



Annual Complaints Performance Report 2017-2018

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Foreword

I am pleased to be able to present Argyll and Bute Council's third Annual Complaints Report. This report provides information on customer complaints handled between 1 April 2017 and 31 March 2018.



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 I see this as a positive point. 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 in response to a complaint having been received 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’

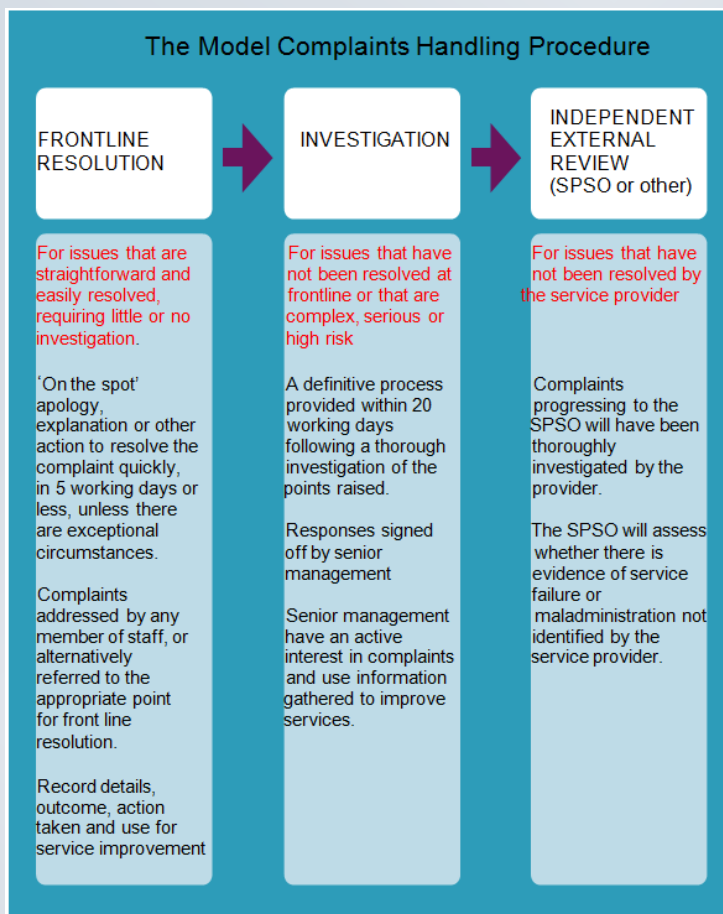
Customers must normally notify their complaint to a member of staff within six months of the date they first knew of the problem, unless there are special circumstances which would cause this timescale to be extended. Clarification on relevant factors can be obtained from Iain Jackson, our Corporate 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 within 5 working days.

Stage 2: Some complaints will start at this stage if the issues are complex and require detailed investigation or if the complaint is identified as serious, high risk or high profile. Also where a customer is not satisfied with a Stage 1 resolution, their complaint is escalated to Stage 2. 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 our complaints handling based on performance indicators approved 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 2017 and 31 March 2018. 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 **86,810***

