NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

29 January 2026

Audit and Scrutiny Committee

Title:	**2025/26 Mid-Year Complaint Report**
Purpose:	To inform the Audit and Scrutiny Committee of the Council's complaint performance and volumes and trends of complaints received in the first six months of Financial Year 2025/26.
Recommendation:	That the Committee notes the report and the information provided.

1. Executive Summary

1.1 This report details complaint handling performance relating to North Ayrshire Council covering the period 1 April 2025 to 30 September 2025 and is referred to in the report as H1 2025. The detailed report is attached at Appendix 1.

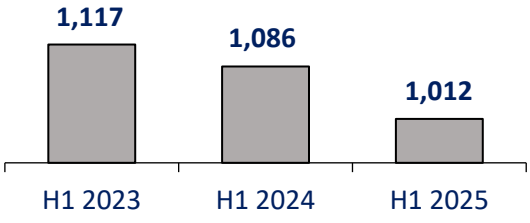
1.2 To allow comparisons to be made the report also details some complaint data relating to H1 2024 and H1 2023.

1.3 Performance is measured through several 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 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 A 7% decrease in complaints received and closed is seen when compared to H1 2024 and a 9% decrease when compared to H1 2023.

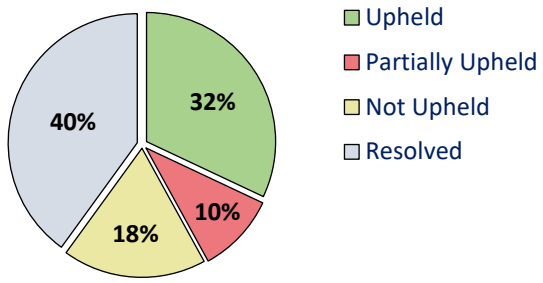
2.3 ***Complaints closed at each Stage***

	H1 2025
Stage One	86%
Stage Two	14%

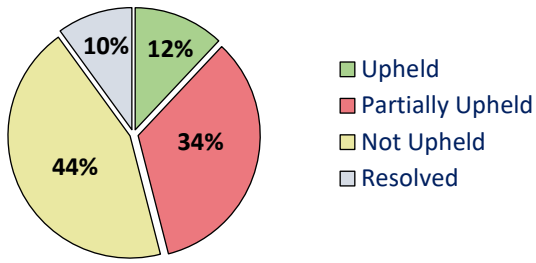
2.3.1 Whilst there is no national target for the number of complaints to be closed under each stage, the Council always seeks to maximise closure at Stage One as complainants receive a quicker resolution compared to Stage Two, reduces the impact on complaint handler time and service delivery and reduces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

2.4 ***Complaint outcomes***

Stage One



Stage Two

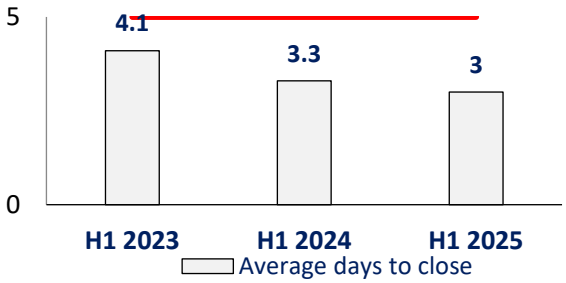


2.4.1 Resolved complaints are where the Council has taken action to address a problem or issue without deciding on whether there were any failings (this would happen where we agree a solution with the complainant at the outset without needing to investigate the complaint).

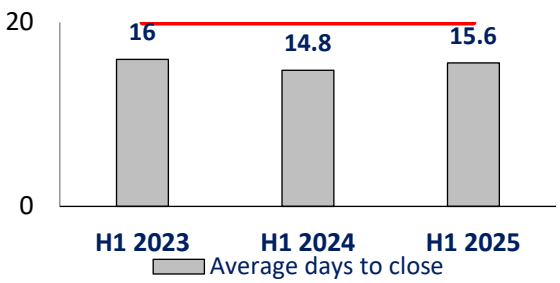
2.4.2 Most complaints not upheld related to policies, regulations or complaints that were proven unfounded after investigation.

