

Quarterly Complaints Monitoring Report

Quarter 2 2024/25: 1 July to 30 September

This report outlines Dumfries and Galloway Council's performance for Quarter 2 in 2024/25. It provides information relating to the Council's quarterly performance in the handling of complaints against a group of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) set out by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). Regularly reporting the analysis of complaints information helps to inform management of where services need to improve.

In March 2022, the SPSO published revised KPI guidance which applies to all Local Authorities. The revised set of standardised complaints KPIs are applicable for data collected from 1 April 2022. Within the revised guidance there are four mandatory quantitative KPIs (as detailed below). It is a minimum requirement for all organisations to:

- report at least quarterly to senior management on the KPIs and analysis of the trends and outcomes of complaints
- publish on a quarterly basis information on complaints outcomes and actions taken to improve services, i.e. good practice and lessons learned
- publish an annual complaints performance report on their website that includes performance statistics in line with the KPIs, complaint trends and actions that have been taken or will be taken to improve services as a result.

Our quarterly and annual complaints monitoring reports are published on the Council website available here: <https://www.dumgal.gov.uk/complaintsprocedure>

The SPSOs Model Complaints Handling Procedure also features qualitative measures, which include a statement about learning from complaints; raising awareness among vulnerable groups; staff training and customer satisfaction, however, these are not mandatory.

The Council remains committed to listening to our customers and using customer feedback to actively change and improve the way we do things.

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Definitions:

Dumfries and Galloway Council's definition of a complaint is, 'an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more members of the public about our Council action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of our Council.'

Stages:

Stage One – complaints received and closed at Stage One (Frontline Response)

Stage Two (direct) – complaints that by-passed Stage One and went directly to Stage Two (Investigation). This could be complex complaints, complaints that relate to serious, high-risk or high profile issues or the customer refuses to engage at Stage One (Frontline Response).

Stage Two Escalated – complaints which were dealt with initially at Stage One and were subsequently escalated to Stage Two (Investigation). This is usually because the customer is dissatisfied with their Stage one response.

Outcomes:

Resolved – A complaint is resolved when both the organisation and the customer agree what action (if any) will be taken to provide full and final resolution for the customer, without making a decision about whether the complaint is upheld or not upheld

Upheld – Means the service did not reach the standard that is expected. (Something has gone wrong)

Partially Upheld - This would be used where the organisation found that there was evidence of service failure in one or more elements of the complaint, even if other parts of the complaint were not upheld

Not Upheld – Means that the service provided was of a standard that is expected.

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Key Performance Indicators

The following section details our performance against the set of standardised complaints KPIs outlined by the SPSO.

Indicator One: the total number of complaints received

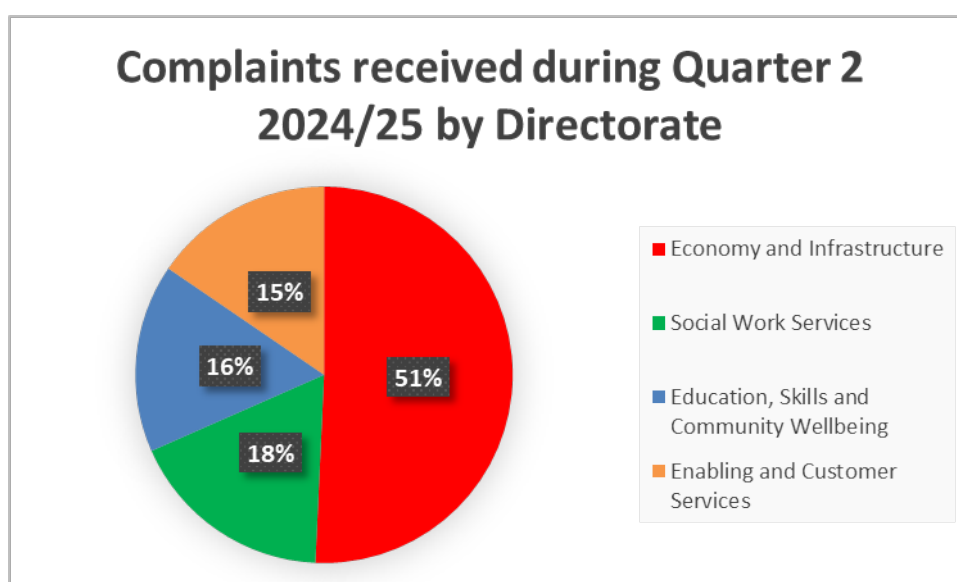
This indicator records the total number of complaints received by Dumfries and Galloway Council in the reporting period. This is the sum of the number of complaints received at Stage 1 (this includes escalated complaints, as they were first received at Stage 1), and the number of complaints received directly at Stage 2.

