



Annual Complaints Performance Report 2016-2017

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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 2016 to 31 March 2017.



Argyll and Bute Council is committed to providing high quality services for residents, businesses and visitors in Argyll and Bute. An important part of this commitment is to ensure we have effective processes in place to resolve matters when things go wrong, and to learn from the issues reported to us to improve the quality of services provided.

We aim to be thorough, transparent, objective and fair in our approach to complaints, and strive to make it as easy as possible for customers to access our complaints procedure through our website, by email, over the telephone or in person.

We understand that it can be disappointing and frustrating when expectations are not met, however, we welcome and value complaints and although I've noted a slight rise in the number of complaints received in 16/17, I see this as a positive point, as feedback from our customers allows us to take steps to correct things and identify areas where service delivery can be improved. Some examples of improvements made are included in this report.

Cleland Sneddon
Chief Executive – Argyll and Bute Council

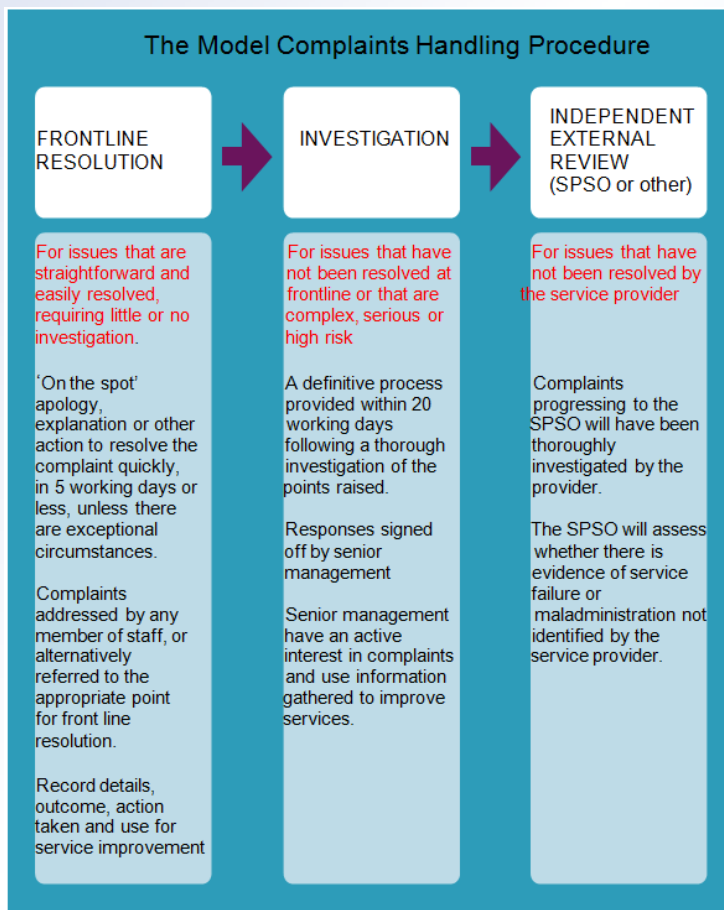
Our Complaints Procedure

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 2016 and 31 March 2017. 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 **87,130***