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

Stage One



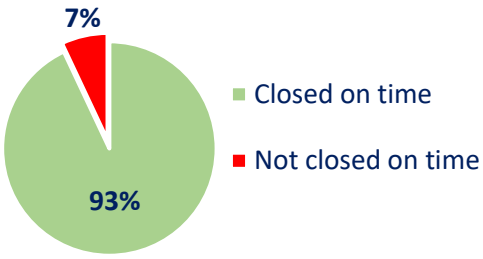
Stage Two



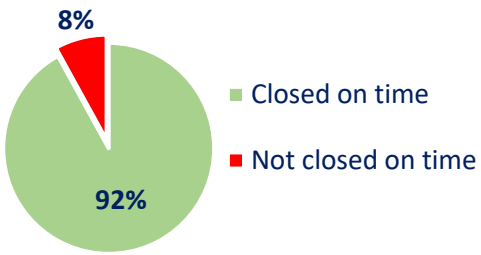
2.5.1 The average time in working days for a response under both Stages is better than the SPSO target response timescales for the last three years. An improvement in our performance to this time last year for Stage One complaints should also be noted.

2.6 ***Complaints closed within timescale***

Stage One



Stage Two



2.6.1 The national target for complaints closed under Stage One is 80% or above. The national target for complaints closed under Stage Two is 85% or above. The Council's performance in closing complaints timeously was better than the national target under both stages. Further details of complaints not closed on time are contained in the attached report.

2.7 ***Trends identified from upheld/partially upheld complaints***

2.7.1 Key complaint topics for upheld or partially upheld complaints are detailed on page 8 of the attached report.

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

2.8.1 Not all services can implement improvements because of complaints due to several 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 period and a selection are noted in page 13 of the attached report.

2.9 ***Compliments***

2.9.1 The Council received some compliments during the period. Some praised specific individuals or teams, some related to more than one service and some were raised by employees complimenting other employees.

3. Proposals

3.1 It is proposed the Committee notes the report and recognises the Council's complaint handling performance in relation to Section 2 above.

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 by identifying trends and focussing on service improvements whenever possible for North Ayrshire residents, customers and visitors.

Community Wealth Building

4.7 None.

Islands Communities Impact Assessment (ICIA)

4.8 None.

United Nations Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

4.9 If a young person under the age of 18 makes a complaint, or an adult makes a complaint on behalf of a young person or about an issue that affects them, we will use an enhanced child-friendly complaints process. This process ensures the young person's views are heard and considered and follows the SPSO Child Friendly Complaints Handling Principles and Child Friendly Complaints Handling Process Guidance.

Consumer Duty

4.10 None.

5. Consultation

5.1 None.

Aileen Craig
Head of Service for Democratic Services

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

Background Papers
2025/26 Mid-Year Complaint Report

North Ayrshire Council
Comhairle Siorrachd Àir a Tuath

2025/26 Mid-Year Complaint Report

Contents

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 being 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 members of the public:-

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

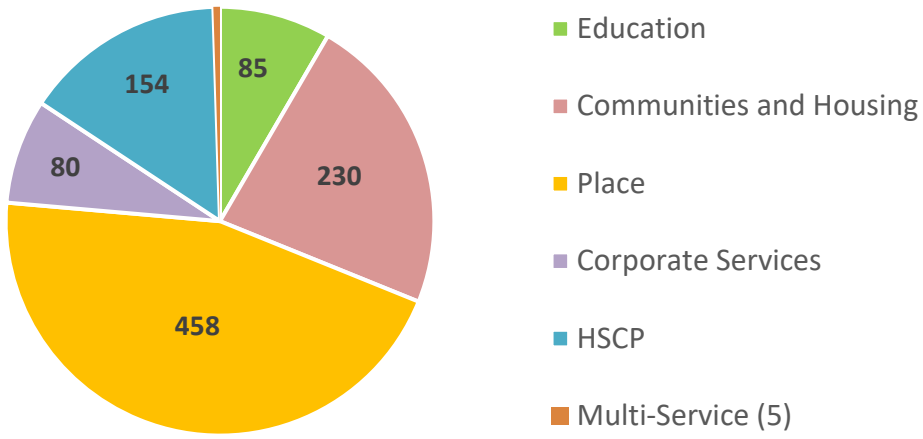
Stage Two complaints (also known as *Investigations*) are complaints the Council are typically unable to address at Stage One and require more time to carry out further investigation. This may be because the complaint is complex, serious or high risk. The Council has up to 20 working days to address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

