
NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

15 November 2022

Audit and Scrutiny Committee

Title: 2021/22 Complaint Report

Purpose: To inform the Audit and Scrutiny Committee of the Council's complaint performance and the volumes and trends of complaints received in Financial Year 2021/22.

Recommendation: That the Committee notes the report and the information provided.

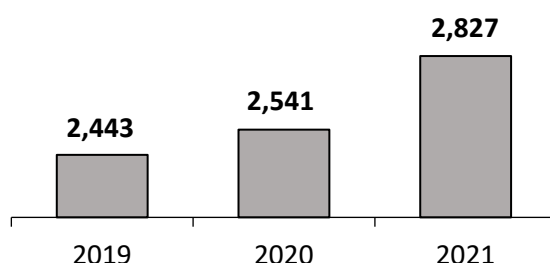
1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report details complaint information relating to North Ayrshire Council during 2021/22, covering the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022.
- 1.2 To allow comparisons to be made the report also details some complaint data relating to 2019 and 2020.
- 1.3 Performance is measured through a number of Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) performance indicators, some of which have national targets. Reporting on complaints is a statutory requirement and is monitored by Audit & Scrutiny.
- 1.4 When considering the report it should be noted that the coronavirus pandemic continued to cause disruption to the Council, however, services continued to operate and critical and key services were maintained.

2. Background

- 2.1 This section contains statistical information and commentary on some of the key complaint performance indicators. More information relating to the indicators can be found in the attached report.

2.2 *Volume of complaints received and closed*



2.2.1 Whilst Council services continued to be impacted by the pandemic during 2021, there was a modest increase in complaints when compared with the previous year.

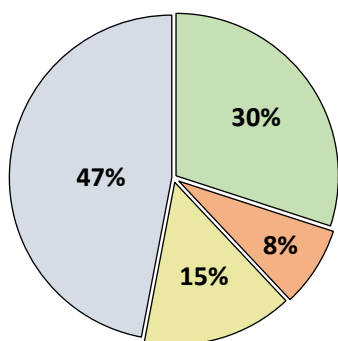
2.3 *Complaints closed at each Stage*

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Stage One	2,302	2,417	2,671
Stage Two	141	124	156

2.3.1 Whilst there is no national target for the number of complaints to be closed under each Stage, the Council always seeks to maximise closure at Stage One as complainants receive a quicker resolution, it reduces the impact on complaint handler time and reduces the possibility of SPSO referrals.

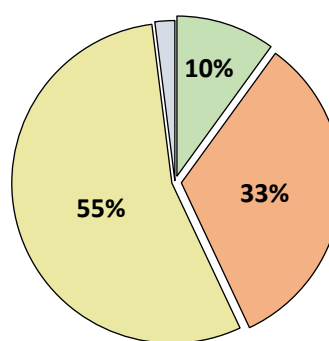
2.4 *Complaint outcomes*

Stage One



■ Upheld ■ Partially Upheld ■ Not Upheld ■ Resolved

Stage Two



■ Upheld ■ Partially Upheld ■ Not Upheld ■ Resolved (2%)

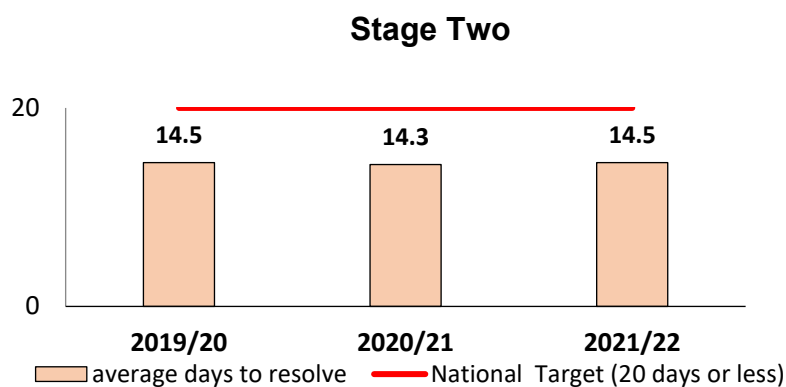
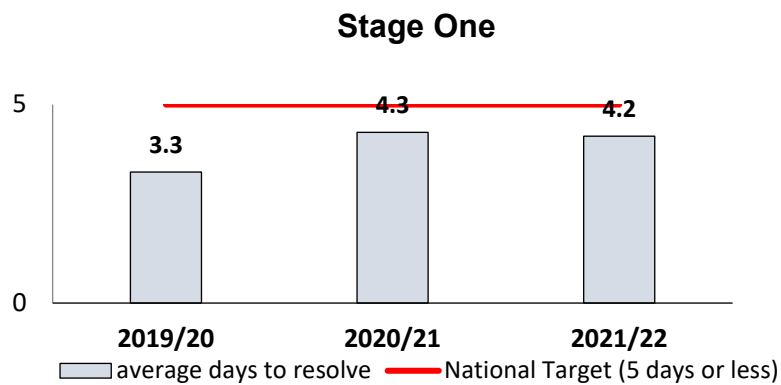
2.4.1 Up to 31 March 2021, a complaint that meets our complaint criteria could be upheld, partially upheld or not upheld. From 1 April 2021 a fourth outcome became available to use called 'Resolved'. Resolved complaints are where the Council has taken action to address a problem or issue without making a decision on whether there were any failings (this would happen where we agree a solution with the complainant at the outset without needing to actually investigate the complaint).

2.4.2 Analysis shows the majority of Resolved complaints related to missed bin collections, where complainants simply wanted the bins collected.

2.4.3 Half of all upheld and partially upheld complaints also related to Waste Services, however it should be noted over 102,000 household waste bins are collected each week. As this equates to approximately 5 million collections a year, from a complaint perspective this results in a small percentage complaint rate of 0.03%.