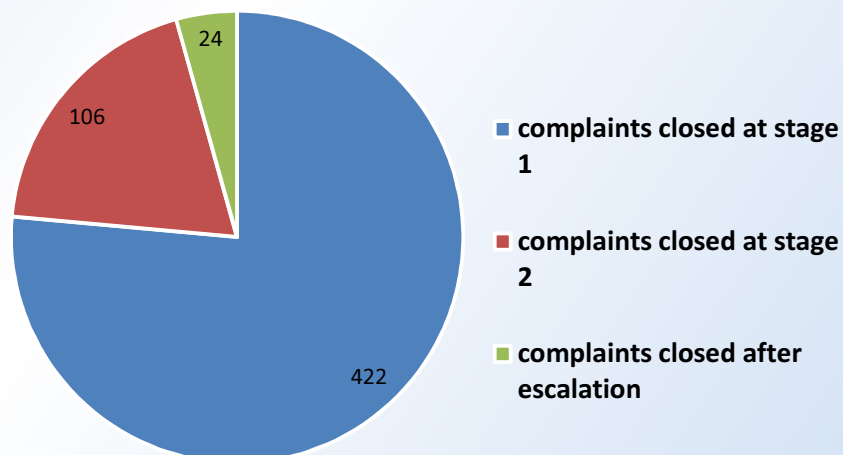
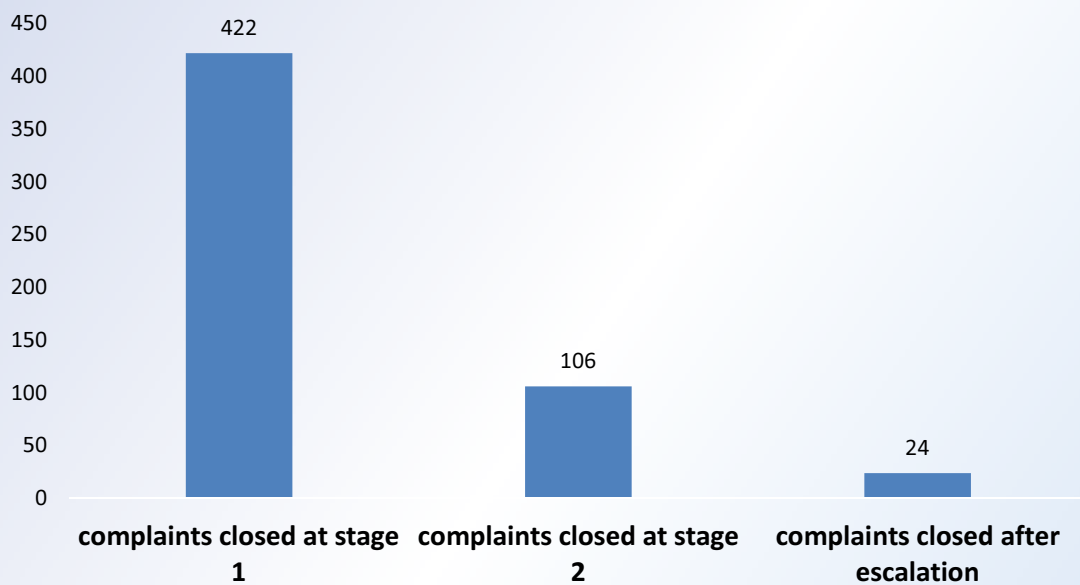
In 2016/2017 Argyll and Bute received and processed **528** complaints.

This means there were **6.1** complaints per **1,000 population**, or roughly **1** resident in **165** made a complaint about our services.

* National Records of Scotland mid year population estimate for Argyll and Bute

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).

