



# Annual Complaints Performance Report 2018-2019



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# Foreword

**I am pleased to be able to present Argyll and Bute Council's Annual Complaints Report. This report provides information on customer complaints handled between 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019.**



**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. 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’

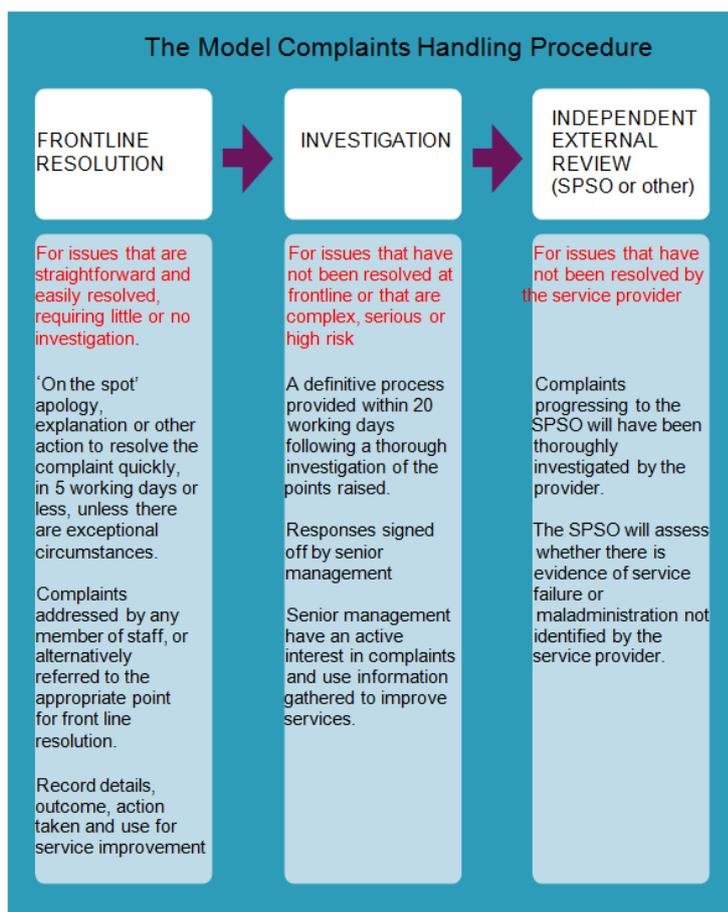
Customers must normally notify their complaint to a member of staff within six months of the date they first knew of the problem, unless there are special circumstances which would cause this timescale to be extended. Clarification on relevant factors can be obtained from Iain Jackson, our Corporate 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 within 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 our complaints handling based on 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 2018 and 31 March 2019. 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\***

