
NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

25 September 2018

Audit and Scrutiny Committee

Title: 2017/18 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 2017/18.

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

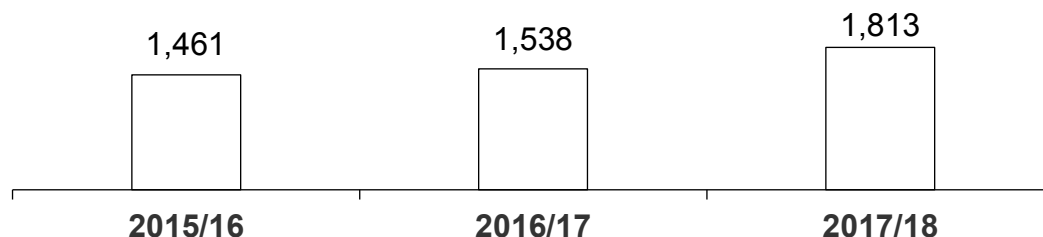
1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The report details complaint information relating to North Ayrshire Council during 2017/18, covering the period from 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018.
- 1.2 In order to allow comparisons the report also details complaint data covering 2016 and 2015 (referred to in the report as 2016/15 and 2014/15).
- 1.3 Performance is measured through a number of Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) performance indicators, some of which have national targets.

2. Background

- 2.1 This section contains statistical information and commentary on some of the key complaint performance indicators devised by the SPSO in conjunction with all 32 Scottish councils.

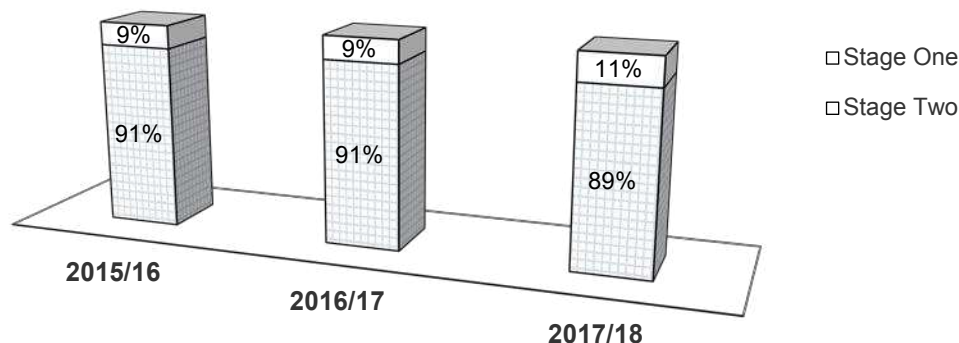
2.2 *Volume of complaints received and closed*



- 2.2.1A higher volume of complaints was received in 2017/18 compared to previous years but there are valid reasons for this. More details can be found in the attached report.

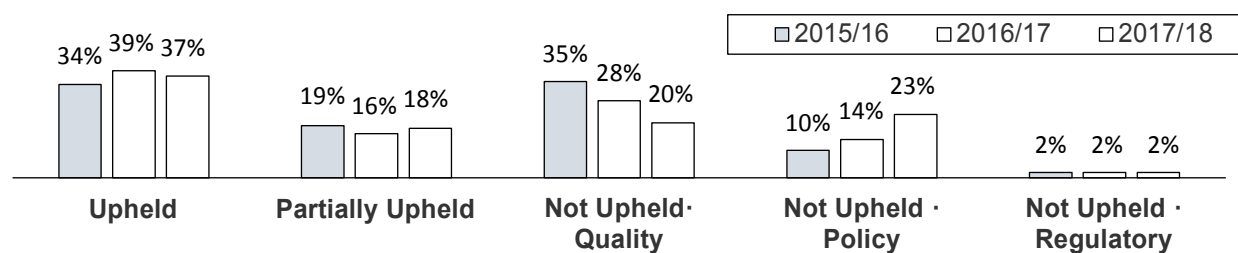
2.2.2 There is no target for the volume of complaints the Council should receive as this is an unknown quantity and cannot be predicted.

2.3 *Complaints closed as each Stage*



2.3.1 The Council cannot predict how many complaints will be closed under each stage, however, most should be straightforward in nature or easy to resolve and will be handled as Stage Ones. There is no target set for the volume handled under each Stage.

2.4 *Complaint outcomes*



2.4.1 The volume of complaints closed as poor quality has reduced when comparing 2017/18 with 2016/17. This is due to an improvement in the quality of complaint commentaries, allowing better complaint outcomes to be determined.

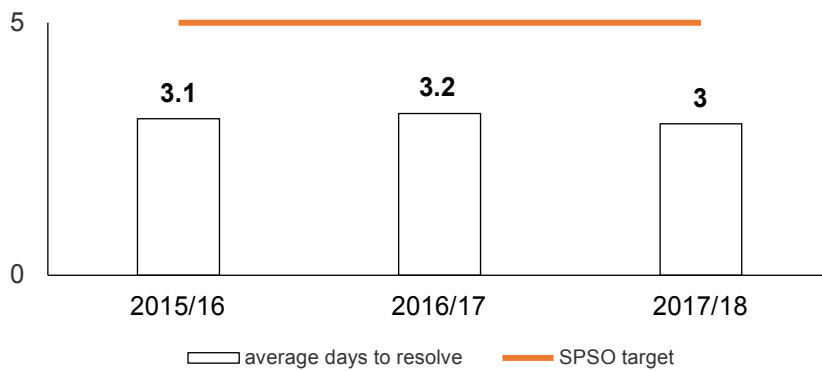
2.4.2 Policy complaints increased in 2017/18 mainly due to three issues - the changing of the Council's flag flying protocol, the removal of a free bus service and the removal/transfer of some public conveniences.

2.4.3 There is no target for the number of complaints the Council should uphold as complaint

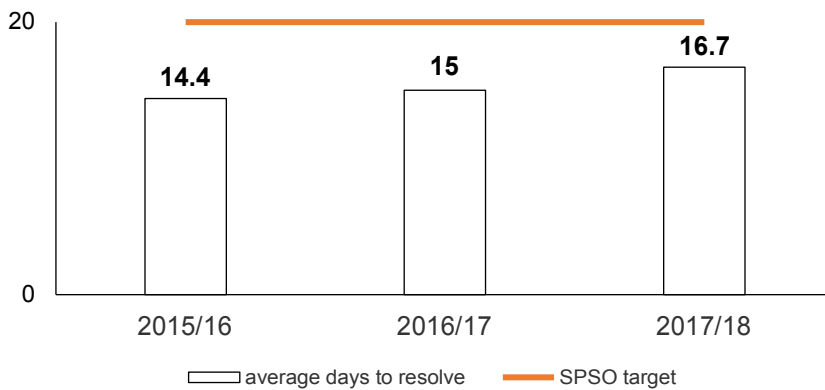
2.4.4 Further analysis of upheld complaints is contained in the attached report under Appendix 1.

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

Stage One



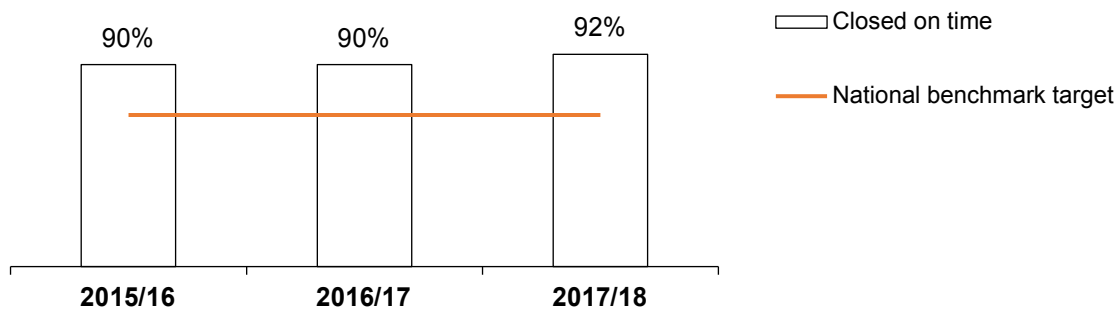
Stage Two



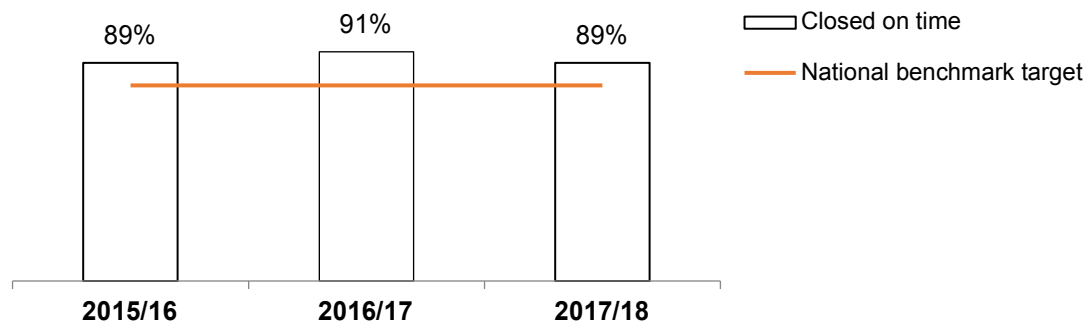
2.5.1 The average time in working days for a response under both Stages has met the SPSO target response timescales for the last three years.

2.6 Complaints closed within timescale

Stage One



Stage Two



2.6.1 Complaints that did not meet timescale during 2017/18 was due to several factors and

extensions could have been approved for some of these. More details of complaints not

2.6.2 It should be noted there has been no discernible dip in performance even though there was an 18% increase in the number of complaints handled when compared to 2016/17.

2.7 ***Complaint time scale extensions***

2.7.1 Stage One complaints should be responded to within 5 working days but we can extend them

an additional 5 working days (10 if the complaint relates to Social Work) under certain circumstances. Stage Two complaints should be responded to within 20 working days but again we can extend the timescale of these to a date in the future if certain circumstances are

2.7.2 A total of 30 complaints had their Stage One timescale extended during 2017/18 and the majority were closed within the new timescale. A total of 15 Stage Two complaints had their timescales extended and all met the new agreed due dates.