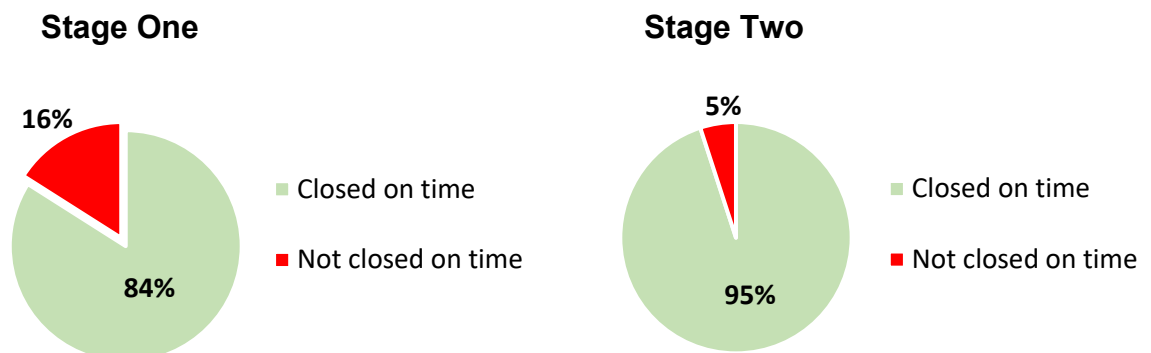
2.4.4 Many complaints not upheld related to policies, regulations or complaints that turned out to be unfounded after investigation.

2.5 *Average time in working days for a full response at each Stage*



2.5.1 The average time in working days for a response under both Stages has exceeded the SPSO target response timescales for the last three years.

2.6 *Complaints closed within timescale*



2.6.1 The national target for complaints closed on time under Stage One is 80% or above and the target was exceeded. The national target for complaints closed on time under Stage Two is 85% or above and again this target was exceeded.

2.6.2 Further details of complaints not closed on time are contained in the attached report.

2.7 Complaint timescale extensions

2.7.1 Stage One complaints should be responded to within 5 working days but can be extended an additional 5 working days under certain circumstances. Stage Two complaints should be responded to within 20 working days but again Services can extend the timescale if certain circumstances are met.

2.7.2 A total of 106 complaints had their timescales extended during the year and over two thirds were Stage Ones. Reasons for extension included complainants and individuals being unavailable to assist with investigations, additional information having to be sought to support investigations and issues arising from the ongoing Covid-19 outbreak.

2.8 Trends identified from upheld/partially upheld complaints

Key complaint topics for upheld or partially upheld complaints are detailed on page 9 and 10 of the attached report.

2.9 Changes or Improvements made as a result of complaints

Not all Services can implement improvements as a result of complaints due to a number of factors, including the feasibility of making changes and resource/budget considerations. That said, improvements were made in some Services as a result of complaints received during the year and a selection are noted in page 15 of the attached report.

2.10 Compliments

The Council recorded over 240 compliments received during the year. Some praised specific individuals or teams, some related to more than one Service and some were raised by employees complimenting other employees. A selection can be found in page 16 of the attached report.

3. Proposals

3.1 It is proposed the Committee approves the report and now the Council's complaint handling performance.

4. Implications/Socio-economic Duty

Financial

4.1 None.

Human Resources

4.2 None.

Legal

4.3 None.

Equality/Socio-economic

4.4 None.

Climate Change and Carbon

4.5 None.

Key Priorities

4.6 The Two Stage Complaint Handling Procedure supports the Council's key priority of delivering more effective and efficient service provision. It demonstrates commitment through focussing on and determining trends to service improvement and delivery for North Ayrshire residents, customers and visitors.

Community Wealth Building

4.7 None.

5. Consultation

5.1 None.

Aileen Craig
Head of Democratic Services

For further information please contact **Darren Millar, Manager Information Governance**, on **(01294) 322988**.

Background Papers

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Corporate Complaints 2021/22



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Introduction

North Ayrshire Council always seeks to deliver the best services possible to its customers and residents but it is recognised that dissatisfaction will sometimes occur. When it does we want to know what went wrong, why it went wrong and what we can do to make things right.

The Council recognises valuable lessons can be learnt from complaints which are defined as expressions of dissatisfaction from members of the public about actions, or lack of actions, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of the Council.

The Council's complaint handling procedure (CHP) has two stages for handling complaints from the public:-

1

Stage One complaints (also known as *Frontline Resolution* complaints) are straightforward, non-complex complaints the Council can resolve at the initial point of contact or as close to the point of service delivery as possible. The Council has up to 5 working days to resolve these.

2

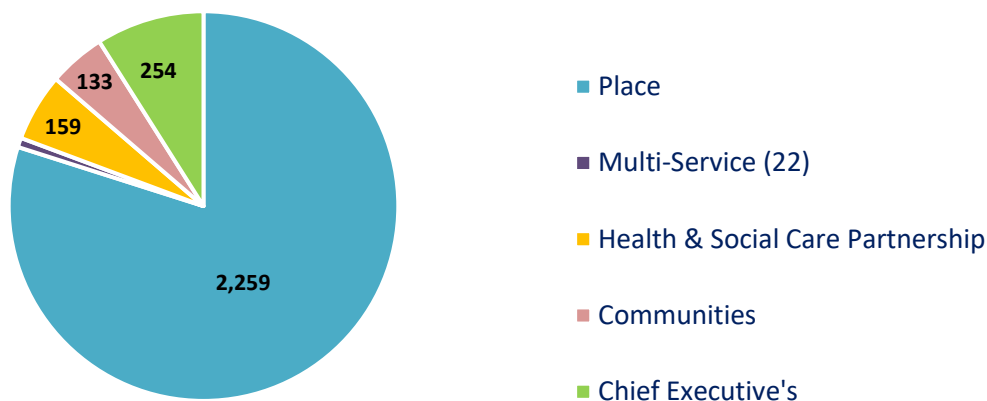
Stage Two complaints (also known as *Investigation* complaints) are complaints the Council is typically unable to resolve at Stage One and requires more time to carry out further investigation. This may be because the nature of the complaint is complex, serious or high risk. The Council has up to 20 working days to resolve these.