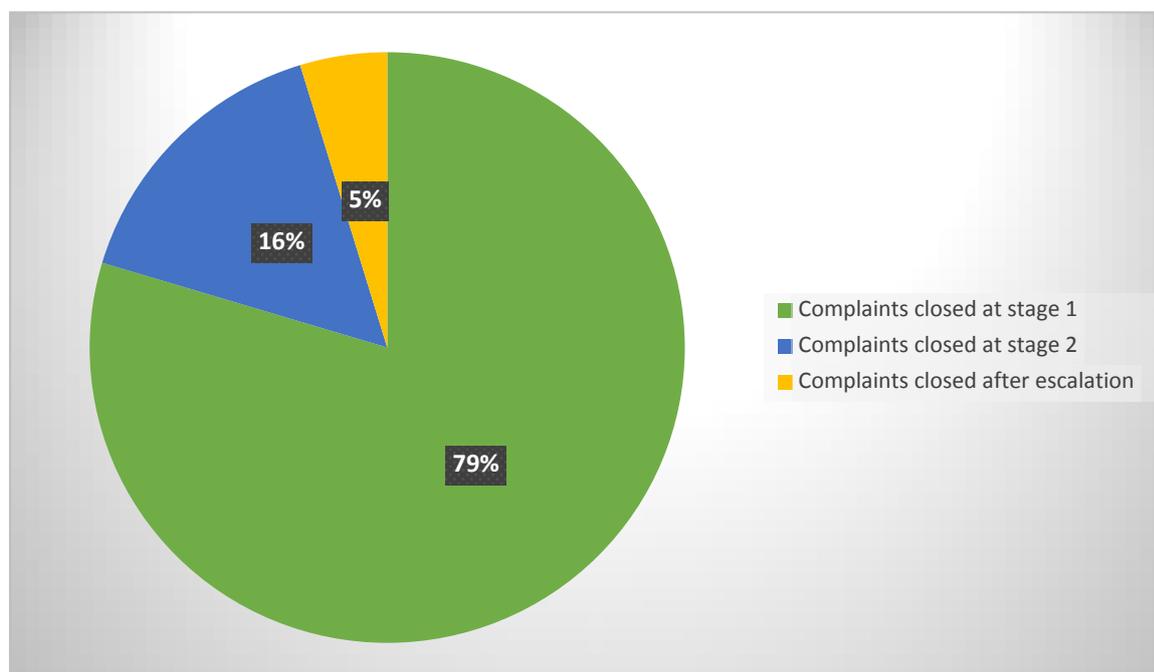
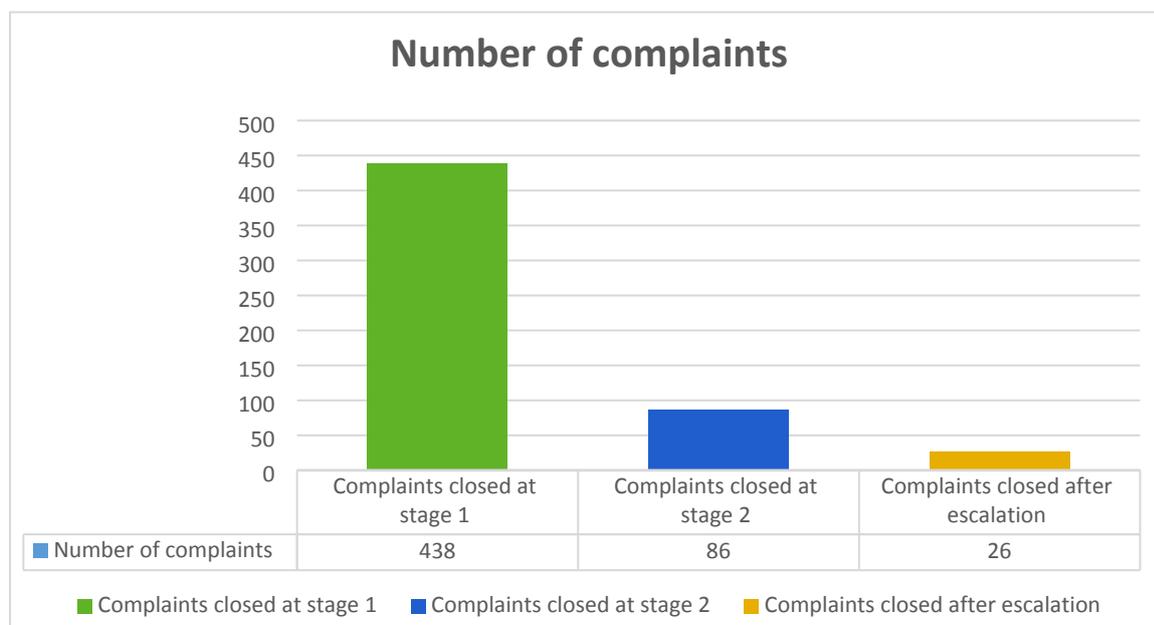
In 2018/2019 Argyll and Bute received and processed **552** complaints (550 closed within the period).

This means there were **6.4** complaints per **1,000 population**, or roughly **1** resident in **157** made a complaint about our services.

\* National Records of Scotland mid-year 2017 to 2018 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 (please note there may be discrepancies due to data rounding)