2.7.3 More information on complaints that were extended is contained in the attached report.

2.8 ***Changes or Improvements made as a result of complaints***

2.8.1 Not all Services were able to implement improvements from complaints due to a number of factors, including the feasibility of making changes and resource/budget considerations. That said, there were some improvements made to service provision as a result of complaints received during 2017/18 and a selection are noted in the attached report.

3. **Proposals**

3.1 It is proposed the Committee approves the report and recognises NAC performance in relation to the information listed in Section 2 above.

4. Implications

Financial:	None
Human Resources:	None
Legal:	None
Equality:	None
Children and Young People:	None
Environmental & Sustainability:	None
Key Priorities:	<p>The Two Stage CHP supports the Council's key priority of delivering more effective and efficient service provision.</p> <p>Timely reports are produced with a focus on analysing trends and identifying improvements.</p> <p>Support and guidance from the Complaint Team ensures greater consistency in complaint handling, improvements in response times and a reduction in duplication of effort.</p>
Community Benefits:	The Two Stage CHP demonstrates a commitment to improve service delivery for North Ayrshire customers and

5. Consultation

- 5.1 Complaint Handling Satisfaction Surveys are issued quarterly to customers who complained to capture their views on the Two Stage CHP and how Services handled their complaints.
- 5.2 The full survey results are contained within the attached report.



Laura Friel
Executive Director (Finance & Corporate Support)

For further information please contact **Darren Miller** on **(01294) 322988**.



Complaint Report 2017/18



Contents

	Page
Foreword by the Chief Executive	3
Introduction	4
1 (a) Volume of complaints received and closed	5
(b) Complaints received per thousand population	5
(c) Analysis by geographical area	6
(d) Analysis by channel	6
(e) Analysis by complaint category and topic	7
2 Complaints closed at each Stage	10
3 (a) Complaint outcomes	10
(b) Average time for full response at each Stage	11
(c) Average time for a response per Service at each Stage	12
4 Upheld I Partially Upheld complaint volumes by Service	14
5 Complaints closed at each Stage within timescale	16
6 Complaint timescale extensions	21
7 Customer satisfaction with complaint handling	22
8 Improvements as a result of complaints	23
9 Compliments	25
10 ALEO complaints	26
11 SPSO referrals	28
12 Glossary	30
Appendix 1 • Upheld complaints analysis	31

Foreword by the Chief Executive

North Ayrshire Council is committed to providing high quality services for North Ayrshire residents, businesses and visitors but it is recognised 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.

Our Two Stage Complaint Handling Procedure provides the public with the opportunity to raise their views and share their experiences which in turn helps us understand where we do well and also where we need to improve. We review our complaint handling performance regularly to ensure we learn from mistakes and use the feedback we receive to improve services the Council provides.

I am therefore pleased to present the North Ayrshire Council complaint report for 2017/18. The report supports the Council's commitment to valuing complaints and contains complaint performance information, statistics and trends.

I trust you find the report informative.

Elma Murray OBE
Chief Executive

Introduction

North Ayrshire Council (NAC) define a complaint as ***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 make their complaint within six months of the date they first knew of the problem unless there are special circumstances that would cause this timescale to be extended.

In most cases a complaint will be made because the Council has:

- done something wrong
- not done something it should have
- failed to live up to expectations

To address these, the Council's CHP has two stages for handling complaints from the public:-



Stage One complaints (also known as *Frontline Resolution*) 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.



Stage Two complaints (also known as *Investigations*) are complaints the Council are typically unable to resolve at Stage One and need 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.

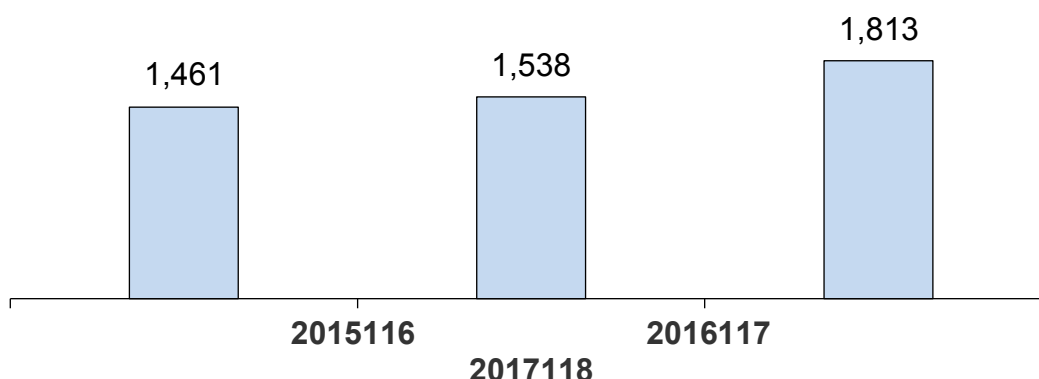
This report details the Council's performance handling complaints under both Stages and covers the period 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018 (referred to in the report as 2017/18). Performance is measured through a number of Scottish Public Services Ombudsman indicators, some of which have national targets.

In order to allow a year on year comparison the report includes complaint data covering 2015/16 and 2016/17.

Social Work complaints received in our Health & Social Care Partnership aligned with the Two Stage CHP on 1 April 2017 and complaint information relating to this Directorate has been integrated into the report.

Reporting complaints is a statutory requirement and is monitored by Audit Scotland in conjunction with the SPSO.

1(a) - Volume of complaints received and closed



- A higher volume of complaints was received in 2017/18 compared to previous years and the table below shows the volume breakdown for each Directorate over the three periods:

Directorate	2015116	2016117	2017118	Variance
				(16117 - 17118)
Chief Executive Service	4	2	1	neg.
Democratic Services	0	5	5	no change
Economy & Communities	33	44	33	-25%
Education & Youth Employment	115	84	116	+38%
Finance & Corporate Support	172	195	210	+8%
HSCP (Social Work complaints)	-	-	127	n/a
Place	1,068	1,146	1,237	+8%
Multi-service complaints	69	62	69	+11%
Total	1,461	1,538	1,798	+17%

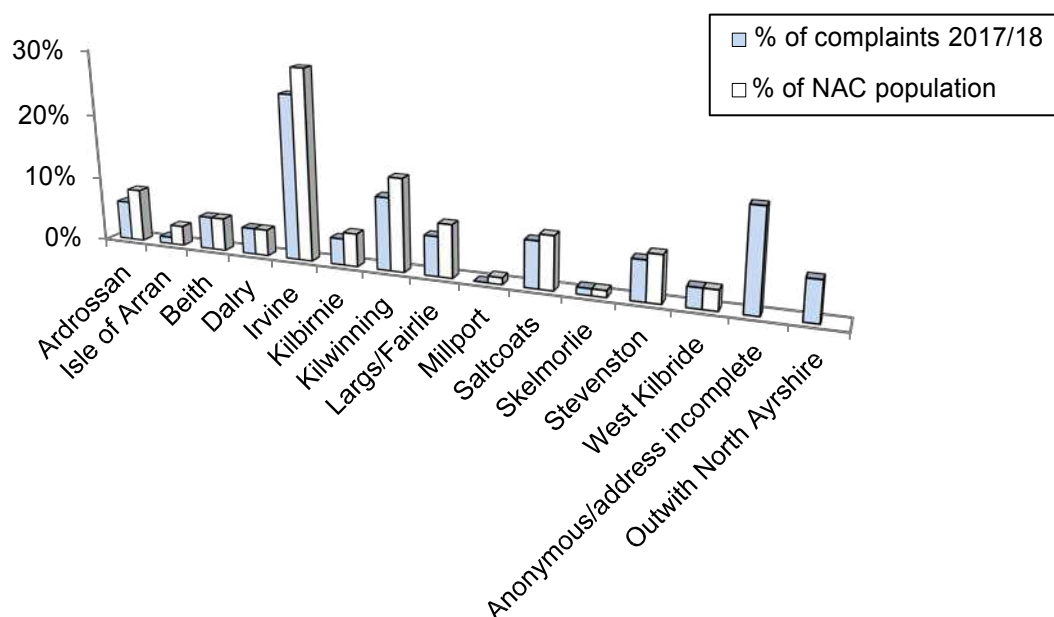
- Social Work complaints are now included in the Council's complaint statistics (from 1 April 2017) and has contributed to the higher volume being reported Council-wide for 2017/18.
- The 38% increase in complaints for Education is the result of schools being better able to identify complaints after receiving additional support and guidance from the Customer Complaint Team throughout the year.
- Some Directorates had small percentage increases in their complaint volumes compared to the previous year but there were no discernible trends and the complaints covered a range of Services. The increase in multiservice complaints was not attributable to an increase in complaints relating to any particular Service.
- 15 complaints received in 2017/18 have been excluded from the above table as they were complaints about a decision made by Elected Members.

1(b) - Complaints received per thousand population

Based on 135,790 residents (nrscotland.gov.uk June 2017 estimate)		
2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
10	11	13

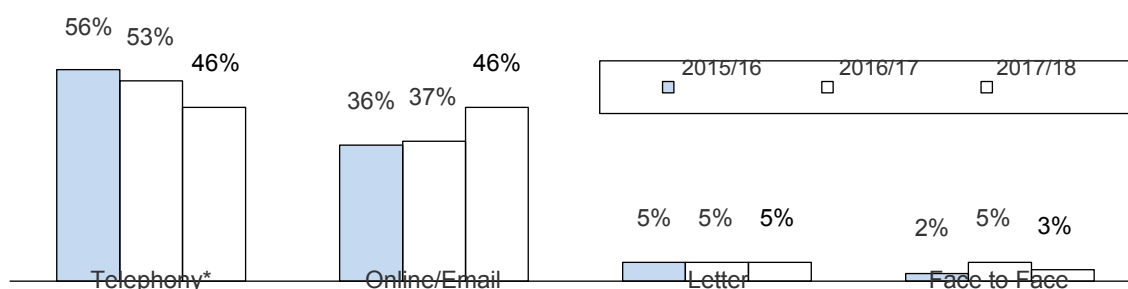
- 13 complaints per 1,000 residents is equivalent to 1% of the North Ayrshire population.