This report details the Council's complaint handling performance covering financial year 2021 (1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022). Performance is measured via several Scottish Public Services Ombudsman indicators (some of which have national targets) and complaint data relating to previous years has been included in certain sections to allow comparisons to be made.

Reporting on complaints is a statutory requirement and is monitored by Audit Scotland.

1 Volume of complaints closed

The Council received 2,859 complaints during 2021/22 and closed 2,827. The chart below provides a breakdown of the closed complaints per Directorate:



The following tables highlight complaints closed per Directorate under each Stage:

Place	Stage One	Stage Two
Building Services	208	4
Business Development	-	1
Facilities Management	27	-
Housing	166	25
Planning	5	2
Property Management & Investment	74	4
Protective Services	9	1
Regeneration	2	-
Roads	88	6
Streetscene	129	1
Sustainability	2	-
Transport	2	-
Waste Services	1,498	5
Total	2,210	49

Multi-Service	Stage One	Stage Two
Complaints involving more than one service	11	11
Total	11	11

Health & Social Care Partnership	Stage One	Stage Two
Children, Families & Criminal Justice	31	23
Health & Community Care	65	24
Mental Health	3	4
Support Services	6	3
Total	105	54

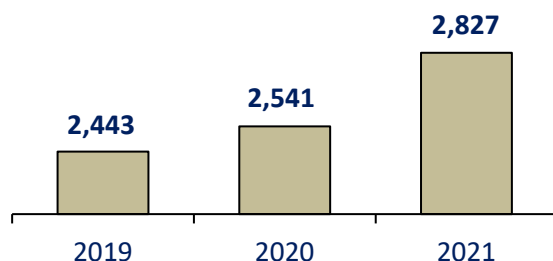
Communities	Stage One	Stage Two
Community Facilities	2	-
Education (HQ)	31	24
Education (Schools)	60	9
Information & Culture	6	-
Sports & Activity	1	-
Total	100	33

Chief Executive's	Stage One	Stage Two
Committee & Member Services	-	1
Customer Services	204	7
Financial Services	14	-
Fraud & Internal Audit	1	-
HR	1	-
Information Technology	20	-
Legal Services	5	1
Total	245	9

- Although there is no target for the volume of complaints handled under each Stage, the Council seeks to maximise closure at Stage One wherever possible and 94% were handled at this Stage during the period.
- Some Services handled all their complaints at Stage One.
- Whilst 53% of all complaints received related to Waste Services (the majority being missed bins and assisted pullouts), the Service empties over 102,000 household waste bins each week. As this equates to approximately 4.9 million collections over the year, 0.03% of these collections resulted in complaints being raised. This is worth highlighting given Waste Services experienced significant operational challenges due to the Covid pandemic during the year and was still able to maintain a bin collection service.
- Multi-Service complaints have a table of their own as they are not attributable to a specific Service.

Year on Year comparison

The graph below shows a comparison of the volume of complaints received each year over the last three years:



The table below shows the volume breakdown for each Directorate over the last three years (based on the Council's new 2020 structure):

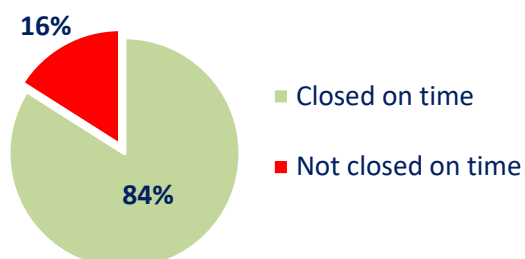
Directorate	2019	2020	2021	Variance (2020 – 2021)
Chief Executive's	188	176	254	+44%
Communities	136	90	133	+48%
HSCP (Social Work complaints)	125	127	159	+25%
Place	1,978	2,128	2,259	+6%
Total	2,427*	2,521*	2,805*	+11%

*Multi-service complaints have been excluded to allow for true Directorate comparisons

- Whilst the Council maintained various measures, policies, processes and practices to combat the ongoing pandemic during 2021/22, there has only been an 11% increase in complaints when comparing 2021 with the previous year.
- The 44% uplift in Chief Executive complaints can be attributed to increases in Customer Services, IT and Finance complaints. Key complaint topics are detailed in section 4 of this report.
- The 48% increase in Communities complaints is the result of a considerable uplift in school-related complaints received. Key complaint topics are detailed in section 4 of this report.

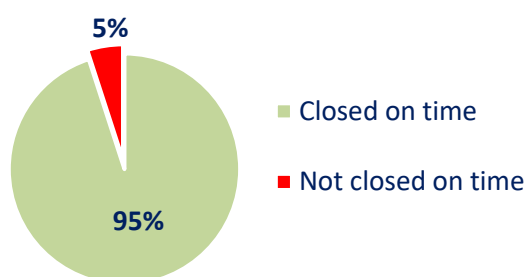
2 Volume of complaints closed on time at both Stages

Stage One



- The national target for closing Stage One complaints on time is 80% and above.
- The volume closed on time includes extended complaints that met their new due dates.

Stage Two



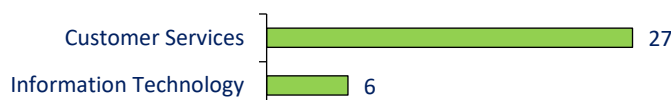
- The national target for closing Stage Two complaints on time is 85% and above.
- The volume closed on time includes extended complaints that met their new due dates.

3 Volume of complaints not closed on time per Directorate

This section provides details of complaints not closed on time under each Stage and includes extended complaints that did not meet their new timescales.