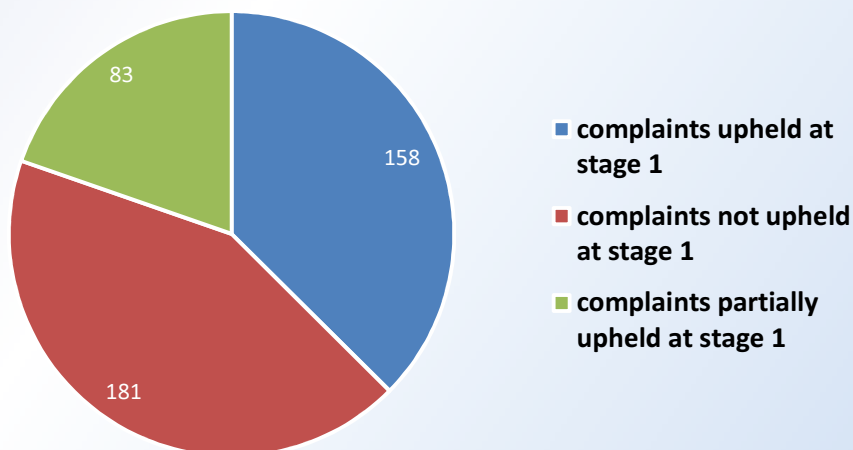
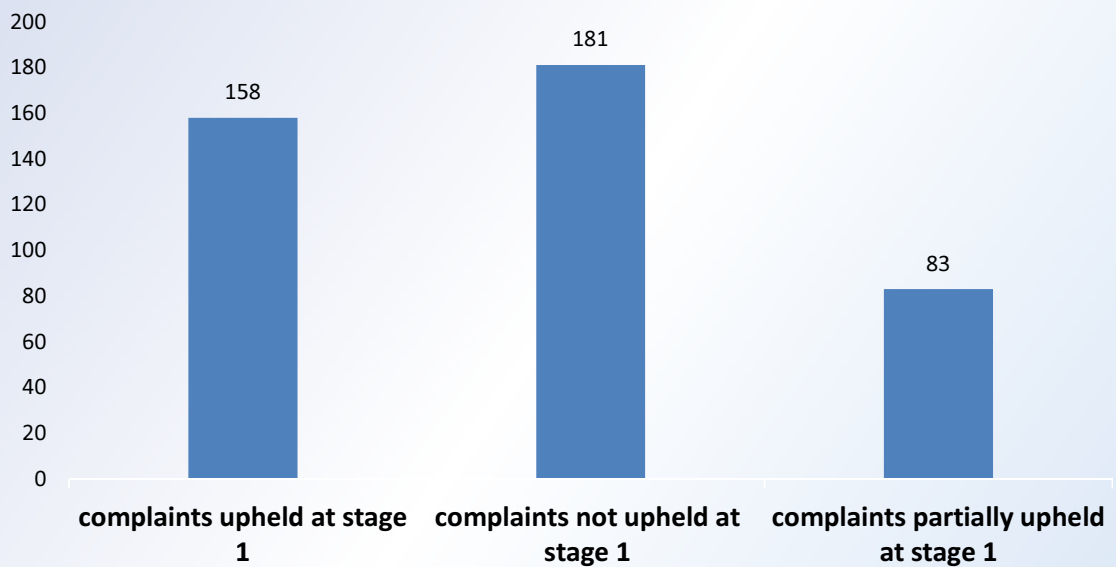


422 complaints were closed at Stage 1, or 79.9%
106 complaints were closed at Stage 2, or 20.1%
24 complaints were closed after escalation, or 4.5%

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

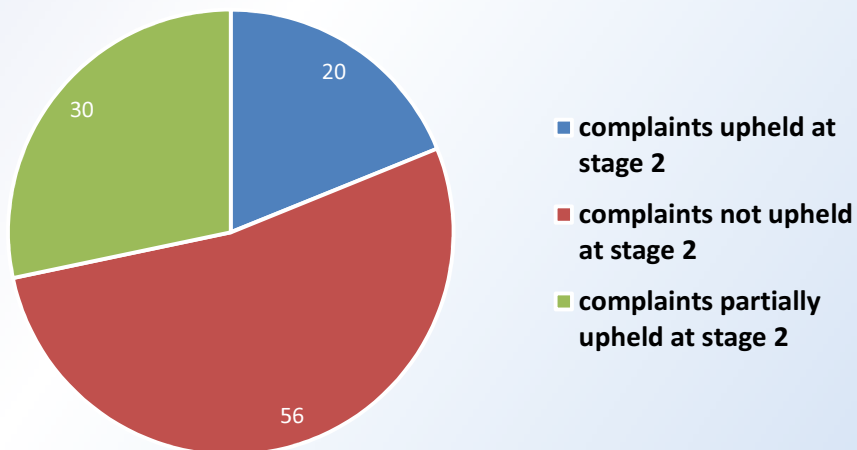
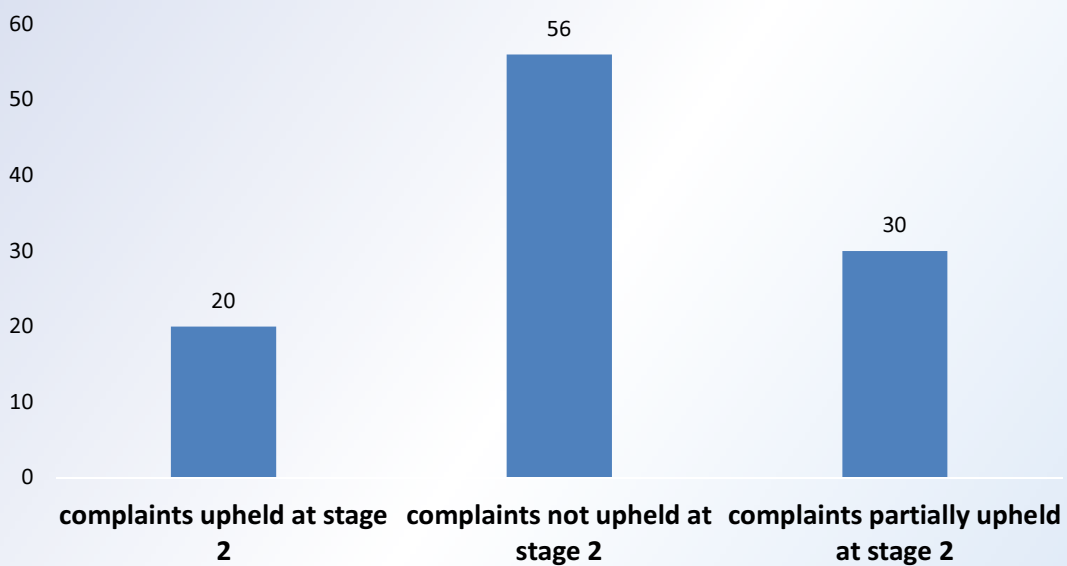