1(c) • Analysis by geographical area



- Residents and customers of Irvine and Kilwinning raised the highest volume of complaints but this was expected given the population sizes. The complaints were various in nature and covered a range of different services.
- 15% of online complainants provided incomplete addresses or chose to remain anonymous. These complaints were handled in line with our CHP where sufficient information was provided.
- 6% of all complaints were made by individuals who do not live in North Ayrshire and the substance of each complaint was investigated, where possible, in line with our CHP.

1(d) • Analysis by channel



* includes the Contact Centre

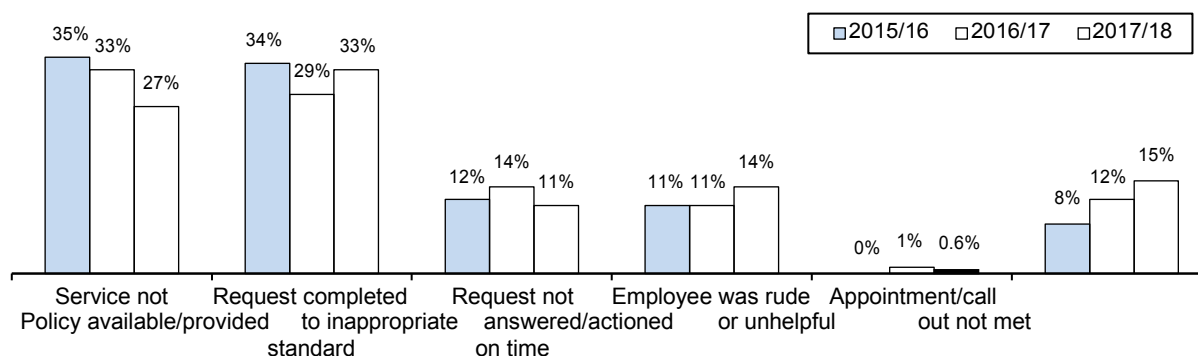
- There is a year on year trend of more customers using digital channels to raise their complaints instead of the traditional telephony methods. This illustrates customers are willing to use new technologies when raising concerns with the Council.

1(e) • Analysis by complaint category and topic

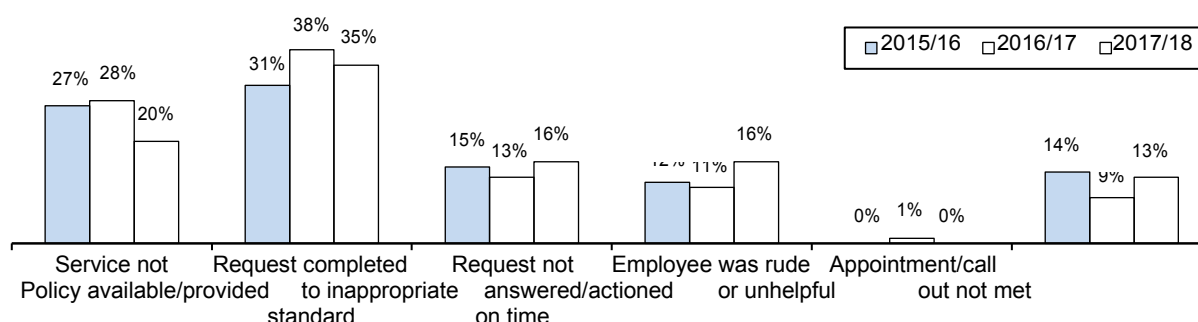
All complaints received by the Council are recorded in a customer record management system and categorised.

The following graphs illustrate the percentage of complaints handled under each category for each Stage:

Stage One



Stage Two



- Complaints the Council received in 2017/18 fall into two main categories - services that are not available/provided and service requests not done to an appropriate standard.
- The increase in Stage One policy complaints can be partly attributed to issues concerning the Council's flag flying protocol, the removal of a free school bus service and issues surrounding the closure/transfer of some public conveniences.

Key complaint topics identified for Services in each Directorate are listed below. Services where no key topics were identified (or too few complaints were received to undertake meaningful analysis) will not be listed:

Education & Youth Employment

Service	Key complaint topic(s)
Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service provision/delivery • Employee Actions

Economy and Communities

Economic Growth

Service	Key complaint topic(s)
Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning permissions/applications

Place

Commercial Services

Service	Key complaint topic(s)
Roads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gritting/Grit bins • Street lighting
Streetscene	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grounds maintenance (including parks, play areas and open spaces) • Grass-cutting/grass cutting scheme • Employee Actions • Cemetery/Church management
Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removal of free bus travel to Greenwood Academy pupils
Waste Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Missed bins/pull outs • Employee Actions

Physical Environment

Service	Key complaint topic(s)
Building Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality issues - work incomplete or poor workmanship • Follow Ups not done
Facilities Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Crossing Patrols
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer Care • Employee Actions • Estate Management
PMI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closure/transfer of public conveniences • Capital works programme (planned works for tenants) • Council stock issues • Gas Central Heating issues • Inspector issues

Finance & Corporate Support

Customer & Digital Services

Service	Key complaint topic(s)
Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Standard of service• Communication
Customer Services (Contact Centre and Customer Service Centres)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Incorrect information provided• Introduction of self-service payment machines• Employee Actions
Revenues	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communication• Recovery of monies

HSCP (Social Work complaints)

Service	Key complaint topic(s)
Children, Families & Criminal Justice	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Employee Actions• Service provision/delivery
Health & Community Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Employee Actions• Service provision/delivery
Mental Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Service provision/delivery• Employee Actions

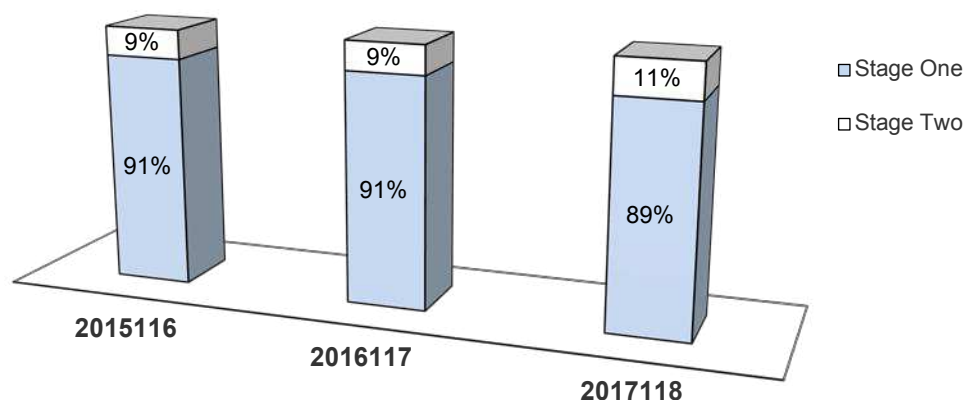
Complaints concerning an Elected Member decision

In Q1 2017 Elected Members agreed to changes to the way flags are flown outside Cunninghame House and several complaints were received from members of the public as a result.

- The key topics listed are based on complaints whether upheld or not.
- Employee Actions appears as a key topic for some Services, however the topic is broad in its definition and has been used where customers perceive employee actions or behaviour to be unacceptable. This includes instances where:
 - The attitude of employees were considered inappropriate
 - The content/tone of letters from employees were considered inappropriate
 - Employee actions were considered inappropriate
 - Employees made inappropriate comments or offered inappropriate advice
 - Employees were considered 'officious' when quoting procedures, policies or regulations

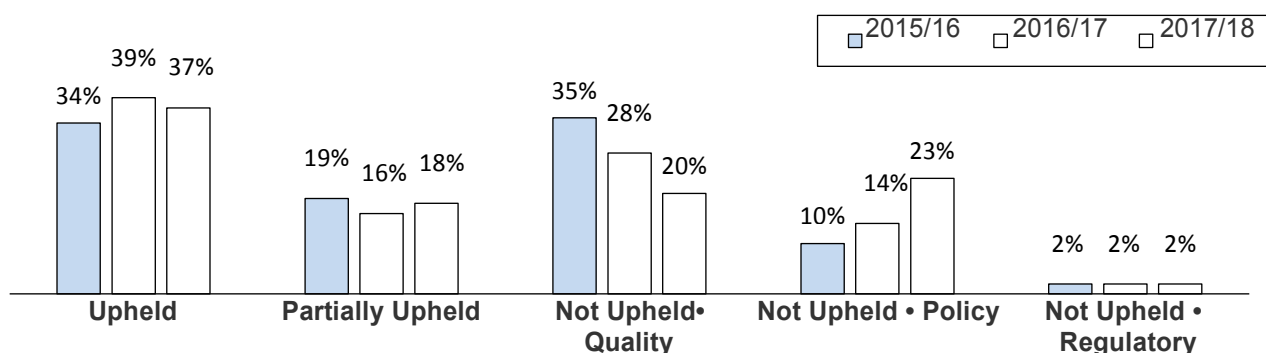
Of the 14% of complaints logged with the topic Employee Actions, half were determined to be unfounded. Where Services did identify unacceptable behaviour, appropriate action was taken to address this.

2 • Complaints closed at each Stage



- Although there is no set target for complaints handled under each Stage, it is expected the majority will be non-complex in nature and this is apparent when reviewing the volume of complaints handled at Stage One over the last three years.

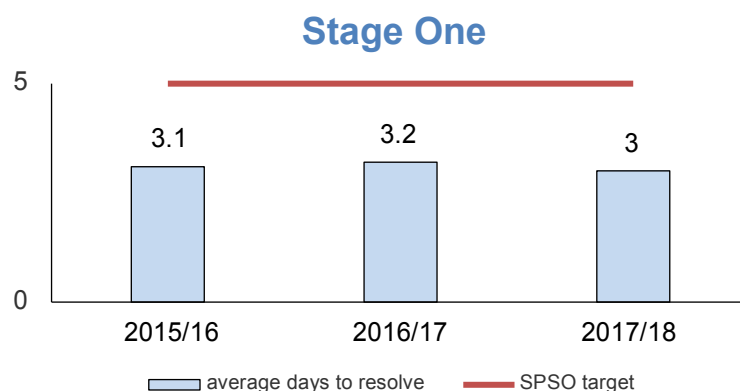
3 (a) • Complaint outcomes



- Just over a third of all complaints handled in 2017/18 were fully upheld.
- The volume of poor quality complaints has reduced when comparing the last two years. This is due to an improvement in the quality of complaint submissions, which has allowed better complaint outcomes to be determined.
- Policy complaints increased in 2017/18 and can be attributable in part to three issues - the changing of the Council's flag flying protocol, the removal of a free bus facility and the removal/transfer of some public conveniences.
- There is no target for the number of complaints the Council should uphold as outcomes are unique to each complaint and cannot be predicted.