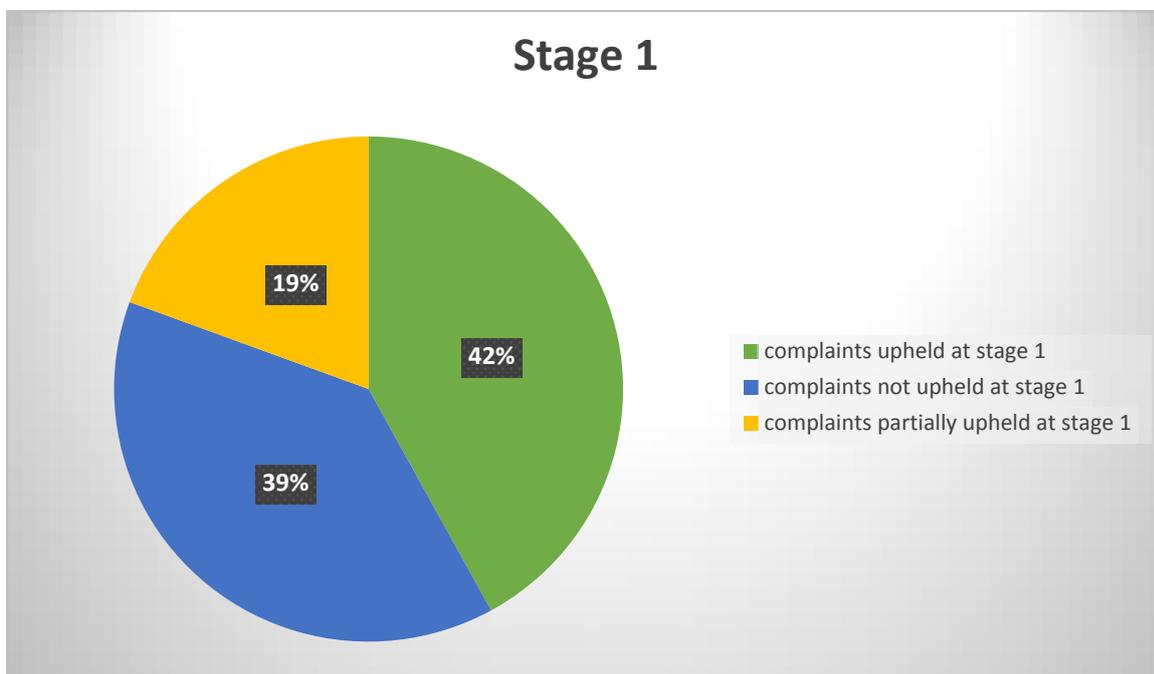
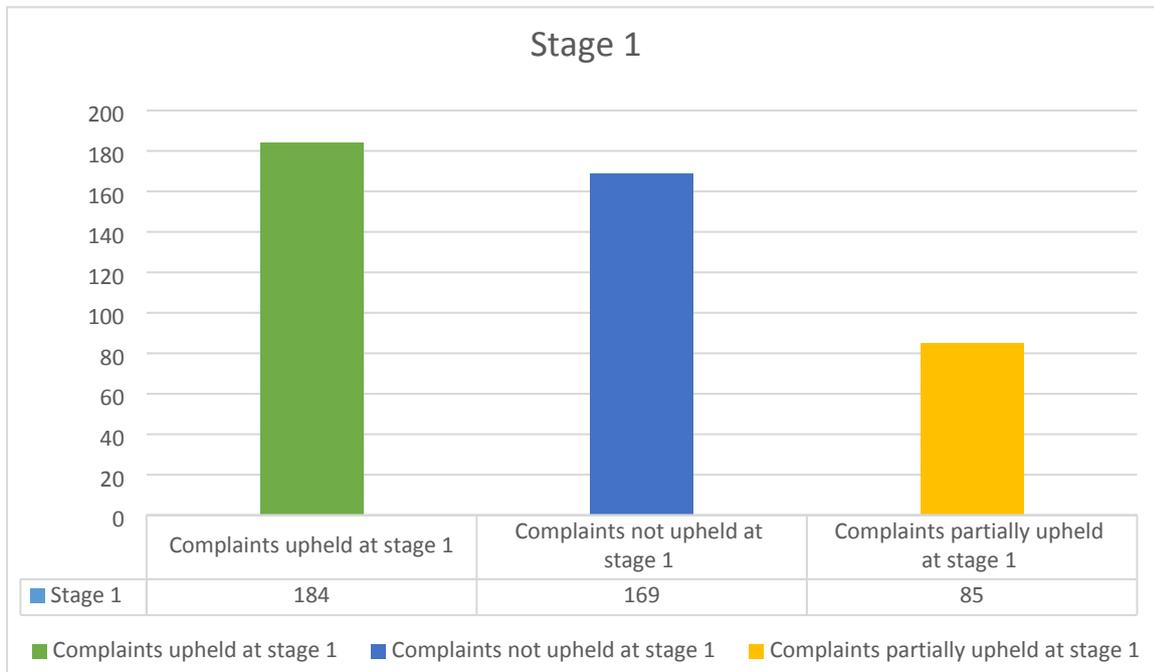
**438 complaints were closed at Stage 1 – 80%**

