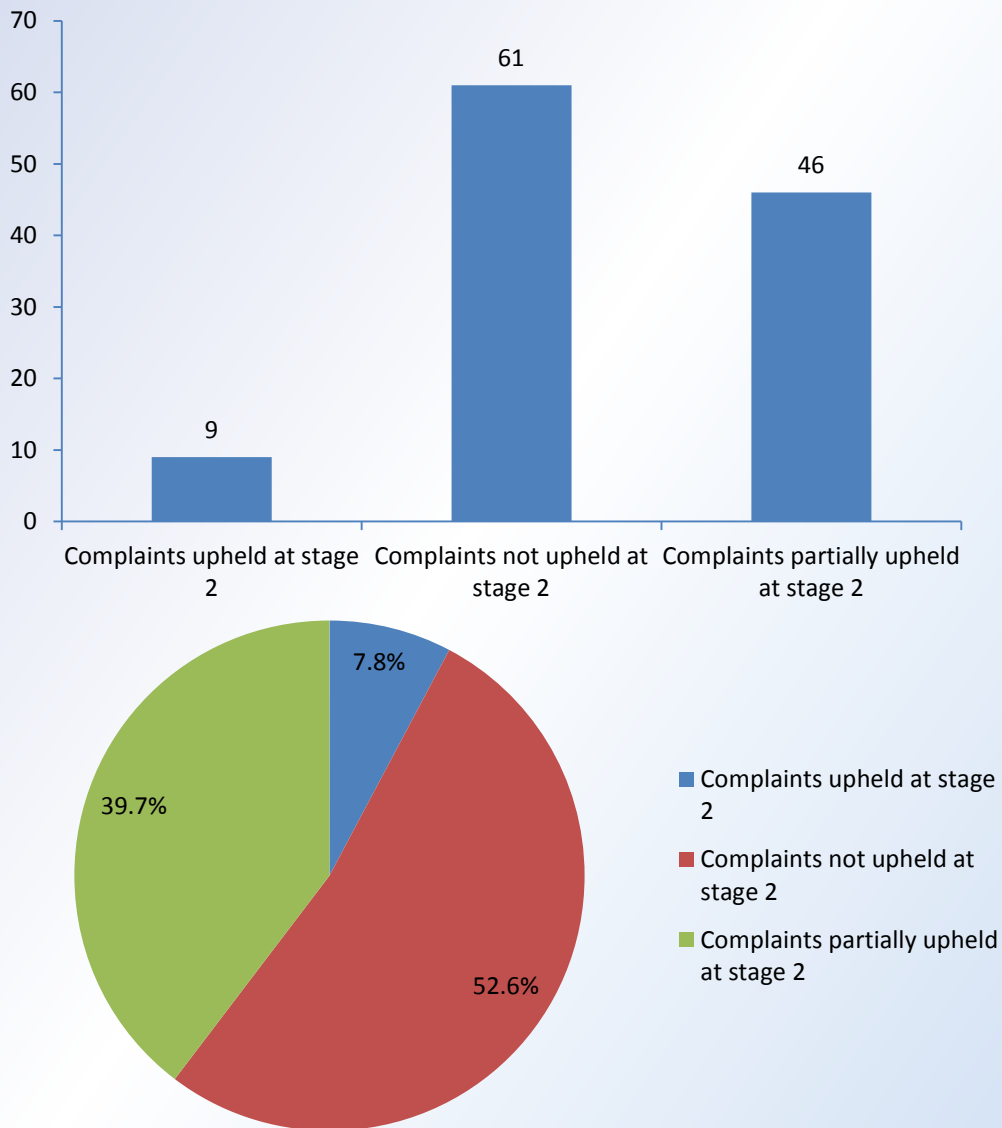


84 complaints were Upheld at Stage 1, or 33.5%
124 complaints were Not Upheld at Stage 1, or 49.4%
43 complaints were Partially Upheld at Stage 1, or 17.1%

Indicator 3, Stage 2 –Complaints Upheld, Not Upheld and Partially Upheld

With every complaint, we contact the customer and explain if their complaint was Upheld, Not Upheld or Partially Upheld, and why.