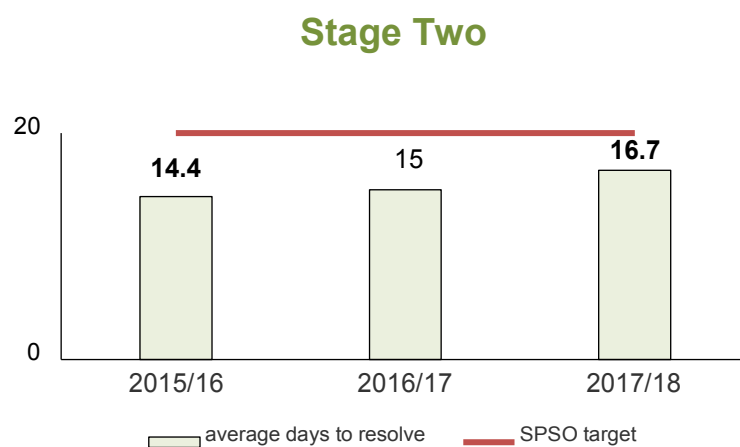
3 (b) • Average time in working days for a full response at each Stage

The graphs below show the average time in working days for complaints closed under both Stages.



- The average time in working days for a response under Stage One has consistently met the SPSO target response time over the last three years.

(Any Stage One complaints that had their timescale extended have been omitted from the calculation.)



- The average time in working days for a response under Stage Two has comfortably met the SPSO target response time of 20 working days over the last three years.

(Any Stage Two complaints that had their timescale extended have been omitted from the calculation)

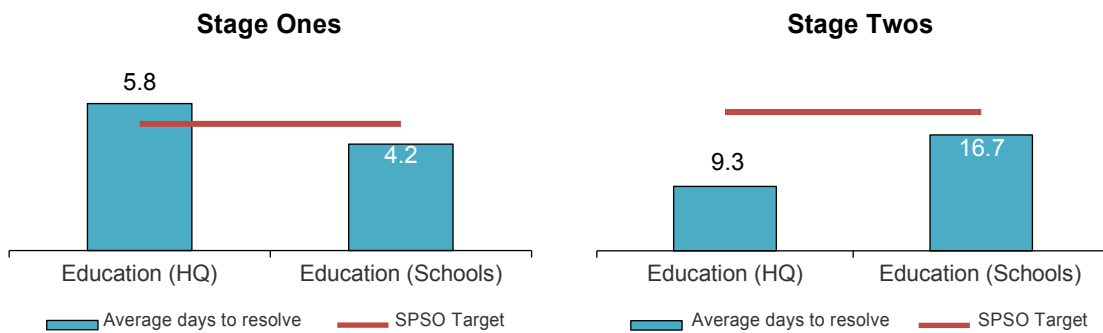
3 (c) • Average time in working days for a full response per Service

Below is a Directorate breakdown showing the average time in working days for a response under both stages in 2017/18:

Democratic Services



Education & Youth Employment

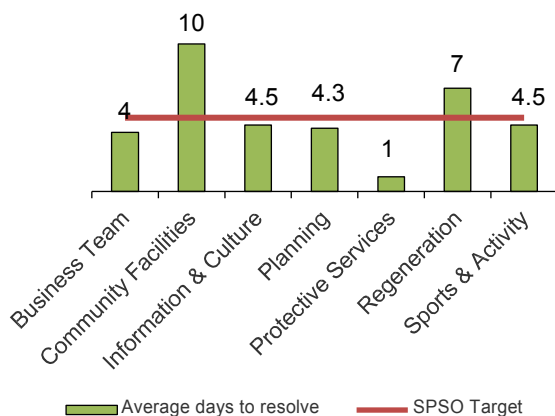


Finance & Corporate Support

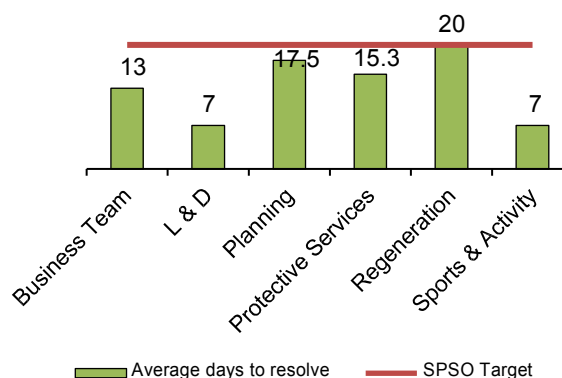


Economy & Communities

Stage Ones

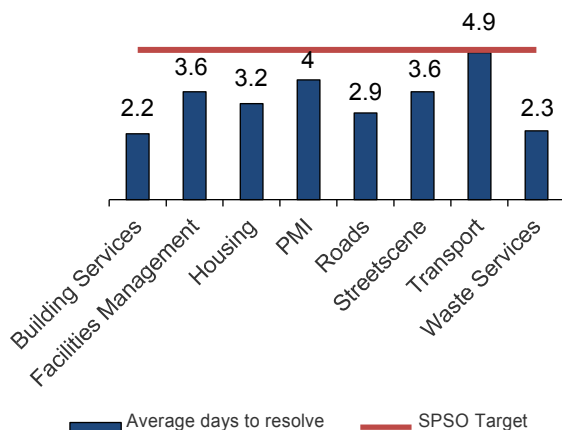


Stage Twos

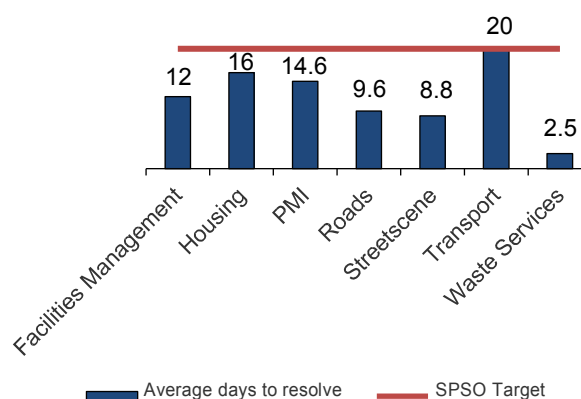


Place

Stage Ones

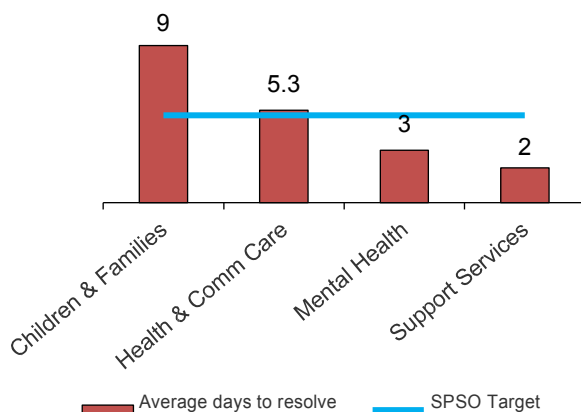


Stage Twos

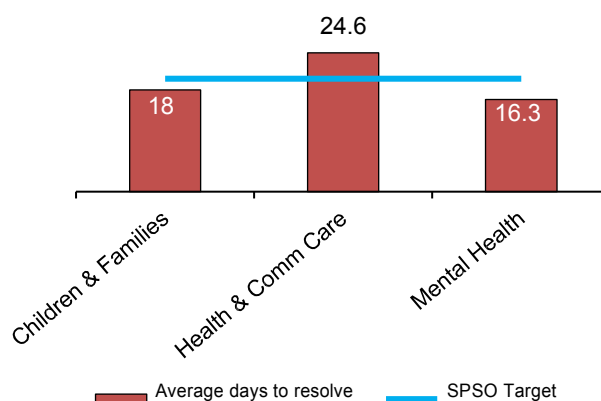


HSCP (Social Work complaints)

Stage Ones



Stage Twos

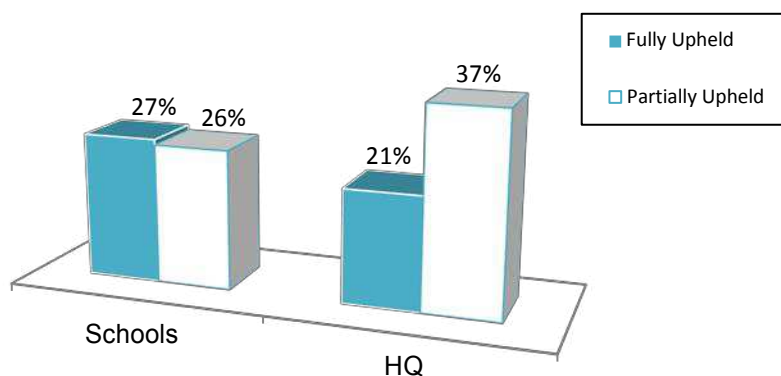


- Any complaints that had their timescales extended have been omitted from the graphs.
- See Sections 5 and 6 for more information on complaints not closed on time and complaints that were extended.