Stage One

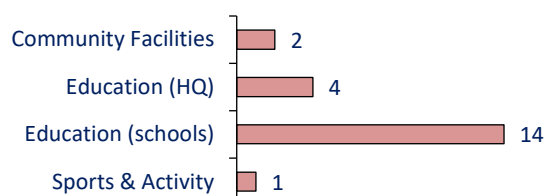
Chief Executive's



Notes

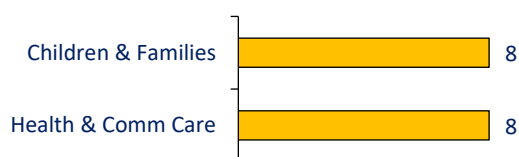
Customer Services complaints breached mainly due to resourcing issues (including self-isolations) and delays in obtaining information from complainants/3rd parties to progress complaints. Extensions could have been considered for around 70% of these given they were closed within the extra 5 working day extension allowance. IT complaints breached due to the complexity of the system(s) issues, awaiting further information from complainants and complaints being incorrectly routed. Extensions could have been considered for 50% of these for the same reason given above.

Communities



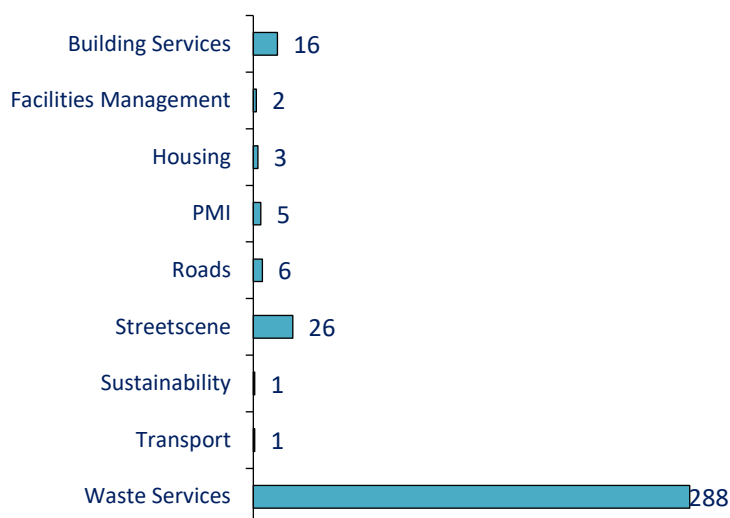
Some complaints breached due to complaint handlers being unable to contact complainants in order to discuss or agree the issues. Some Education complaints also breached as they were received when the schools were closed. Extensions could have been agreed for 60% of all Communities complaints not closed on time given they were closed within the extra 5 working day extension allowance.

HSCP (Social Work complaints)



These complaints breached due to multiple reasons and no specific trends were identified, however, extensions could have been considered for some of these given they were closed within the extra 5 working day extension allowance.

Place



Reasons for complaints not closed on time included complaint handlers being unavailable to progress complaints for various reasons, complainants/3rd parties being unavailable to assist with investigations, resourcing issues related to Covid-19 and the complexity of the complaints.

Of the 348 Place complaints not closed on time, 64% could have been considered for the extra 5 working day extension given they were closed within 10 working days.

Regarding the volume of Waste complaints that did not meet timescale, see additional commentary below.

Waste Services (operations) complaints in 2021/22

Waste Operations continued to operate under Covid-related restrictions for the full period of 2021/22 and additional labour was carried throughout the year to ensure vehicles could be resourced. Additional vehicle hires were also extended throughout 2021/22 as availability of vehicles became a pinch point causing operational disruption and service disruption.

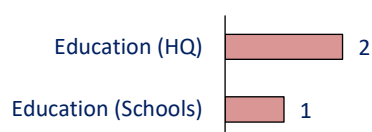
The impact of Covid was seasonal with waves of absences following the general trends seen in the wider community. There was a particular peak as the omicron variant became prevalent from the festive period into the second half of the winter. At one point a suspension of the brown bin service was necessary in January as the omicron surge peaked.

The service had to make operational decisions to prioritise resourcing beats unfortunately at the expense of bin deliveries. A focus has been undertaken to ensure priority is given to any complaints relating to assisted collections.

When reviewing the complaint data for Waste Service, particularly Waste Operations, it is evident that despite significant operational challenges, the majority of bin collections took place without issue.

Stage Two

Communities



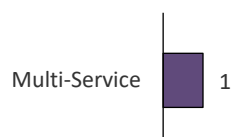
These complaints were sensitive in nature and required detailed investigation. Extensions could have been considered for these.

HSCP (Social Work complaints)



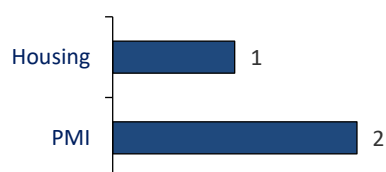
This complaint breached due to service pressures caused by resourcing issues as a result of the pandemic.

Multi-Service



This complaint breached by one day as approval was required from a Chief Officer before the response could be issued.

Place



These complaints breached due to delays in the Stage Two response letters being approved prior to issue.

4 Key complaint topics

Key topics for upheld and partially upheld complaints for Services are listed below. Services will not be listed if there were low complaint volumes that did not allow meaningful analysis.

