

## **Quarterly Complaints Monitoring Report**

### **Quarter 3 2024/25: 1 October to 31 December**

This report outlines Dumfries and Galloway Council's performance for Quarter 3 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.

## Dumfries and Galloway Council Quarterly Complaints Monitoring Report

**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.

## Dumfries and Galloway Council Quarterly Complaints Monitoring Report

## 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

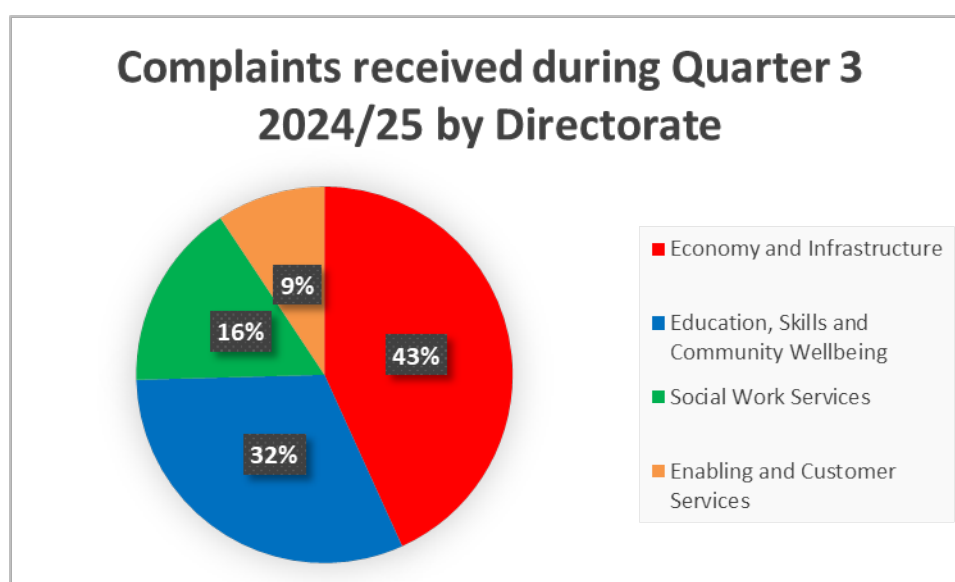
This indicator records the total number of complaints received by Dumfries and Galloway Council in the reporting period. This is the sum of the number of complaints received at Stage 1 (this includes escalated complaints, as they were first received at Stage 1), and the number of complaints received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

Description	Q3 1 October to 31 December 2024
The total number of complaints received per 1,000 population	0.8
Total number of complaints received	<b>118</b>

**Please note: complaints received includes complaints that may have been later withdrawn or determined out of remit.**

The 118 new complaints we received during Quarter 3 related to the following Directorates.

Complaints received in Quarter 3 2024/25 by Service		
Directorate	Number	Percentage
Economy and Infrastructure	51	43%
Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing	37	32%
Social Work Services	19	16%
Enabling and Customer Services	11	9%



Between 1 October to 31 December 2024, we closed 106 complaints. 77 of these were closed at Stage One (72.6%), 10 at Stage Two (9.4%) and 19 after escalation to Stage Two (19%).

## Dumfries and Galloway Council Quarterly Complaints Monitoring Report

**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%)	63	81.8%
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%)	3	30.0%
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%)	16	84.2%

**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)	5.0 w/d
The average time in working days to respond to complaints at Stage 2 (target – 20 working days)	34.4 w/d
The average time in working days to respond to complaints after escalation (target – 20 working days)	18.3 w/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	12	15.6%
Number and percentage of complaints at Stage 2 where extension was applied	6	60.0%
Number and percentage of escalated complaints where extension was applied	1	5.3%

## Dumfries and Galloway Council Quarterly Complaints Monitoring Report

Of the 19 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
Essential information unavailable due to long-term sick, leave or professional hearings	3
School holidays	2
Lack of response from customer	1
Meeting with customer	1
Complexity of issue(s)	1
Alternative resolution action in progress as agreed with customer	1

One of the key principles that under pins an effective complaints procedure and is the foundation for our CHP is simple and timely. The quality and thoroughness of investigation should not be compromised by attempts to meet timescales. Where timescales cannot legitimately be adhered to, we keep complainants informed, reasons explained to them, and they are told how long their complaint will take.