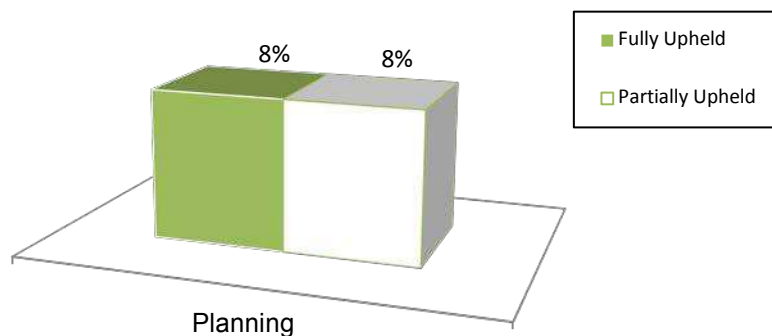
4 • Upheld 1 Partially Upheld Complaint percentage volumes by Service

A third of all complaints resolved in 2017/18 were upheld and a fifth were partially upheld. The graphs below detail the Directorate breakdowns and any Directorates or Services that received small volumes have been omitted from the graphs:

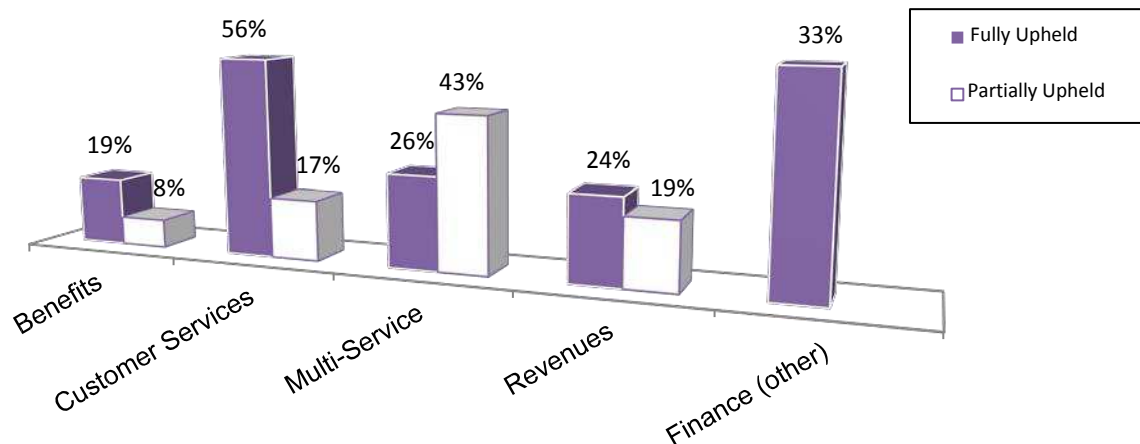
Education & Youth Employment



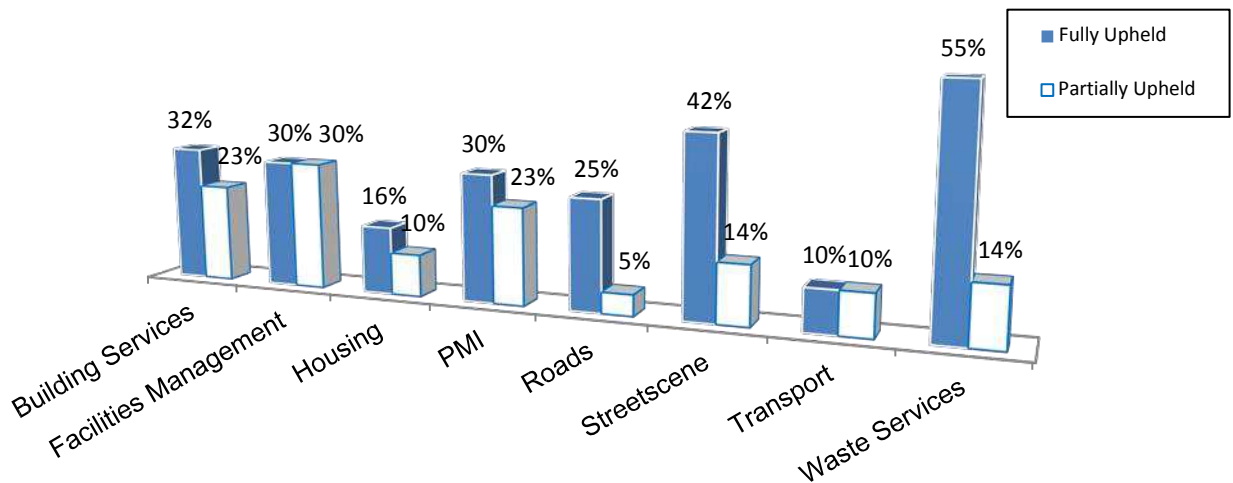
Economy & Communities



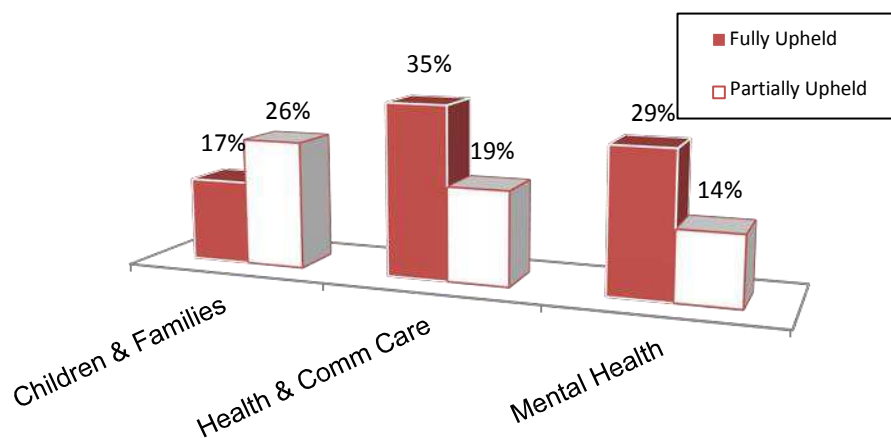
Finance & Corporate Support



Place



HSCP (Social Work complaints)

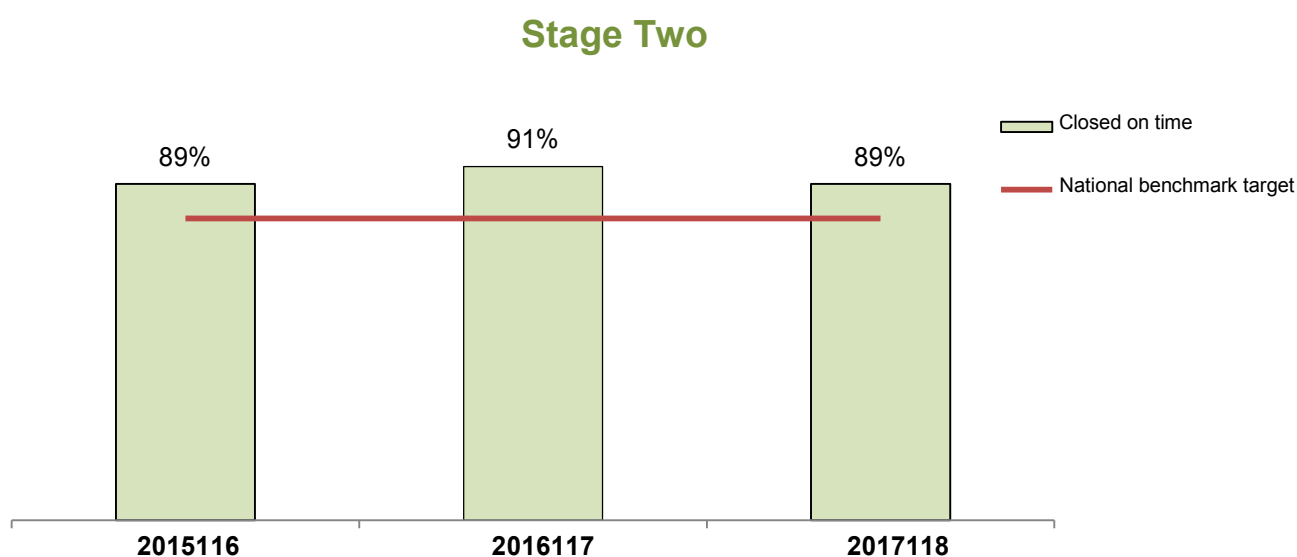
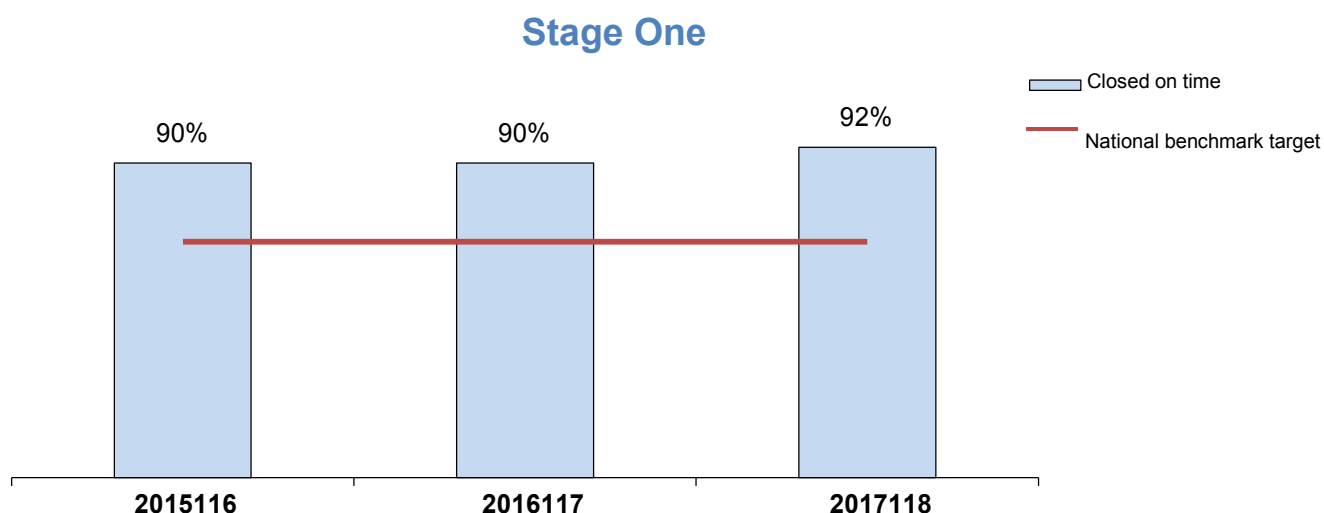


- The average percentage of complaints fully upheld in each Service was 30% and the average partially upheld was 19%.
- Further analysis relating to upheld complaints is contained in Appendix 1.

5 • Complaints closed at each Stage within timescale

The Improvement Service conducted a review of complaint data across all 32 Scottish Local Authorities and national averages were calculated for complaints closed on time for Stage One and Stage Two. These averages are **80%** and **85%** respectively and are used by the Council to benchmark its complaint performance.