**86 complaints were closed at Stage 2 – 15%**

**26 complaints were closed after escalation – 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.



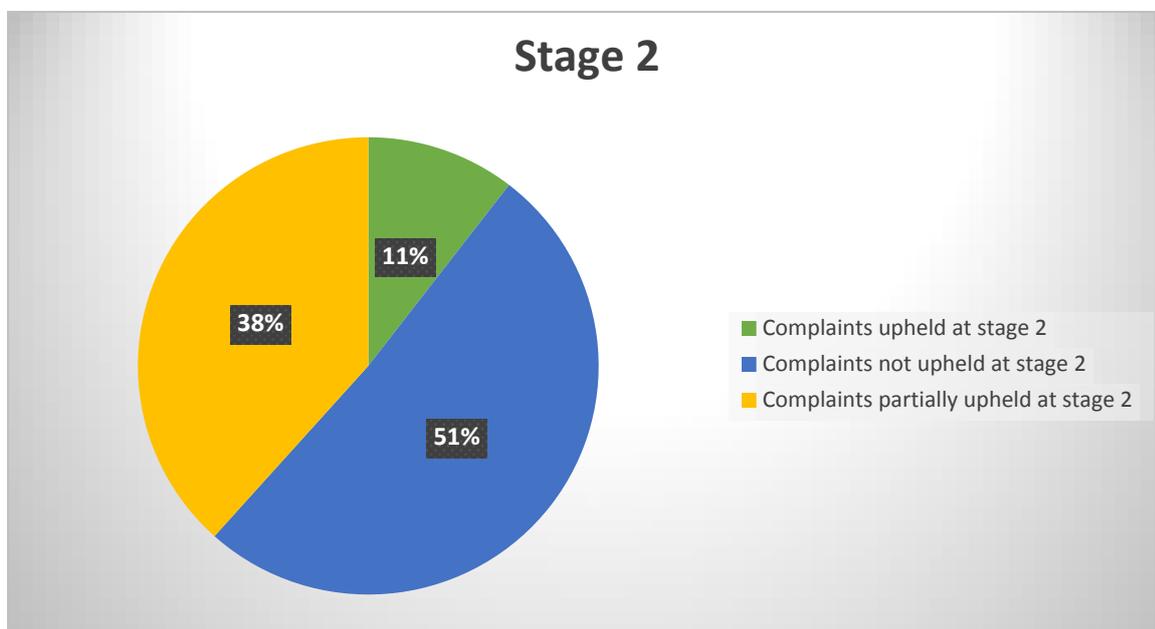
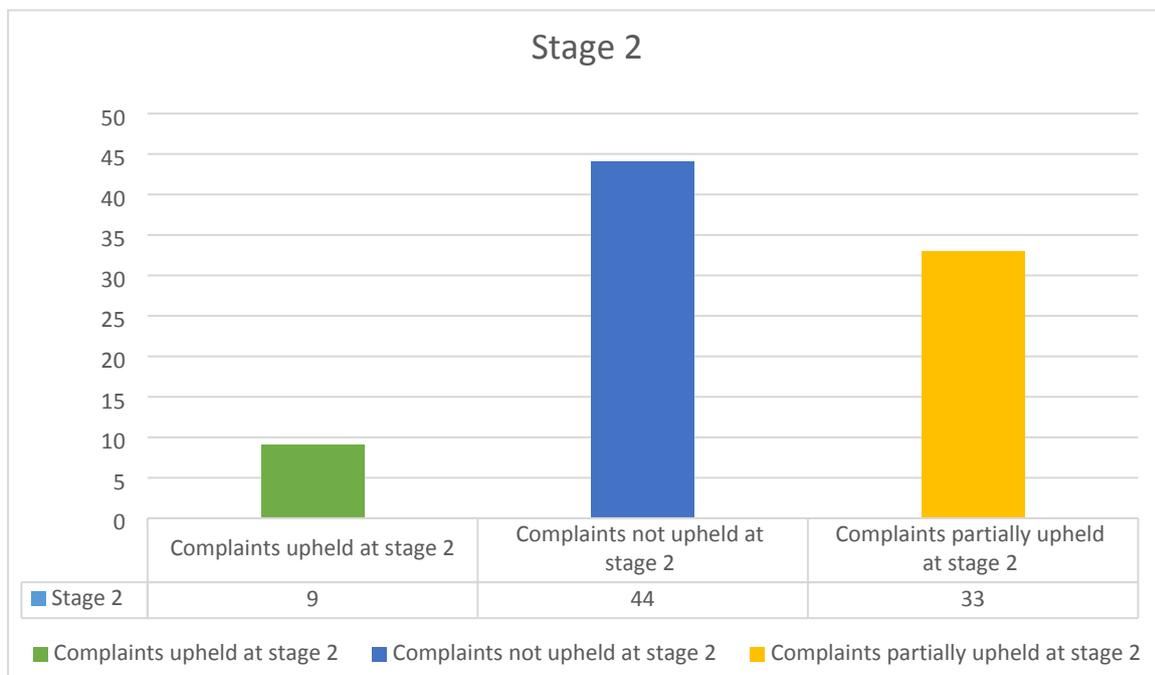
**184 complaints were Upheld at Stage 1 – 42%**