#### 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 <b>upheld</b> at Stage 1 as % of all complaints closed at Stage 1	26	33.8%
Number of complaints <b>not upheld</b> at Stage 1 as % of all complaints closed at Stage 1	22	28.6%
Number of complaints <b>partially upheld</b> at Stage 1 as % of complaints closed at Stage 1	18	23.4%
Number of complaints <b>resolved</b> at Stage One as % of all complaints closed at Stage One	11	14.3%
Stage 2 Complaints upheld, partially upheld, not upheld and resolved		
Number complaints <b>upheld</b> at Stage Two as % of complaints closed at Stage 2	0	0.0%
Number complaints <b>not upheld</b> at Stage 2 as % of complaints closed at Stage 2	6	60.0%
Number complaints <b>partially upheld</b> at Stage 2 as % of complaints closed at Stage 2	4	40.0%
Number complaints <b>resolved</b> 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 <b>upheld</b> at Stage 2 as % of escalated complaints closed	2	10.5%

## Dumfries and Galloway Council Quarterly Complaints Monitoring Report

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**Stage 1 Complaints upheld, partially upheld, not upheld and resolved**

Description	Number	Percentage
after escalation		
Number of complaints <b>not upheld</b> at Stage 2 as % of escalated complaints closed after escalation	9	47.4%
Number of complaints <b>partially upheld</b> at Stage 2 as % of escalated complaints closed after escalation	6	31.6%
Number escalated complaints <b>resolved</b> at Stage 2 as % of escalated complaints closed after escalation	2	10.5%

**Customer Satisfaction**

An electronic customer satisfaction survey is sent out to all customers with their response using Microsoft Forms. From 1 October to 31 December 2024, we received 6 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 I found it easy to make my complaint	1	1	2	1	1	
I was happy that staff fully understood my complaint	1		1	3	1	
I was given the opportunity to fully explain my complaint		1		2	3	
The points of my complaint were identified and responded to	1			2	3	
The response to my complaint was easy to understand	1			3	2	
Overall, I was satisfied with the handling of my complaint	1			3	2	
I was clearly told what the next stage of the complaints process was for me	1	1		4		

## Dumfries and Galloway Council Quarterly Complaints Monitoring Report

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	2	1
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**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 dustbins not being returned to the location they were collected. Staff have been reminded of their responsibilities, collection procedure and responsibility to our customers. Regular communication on staff responsibilities when collecting bins and returning bins to be given, using different methods such as risk assessments, safe operating procedures and toolbox talks.

**Economy and Infrastructure**

The investigation outcome of a complaint regarding the tone of correspondence received. A more constructive approach in communication has been brought to the attention of the team leader. Staff have been reminded of the process for processing building warrants. Any correspondence follows the standard process and is reviewed before it is submitted.

**Enabling and Customer Services**

This complaint centred around information received indicating the sale of a farm. We incorrectly assumed the sale included this property and amended the account. Following the complaint the procedure for checking the properties included in farm sales was strengthened to ensure only the properties included in the sale are apportioned.

**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**

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

## Dumfries and Galloway Council Quarterly Complaints Monitoring Report

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**Staff training provided**

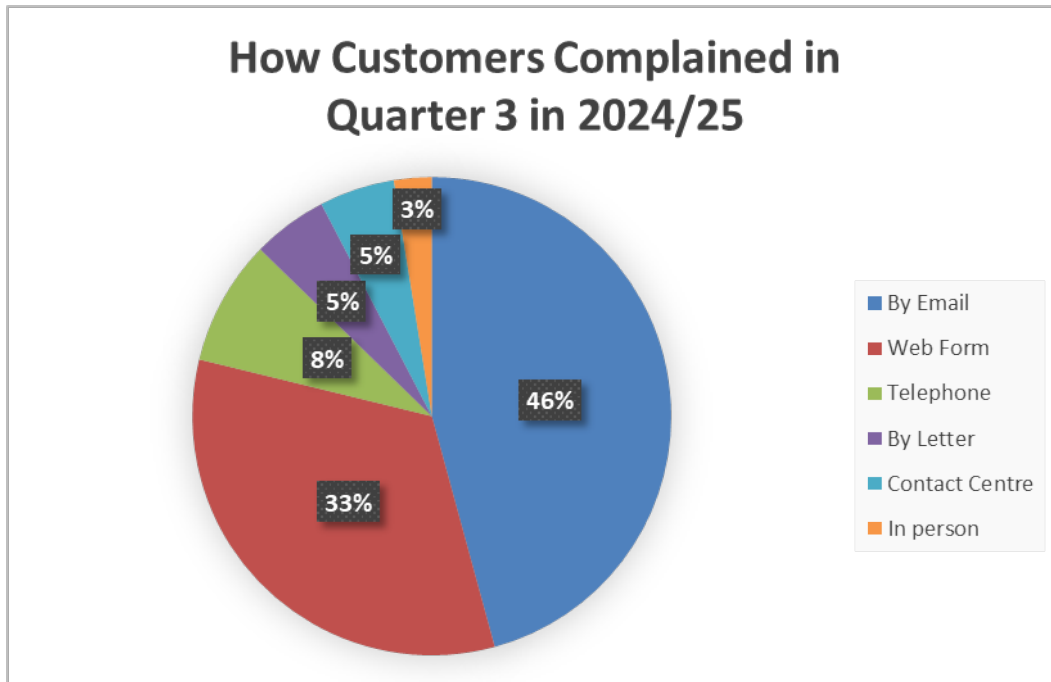
the Model Council's Complaints Handling procedure (CHP). We have now broadened the pool of staff who can undertake investigations which means this workload can be better managed across services so that there is more staff who have the time and the ability as well as the right skill set to undertake such 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 **eight** Officers have completed this online training.