How the Council has performed over the last three years is noted below:

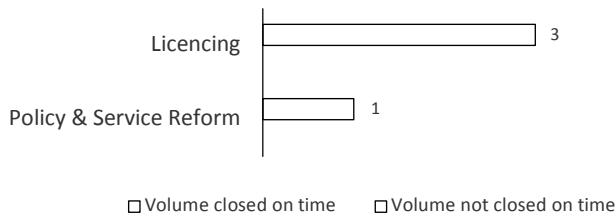


- It is pleasing to note there has been no discernible dip in performance even though there was an 18% increase in the number of complaints handled when comparing 2017/18 to 2016/17.
- Some complaints did not meet timescale during 2017/18 and reasons are detailed in the next few pages.

(Any complaints that had their timescale extended are detailed separately in Section 6)

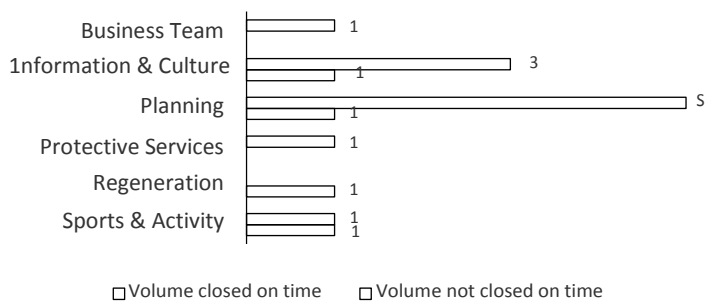
Stage Ones

Chief Executive (inc. Democratic Services)



No Stage One complaints breached timescale during 2017/18.

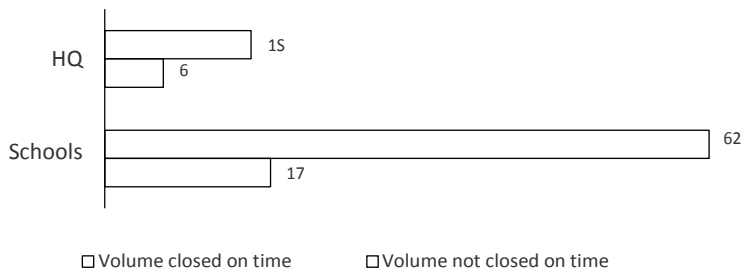
Economy & Communities



A small number of complaints were closed just beyond the 5 working day timescale. Reasons included complainants not being available to assist and complaints being incorrectly routed.

Of the 15 complaints handled under this Stage, 26% were not closed on time.

Education

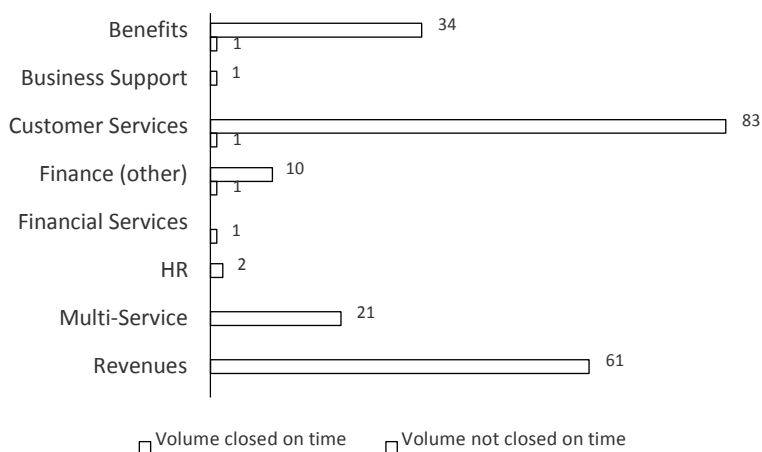


Several school complaints did not meet timescale due to parents being unavailable to discuss the issues.

As no reasons were provided as to why the some complaints did not meet timescale, a reminder was issued to provide such commentaries going forward.

Of the 100 complaints handled under this Stage, 23% were not closed on time.

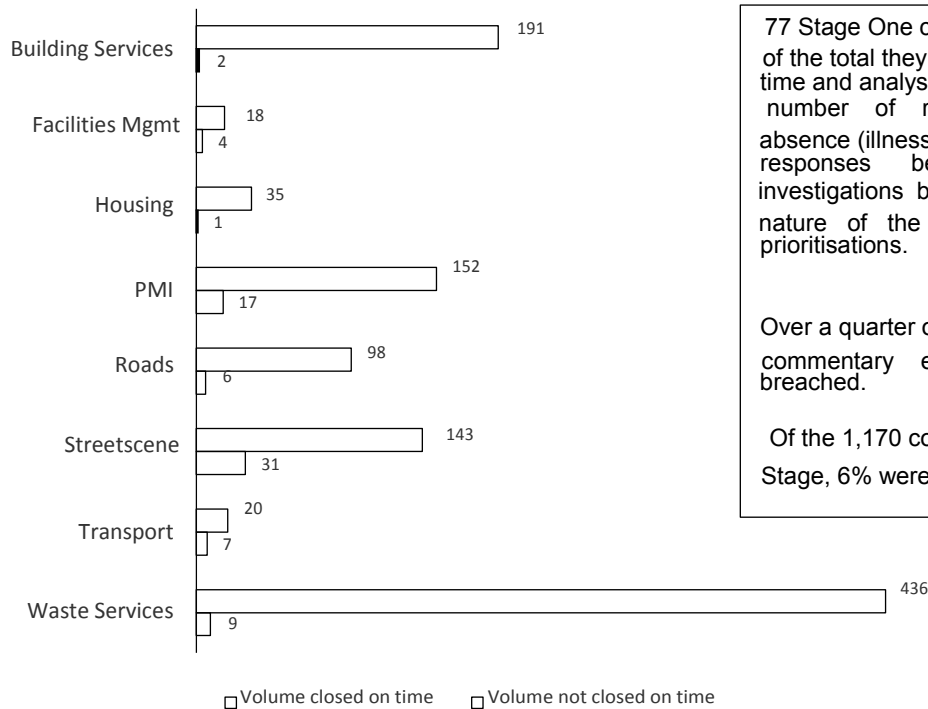
Finance & Corporate Support



A very small number of Stage One complaints for FACs were not closed on time. Due to the low volume no trends were identified.

Of the 216 complaints handled under this Stage, 2% were not closed on time.

Place



77 Stage One complaints across Place (7% of the total they handled) were not closed on time and analysis shows they breached for a number of reasons, including officer absence (illness or annual leave), delays in responses being authorised, further investigations being required (due to the nature of the complaints) and workload prioritisations.

Over a quarter of these complaints had no commentary explaining why they had breached.

Of the 1,170 complaints handled under this Stage, 6% were not closed on time.

HSCP (Social Work complaints)

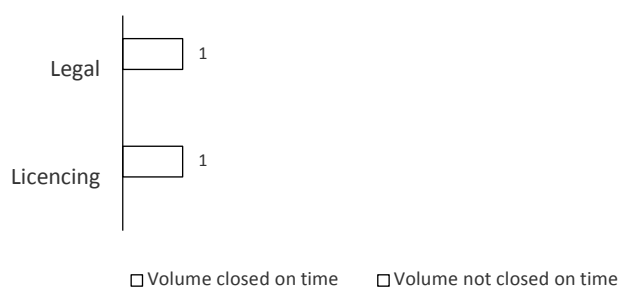


Although several Stage One complaints did not meet timescale during 2017/18, the Directorate transitioned to the Two Stage procedure used by the rest of the Council on 1 April 2017 and it was expected some complaints would breach timescale as employees became familiar with the new processes to follow.

Of the 71 complaints handled under this Stage, 27% were not closed on time.

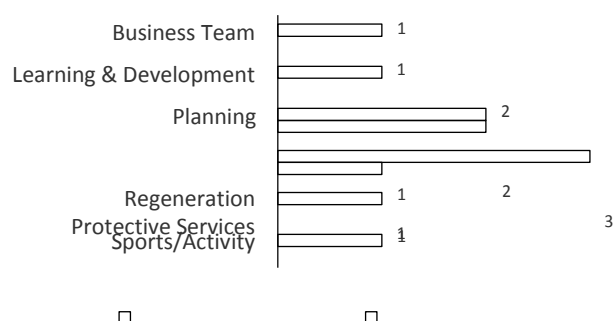
Stage Twos

Democratic Services



No complaints breached timescale in 2017/18.

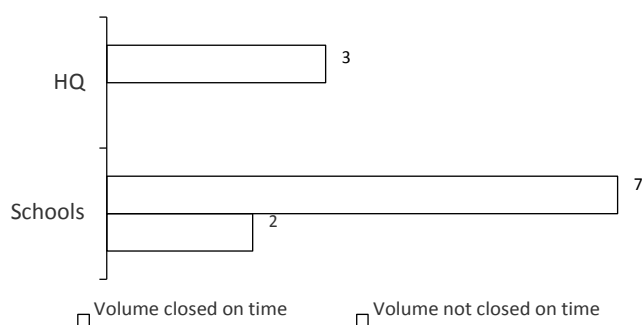
Economy & Communities



Two Planning complaints were closed beyond the 20 working day timescale due to just a delay in receiving the final response the Manager.
from
One Protective Services complaint was manager signing the response letter.
closed on day 23 due to a delay in the senior
Stage, 25% were not closed on time.

Of the 12 complaints handled under this

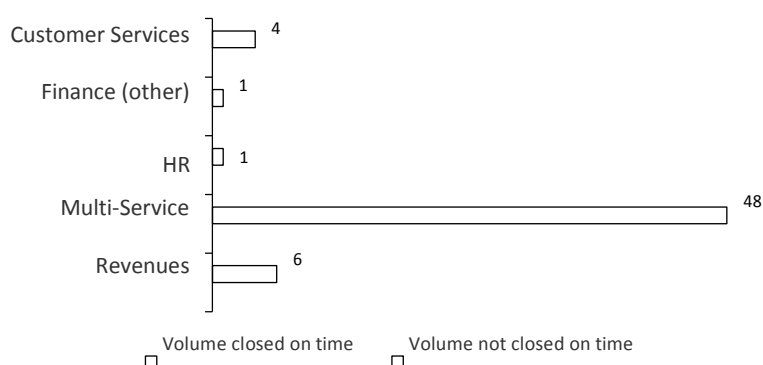
Education



Two complaints breached timescale due to a manager being on leave and a face to face meeting being arranged with a parent beyond the complaint due date.