This report details the Council's complaint handling performance covering the first six months of financial year 2025 (1 April to 30 September) and is referred to in the report as H1 2025. 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 complaints is a statutory requirement and is monitored by Audit Scotland.

1 Volume of complaints closed

1,005 complaints were received during the period and 1,012 closed. The chart below provides a breakdown of the closed complaints per Directorate:



The following tables highlight complaint volumes per Directorate under each Stage:

Education	Stage One	Stage Two
Education (HQ)	3	11
Education (Schools)	34	28
Facilities Management	9	-
Total	**46**	**39**

Communities and Housing	Stage One	Stage Two
Building Services	107	11
Community Facilities	4	-
Housing	71	16
Information & Culture	1	-
Planning	2	3
Protective Services	10	3
Sport and Outdoor Activity	2	-
Total	**197**	**33**

Place	Stage One	Stage Two
Property Management and Investment	41	10
Roads	44	6
Streetscene	32	-
Transport	2	-
Waste Services	322	1
Total	**441**	**17**

Corporate Services	Stage One	Stage Two
Customer Services	67	4
Finance	1	1
IT	1	-
Legal Services	6	-
Total	**75**	**5**

Health & Social Care Partnership	Stage One	Stage Two
Children, Families & Justice	18	14
Finance & Transformation	11	1
Health & Community Care	69	23
Mental Health	9	7
Support Services	2	-
Total	**109**	**45**

Multi-Service	Stage One	Stage Two
Complaints involving more than one service	-	5
Total	**-**	**5**

- 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 86% were handled at this Stage during the period.

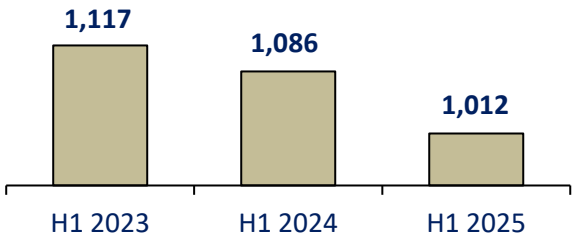
- Some services handled all their complaints at Stage One.

- Whilst 32% of all complaints closed related to Waste Services (the majority relating to missed collections), the service empty over 102,000 household waste bins each week. As this equates to approximately 2.5 million collections during the period, 0.01% of these collections resulted in complaints being raised.

- Multi-Service complaints have a table of their own as they are not attributable to a particular service.

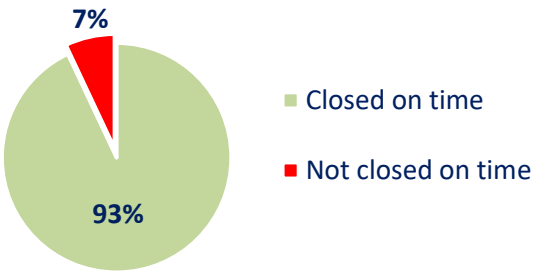
Year on Year comparison

The graph below compares the volume of complaints received over the half year period in the last three years:



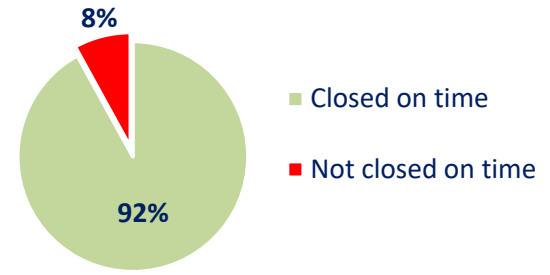
2 Volume of complaints closed on time at both Stages

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.