STAGE 2



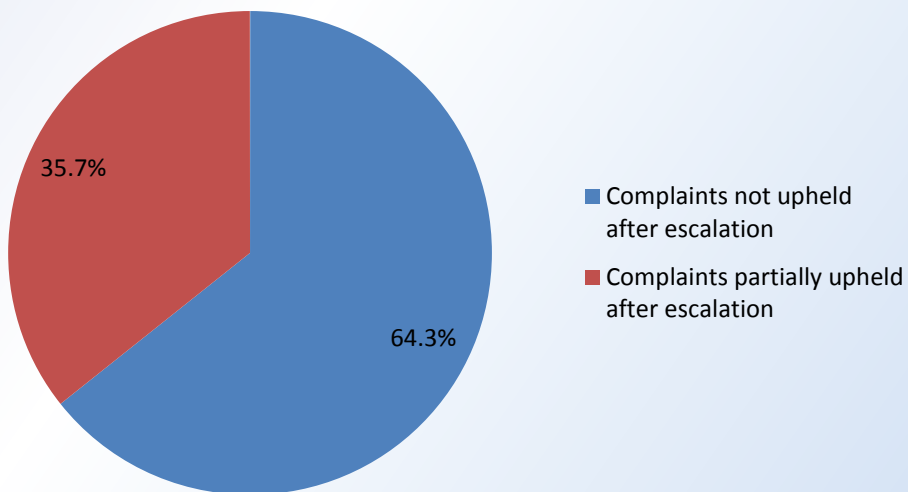
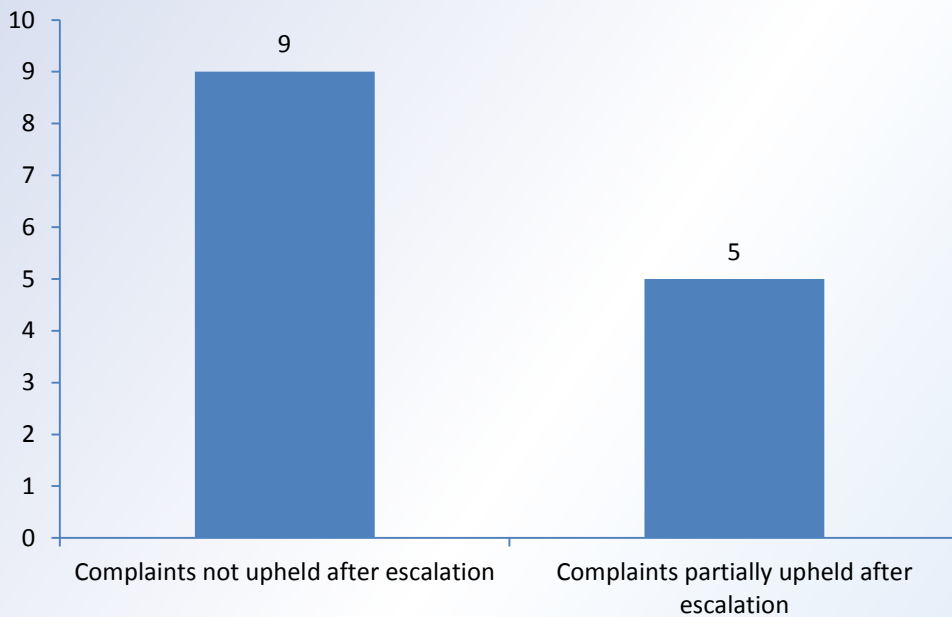
9 complaints were Upheld at Stage 2, or 7.8%

61 complaints were Not Upheld at Stage 2, or 52.6%

46 complaints were Partially Upheld at Stage 2, or 39.7%

Indicator 3, Stage 3 –Complaints Escalated

A complaint is escalated to the investigation stage when the customer remains unsatisfied with the frontline resolution, the issues are complex and will require investigation or if the complaint is identified as serious, high risk or high profile.



There were no complaints Upheld after Escalation
9 complaints were Not Upheld after Escalation, or 64.3%
5 complaints were Partially Upheld after Escalation, or 35.7%

Indicator 4 – Average Times

Stage 1 – We aim to respond to and close all Stage 1 complaints within **5 working days**. In 2015/2016, we closed **251** complaints at Stage 1, with a total sum of **1,121** working days used to close them. Our average time to close a Stage 1 complaint was **4.5 days**.

Stage 2 – We aim to respond to and close all Stage 2 complaints within **20 working days** from the date of Escalation to Stage 2. In 2015/2016, we closed **116** complaints at Stage 2, with a total sum of **1,933** working days used to close them. Our average time to close a Stage 2 complaint was **16.7 days**.

After Escalation – in 2015/2016, we closed **14** complaints after Escalation, with an average time of **4.2 days**.



Indicator 5 – Performance Against Timescales

This indicator reports the number and percentage of complaints at each stage which were closed within the correct timescales of 5 and 20 days.

Stage 1 – We aim to respond to and close all Stage 1 complaints within **5 working days**. In 2015/2016, we closed **251** complaints at Stage 1, with **220** of these within timescale, or **87.6%**. **6** were closed after an extension was agreed with the customer.

Stage 2 – We aim to respond to and close all Stage 2 complaints within **20 working days**. In 2015/2016, we closed **116** complaints at Stage 2, with **96** of these within timescale, or **82.8%**. **2** were closed after an extension was agreed with the customer.

After Escalation – in 2015/2016, we closed **14** complaints after Escalation, with all of these within timescale (100%). No extensions were required.

Indicator 6 – Extensions to Timescales

This indicator reports the number and percentage of complaints at each stage which were closed after an extension to the 5 or 20 day timeline was authorised.

Stage 1 – In 2015/2016, we had a total of **6** complaints where an extension was authorised, or **2.4%** of the total complaints closed.

Stage 2 – In 2015/2016, we had a total of **2** complaints where an extension was authorised, or **1.7%** of the total complaints closed.