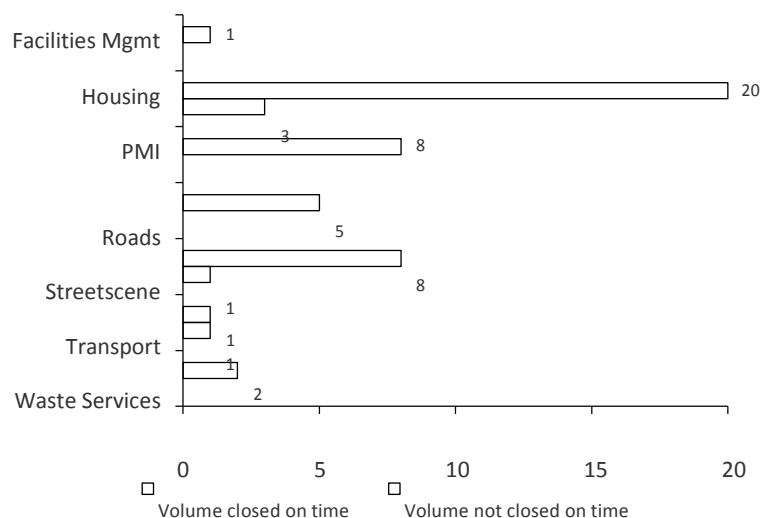
Of the 12 complaints handled under this Stage, 17% were not closed on time.

Finance & Corporate Support



No complaints breached timescale in 2017/18.

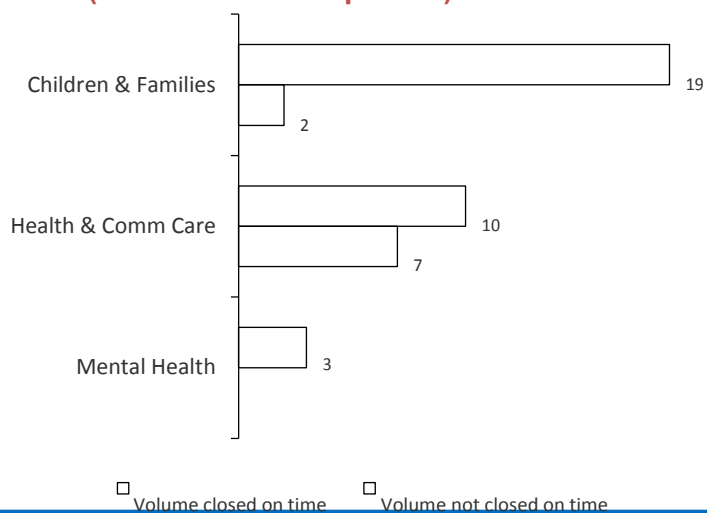
Place



A small number of Stage Two complaints were closed just beyond the 20 working day timescale. One related to a customer who issued a threatening email to an employee who was late due to employee cross-over (due to annual leave) and the two remaining complaints were complex investigations.

Of the 50 complaints handled under this Stage, 10% were not closed on time.

HSCP (Social Work complaints)



Several Stage Two complaints did not meet timescale during 2017/18, however, the Directorate transitioned to the Two Stage procedure used by the rest of the Council on 1 April 2017, and it was expected some complaints would 'breach' while the new processes were embedded.

Of the 41 complaints handled under this Stage, 22% were not closed on time.

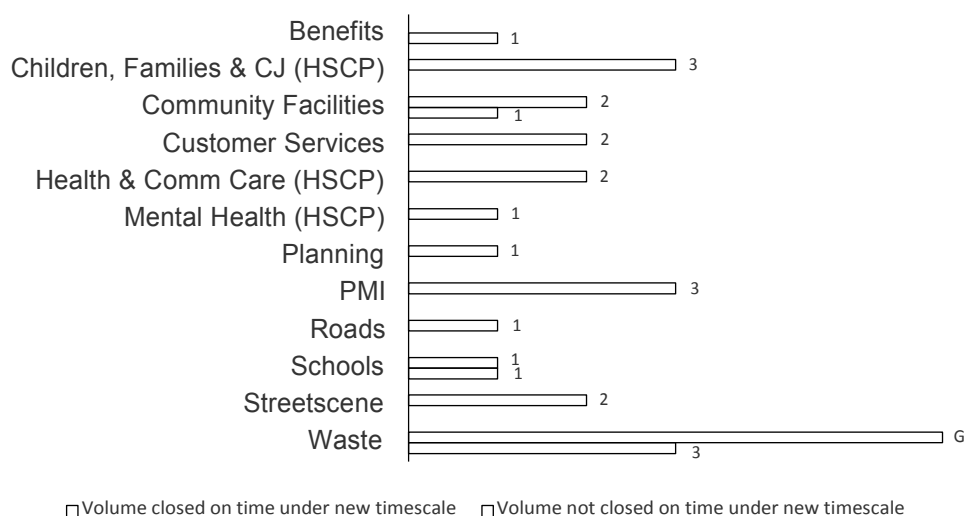
6 • Complaint timescale extensions

Stage One complaints should be responded to within 5 working days but the Council can extend them an additional 5 working days (an additional 10 if the complaint relates to Social Work) under certain circumstances.

Stage Two complaints should be responded to within 20 working days but again the Council can extend the timescale to a new date in the future if certain circumstances are met.

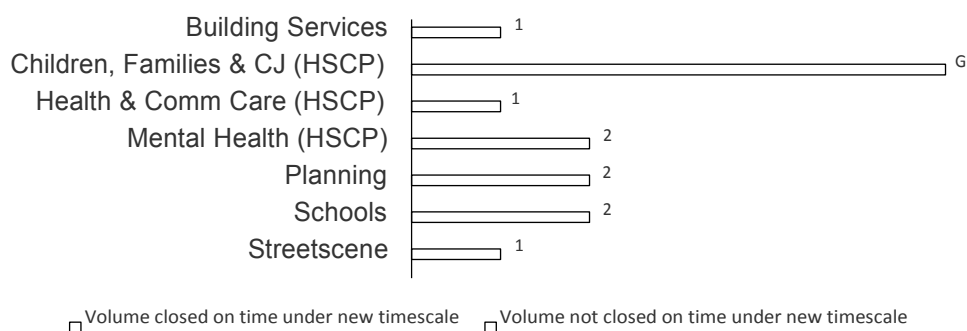
Complaints extended under both Stages during 2017/18 are detailed below.

Stage Ones



- 30 Stage One complaints had their timescales extended and six did not meet the new timescale. Reasons included complainant and employee availability, information awaited from 3rd parties and additional investigations being required.

Stage Twos



- 15 Stage Two complaints that had their timescales extended and all met the agreed new due dates.

Extending complaints is not considered normal practice so extension volumes should typically be low.

7 • Customer satisfaction with complaints handling

Complaint handling customer satisfaction surveys were issued during 2017/18 to determine how customers felt about their complaint experience. The survey questions fall under specific headings and key themes identified are listed below.

Whilst over 150 customers responded, it should be noted not all customers answered every question so the percentage results are reflective of this.

"Considering a complaint" (what did the customer consider when making their complaint)

- 67% said they felt raising a complaint would enable the Council to make things better
- 53% of respondents said they felt they should raise a complaint because something had gone wrong
- 44% said they knew they had a right to complain
- 47% of respondents said they knew the Council had a complaint procedure

"Making your complaint" (how did the customer feel when making their complaint)

- 45% said they knew there would be a formal record of their complaint
- 43% of respondents said they felt confident raising their complaint
- 34% said they knew their complaint would be passed to the appropriate person/department to resolve

"Investigating the complaint" (how did the customer feel during the complaint process)

- 30% felt the employee handling their complaints were empowered to resolve them
- 33% said they felt their concerns were understood and employees empathised with their situation
- 31% said they received updates as their complaints progressed
- 14% said they knew what stage their complaint was handled under

"Resolving the complaint" (what happened when the complaint was resolved by the Service)

- 42% of respondents said they were contacted with the outcome to their complaint
- 25% felt their complaint was handled fairly (although this may be subjective based on the outcome the customer wanted)
- 26% said the response received directly addressed their complaint
- 23% said they understood how any actions had been taken or any decisions had been reached

"Reflecting on the complaint experience" (would the customer make a complaint again)

- 65% of respondents said they would complain again and 39% would encourage others to complain
- 43% of respondents said they would complain again as it is important to raise issues
- 40% said they would complain again as complaints help improve service delivery

"Customer Satisfaction" (how did the customer rate their complaint experience)

- 54% of respondents were generally satisfied with how their complaints were handled and 24% thought their experience was excellent.

The feedback highlights some good scores as well as some development work. The introduction of a new Complaint Improvement Framework during 2018/19 should help address some of the low scores that have been identified.

8 • Improvements as a result of complaints

Complaint data for each Service is issued on a monthly basis and reviewed for accuracy, with remedial action undertaken if incorrect information is identified. The data is then issued to each Service quarterly, with a report provided to the Council's Head of Service Group. A report is also produced and submitted to the Audit & Scrutiny Committee every six months.

Not all Services are able to implement improvements from complaints due to a number of factors, including the feasibility of making changes and resource/budget considerations. That said, there were improvements made to service provision as a result of some complaints received during 2017/18 and a selection are noted below.

-) As a result of some complaints from residents regarding waste being put in incorrect bins, **Waste Services** developed a recycling leaflet that was issued across North Ayrshire together with changes to the brown bin collection frequency.
-) National Entitlement Card application processing involved a manual system where applications were being passed between offices, resulting in information going missing and some applications being misplaced. As a result of some complaints about this, **Customer Services** transferred the process to a new system, reducing the possibility of applications/information going missing.
-) A complaint was received regarding **Building Services** operatives making too much noise when starting repair work early in one morning. As a result operatives have been instructed to ensure noise levels are kept to a minimum if starting early.
-) Due to a breakdown in communication between 3rd party contractors, **Property Management & Investment** reviewed their handover procedures between installation and maintenance contractors in order to document areas of responsibility.
-) Due to some issues a customer had with a contractor, **Roads** will closely monitor the contractor in order to ensure any unacceptable performance is addressed.
-) As a customer was not happy with the way they were spoken to by one of our employees, our **Health & Community Care** service reiterated the employee code of conduct at their team meetings.
-) As a result of a complaint where cardboard had not been removed because it was sitting against a resident's blue bin, **Waste Services** issued a reminder for operatives to uplift such waste if placed alongside the bin.
-) In **Customer Services**, a customer complained that their DHP application was delayed after it was handed into a Customer Service Centre. A new scanning process was therefore introduced to reduce delays in applications being actioned.
-) As a result of a complaint to the **Welfare Reform Advice Team** about short notice visits, the notice given in appointment letters has been increased to 5 days.