158 complaints were Upheld at Stage 1, or 37.4%
181 complaints were Not Upheld at Stage 1, or 42.9%
83 complaints were Partially Upheld at Stage 1, or 19.7%

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.

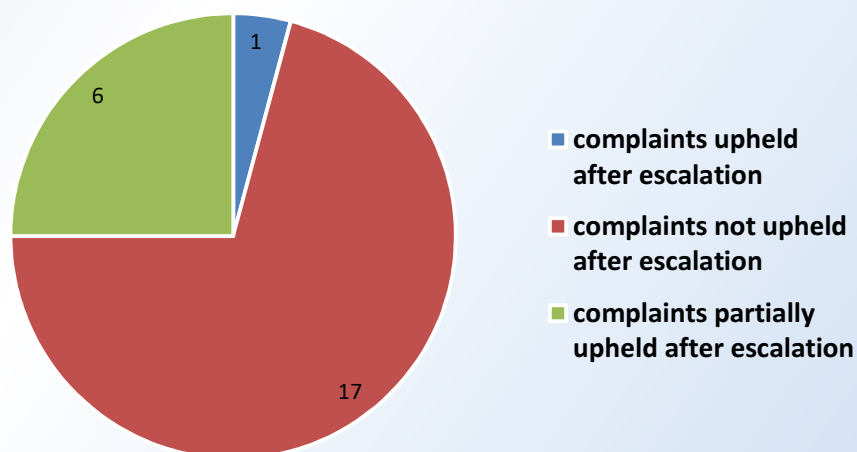
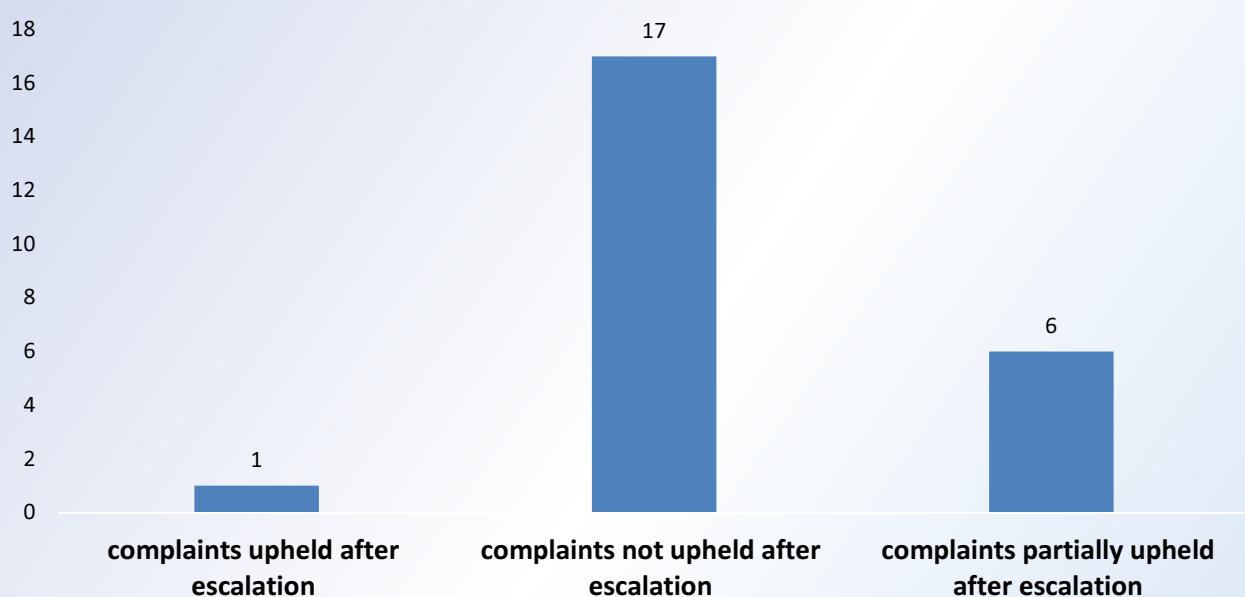
STAGE 2