Chief Executive's

Service	Key complaint topic(s)
Customer Services	• Issues with Council Tax
	• Communication
	• System issues
	• Waiting times
Information Technology	• Systems issues

Communities

Service	Key complaint topic(s)
Education (HQ)	• Sensitive issues relating to teachers and/or pupils
	• Service provision/delivery

HSCP (Social Work complaints)

Service	Key complaint topic(s)
Children & Families	• Service provision/delivery
	• Alleged employee behaviour
Health & Community Care	• Service provision/delivery
	• Alleged employee behaviour

Place

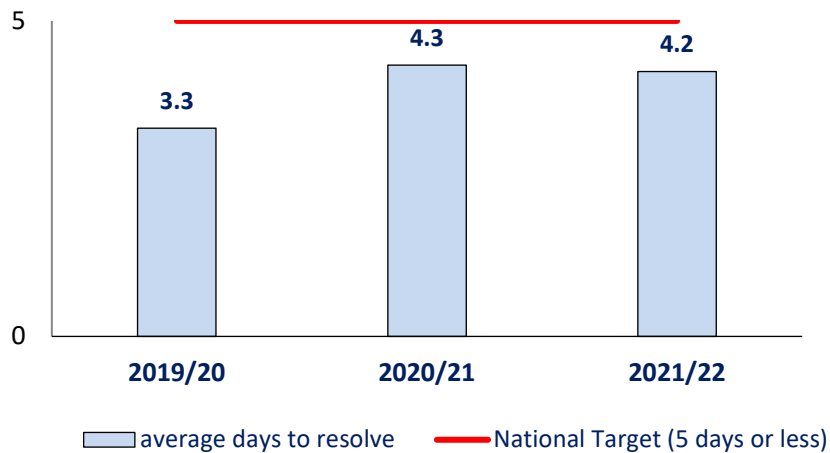
Service	Key complaint topic(s)
Building Services	• Follow Up appointments
	• Quality issues
Housing	• Anti-social behaviour
PMI	• Gas Central Heating (incl. maintenance)
Roads	• Road conditions
Streetscene	• Quality/lack of grass cutting
Waste Services	• Missed collections (all colours)
	• Missed pull out collections (all colours)
	• Waste Bins not delivered (all colours)
	• Failed special uplifts
	• Alleged employee behaviour

- 'Alleged employee behaviour' appears as a key topic for some Services but the definition is broad and has been used where complainants perceived employee actions or behaviour to be unacceptable. Where unacceptable behaviour was identified by Services appropriate action will have been taken to address.

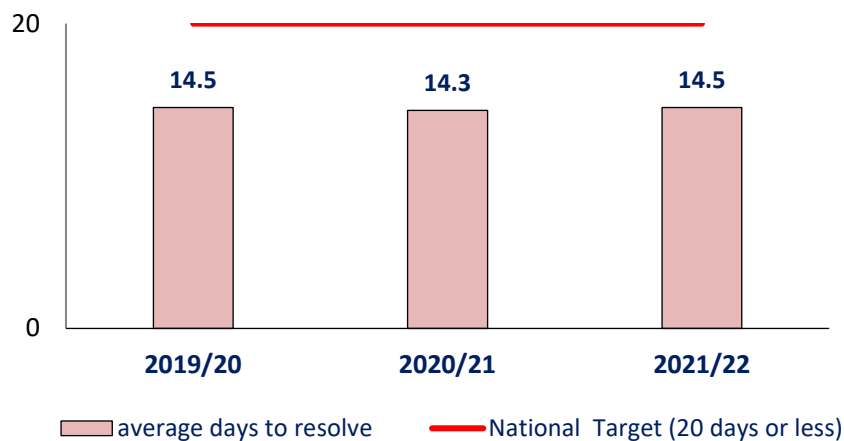
5 Average time in working days for a full response

The average time in working days to close complaints under both Stages during the period is noted below. Values for previous years have been included to allow comparisons to be made and any complaints that had their timescales extended have been excluded from the calculations.

Stage One



Stage Two

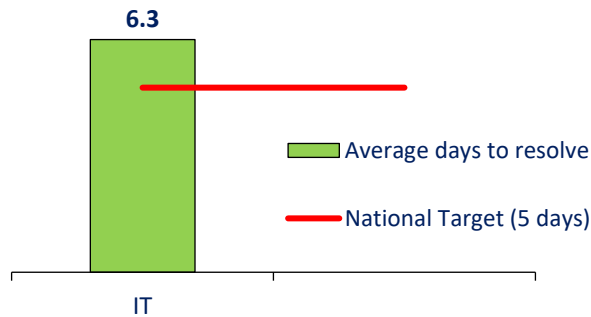


- The average time to close complaints under both Stages has consistently exceeded target.

The bar charts on the following two pages detail Services that did not meet the average time in working days for a response under either Stage. Services that met the target are not listed and any complaints that had their timescales extended have been excluded from the calculations.

Chief Executive's

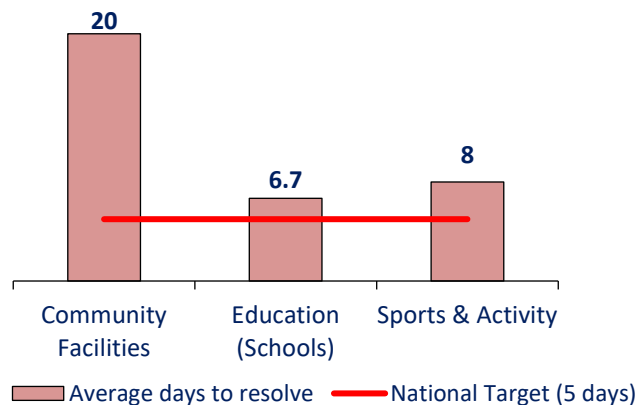
Stage One



Two IT complaints that were received were resolved beyond 20 working days, resulting in the average days to resolve target not being achieved. One complaint was hindered due to the delay caused by the complainant not providing further information. The other complaint involved a number of services and delays were encountered in receiving their responses in order to address and fix the issue.