**169 complaints were Not Upheld at Stage 1 – 39%**

**85 complaints were Partially Upheld at Stage 1 – 19%**

# Indicator 3, Stage 2 – Complaints Upheld, Not Upheld & Partially Upheld

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



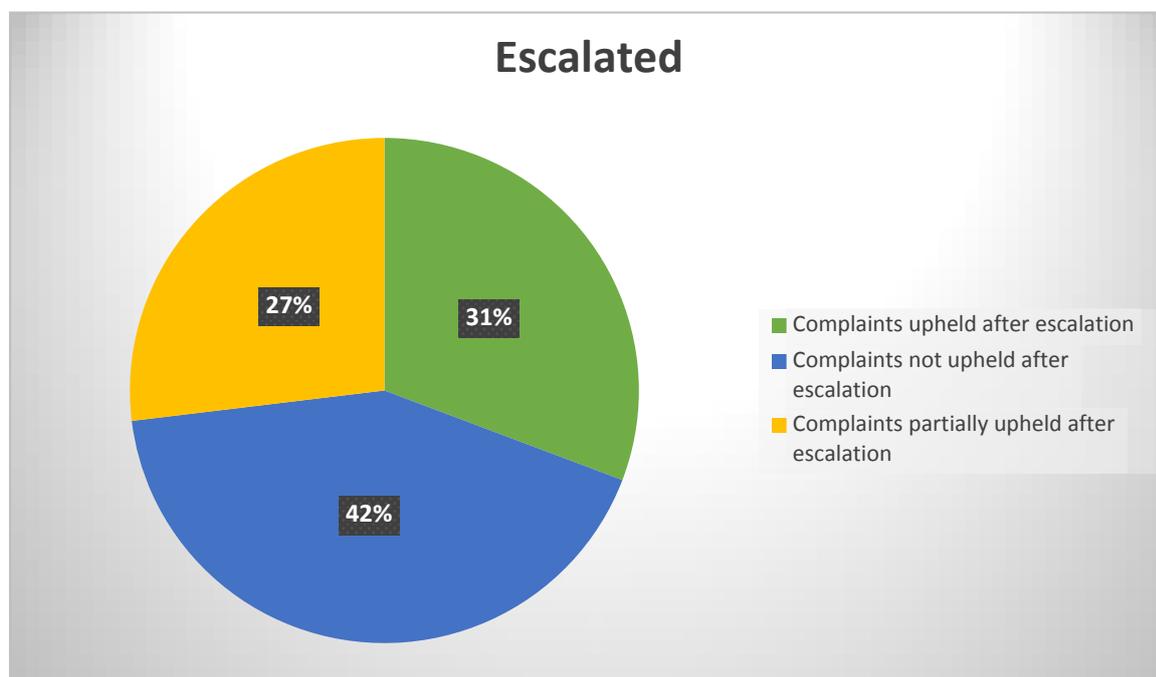
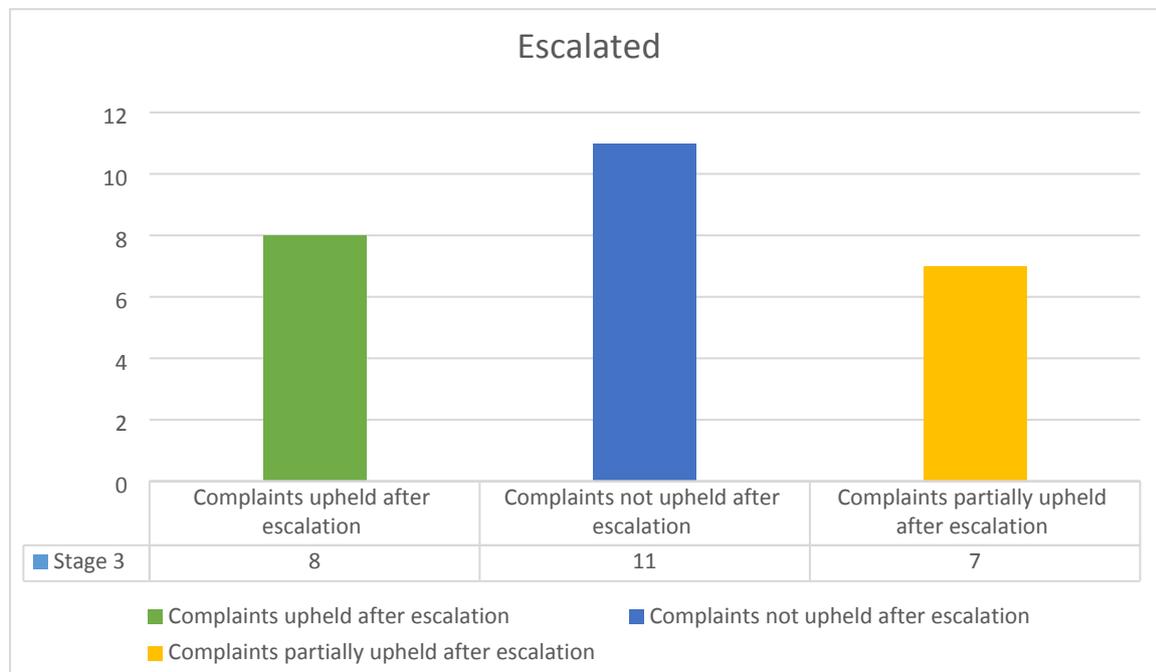
**9 Complaints were Upheld at Stage 2 – 11%**