## Dumfries and Galloway Council Quarterly Complaints Monitoring Report

**How customers have complained**

In Quarter 3 of 2024/25, of the 118 complaints we received, customers chose the following ways to contact us with their complaint. Within Quarter 3 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 October to 31 December 2024, the most common customer complaints related to the following topic areas.

Topic	Number of complaints
Behaviour/Bullying (Schools)	12
Professionalism of Staff	12
Inadequate or poor standard of service delivery	11
Communication	7
Road Condition/Road Maintenance	6
Waste Collection	6
Drains	5
Children and Families Social Work	4
Council Tax	4

## Dumfries and Galloway Council Quarterly Complaints Monitoring Report

## Complaint type

Type	Number of complaints
Inadequate quality or standard of service, or an unreasonable delay in providing a service	47
Dissatisfaction with one of our policies or its impact on the individual	22
Conduct, treatment by or attitude of member of staff or contractor	15
Disagreement with a decision	7
Failure to properly apply law procedure or guidance when delivering services	5
Failure to respond to correspondence/telephone call	14
Accuracy of Information	2
Failure or refusal to provide a service	3
Lack of information	3

## 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 27 Compliments during Quarter 3 of 2024/25.

Compliments received in Quarter 3 of 2024/25 by Directorate		
Service	Number	Percentage
Economy and Infrastructure	12	45%
Education, Skills and Community Wellbeing	7	26%
Enabling and Customer Services	6	22%
Social Work Services	2	7%

One of the recurring themes of the compliments received in Quarter 3 of 2024/25 was around Professionalism of Staff.

## Dumfries and Galloway Council Quarterly Complaints Monitoring Report

Here is what customers had to say about our staff:

*"We do not have the internet, so we rely on the use of the 030 33 33 3000 telephone number. We hope we are contacting the correct person. The service that is provided by Dumfries and Galloway Council we cannot fault. The people that answer the calls are always very helpful, patient, polite and understanding so we want to commend them for the service that they provide. So, on behalf of us please pass on our thanks to all the team members as they deserve to be commended."*

*"I just wanted to record that I phoned yesterday to amend council tax for my mum's property as she has recently moved .....*

*Despite the fact I had to wait quite a time for my call to council tax to be answered, the wait was worth it when the call was answered by the super-efficient and very kind xxx.*

*Huge praise to her for how she dealt with my queries, it's been a difficult time for me recently and she was so kind. Very much appreciated. And of course, I now realise why the phone took time to be answered as my query took time. First class member of staff!!"*

*"There is a tall gentleman with a long beard who works for the Council and cleans the streets in Dalbeattie. Credit where it is due, he does an outstanding job!"*

*"He wanted to let the Blue Badge Team know he appreciates the fantastic service from you. The application for xxx was only sent in last Tuesday and xxx received his Blue Badge today and he is impressed with the quick turnover and thinks Blue Badge Team did a great job."*

*"This morning xxx, xxx put out the wrong bin for collection. The waste crew drove past her home, turned the vehicle around and came back. The man on the lorry got out of the vehicle, came up her drive and asked if she wanted him to take the correct bin out for her. She would like to thank this gentleman for his kindness and service."*