Communities

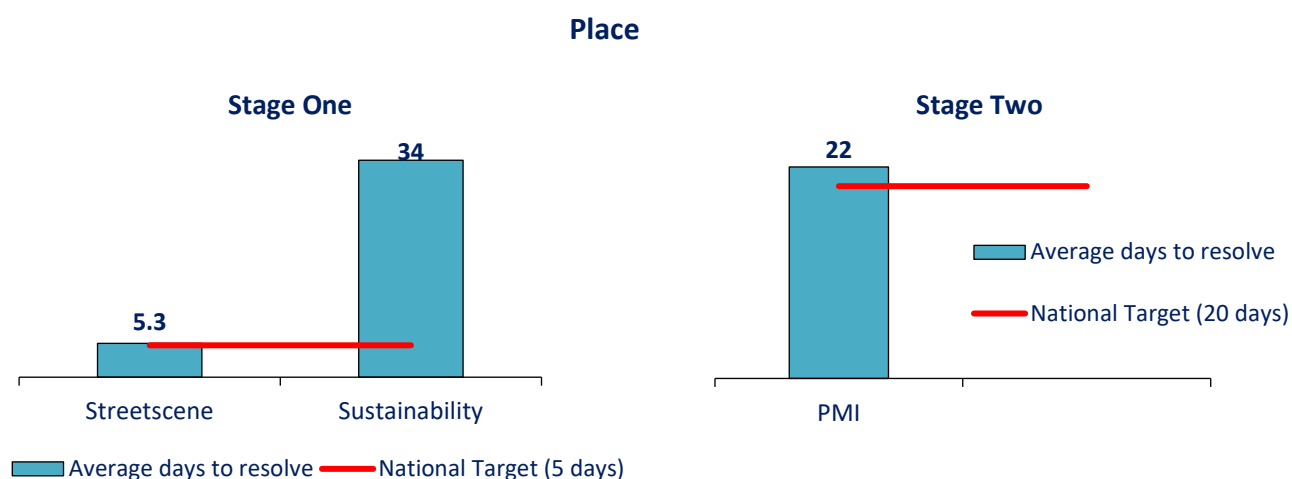
Stage One



Two complaints were received for Community Facilities and one was closed significantly beyond the 5 working day target due to resourcing issues in the service and delays encountered when engaging the relevant community group to assist in investigating the complaint.

A small number of school complaints were closed significantly beyond the 5 working day target as they had been received when the schools were closed for the summer holidays and so could not be progressed.

One Sports & Activity complaint was received and closed on day 8, breaching the target. This complaint could have been considered for the 5 working day extension.



A small number of Streetscene complaints were closed significantly beyond the 5 working day timescale, impacting on the average days to close. Reasons for this included difficulties in contacting complainants to progress complaints and the complexities of the complaints. Some of these complaints could have been considered at Stage Two.

Energy & Sustainability received two complaints during the year, one of which was closed on working day 64. The delay was due to multiple issues, including bereavement leave, issues with the complaint being directed to the appropriate team to investigate and a breakdown in communication between services involved.

PMI closed a small number of Stage Two complaints during the year, two of which were closed a few days beyond the 20 working day timescale. The delay in closing the complaints was due to the response requiring approval before being issued.

6 Extended complaints

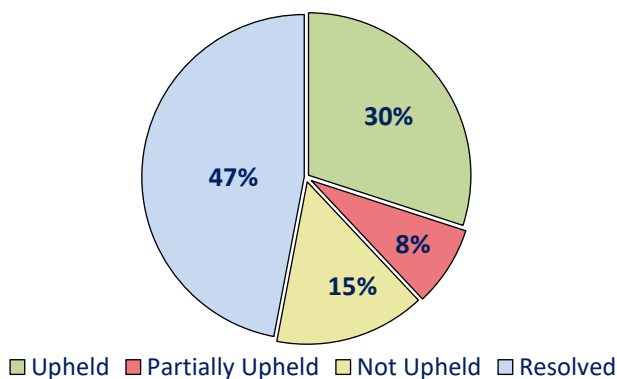
- 106 complaints had their timescales extended during the year - 77 at Stage One and 29 at Stage Two. The complaints related mainly to two Directorates - HSCP (30%) and Place (40%).
- There were numerous reasons for extending, including complainants, 3rd parties and employees being unavailable to assist or support with investigations, additional information having to be sought to support investigations and issues arising from the ongoing pandemic (particular lack of resource through self-isolations).
- Of the 106 complaints that had their timescales extended, 81% were closed within their new due dates.

7 Complaint Outcomes

Up to 31 March 2021, a complaint that meets our complaint criteria could be upheld, partially upheld or not upheld. From 1 April 2021, a fourth outcome became available to use called 'Resolved'. Resolved complaints are where the Council has taken action to address the problem/issue without making a decision on whether there were any failings (this would happen where we agree a solution with the complainant at the outset without needing to actually investigate the complaint).

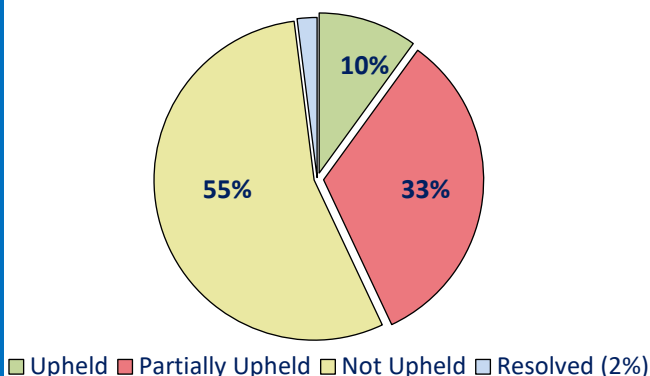
The charts below detail the number of complaints upheld, partially upheld, not upheld or resolved under both Stages.

Stage One



- Of the 38% of complaints upheld and partially upheld* at Stage One, over half related to Waste Services and in particular bin collections. This was anticipated given issues the service continued to experience as a result of the pandemic.
- Over two thirds of all Resolved complaints also related to Waste Services (mainly missed bin collections) which indicates many residents simply wanted their bins collected.
- The 15% of complaints not upheld related to policies, regulations or complaints that were poor quality/unfounded.

Stage Two



- All the Stage Two complaints that were upheld or partially upheld* were split across all Directorates and multiple services.
- A very small number of complaints were marked as 'Resolved' at Stage Two. As complaints can only typically be 'Resolved' at Stage One, an investigation is underway to determine if the outcomes for these complaints are correct and if not, remedial action will be taken to address.
- Of the 55% of complaints not upheld, these related to various reasons, including policies, regulations and complaints that were unsubstantiated.