20 complaints were Upheld at Stage 2, or 18.9%
56 complaints were Not Upheld at Stage 2, or 52.8%
30 complaints were Partially Upheld at Stage 2, or 28.3%

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.



1 complaint was upheld after escalation, or 4.2%
17 complaints were Not Upheld after Escalation, or 70.8%
6 complaints were Partially Upheld after Escalation, or 25.0%

Indicator 4 – Average Times

Stage 1 – We aim to respond to and close all Stage 1 complaints within **5 working days**. In 2016/2017, we closed 422 complaints at Stage 1, with a total sum of **2,547** working days used to close them. Our average time to close a Stage 1 complaint was **6.0 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 2016/2017, we closed **106** complaints at Stage 2, with a total sum of **1,821** working days used to close them. Our average time to close a Stage 2 complaint was **17.2 days**.

After Escalation – in 2016/2017, we closed **24** complaints after Escalation, with an average time of **14.7 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 2016/2017, we closed **422** complaints at Stage 1, with **290** of these within timescale, or **68.7%**. **2** 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 2016/2017, we closed **106** complaints at Stage 2, with **77** of these within timescale, or **72.6%**. **7** were closed after an extension was agreed with the customer.

After Escalation – in 2016/2017, we closed **24** complaints after Escalation, with **23** of these within timescale, or **95.8%**.

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 2016/2017, we had a total of **2** complaints where an extension was authorised, or **0.5%** of the total complaints closed.

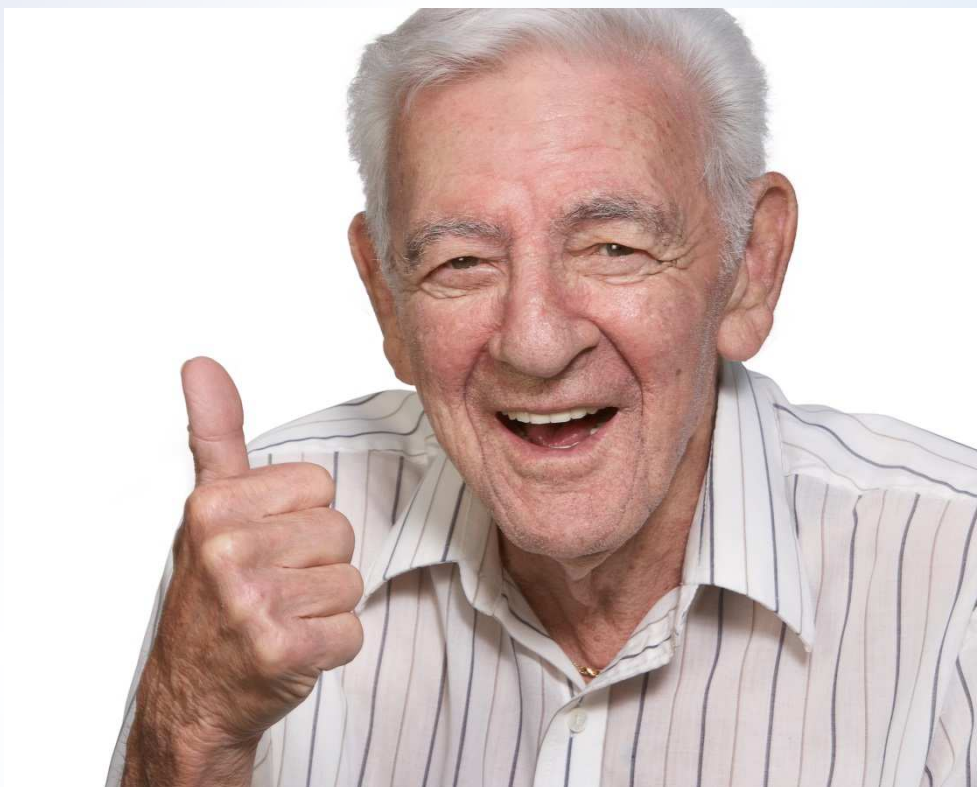
Stage 2 – In 2016/2017, we had a total of **7** complaints where an extension was authorised, or **6.6%** of the total complaints closed.