Description	Q2 1 July to 30 September 2024
The total number of complaints received per 1,000 population	136
Total number of complaints received	0.9

Please note: complaints received includes complaints that may have been later withdrawn or determined out of remit.

The 136 new complaints we received during Quarter 2 related to the following Directorates.

Complaints received in Quarter 2 2024/25 by Service		
Directorate	Number	Percentage
Economy and Infrastructure	69	51%
Social Work Services	24	18%
Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing	22	16%
Enabling and Customer Services	21	15%



Between 1 July to 30 September 2024, we closed 136 complaints. 93 of these were closed at Stage One (78.2%), 4 at Stage Two (3.4%) and 22 after escalation to Stage Two (18.5%). 17 complaints were later withdrawn or determined out of remit (12.5%).

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Indicator Two: the number and percentage of complaints at each stage that were closed in full within the set timescales of five and 20 working days

The CHP requires complaints to be closed within five working days at stage 1 and 20 working days at stage 2. 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 at which stage it is processed and whether any further escalation takes place).

Description	Number	Percentage
The number of complaints closed in full at Stage 1 within five working days as % of all stage 1 complaints responded to in full (Target – 80%)	78	83.9%
The number of complaints closed in full at Stage 2 within 20 working days as % of all stage 2 complaints responded to in full (Target – 80%)	0	0%
The number of complaints closed in full after escalation within 20 working days as % of all complaints responded to in full after escalation (Target – 80%)	14	63.6%

Indicator Three: the average time in working days for a full response to complaints at each stage

This indicator represents the average time in working days for a full response to complaints at each stage.

Description	Working days
The average time in working days to respond to complaints at Stage 1 (target – 5 working days)	6.0 w/d
The average time in working days to respond to complaints at Stage 2 (target – 20 working days)	41.5 w/d
The average time in working days to respond to complaints after escalation (target – 20 working days)	26.5w/d

The number and percentage of complaints at each stage where an extension to the 5 or 20 working day timeline was applied

There are times when an extension to the timescales may be necessary. Extensions must be agreed with an appropriate manager. We must keep the customer updated on the reason for the delay and give them a revised timescale for completion. This indicator outlines the number and percentage of complaints at each stage where an extension to the 5 or 20 working day timeline was applied.

Description	Number	Percentage
Number and percentage of complaints at Stage 1 where extension was applied	11	11.8%
Number and percentage of complaints at Stage 2 where extension was applied	4	100%
Number and percentage of escalated complaints where extension was applied	7	31.8%

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Of the 22 complaints where an authorised extension was applied. They were extended for the following reasons:

Reason for extension	Number of cases
Unable to obtain essential information within timescale	10
Complexity of issue(s)	5
Essential information unavailable due to long-term sick, leave or professional hearings	3
Lack of response from customer	2
School holidays	2

Indicator Four: the outcome of complaints at each stage

There is a requirement for the outcome to be recorded for each complaint. There are four outcome categories: resolved, upheld, partially upheld or not upheld. Where some of the points of complaint are upheld and others are not, this should be reported as 'partially upheld'. If a customer complains about two or more completely distinct topics, these should be treated as two or more complaints. This indicator provides information on the number of complaints which were resolved, upheld, partially upheld or not upheld at each stage as a percentage of complaints closed (*responded to*) in full at each stage.