*Partially Upheld complaints are complaints that contain more than one complaint element and at least one of them is upheld

8 Improvements made as a result of complaints

Council officers continually seek to make improvements in service delivery and complaint information is analysed regularly to inform service improvements. The largest proportion of complaints raised were experienced within Waste Services and work is ongoing to reflect learning into service delivery arrangements and complaint processing practices to achieve a reduction in complaints received.

Many improvements were made as a result of complaints received during the year and a selection is noted below.

What happened?	What we did
A customer advised they were in the process of booking a special waste uplift when the payment system went down. This resulted in the payment being taken but no uplift.	An apology was offered to the complainant, the special uplift payment refunded and consideration given to adding a statement to the website advising customers what to do when payment receipts are not generated.
This complaint was a sensitive matter regarding a child and an additional support needs Early Years (EY) placement.	An apology was offered to the complainant and it was determined the criteria for the allocation of places to be more clearly communicated with families. It was also agreed EY Management would clarify the process with EY managers regarding who makes contact with a new provider when a child moves locality; EY Management would clarify the start time for an Early Years placement (on birthday or term after birthday); to reconcile the Team Around the Child process regarding the allocation of any placement and to improve communication and sharing of information in a timely fashion; full assessment of needs to be shared with each prospective setting to inform and help decisions to be taken in a timely fashion.
A resident contacted the Council in order to have their address updated as a new build property but was unable to speak to someone using the Street Naming & Numbering (SNN) telephone number in order to get issue resolved.	An apology was offered to the complainant as it was identified the telephone number was not fully operational. Use of a new communications application has allowed the SNN telephone phone number to become usable again and the SNN page on the Council's website will be reviewed to ensure the most appropriate contact details and information.
A customer complained as they called the Council's Contact Centre about a matter and were placed in a queue, however the call was then prematurely terminated, resulting in the customer having to call in a second time and queue again to speak to someone.	A call-back queue has been introduced in the Contact Centre which allows customers to request a call back instead of holding on in a queue. An apology was offered to the complainant for the problems encountered.

9 Compliments

Over 240 compliments were recorded cross-Council during the year. Although they cannot all be highlighted in this report, a selection are noted below.

*"I'd like to commend the **Streetscene** fly-tipping team. Any reports I have made have been dealt with quickly whether in the town or out in the country. Well done to all for which has so far been an excellent service."*

Multiple compliments received for **Waste Services** regarding returning to collect missed bins, delivering new bins and the attitude of the employees working at the Recycle Centres

*"Quick response and excellent service from Pest Control Officer from **Environmental Health** today. He was very knowledgeable about wasps and bees that I felt reassured following his inspection. Great work NAC"*

*"I'd like to compliment the **Money Matters Team** - great support and help with my child's DLA appeal. Caring and brilliant at what they do."*

*"I had a plumber from **Building Services** visit my property today to carry out some work. His workmanship was outstanding and he was also very polite and courteous. He is a credit to NAC and I would like his bosses to recognise what an asset he is."*

*"I would like to thank **Housing** and the **Welfare Team** for their help and support as I felt very low and the people I spoke to were very kind, understanding and helpful. I am grateful for their kindness and support during a very difficult time for me"*

*"I would like to pass on my thanks to the Assistant Registrar in **Customer Services** who conducted my wedding in June. The ceremony itself was lovely and she and her colleague let us delay the start as a guest was running late. We were kept updated regularly which was lovely and reassuring. Thank you."*

Several compliments received from residents of Montgomerie Park regarding ground works undertaken by **Regeneration** back in June

*"I would like to express my thanks to two members of your **Streetscene** Team who came to my aid yesterday afternoon when my car broke down in Largs. They were a very calm presence in an otherwise very stressful situation. I do not know what I would have done without them".*

*"We have had a new wet room put in by **Building Services**. I have nothing but praise for the three men who fitted it - what a pleasant experience it was. Friendly, professional and Covid aware. Thank you so much"*

Compliment letter received from a bowling club commending an employee from **Licensing** and an employee from **Environmental Health** for their help and support when adhering to Covid-19 restrictions

10 ALEO complaints

An Arms-Length External Organisation (ALEO) is an organisation formally separate from a local authority but still subject to its control and influence. North Ayrshire Leisure Limited (NALL) is an ALEO for North Ayrshire Council and this section highlights complaints handled by NALL in 2021/22 using the same Two Stage procedure the Council operates.

Complaints received per Business Area and Complaint Category

Business Area	Complaint Category	Volume to date
LEISURE		
Irvine	Activities & Programming	40
	Facilities General	26
	Facilities Cleanliness	7
	Customer Service	30
	Marketing/Promo	1
	Policy/General	25
Three Towns	Activities & Programming	10
	Facilities General	9
	Facilities Cleanliness	2
	Customer Service	12
	Marketing/Promo	0
	Policy/General	3
Garnock & Kilwinning	Activities & Programming	6
	Facilities General	10
	Facilities Cleanliness	1
	Customer Service	5
	Policy/General	2
North Coast & Arran	Activities & Programming	8
	Facilities General	26
	Facilities Cleanliness	0
	Customer Service	6
	Policy General	6
	Marketing/Promo	1
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY		
Active Lifestyles	Activities & Programming	3
	Customer Service	0
	Policy/General	3
Community Sport	Activities & Programming	1
	Customer Service	0
Support Team	Customer Service	2
	Policy General	8
	Marketing/Promo	0

- 253 complaints were received by NALL during the year.

Complaints per 1,000 visits for each department

Department	Complaint Volume	Attendances	Complaint Rate
Leisure	221	697,243	0.32
Physical Activity	12	72,205	0.17
Support Team	20	n/a	n/a

- Whilst the above table only highlights complaint volumes for the first three quarters of 2020/21, the volume of complaints received over the period is small compared to the number of people visiting NALL facilities/venues during the period.