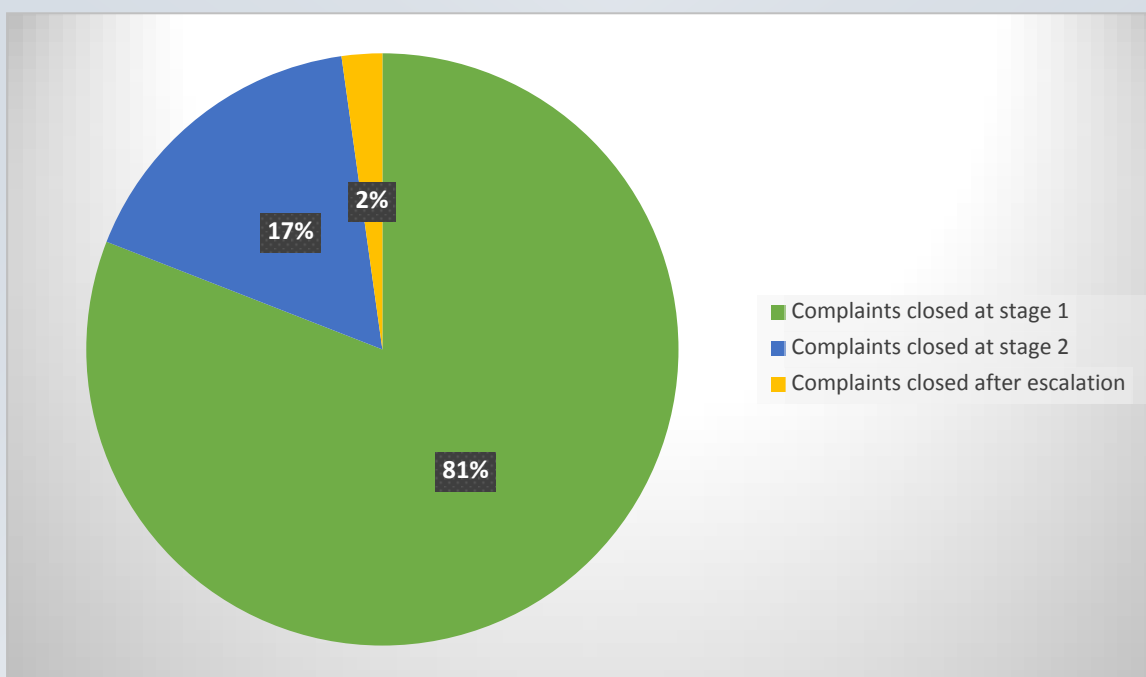
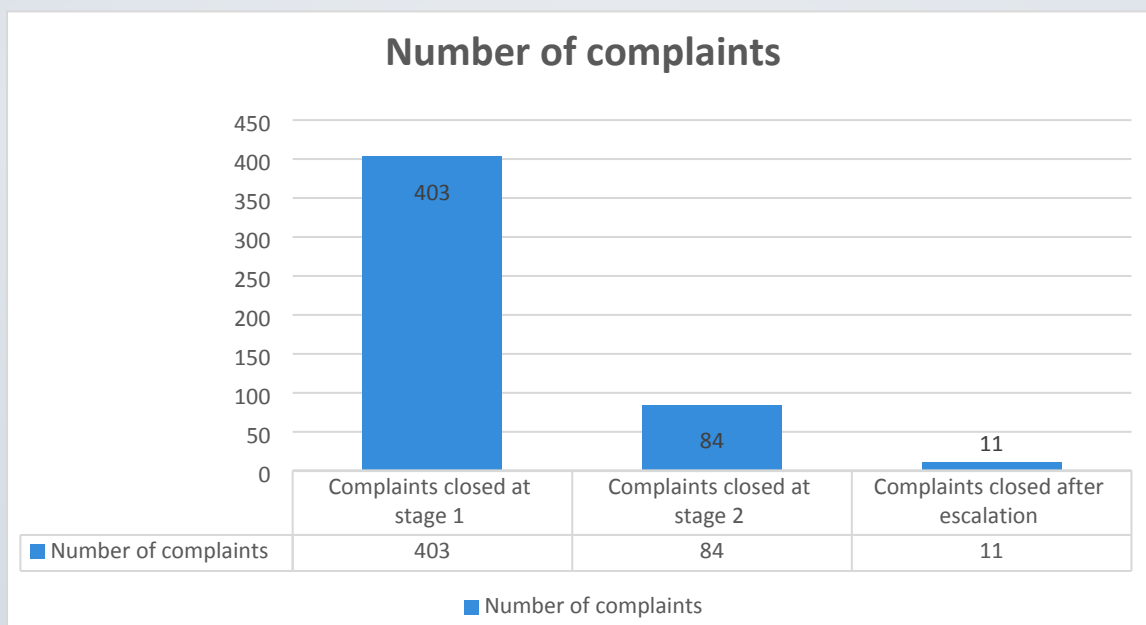
In 2017/2018 Argyll and Bute received and processed **498** complaints.

This means there were **5.7** complaints per **1,000 population**, or roughly **1** resident in **175** made a complaint about our services.

* National Records of Scotland mid-year 2017 population estimate for Argyll and Bute.