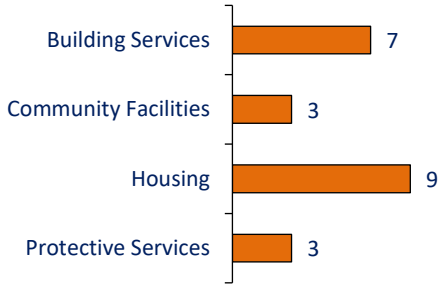
Stage One

Education

The two school complaints did not meet timescale due to difficulties meeting/communicating with complainants.

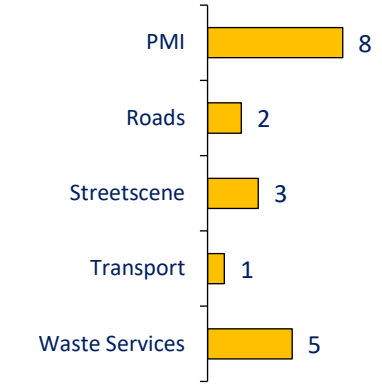
For two of the Facilities Management complaints, no reasons were recorded as to why they breached timescale

Communities and Housing



There were several reasons why complaints breached in this Directorate, including resourcing issues, employee availability, administrative errors and complaints being routed to incorrect services initially.

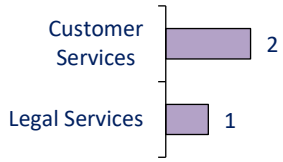
Place



The main reasons for complaints breaching in this Directorate were reduced resources and awaiting information from third parties.

Some of these complaints could have had their timescales extended or escalated to Stage Two given the difficulties encountered.

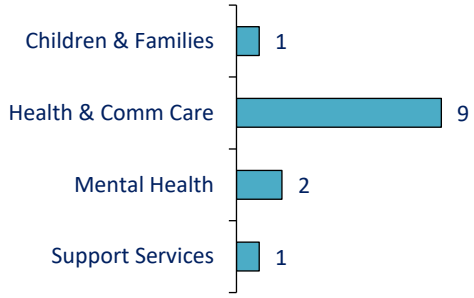
Corporate Services



One Customer Services complaint breached because the complainant could not be contacted to discuss their complaint and the other complaint breached due to a system issue. Both these complaints could have been escalated to Stage Two given the difficulties encountered.

The Legal Services complaint related to a resource issue.

HSCP



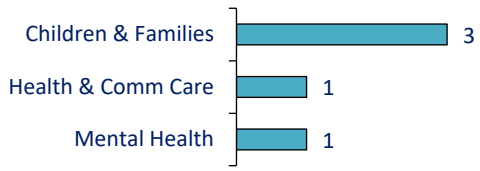
Various reasons given why these complaints breached timescale, including individuals not being available to progress complaints, complaint complexity (some of which could have been escalated to Stage Two given the difficulties encountered) and system issues.

Stage Two

Communities and Housing

Various reasons recorded as to why these complaints breached timescale. No trends or themes identified.

HSCP



The main reason these complaints breached was due to delays encountered at response approval stage.

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.