Stage 1 Complaints upheld, partially upheld, not upheld and resolved		
Description	Number	Percentage
Number of complaints upheld at Stage 1 as % of all complaints closed at Stage 1	41	44.1%
Number of complaints not upheld at Stage 1 as % of all complaints closed at Stage 1	32	34.4%
Number of complaints partially upheld at Stage 1 as % of complaints closed at Stage 1	11	11.8%
Number of complaints resolved at Stage One as % of all complaints closed at Stage One	9	9.7%
Stage 2 Complaints upheld, partially upheld, not upheld and resolved		
Number complaints upheld at Stage Two as % of complaints closed at Stage 2	1	25.0%
Number complaints not upheld at Stage 2 as % of complaints closed at Stage 2	3	75.0%
Number complaints partially upheld at Stage 2 as % of complaints closed at Stage 2	0	0.0%
Number complaints resolved at Stage 2 as % of complaints closed at Stage 2	0	0.0%
Escalated Complaints upheld, partially upheld, not upheld and resolved		
Number of complaints upheld at Stage 2 as % of escalated complaints closed after escalation	1	4.5%
Number of complaints not upheld at Stage 2 as % of escalated complaints closed after escalation	12	54.5%
Number of complaints partially upheld at Stage 2 as % of escalated complaints closed after escalation	8	36.4%
Number escalated complaints resolved at Stage 2 as % of escalated complaints closed after escalation	1	4.5%

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Customer Satisfaction

An electronic customer satisfaction survey is sent out to all customers with their response using Microsoft Forms. From 1 July to 30 September 2024, we received 4 responses to the Complaints Customer Satisfaction Survey. Results received relies on the good will of customers taking the time to complete the survey.

Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not applicable
Information about the complaint's procedure was easily accessible	1	1			2	
I found it easy to make my complaint	1	1			2	
I was happy that staff fully understood my complaint	1	1			2	
I was given the opportunity to fully explain my complaint	1	1			2	
The points of my complaint were identified and responded to	1	1			2	
The response to my complaint was easy to understand	1	1	1		1	
Overall, I was satisfied with the handling of my complaint	1	1			2	
I was clearly told what the next stage of the complaints process was for me	1	2			1	
I was told if the response was going to take longer than the set timescales (five working days at stage 1 and 20 working days at stage 2)		1	1		1	1

Learning from Complaints

We should embrace all the feedback we receive to gain a better understanding of our customers reasons for complaining then engage with our staff on ways to improve. One of the most important aspects of the Complaints Handling Procedure is to learn from the feedback we receive from our customers. The examples below demonstrate service improvements and/or changes that have been made to Council services as a result of our learning from the key themes of complaints.

Improvement work undertaken**Economy and Infrastructure**

Following on from a complaint received regarding refuse collectors leaving household waste on a residential street. Refuse collection staff have been made aware of their responsibilities to clear any waste spillages immediately and to use the appropriate equipment located in refuse vehicles. Regular communication to staff on the topic the availability of shovels and brushes in waste collection vehicles to clean spillages to be given, using different methods such as risk assessments, safe operating procedures and toolbox talks.

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Improvement work undertaken**Economy and Infrastructure**

Following on from a complaint received regarding pavement maintenance and the location of protective barriers. Staff have been made aware to conduct weekly checks on health and safety measures put in place to ensure the integrity of the area is made safe until repairs are complete and safety measures can be removed.

Economy and Infrastructure

The investigation outcome of a complaint on an unsatisfactory response in reporting a child being hurt whilst on play equipment at a play park. Although 2023 Annual Playground Inspection Report had evaluated signage as a low risk. To avoid future incidents appropriate signage has been put in place. Periodically review audit inspection reports to ensure that lower priority risks are assessed and if appropriate reprioritised.