Indicator 2 – Number of Complaints

This indicator details information on the number of complaint closed at Stages 1 and 2 and also as a percentage of all complaints received

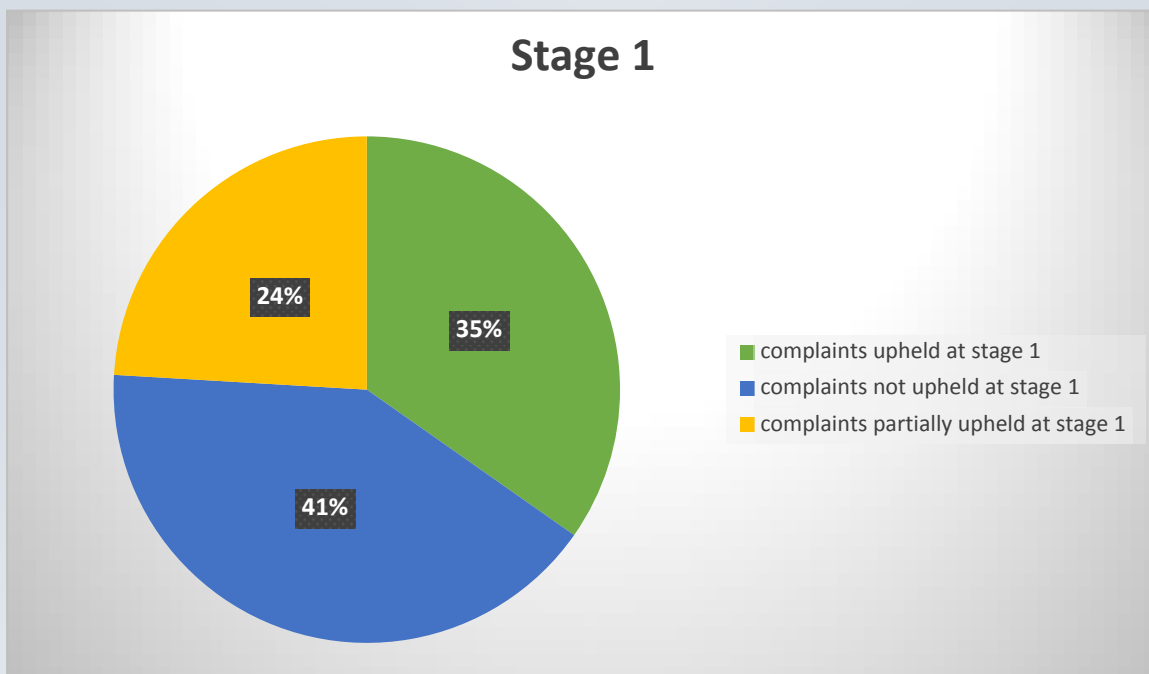
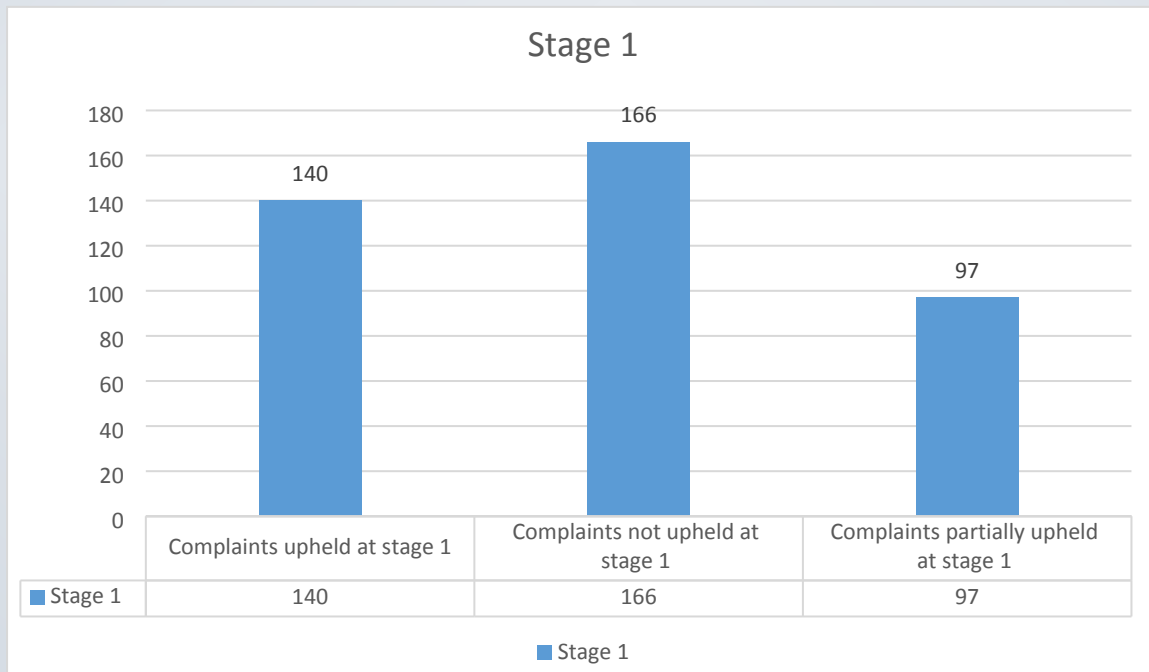