Education

Service	Key complaint topic(s)
Education (HQ and Schools)	• Sensitive issues relating to teachers and/or pupils • Service delivery/provision • Employee actions (alleged or perceived)
Facilities Management	• School Crossing patrols

Communities and Housing

Service	Key complaint topic(s)
Building Services	• Quality issues • Communication • Employee actions (alleged or perceived)

Place

Service	Key complaint topic(s)
Property Management and Investment	• Gas Central Heating issues
Roads	• Parking/parking enforcement
Waste Services	• Failed bulky uplifts • Missed waste bin collections (all colours) • Missed assisted bin collections (all colours) • Waste bins not delivered (any colour)

Corporate Services

Service	Key complaint topic(s)
Customer Services	• Employee actions (alleged or perceived)

HSCP (Social Work complaints)

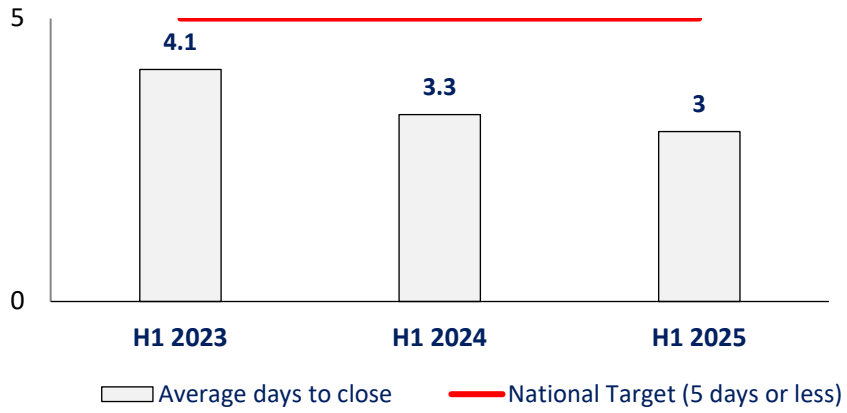
Service	Key complaint topic(s)
Children & Families	• Employee actions (alleged or perceived)
Health & Community Care	• Service delivery/provision • Employee actions (alleged or perceived)
Mental Health	• Service delivery/provision

5 Average time in working days for a full response

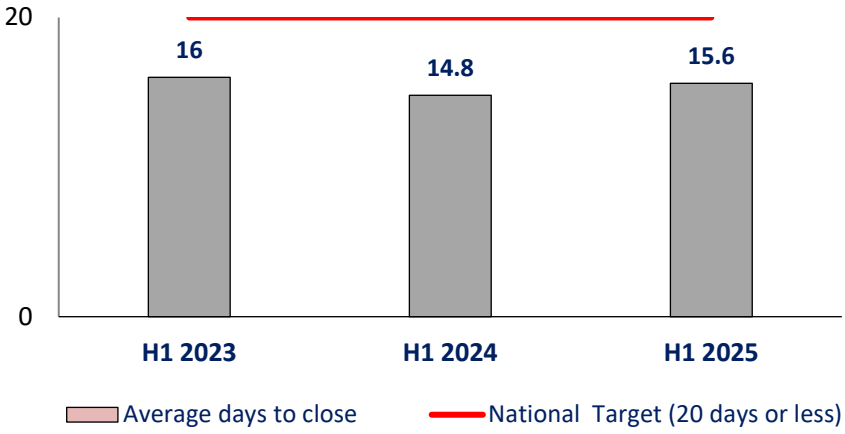
The average time in working days to close complaints under both Stages during the period is noted below.

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

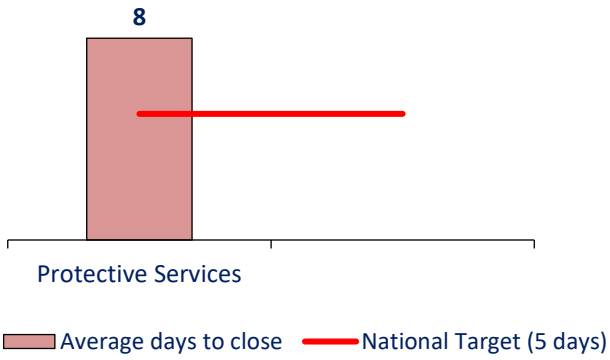


The average number of days to close Stage One and Stage Two complaints within target in the last three years have been consistently surpassed.

The bar charts below 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.