Enabling and Customer Services

As the result of a complaint, Business Support Services have revised its procedures for handling internal and external mail we have implemented a new procedure which has provided the service with a more efficient way of tracking mail.

Enabling and Customer Services

This complaint centred around the timescales provided to a customer for the return of information for a benefit claim. An incorrect date was used which was only 7 days after the letter was generated. This meant by the time the customer would receive the letter there were only 2 days left for them to provide the information. Following the complaint officers were asked to take more care in their letter writing particularly around dates and making sure customers are advised to provide the information as soon as possible, making sure to include the legislative time frame of 1 month.

Staff training on Complaints

The emphasis in our Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP) is on quicker, simpler and more streamlined complaints handling with local, early resolution by empowered and well-trained staff. Training that has been provided to staff to help drive improvements in performance is detailed below.

Staff training provided

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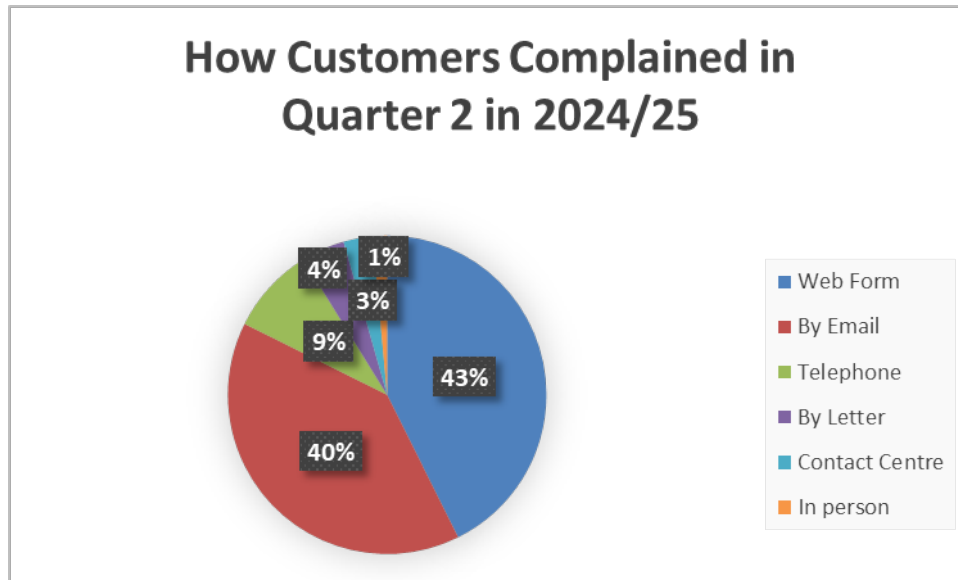
Within this quarter we have continued to work with services to update our list of Investigating Officers (IO) for the complaints process and asked them to nominate new people to attend the new SPSO Online Complaints Investigation Skills (CIS) course or identify existing IO's to undertake refresher training. This course is aimed at staff who investigate complaints at Stage 2 of the Model Council's Complaints Handling procedure (CHP). We have now broadened the pool of staff who can undertake investigations which means this workload can be better managed across services so that there is more staff who have the time and the ability as well as the right skill set to undertake such investigations when required.

Stage 2 - SPSO Complaints Investigation Skills training course – The Information Governance Team (IGT) have been coordinating the booking of this training for services and in this reporting period **nine** Officers have completed this online training.

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How customers have complained

In Quarter 2 of 2024/25, of the 136 complaints we received, customers chose the following ways to contact us with their complaint. Within Quarter 2 we seen customer use of the online webform is the most common way to contact us with their complaint, closely followed by email.

**Complaints received by topic**

We have developed a list of 'topics' which complaint handlers are prompted to select from when the details of a new complaint are recorded within Respond. This classification allows us to run reports about a specific topic area and identify the type of complaints received and identify any trends.

Between 1 July to 30 September 2024, the most common customer complaints related to the following topic areas.