Indicator 7 – Customer Satisfaction

Our Customer Contact Centre has developed an automatic customer satisfaction survey which is sent out to customers when a complaint is closed. This survey aims to assess how the customer found the complaints process, rather than looking at the outcome of their complaint.

Overall, 2 out of 3 of our customers who completed the survey were satisfied with the process for making a complaint.

We report the feedback and any suggestions for improvements back to our quarterly complaints meetings, and look at how our complaints process could be improved.



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:

- Additional information added to our website – service disruptions, changes to bin collections etc
- Standard letter amended to make the information clearer to customers
- Toolbox talks given to staff to ensure they are familiar with service standards



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 2016-17

33 cases were received by the SPSO in relation to Argyll and Bute Council in 2016/2017. 29 of these were not progressed (i.e. they were withdrawn, premature, out with SPSO jurisdiction etc); 3 were investigated by the SPSO and not upheld; and 1 was partially upheld.

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

<https://www.spsos.org.uk/statistics-2016-17>

Benchmarking 2016/2017

We can now look at figures from 2016/2017 and use these to compare our performance against other Local Authorities.

A comparison between three councils; the Scottish Borders, Aberdeenshire and Argyll and Bute, alongside the national average, can be seen on the following pages. 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 2016/2017

Indicator 1 – Complaints received per 1000 of population

	Argyll & Bute	Scottish Borders	Aberdeenshire
Population	87,130	114,030	261,960
Total complaints	528	563	1,741
Complaints per 1000 population	6.1	4.94	6.65

Indicator 2 – Closed Complaints

	National average	Argyll & Bute	Scottish Borders	Aberdeenshire
	% of total	% of total	% of total	% of total
Stage 1	88.8	79.9	79.4	60.9
Stage 2	9.8	20.1	20.6	39.1
Escalated	1.8	4.5	4.6	2.0

Indicator 3 – Complaints upheld / not upheld / partially upheld

	National average	Argyll & Bute	Scottish Borders	Aberdeenshire
	% of total	% of total	% of total	% of total
Stage 1 upheld/partially upheld	70.2	57.1	40	36.3
Stage 1 not upheld	26	42.9	60	63.7
Stage 2 upheld/partially upheld	59.7	47.2	37.6	30.4
Stage 2 not upheld	36.3	52.8	62.4	69.6

Benchmarking 2016/2017

Indicator 4 – Average time spent (in days)

	National average	Argyll & Bute	Scottish Borders	Aberdeenshire
Stage 1	7.5	6.0	3.9	3.7
Stage 2	19.4	17.2	17.5	15.3
Escalated	19.2	14.7	17.0	No data

Indicator 5 – Complaints closed within timescale

	National average	Argyll & Bute	Scottish Borders	Aberdeenshire
	% of total	% of total	% of total	% of total
Stage 1	70.9	68.7	86.7	85.2
Stage 2	69.2	72.6	77.8	89.7
Escalated	75.2	95.8	65.4	100

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>