403 complaints were closed at Stage 1 – 81%

84 complaints were closed at Stage 2 – 17%

11 complaints were closed after escalation – 2%

Indicator 3, Stage 1 – Complaints upheld, not upheld and partially upheld

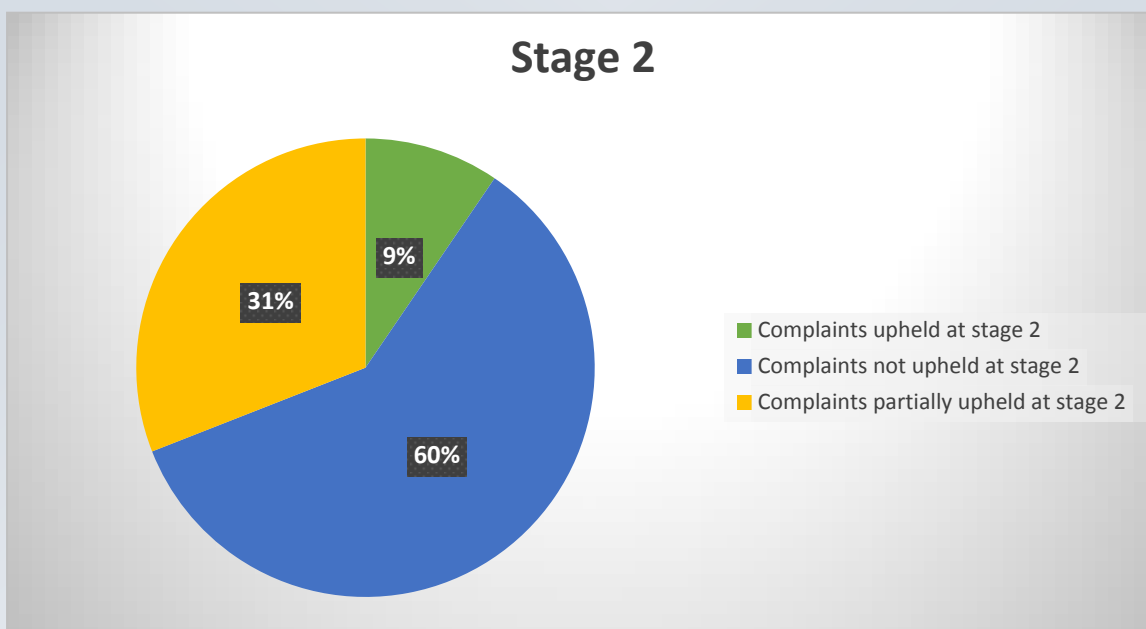
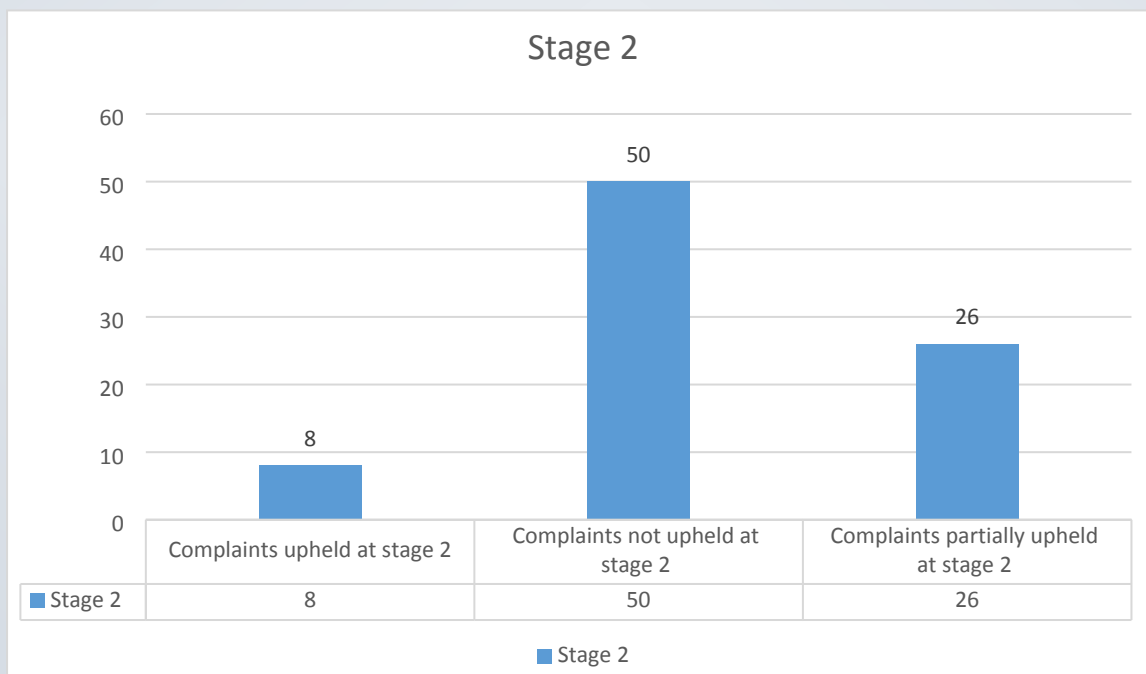