Complaint categories by volume

Category	Volume
Facilities General	71
Facilities Cleanliness	10
Customer Service	55
Activities and Programming	68
Policy/General	47
Marketing and Promotion	2
Total	253

Three-year Complaint Category comparison

Category	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Facilities General	23	25	71
Facilities Cleanliness	7	12	10
Customer Service	22	56	55
Activities & Programming	27	41	68
Policy/General	17	16	47
Marketing/Promotion	4	0	2
Total	100	150	253

Complaints handled at each Stage by category

Category	Stage One	Stage Two
Facilities General	36	25
Facilities Cleanliness	5	3
Customer Service	33	11
Activities and Programming	40	22
Policy/General	28	14
Marketing and Promotion	2	0
Total	144	75

Examples of complaints received

Category	Nature of complaints	NALL Response/Action
Facilities General	Customer complained regarding the low temperature of the main pool at Vikingar first thing in the morning.	Apology offered and customer advised that the thermostat had now been set to heat the pool an hour earlier than normal to benefit early morning swimmers.
Facilities Cleanliness	Customer complained about the cleanliness of the sports halls and toilets at Greenwood Academy.	Apology offered to customer and comment passed to the school facility management team who are responsible for school cleaning. KA Leisure staff have also been instructed to monitor cleanliness in these areas.
Customer Service	Customer complained that their direct debit payments were higher than expected.	Apology offered to customer, direct debit amount corrected and refund issued for excess fees collected.
Activities & Programming	Customer complained that live streaming classes were not starting on schedule or sometimes not at all.	Apology offered. Customer was advised that all instructors have been told to ensure classes start at the time advertised. Customer also advised that there are alternative online classes available via the KA App.
Policy/General	Customer complained about having to pay a joining fee which was a deciding factor in joining up.	Apology given but customer advised that KA Leisure was running a join now, pay nothing until January promotion and provided the customer the Promo Code to take advantage of the offer.
Marketing/Promo	Customer complained that they were unable to get in contact with Arran Community Sport Hub or find details on the web site.	Apology offered to customer and a contact number and full list of activities on offer provided.

11 SPSO complaint referrals

The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) is the final stage for complaints about Local Authorities in Scotland. The table below details the volume of complaints relating to the Council that were referred to the SPSO during 2021/22:

Type of Complaint	Volume
Economic Development	1
Education	1
Environmental Health & Cleansing	3
Finance	2
Housing	11
Legal & Admin	2
Planning	3
Social Work	1
Welfare Fund - Crisis Grants	1

- The SPSO received 1,189 complaints about Scottish Local Authorities during 2021/22 which equates to 2% relating to the Council. This referral rate is consistent with previous years (typically between 2% and 3%).
- The highest number of referrals made to the SPSO related to Housing but this was expected given the majority of Local Authority referrals made to the SPSO during the year related to Housing or housing services.

The outcomes of the 24 North Ayrshire Council complaints that were referred to the SPSO and determined are noted below.

Stage	Outcome	Volume
Advice	Premature	3
	Unable to proceed	4
Early Resolution	Discretion – Insufficient benefit achieved by investigation	3
	Discretion - Good complaint handling	9
	Subject matter not in jurisdiction	1
	Time limit (s 10)	1
	Unable to proceed	3
Investigation	<i>None received</i>	<i>n/a</i>

- All referrals made by North Ayrshire complainants were resolved by the SPSO at the Advice or Early Resolution stages. None were taken to Investigation stage.
- Some referrals at Advice stage were premature i.e. complainants approached the SPSO before exhausting the Council's Two Stage process.

- The majority of complaint referrals handled at Early Resolution were discretionary in nature, meaning the Council had discretion in terms of how to action them. It is pleasing to note many were considered 'good complaint handling' complaints, meaning the SPSO was satisfied with the way the Council handled them.

More details regarding complaint referrals for North Ayrshire Council can be found on the SPSO website at <https://www.spsa.org.uk/decision-reports>.

12 Glossary

Term	Explanation
Stage One	Stage One (aka <i>Frontline Resolution</i>) aims to resolve straightforward customer complaints that require little or no investigation. Any employee may deal with complaints at this stage and they can be resolved via any channel. The main principle is to seek resolution at the earliest opportunity and as close to the point of service delivery as possible. Stage One complaints must be responded to within 5 working days unless an extension (a maximum of 5 additional working days or 10 if the complaint relates to Social Work) is requested and approved by a senior manager. The Council should, however, always aim to resolve these types of complaints within 5 working days.
Stage Two	Not all complaints are suitable for Frontline Resolution and not all complaints will be satisfactorily resolved at that stage. Complaints therefore handled at Stage Two (aka <i>Investigation</i>) typically require a detailed examination before the Council can state its position. These complaints may already have been considered at Stage One, or they may have been identified from the outset as being complex, serious or high risk and needing immediate investigation. The investigation under a Stage Two should establish all the facts relevant to the points made in the complaint and give the customer a full, objective and proportionate response that represents our final position. Stage Two complaints must be responded to within 20 working days unless an extension is approved by senior manager in conjunction with the customer. Stage Two complaints require a written response, signed by a senior manager.

Complaint criteria

When an expression of dissatisfaction is received the Council determines if the issue falls into one of six complaint categories:

- A service the Council should be providing is not being provided (or is not available)
- A request for a service was provided but not to an appropriate standard
- A request for service has not been answered or actioned within the agreed timescale
- A Council employee was rude, unhelpful or unprofessional
- A Council employee did not attend an appointment or call-out on a date/time agreed
- The complaint relates to a policy (internal or external)

If the issue being raised relates to one or more of the above, the matter is considered a complaint and will be recorded and handled as such. If not, the matter will be handled as something else i.e. a request for a service, observation or enquiry and processed accordingly.

END OF REPORT