-) As a result of a tenant being unable to contact one of our contractors by phone, **Property Management & Investment** discussed the matter with the contractor who now provides an email and text option on initial correspondence.
-) As a result of a customer complaining that a request for parking assistance had not been answered, **Roads** introduced timescales for completing such requests.

Although the list is not exhaustive, it does provide a selection of the improvements Services made as a result of complaints, concerns and feedback received during 2017/18.

Actions and improvements as a result of complaints received are published on the NAG website under the banner "You Said, We Did".

9 • Compliments

Over 570 compliments were recorded across the Directorates during 2017/18:

Directorate	Volume
Chief Executive Service	2
Democratic Services	5
Economy & Communities	64
Education & Youth Employment	4
Finance & Corporate Support	151
Health & Social Care Partnership	160
Place	188

Of the compliments recorded:

- A number were cross-Council, with customers commending or praising more than one service.
- Some were internal, with employees complimenting other employees.
- Many related to specific individuals and teams.

The following word cloud details some of the feedback employees received:



10 • ALEO complaints

The SPSO requested all Arms-Length External Organisations (ALEOs) comply with the requirements of the Two Stage GHP. As North Ayrshire Leisure Limited (NALL) is an ALEO of the Council, NALL adopted the GHP.

From 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018, the Company received a total of 195 complaints, of which 52% were resolved at Stage One and the remainder resolved at Stage Two.

The complaints received were categorised as follows.

Category	2017118 Volume	% of total
Facilities (General)	55	28%
Facilities (Gleanliness)	3	1%
Gustomer Service	54	28%
Activities and Programming	46	24%
Policy/General	33	17%
Marketing and Promotion	4	2%
TOTAL	195	
100%		

The table below details a three year comparison of complaints received in relation to each category.

	Total by Year		
Category	2015116	2016117	2017118
Facilities General	41	41	55
Facilities Gleanliness	6	13	3
Gustomer Service	47	95	54
Activities and Programming	46	33	46
Policy/General	35	16	33
Marketing and Promotion	4	5	4
TOTAL	179	203	195

The table below details complaint response times and by category. Performance figures show that all Stage Two complaints were answered within the 20 working day target with 52% being answered within 5 working days.

	Stage One (< 5 days)	Stage Two (<20 days)
Category	2017118 Total	2015116 YTD Total
Facilities General	36	19
Facilities Gleanliness	2	1
Gustomer Service	24	30
Activities and Programming	19	27
Policy/General	17	16
Marketing and Promotion	4	0
TOTAL	102	93

Gomplaint responses are provided via the same channel the complaint is received (or by letter or e-mail for Stage Two responses). Where possible and appropriate, complaints made verbally are addressed and answered verbally as quickly as possible by the appropriate manager.

The Gompany values all complaints it receives and uses them to inform management and develop decisions. Examples of complaints received over the period are detailed in the table below.

Category	Nature of Complaint	Company Response1Action
Facilities General	A complaint was received about older children using the training pool and lifeguards taking no action.	Customer was advised that we cannot ban older children from training pool as they may not be able to swim. Managers will encourage lifeguards on duty to monitor and manage area better.
Customer Service	There were a small number of customer complaints about trying to contact centres by telephone but receiving no answer.	Customers were apologised to for poor customer service. Front of House staff also deal with walk in customers, asked if phoning to avoid peak times. New corporate telephone system currently being explored.
Activities and Programming	There were some customer complaints concerning late cancellation of classes and not being advised in advance.	Customers received an apology and advised that instructor/s had reported sick at last minute not allowing time to contact customers. Gompany is seeking to recruit more Aerobics Instructors to reduce cancellations.
Policy/General	There were several complaints received about changes to pricing which occurred from October 2017.	Customers advised that there had been no price increases in 6 years, prices remain in the bottom quartile in Scotland Gompany sustainability is paramount.

It was proposed that the categorisation of complaints change from April 2018 in order to provide the Board with greater detail on the range of complaints being received (in addition to providing better management information for managers in the decision making process).

The categories currently being used will reduce from six to five and will now be broken down by location. The locations will be Irvine, Three Towns, Garnock & Kilwinning and North Goast & Arran.

Details of complaints received using the new categorisations will be detailed in the North Ayrshire Gouncil 2018/19 annual complaint report.

11 • SPSO referrals

The SPSO recently published its 2017/18 statistics and below are details of the complaints the Ombudsman's office received about North Ayrshire Gouncil (NAG) during 2017/18:

Type of complaint

SPSO Subject heading	Volume
Building Gontrol	2
Gonsumer Protection	0
Economic Development	0
Education	3
Environmental Health & Gleansing	2
Finance	2
Fire & Police Boards	0
Housing	8
Land & Property	1
Legal & Admin	2
National Park Authorities	0
Other	0
Personnel	0
Planning	0
Recreation & Leisure	2
Roads & Transport	0
Social Work	6
Welfare Fund - Gommunity Gare Grants	0
Welfare Fund - Grisis Grants	0
Subject Unknown or Out Of Jurisdiction	0

- 28 NAG complaints were referred to the SPSO in 2017/18 and the total number relating to the Scottish Local Authority sector as a whole was 1,542. This equates to 1.8% of all referrals made.
- The highest number of NAG referrals related to Housing and Social Work but this is unsurprising given 39% of all referrals the SPSO received for the sector in 2017/18 related to these two services.
- Interestingly there were no NAG Planning complaint referrals made to the SPSO in 2017/18, even though Planning complaints made up 10% of all referrals the SPSO received for the sector.

Outcome of complaints

Stage	Outcome	Volume
Advice	Not duly made or withdrawn	8
	Out of jurisdiction (discretionary)	0
	Out of jurisdiction (non-discretionary)	0
	Premature	3
	Total	11
Early Resolution	Not duly made or withdrawn	1
	Out of jurisdiction (discretionary)	3
	Out of jurisdiction (non-discretionary)	2
	Outcome not achievable	1
	Premature	1
	Proportionality	7
	Resolved	0
	Total	15
Investigation	Fully upheld	0
	Some upheld	1
	Not upheld	2
	Not duly made or withdrawn	0
	Resolved	0
	Total	3

- Reviewing the NAG complaint referrals the SPSO received during 2017/18, many were resolved at the Advice or Early Resolution stages and no action was therefore required by the Council. The SPSO decided to investigate only three complaints during the year and further details of these are noted below:

SPSO ref	Nature of complaint	SPSO Decision
201607212	Customer was unhappy with the condition of a property she moved into. Customer said it took the Council too long to carry out repairs that were needed and that the Council did not respond to all the issues she raised in her complaint.	Some complaint elements upheld. One recommendation made.
201702249	Customer complained the Council did not adequately respond to the repairs at his property relating to dampness and a faulty boiler. Customer also complained that the Council failed to properly assess his homelessness application and take into account his mental health.	No complaint elements upheld. No recommendations made.
201700955	Customer complained about how her application for accessible housing points (points awarded to someone to help them find an alternative property, on the basis that their current home is not suitable for their needs) was assessed.	No complaint elements upheld. No recommendations made.

More details regarding complaint referrals for North Ayrshire Council can be found on the SPSO website at <https://www.spsso.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 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 SLA timescale
- A Council employee was rude, unhelpful or unprofessional
- A Council employee did not attend an appointment or call-out on a dateltime 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 a request for a service, observation or enquiry and actioned accordingly.

Appendix 1 • Upheld complaints analysis

In response to a question raised by our Audit & Scrutiny Committee when the half yearly 2017/18 report was produced, an exercise was undertaken within each Directorate to analyse complaints they fully upheld during the first 6 months of 2017/18. Although it is accepted that outcomes are unique to each complaint and cannot be predicted, this analysis was to ensure complaints were being closed using the correct outcomes and that improvements were being identified if complaints were being upheld.

The analysis produced by each Directorate showed the following:-

Economy & Communities

A small number of complaints were fully upheld for this Directorate and there were no concerns with the outcomes selected. Improvements were identified in some instances.

Education & Youth Employment

The majority of upheld complaints related to service provision in schools and the Directorate is committed to reducing complaints in this area through on-going support provided by the Senior Management team as well as school leadership team development opportunities. Policies, strategies and guidance documents are also regularly reviewed to ensure they meet school requirements.

Some improvements were made as a result of the complaints received in both Primary and Secondary schools.

The Directorate continues to view complaints as an opportunity to ensure the services provided best meet the needs of learners, partners and communities.

Finance & Corporate Support

Complaints that were fully upheld for this Directorate were varied in nature and related to a number of services.

A small number of topics featured more than others but no patterns or trends were identified and the complaints were typically isolated events. Improvements were often made as a result of complaints that were fully upheld.

Place

Complaints that were fully upheld for this Directorate were varied in nature and covered a range of services.

One service that upheld most of its complaints was the result of genuine errors and in some instances local improvements were made. In another Service, a review was undertaken that identified complaints that should have been closed as service requests and all affected cases were amended to reflect this.

The most recorded complaint topic across the Directorate was 'Other'. As this topic is not helpful when trying to identify complaint trends, the Place Performance Team is working with each Service to identify additional topics for inclusion in the complaint recording form to reduce the necessity to use this option.

Health & Social Care Partnership

Last year this Directorate adopted the same complaint procedure the rest of the Council uses and a major change was that all informal complaints are now recorded. A positive outcome of this is that the Directorate has been able to identify trends from some of these complaints (which would not have been ordinarily logged under the previous procedure that was being used).

Gomplaints that were fully upheld for some of the HSGP Services has resulted in some changes being introduced and as employees become more comfortable with the data being produced, there is an expectation further trends will be identified and more improvements made.

Conclusion

It is evident complaint outcomes are generally being classified correctly and the average volume of complaints being upheld per Service is less than one third. Directorates receive regular complaint data which they review and use to identify improvements and1or changes to service provision.

End of Report