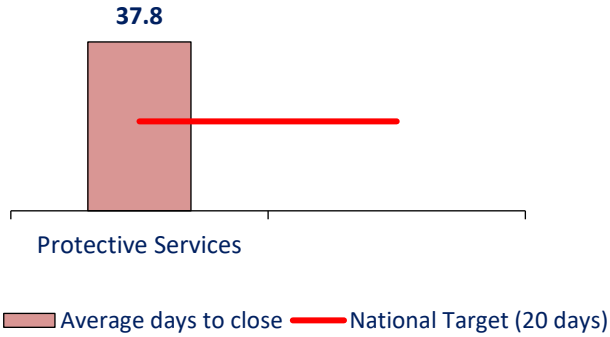
Housing & Public Protection

Stage One



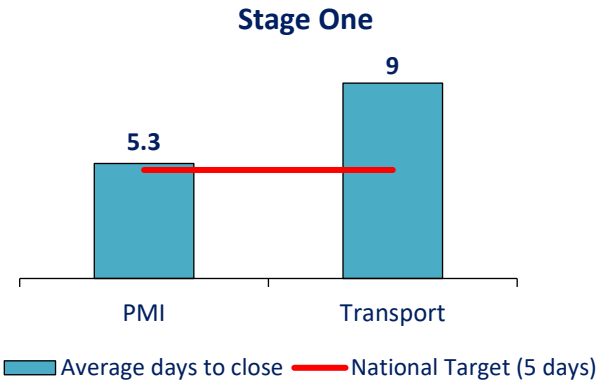
One complaint was closed on working day 43, resulting in the target not being met. This was due to an oversight and the complainant being unavailable to assist with the complaint investigation.

Stage Two



No Stage Two complaints for this service met the 20-working day timescale. Various reasons were provided and no trend or theme was identified.

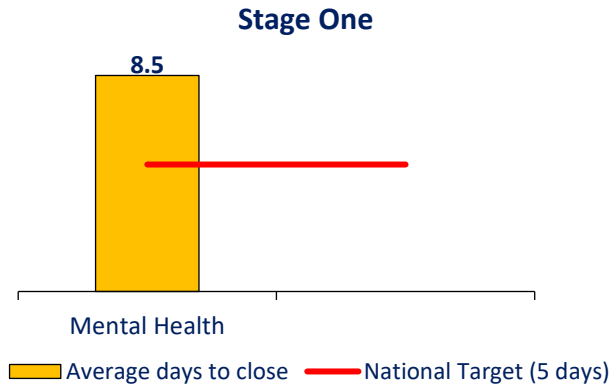
Sustainability, Transport & Corporate Property



A small number of Property Management & Investment complaints were closed just outwith the 5 working day timescale, resulting in the target not being met.

One Transport complaint was closed on working day 17 as information was awaited from the complainant.

HSCP



One complaint was closed on working day 16 as further information was required from the complainant to progress the investigation. This complaint could have been escalated and handled at Stage Two given the circumstances.

6 Extended complaints

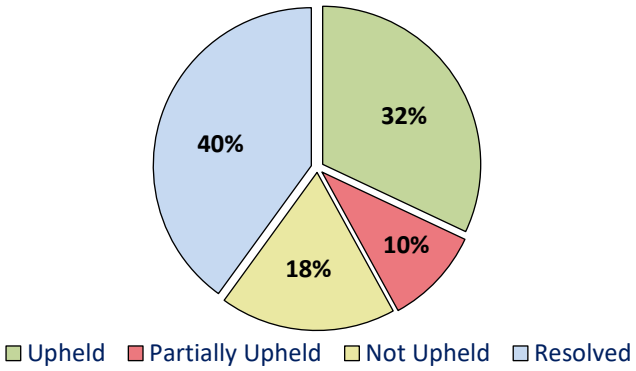
- 91 complaints had their timescales extended during the period (74 at Stage One and 17 at Stage Two). The complaints related to multiple services across all Directorates. There were various reasons for extensions, including complainants and/or employees not being available to assist with investigations, reduced resources, additional information having to be sought to support investigations and system issues.