140 complaints were upheld at Stage 1 – 35%

166 complaints were not upheld at Stage 1 – 41%

97 complaints were partially upheld at Stage 1 – 24%

Indicator 3, Stage 2 – Complaints upheld, not upheld & partially upheld



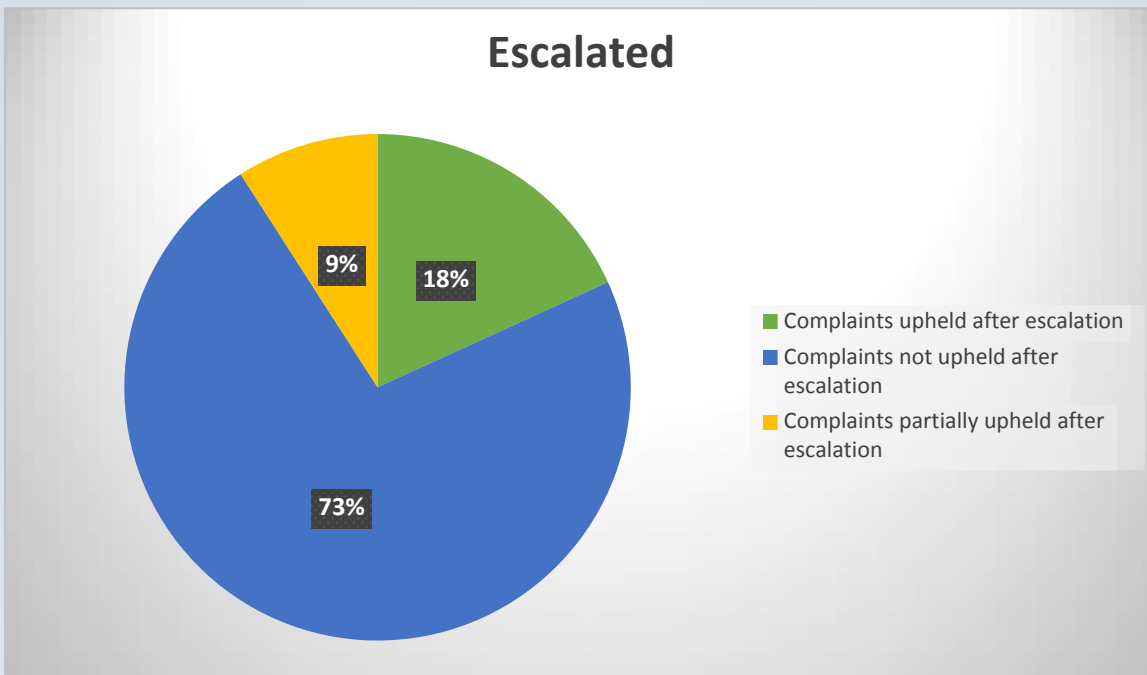
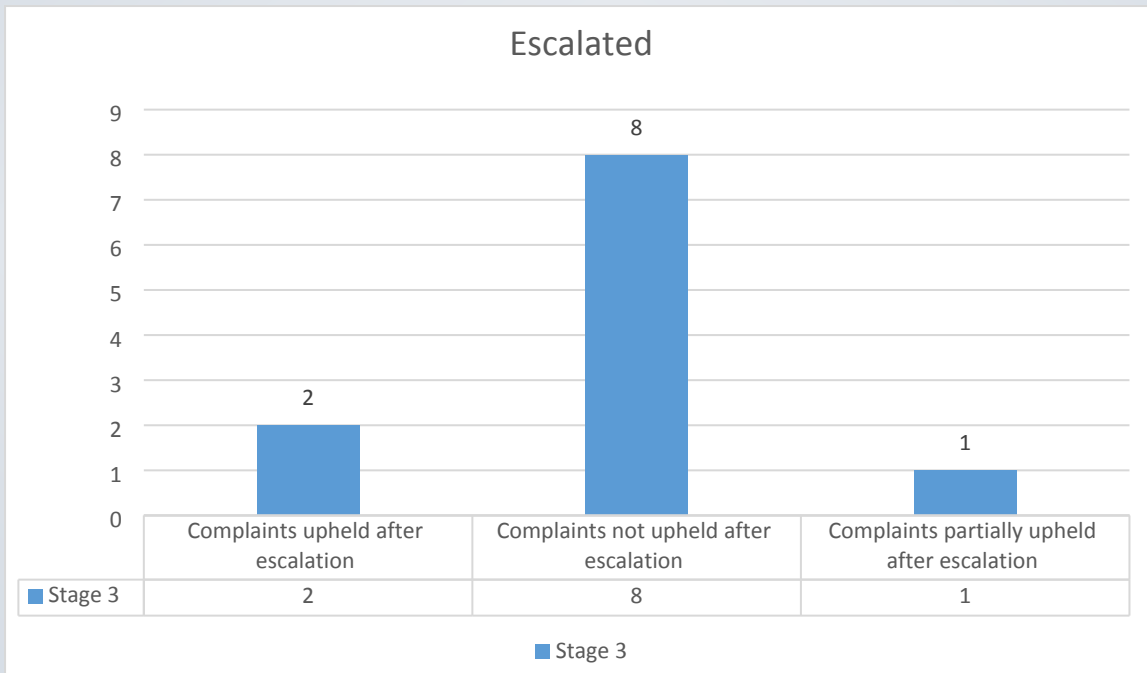
8 Complaints were upheld at Stage 2 – 9%

50 Complaints were not upheld at Stage 2 – 60%

26 Complaints were partially upheld at Stage 2 – 31%

Indicator 3 –Escalated Complaints

Where the customer is dissatisfied with the stage 1 resolution.



2 complaints were upheld after escalation -18%

8 complaints were not upheld after escalation – 62%

1 complaint was partially upheld after escalation – 9%

Indicator 4 – Average Times

Stage 1 – We aim to respond to and close all Stage 1 complaints within **5 working days**. In 2017/2018, we closed **403** complaints at Stage 1, with a total sum of **2,488 working days** used to close them. Our average time to close a Stage 1 complaint was **6.2 working days**.

Stage 2 – We aim to respond to and close all Stage 2 complaints within **20 working days**. In 2017/2018, we closed **84** complaints at Stage 2, with a total sum of **1,544 working days** used to close them. Our average time to close a Stage 2 complaint was **18.4 working days**.

After Escalation – in 2017/2018, we closed **11** complaints after escalation with an average time of **16.9 working 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 – In 2017/2018 we closed **403** complaints at Stage 1 with **275** of these within timescale or **68.2%**. **3** were closed after an extension was agreed with the customer.

Stage 2 – In 2017/2018 we closed **84** complaints at Stage 2, with **63** of these within timescale or **75%**. **3** were closed after an extension was agreed with the customer.