**44 Complaints were Not Upheld at Stage 2 – 51%**

**33 Complaints were Partially Upheld at Stage 2 – 38%**

## Indicator 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.



**8 complaints were Upheld after escalation -31%**

**11 complaints were Not Upheld after escalation – 42%**

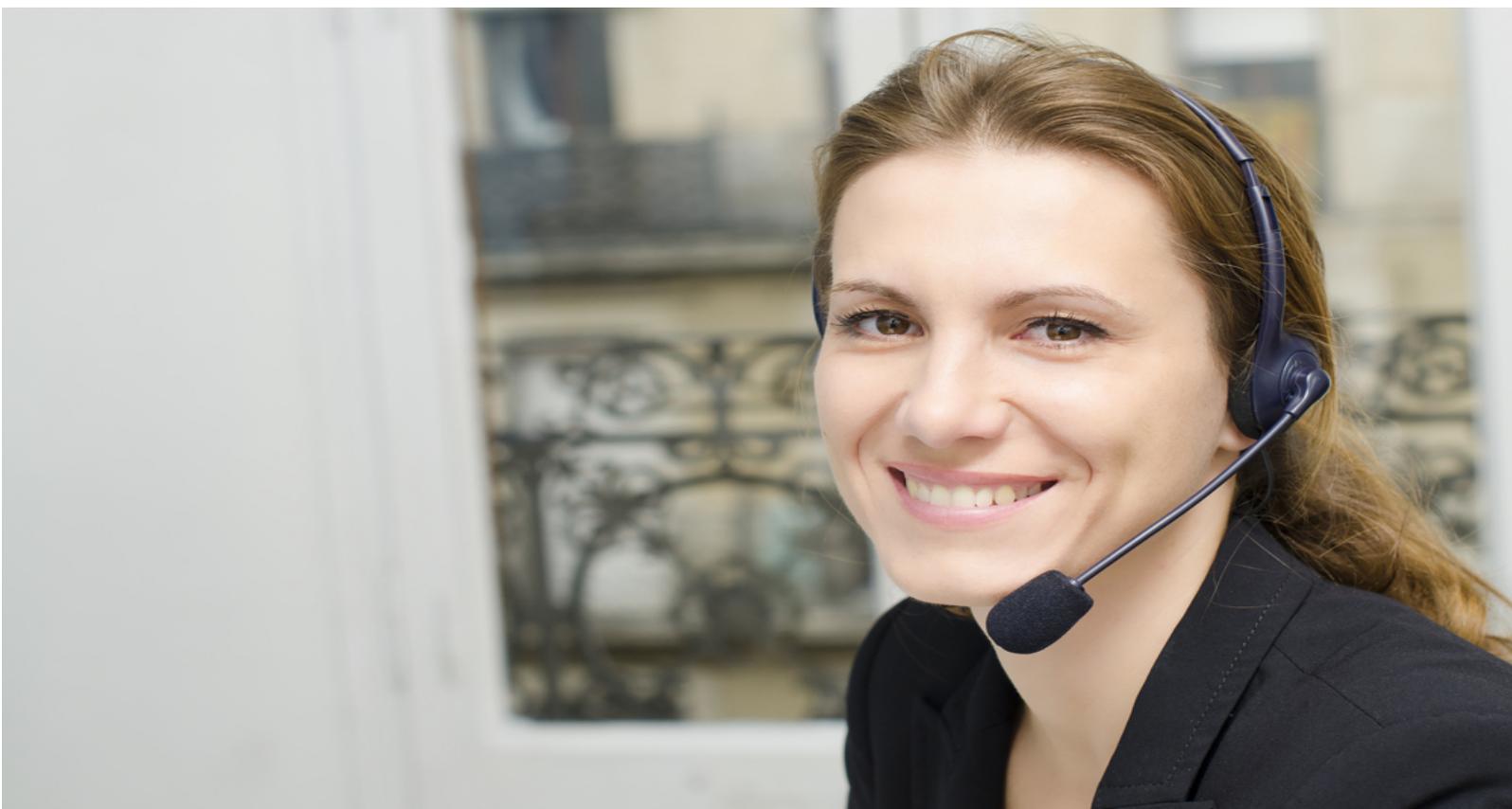
**7 complaints were Partially Upheld after escalation – 27%**

## Indicator 4 – Average Times

**Stage 1** – We aim to respond to and close all Stage 1 complaints within **5 working days**. In 2018/2019, we closed **438** complaints at Stage 1, with a total sum of **2,810 working days** used to close them. Our average time to close a Stage 1 complaint was **6.4 working 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 2018/ 2019, we closed **86** complaints at Stage 2, with a total sum of **1,663 working days** used to close them. Our average time to close a Stage 2 complaint was **19.3 working days**.

**After Escalation** – in 2018/2019, we closed **26** complaints after Escalation with a total sum of **400 working days**. Our average time to close a complaint after Escalation was **15.4 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** – We aim to respond to and close all Stage 1 complaints within **5 working days**. In 2018/2019 we closed **438** complaints at Stage 1 with **293** of these within timescale, or **66.9%**. **22 (5%)** 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 2018/2019 we closed **86** complaints at Stage 2, with **56** of these within timescale, or **65.1%**. **2 (2.3%)** were closed after an extension was agreed with the customer.

**After Escalation** – in 2018/2019, we closed **26** complaints after Escalation, with **15** of these within timescale, or **57.7 %**. **10 (38.5%)** were closed after an extension was agree with the customer.