- Of the 91 complaints that had their timescales extended, 78% were closed within their new timescales (84% for Stage One and 94% for Stage Two).

7 Complaint Outcomes

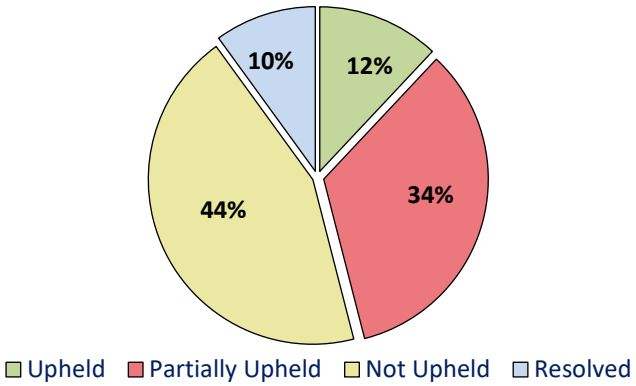
The charts below detail the number of complaints upheld, partially upheld, not upheld or resolved under both Stages.

Stage One



- Complaints closed as Resolved* related to multiple services across all Directorates, with one third relating to Waste Services (mainly missed waste bin collections). This indicates those complainants simply wanted their bins collected.
- Complaints that were not upheld related to policies and regulations or they were complaints that were poor quality/unfounded.

Stage Two



- Complaints that were upheld or partially upheld** related to numerous services across all Directorates.
- Complaints that were not upheld were similar to the reasons Stage One complaints were not upheld.

*Resolved complaints are where the Council has taken action to address the problem/issue without deciding whether there were any failings (this would happen where we agree a solution with a complainant at the outset without needing to investigate the complaint).

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

8 Improvements made as a result of complaints

Some improvements/changes were made because of complaints received during the period and a small selection is noted below.

What happened	What we did
A complaint was received regarding a parent's concerns over the safeguarding of their child while attending school.	The matter was investigated and a parental meeting held with the Head Teacher and others to discuss all concerns raised. The parent was happy with the actions agreed and the pupil was taken through all safeguarding procedures. Key Adults, safe places and various supports throughout the pupil's timetable were shared with a summary card of support actions to be completed by the pupil. The pupil accepted the card and agreed it would be helpful.
A complaint was received that a window cleaner working on behalf of the Council asked a tenant in a sheltered housing complex if they could gain access to the inside of the complex via the tenant's property to clean the windows.	It was determined it was a window cleaner from a contracted company and the contract only covers the outside of the windows plus communal areas. The Council now receive a list of dates in advance from the company, stating when they will be carrying out cleaning in each housing complex. We also now have a system in place that they can gain access to the front door (public areas only) of housing complexes without having to call any flats or houses.
A resident set up a mygov.scot account but was unable to link two properties to the Council Tax system.	The issue was investigated and it was discovered there was a problem within the system that prohibited more than one property being added. This was fixed and the resident was thanked for bringing this matter to our attention.
A resident complained that rats were causing damage to their garden and the nest was on unattended waste ground between the resident's property and a Council property boundary.	The relevant services attended the area to ensure access could be gained to clear it and the Council is now reviewing its land ownership plans to make sure maintenance responsibilities are established going forward.

9 Compliments

Many compliments were recorded during the period and of these:

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

Whilst the compliments received cannot all be highlighted in this report, the word cloud below illustrates some of the feedback the Council received from tenants, customers, residents and visitors:

10 Glossary

Term	Explanation
Stage One	Stage One (aka *Frontline Resolution*) 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 five working days unless an extension is requested (an additional five working days) and approved by a senior manager or above. The Council should, however, always aim to conclude these types of complaints within five 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 *Investigation*) 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 or above.

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 an internal or external policy (but only where the complaint relates specifically to the way the matter was administered)

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, it is deemed to be something else and will be actioned under the relevant process.

END OF REPORT