After Escalation – in 2017/2018, we closed **11** complaints after escalation, with **8** of these within timescale or **72.7 %**.

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 2017/2018, we had a total of **3** complaints where an extension was authorised or **0.7%** of the total complaints closed.

Stage 2 – in 2017/2018, we had a total of **3** complaints where an extension was authorised or **3.6%** 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 the complaint.

Overall, over half of our customers who completed the survey were satisfied or very 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

No major policy or procedural changes were required in response to complaints in 2017 - 2018, 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:

- New written procedure for how we deal with dog control notices
- Staff training to ensure that they are familiar with service standards
- Review of parking appeals procedure
- Collection routes updates
- Review of communication procedures for schools
- Advisory signage put 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.

Complaints passed to SPSO during 2017/2018

20 complaints were received by the SPSO in 2017/2018. 8 were not progressed as they were either withdrawn, premature or out with SPSO's jurisdiction; in 7 it was found that appropriate action had been taken by the Council and the SPSO could not achieve anything more, 2 were resolved early; 3 were investigated with 1 being upheld, 1 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.spsso.org.uk/statistics-2017-18>

Benchmarking 2017/2018

Performance indicators developed in partnership between the SPSO and the Local Authority Complaints Handlers Network (LACHN) help councils to understand their complaints handling performance in more detail.

They also ensure that councils are capturing consistent and directly comparable information to enhance their benchmarking of complaints performance with their peers. The indicators are linked to the core recording, reporting and publicising requirements within the model Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP).

For the purposes of benchmarking complaints, the LACHN has organised Local Authorities into 'family groups' which are similar to the 'family groups' of the Scottish Local Government Benchmarking Framework (SLGBF).

This ensures that comparison can be made between councils that are similar in terms of the type of population that they serve and the type of geographical area which they cover. The point of comparing like with like is that this is expected to lead to useful learning and improvement.

Highland Council and Scottish Borders Council are grouped with Argyll & Bute Council in both the LACHN and the SLGBF 'family groups' and as such are a reasonable comparison to benchmark in this report.

The performance of Argyll and Bute in 2017/2018 with respect to Indicators 1-5 is compared to the Scottish National Average, Highland, and Scottish Borders on the following pages:

Benchmarking 2017/2018

Indicator 1 – Complaints received per 1,000 of population

	Scotland	Argyll & Bute	Highland	Scottish Borders
Population	5,404,700	86,810	234,770	114,530
Total Complaints	58,483	498	2195	670
Complaints per 1,000 population	10.8	5.7	9.3	5.8

Indicator 2 – Closed Complaints

	National Average	Argyll & Bute	Highland	Scottish Borders
	% of Total	% of Total	% of Total	% of Total
Stage 1	88.7	80.9	90.6	75.4
Stage 2	8.5	16.9	5.9	20.8
Escalated	2.8	2.2	3.5	3.8

Indicator 3 – Complaints upheld/ not upheld / partially upheld

	National Average	Argyll & Bute	Highland	Scottish Borders
	% of Total	% of Total	% of Total	% of Total
Stage 1 Upheld /Partially Upheld	66.4	58.8	49.4	42.0
Stage 1 Not Upheld	33.6	41.2	50.6	58.0
Stage 2 Upheld / Partially Upheld	53.7	40.5	47.2	38.2
Stage 2 Not Upheld	46.3	59.5	52.8	61.8

Indicator 4 – Average time spent (in days)

	National Average	Argyll & Bute	Highland	Scottish Borders
Stage 1	8.0	6.2	13.1	4.0
Stage 2	23.7	18.4	19.5	17.7
Escalated	15.8	16.9	14.3	18.0

Indicator 5 – Complaints closed within timescale

	National Average	Argyll & Bute	Highland	Scottish Borders
	% of Total	% of Total	% of Total	% of Total
Stage 1	63.1	68.2	42.6	86.4
Stage 2	76.4	75.0	60.2	67.4
Escalated	60.7	72.7	75.3	53.8

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 605516

Post - Argyll and Bute Council, Kilmory, Lochgilphead, Argyll, PA31 8RT

Email - <mailto:enquiries@argyll-bute.gov.uk>

Online

<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/do-it-online/comments-and-complaints>

<http://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/content/enquiriesform>