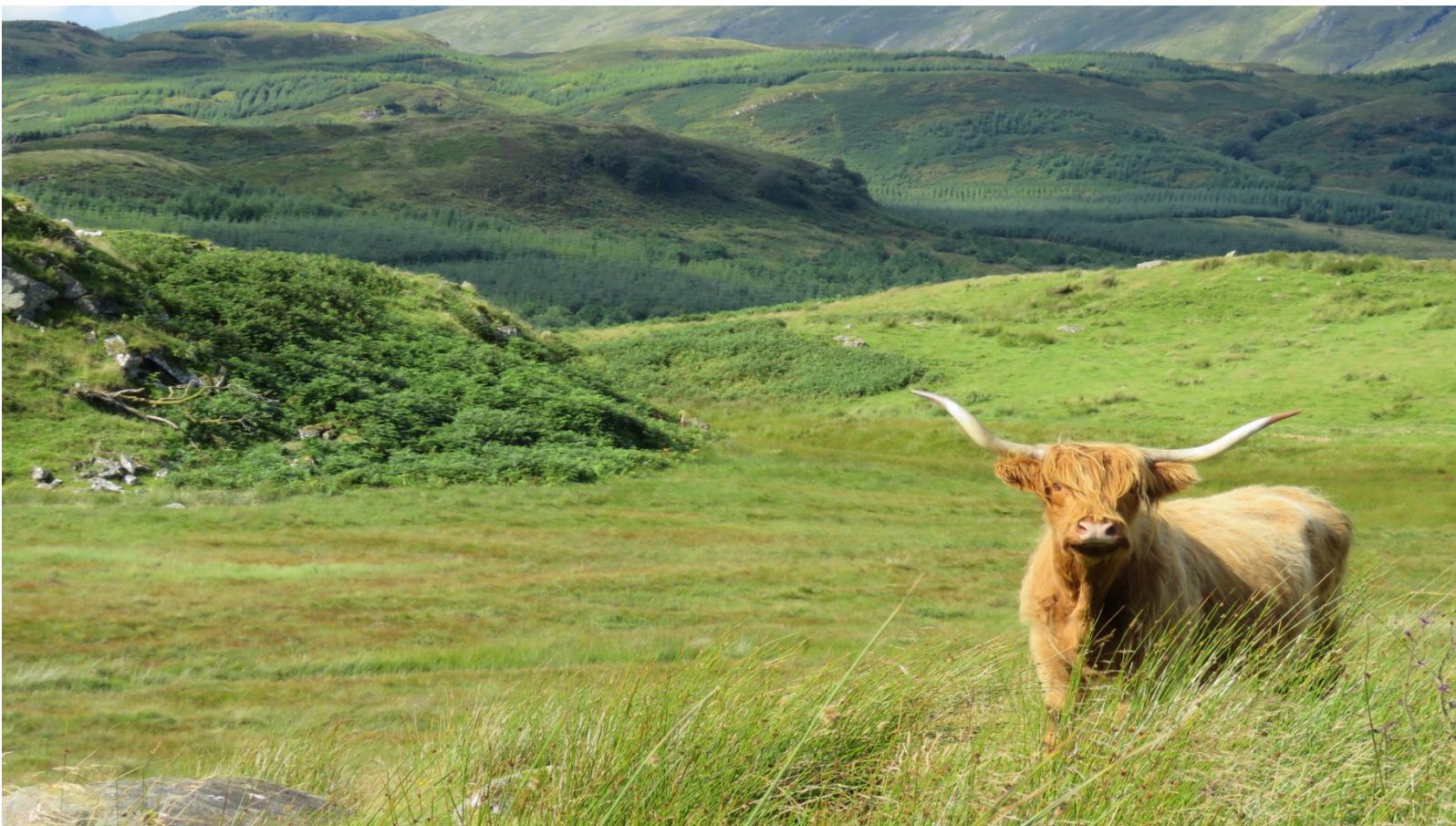
## Indicator 6 – Extensions to Timescales

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 2018/2019, we had a total of **22** complaints where an extension was authorised, or **5%** of the total complaints closed.

Stage 2 – in 2018/2019, we had a total of **2** complaints where an extension was authorised, or **2.3%** of the total complaints closed.

Following Escalation – in 2018/2019, we had a total of **10** complaints where an extension was authorised, or **38.5%** 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.

On average, 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

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 that 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 2018/2019**

24 Cases were received by the SPSO in relation to Argyll and Bute Council in 2018/2019. Of these 13 were not progressed (ie. they were withdrawn, premature, out with SPSO jurisdiction etc.); 8 cases were resolved early; 1 was investigated by the SPSO and upheld, 1 was 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-2018-19>

## Benchmarking 2018/2019

Performance indicators developed in partnership with the Local Authority Complaints Handlers Network 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).

This process has been organised around 'Family Groups' of councils so that comparison can be made between councils that are similar in terms of the type of population that they serve (e.g. relative deprivation and affluence) and the type of geographical area which they cover (e.g. urban, semi-rural, rural). The point of comparing like with like is that this is expected to lead to useful learning and improvement.

Argyll & Bute are in Family Group One for LACHN benchmarking purposes.

LACHN 'Family Group 1' includes - Argyll & Bute, Eilean Siar, Shetland Islands, Highland, Orkney Islands, Scottish Borders, Dumfries & Galloway and Aberdeenshire.

At the time of this annual report compilation, LACHN are waiting for submissions from some local authorities which are outstanding. Family Group 1 are not affected, but, for this reason, we are unable to benchmark against the Scottish average as this would change in respect to the missing information.