Topic	Number of complaints
Inadequate or poor standard of service delivery	19
Professionalism of Staff	12
Waste Collection	7
Communication	5
Road Condition/Road Maintenance	5
Behaviour/Bullying (Schools)	4
Children and Families Social Work	4
Drains	4
Failure to follow policy or procedure	4
Parks and Open Spaces	4
Planning	4
Road Works and Road Closures, Road Works and Road Closures	4

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Complaint type

Type	Number of complaints
Inadequate quality or standard of service, or an unreasonable delay in providing a service	58
Dissatisfaction with one of our policies or its impact on the individual	21
Conduct, treatment by or attitude of member of staff or contractor	19
Disagreement with a decision	8
Failure to properly apply law procedure or guidance when delivering services	6
Failure to respond to correspondence/telephone call	5
Accuracy of Information	4
Failure or refusal to provide a service	4
Other	2
Failure to follow the appropriate administrative process	1
blank	8

Compliments

Although there is no statutory requirement to report on compliments as the positive feedback that customers provide to us in terms of their satisfaction with aspects of work by staff, the report includes information about the number of compliments received across the Council.

Compliments are expressions of praise, encouragement or gratitude about services provided or managed by the Council and present valuable feedback about the level of satisfaction with service delivery, highlighting:

- valuable indicators of the effectiveness of a service
- useful insights about the aspects of service most meaningful to customers
- examples of good practice which can be shared throughout the Council
- an opportunity to recognise the efforts of staff
- acknowledgements of excellence to boost morale.

Staff acknowledge compliments and thank customers for their feedback. Where possible, customers are informed how the feedback will be used and assured that it will be passed on to the relevant staff members.

The Council recorded 25 Compliments during Quarter 2 of 2024/25.

Compliments received in Quarter 4 of 2023/24 by Directorate		
Service	Number	Percentage
Economy and Infrastructure	12	48%
Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing	9	36%
Enabling and Customer Services	4	16%
Social Work Services	0	0%

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One of the recurring themes of the compliments received in Quarter 2 of 2024/25 was around Professionalism of Staff.

Here is what customers had to say about our staff:

"I was at Lochar Moss dumping household waste with my son. The guy (don't know his name - sorry) working was an absolute star. He was so helpful and friendly - couldn't thank him enough. A total ambassador for his service."

"My daughter attended DG1 Leisure Complex for her first ever swimming lesson. She suffers from nerves and anxiety when dealing with new circumstances and was very nervous before going in to the pool, however xxx was her teacher and she was amazing with her, immediately putting her mind at ease and delivering an excellent lesson. My daughter really enjoyed it and is already keen to come back next week. Please pass on my thanks and praise to xxx and also special mention to xxx for her role in organising and helping getting her settled. Good job all round by the team!"

"Please pass on my thanks to this week's Maxwelltown Station Road road sweeper and today's female Caddy collector. In my view both demonstrate the very best in Front Line public service. They show a pride in doing a good job rather than just completing a job. The driver of the sweeper is precise and diligent. The Caddy lady makes sure the empty containers are returned to properties without blocking pathways - she is tidy and gentle with Council property. Others just SLING them anywhere."

"Please can xxx manager acknowledge xxx kindness. He very kindly spent 10 minutes sorting out a problem with a bulky waste collection. Stupid me hadn't actually paid for it doh!! He couldn't have been more helpful."

"Over the last few weeks I have been observing xxx preparing pavements, digging trenches, laying piping, laying hardcore etc for new street lighting. These men's work is very professional. They work extremely hard, they are very courteous and keep everyone informed of progress or next step in work to be done. Each section is brushed and cleaned up when work completed. I have spoken to thank these guys, but felt strongly that a good job should be recognised. Well done lads."

"...we just wanted to extend our thanks for your hospitality during our recent funding Roadshow last week. A big thank you to the facilities staff to helping us fit the tables and the rearranging that was needed. Please do extend our thanks to each member of the team for helping to make the event such a success! Many thanks again for all of your help."