Indicator 7 – Customer Satisfaction

In order to measure how satisfied our customers are with our complaints process, we issued a short satisfaction survey to a random selection of customers in 2015/2016. Due to the low number of responses received, it is difficult to get a clear picture of how satisfied our customers are. We will be considering more effective ways of measuring customer satisfaction for future years.

The Complaints Handlers Network is looking at developing a standardised customer satisfaction survey to be used by all Councils.



Indicator 8 Learning from Complaints – Reporting

Who looks at our complaint figures and trends?

Information about complaint figures and corrective action taken is reported regularly to senior managers, and a quarterly report is submitted to the Strategic Management Team. This process ensures the appropriate level of scrutiny takes place.

We also report our complaint figures to the Scottish Public Service Ombudsman (SPSO) by submitting an annual return.

How We Report Complaints Performance and Trends To Our Customers

We publish the quarterly reports on our website: <https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/do-it-online/comments-and-complaints>



Indicator 8 – Learning from Complaints – Improvements

In general, no major policy or procedural changes were required in response to complaints, however, a number of relatively minor changes or actions were taken in order to improve our service to customers. Whilst these improvements may have been minor in the overall scale of activities within the Council, it is our hope that they have made significant changes to the quality of service received by our customers. Some examples of these improvements include:

- Changes made to booking forms to reflect customer suggestions and make them more user-friendly
- Staff training
- Amendments made to procedures, to ensure the most effective process is in place



Complaints investigated by the SPSO

When a customer is not satisfied with our final response to a complaint, they can take it to the Scottish Public Service Ombudsman (SPSO) and ask for the complaint to be investigated. The SPSO is the final arbiter for complaints about public services.

Cases passed to SPSO during 2015-16

23 cases were received by the SPSO in relation to Argyll and Bute Council in 2015/2016. 19 of these were not progressed (i.e. they were withdrawn, premature, outwith SPSO jurisdiction etc); 2 were investigated by the SPSO and not upheld; and 2 are awaiting a decision.

The SPSO publishes reports about all the organisations it has involvement with – more information is available from

<http://www.spsso.org.uk/statistics-2015-16>

Benchmarking 2014/2015

We can now look at figures from 2014/2015 and use these to compare our performance against other Local Authorities.

Scottish Borders Council has carried out a benchmarking exercise between 3 similar-sized local authorities:

- Scottish Borders
- Argyll and Bute
- Aberdeenshire

The comparison between the 3 Councils is shown on the following pages, however, it should be pointed out that the figures do not take account of differences between the Councils (i.e. Argyll and Bute and Scottish Borders do not have housing stock, whereas Aberdeenshire do).



Benchmarking 2014/2015

Indicator 1 – Complaints received per 1000 of population

	Scotland	Argyll & Bute	Scottish Borders	Aberdeenshire
Population	5,226,410	90,000	114,030	255,540
Total complaints	67,620	340	619	1,990
Complaints per 1000 population	12.2	3.8	5.4	7.8

Indicator 2 – Closed Complaints

	Scotland	Argyll & Bute	Scottish Borders	Aberdeenshire
	% of total	% of total	% of total	% of total
Stage 1	82.0	76.8	81.4	62.1
Stage 2	18.0	23.2	18.6	37.9
Escalated		2.6	3.7	1.8

Indicator 3 – Complaints upheld / not upheld / partially upheld

	Scotland	Argyll & Bute	Scottish Borders	Aberdeenshire
Stage 1 upheld/partially upheld	68.10	61.7	49.2	34.9
Stage 1 not upheld	31.9	38.3	50.8	65.1
Stage 2 upheld/partially upheld	68.9	39.2	29.6	30.1
Stage 2 not upheld	31.1	60.8	70.4	69.9

Benchmarking 2014/2015

Indicator 4 – Average time spent (in days)

	Scotland	Argyll & Bute	Scottish Borders	Aberdeenshire
Stage 1	4.4	4.3	3.9	4
Stage 2	18.6	15.5	17.3	19
Escalated	15.7	15.2	17.5	20

Indicator 5 – Complaints closed within timescale

	Scotland	Argyll & Bute	Scottish Borders	Aberdeenshire
	% of total	% of total	% of total	% of total
Stage 1	80.8	82.4	86.9	83.4
Stage 2	84.5	79.4	77.4	88.7
Escalated	-	44.4	60.9	100

This comparison shows that in general we are performing better than the national average, but there is room for improvement in some areas. Looking at Indicator 5, we can see that improvements have been made in 2015/2016 – with 87.6% of stage 1s, 82.8 of stage 2s and 100% of escalated complaints all closed within timescale.

Conclusion

Argyll and Bute Council is committed to using feedback and listening to customers so we can continually improve the way we do things.

Our complaint handling is benchmarked with other local authorities and we will continue to work closely with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman to ensure this best-practice is on-going.



Contact Us

If you would like to know more about our complaints procedure, please contact us.

- Phone – 01546 605522
- Text – 07860023933
- Post - Argyll and Bute Council, Kilmory, Lochgilphead, Argyll, PA31 8RT
- Email – enquiries@argyll-bute.gov.uk
- Online – <http://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/content/enquiriesform>