The performance of Argyll and Bute in 2018/2019 with respect to Indicators 1-5 is compared to Family Group 1, as a whole on the following pages:

# Benchmarking 2018/2019

## Indicator 1 – Complaints received per 1,000 of population

	Family Group 1	Argyll & Bute
Population	920,040	86,810
Total Complaints	5,125	552
Complaints per 1,000 population	5.6	6.4

## Indicator 2 – Closed Complaints

	Family Group 1	Argyll & Bute
	% of Total	% of Total
Stage 1	74.7	79.6
Stage 2	21.8	15.6
Escalated	3.5	4.7

\* Percentage figures may add within a 0.1 percentage point to 100% due to rounding up / down.

## Indicator 3 – Complaints upheld/ not upheld / partially upheld

	Family Group 1	Argyll & Bute
	% of Stage Total	% of Stage Total
Stage 1 Upheld	35.1	42
Stage 1 Partially Upheld	13.0	19.4
Stage 1 Not Upheld	51.9	38.6
Stage 2 Upheld	22.0	10.5
Stage 2 Partially Upheld	15.0	38.4
Stage 2 Not Upheld	63.1	51.2
Escalated Upheld	28.0	30.8
Escalated Partially Upheld	20.0	26.9
Escalated Not Upheld	52.0	42.3

\* Percentage figures may add within a 0.1 percentage point to 100% due to rounding up / down.

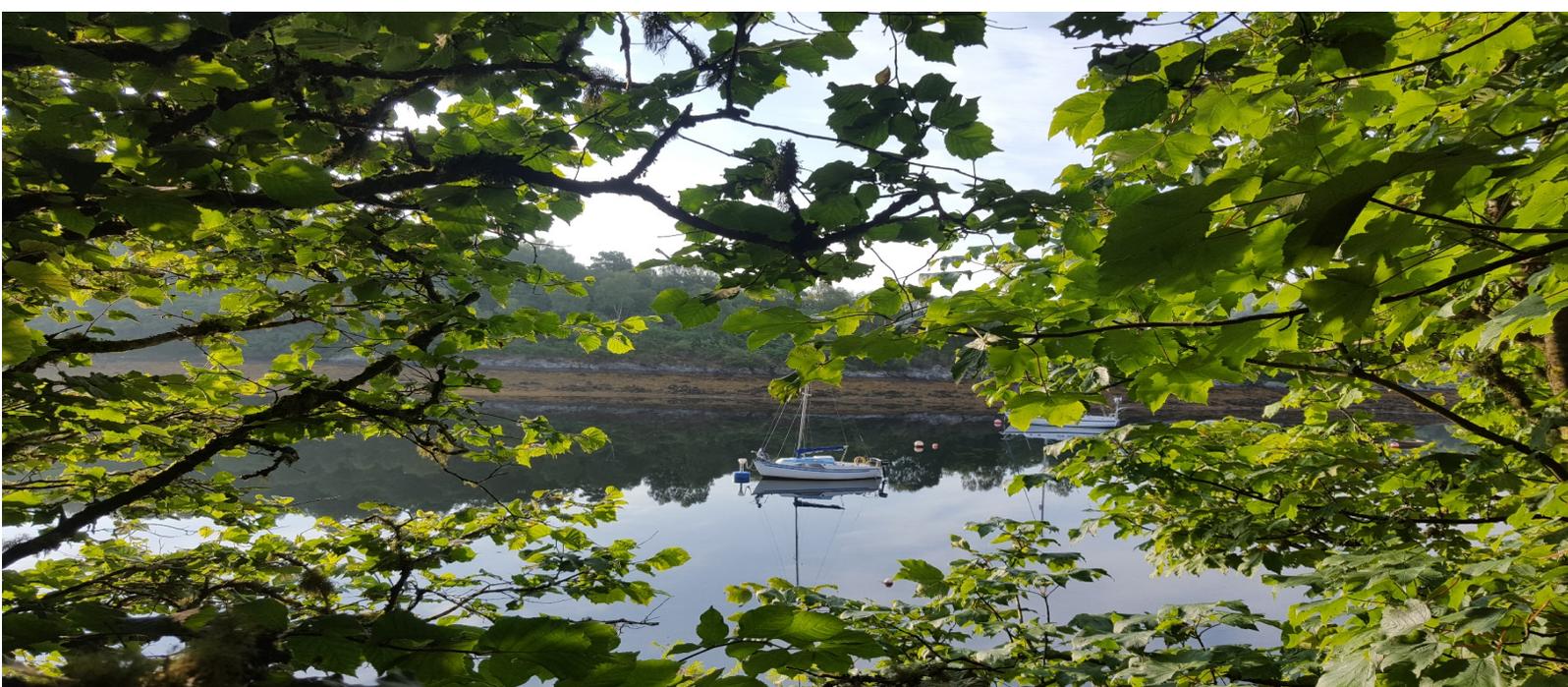
# Benchmarking 2018/2019

## Indicator 4 – Average time spent (in days)

	Family Group 1	Argyll & Bute
Stage 1	7.9	6.4
Stage 2	18.5	19.3
Escalated	20.1	15.4

## Indicator 5 – Complaints closed within timescale

	Family Group 1	Argyll & Bute
	% of Stage Total	% of Stage Total
Stage 1	61.9	66.9
Stage 2	71.0	65.1
Escalated	61.7	57.7



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

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

