
Report to Audit & Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting: 27th October 2022

Subject: Annual Complaints Report 2021/22

Report by: Strategic Director, Partnership & Performance

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1. This report presents an overview of performance in relation to complaints handling during the year 2021/22.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1. It is recommended that Committee note, comment on and challenge the performance of Council services in handling complaints.

3.0 Considerations

- 3.1. Complaints provide a first-hand account of customers' views and experiences, and can highlight problems we may otherwise miss. This can help us address a customer's dissatisfaction and prevent the same problem from happening again. Complaints also offer valuable information that can help us to improve services and customer satisfaction.
- 3.2. Clackmannanshire Council's commitment to customer service is reflected in our values, in particular: Be the **Customer** - Listen to our customers, communicate honestly and with respect and integrity.

Complaints Handling Procedure

- 3.3. A complaint is:

An expression of dissatisfaction by one or more members of the public about our action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by us or on our behalf.

- 3.4. Complaints we receive are dealt with according to our Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP), which is in line with guidance produced by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). The full CHP can be found on the Council website:

<https://www.clacks.gov.uk/site/documents/customerfeedback/clackmannanshirecouncilscomplaintshandlingprocedure/>

3.5. The CHP follows a 2 stage process:

Stage 1 (frontline response) aims to respond quickly (within five working days) to straightforward complaints that require little or no investigation.

Stage 2 is appropriate where:

- the customer is dissatisfied with the frontline response or refuses to engage at the frontline stage;
- the complaint is not simple and straightforward and therefore requires investigation; or
- the complaint relates to a serious, high-risk or high-profile issue

3.6. If, after the Council has fully investigated the complaint, the customer is still not satisfied with the decision or the way the Council has dealt with the complaint, then they can refer it to the SPSO.

3.7. By recording and tracking complaints we can analyse the causes of complaints, identifying any common themes or possible systemic problems, and ensuring that complaints are being dealt with efficiently and appropriately.

3.8. Under the LAMCHP, councils are required to publish annual performance information against a number of indicators, including complaints volumes, outcomes and timeliness of response.

3.9. The Complaints Performance Report for 2021/22 is shown in appendix 1.

4.0 Improvement Actions

4.1. Tying in with the launch of the revised CHP, in April 2021, a number of staff information sessions were run to support the roll-out of the new procedure.

4.2. Changes were made to the complaints database, reflecting changes to the CHP.

4.3. A review of The Council's Customer Charter has been agreed.

5.0 Sustainability Implications

5.1. There are no sustainability implications arising directly from this report.

6.0 Resource Implications

6.1. Financial Details

6.2. The full financial implications of the recommendations are set out in the report. This includes a reference to full life cycle costs where appropriate. Yes

6.3. Finance have been consulted and have agreed the financial implications as set out in the report. Yes

6.4. Staffing

7.0 Exempt Reports

7.1. Is this report exempt? Yes (please detail the reasons for exemption below) No

7.0 Declarations

The recommendations contained within this report support or implement our Corporate Priorities and Council Policies.

(1) **Our Priorities** (Please double click on the check box)

Clackmannanshire will be attractive to businesses & people and ensure fair opportunities for all

Our families; children and young people will have the best possible start in life

Women and girls will be confident and aspirational, and achieve their full potential

Our communities will be resilient and empowered so that they can thrive and flourish

(2) **Council Policies** (Please detail)

Customer Charter

8.0 Equalities Impact

8.1 Have you undertaken the required equalities impact assessment to ensure that no groups are adversely affected by the recommendations?
Yes No

9.0 Legality

- 9.1 It has been confirmed that in adopting the recommendations contained in this report, the Council is acting within its legal powers. Yes

10.0 Appendices

- 10.1 Please list any appendices attached to this report. If there are no appendices, please state "none".

Appendix: Annual Complaints Performance Report 2021/22

11.0 Background Papers


- 11.1 Have you used other documents to compile your report? (All documents must be kept available by the author for public inspection for four years from the date of meeting at which the report is considered)

Yes (please list the documents below) No

Author(s)

NAME	DESIGNATION	TEL NO / EXTENSION
Rose Hetman	Strategy & Performance Adviser	2052

Approved by

NAME	DESIGNATION	SIGNATURE
Stuart Crickmar	Strategic Director	

APPENDIX



Clackmannanshire
Council

www.clacks.gov.uk

Comhairle Siorrachd
Chlach Mhanann

Clackmannanshire Council

Annual Complaints Performance Report 2021/22

Clackmannanshire Council aims to provide the highest possible quality of service to our customers, but we recognise that sometimes things can go wrong and we fail to meet expectations. We value all complaints and use information from them to help us improve our services.

We manage complaints in line with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) Local Authority Model Complaints Handling Procedure, which consists of 2 stages:

Stage 1: (Frontline response) covers straightforward complaints that require little or no investigation, and should be responded to within 5 working days;

Stage 2: (Investigation) concerns complaints that have not been successfully resolved at Stage 1, or more complex or serious complaints that require investigation. Stage 2 complaints should be answered within 20 working days.

This report presents the Council's performance in relation to complaints handling from 1st April 2021 until 31st March 2022, against key performance indicators defined by the SPSO.

NB At the time of writing, the most recent Scottish benchmarking data available was for 2020/21. These figures have been included to allow comparison.

Scottish Public Services Ombudsman Performance Indicators

Indicator 1 Complaints received per thousand population

The steady increase in the number of complaints received has continued, while complaints closed has also increased during the last year.

	2019/20	2020/21		2021/22
	Clacks	Clacks	Scotland	Clacks
1a Number of complaints received per 1,000 population	4.0	4.8	9.87	5.5
1b Number of complaints closed per 1,000 population	4.2	3.8	9.34	5.6

Indicator 2 Complaints closed at stage 1 and stage 2 as a percentage of all complaints closed

The majority of complaints are dealt with at stage 1. The volume of complaints that went straight to stage 2 declined significantly during 2020/21, but has returned to what has been the usual level historically. Meanwhile, complaints dealt with at stage 2 following escalation increased during 2020/21 and returned to their usual level historically during 2021/22.

Complaints can be classed as stage 2 either on receipt (if they are considered to be particularly complex or serious), or they can be escalated from stage 1 (if they have not been closed after 10 days or if the customer is unhappy about the outcome of their stage 1 complaint).

	2019/20	2020/21		2021/22
	Clacks	Clacks	Scotland	Clacks
2a Number of complaints closed at stage 1 as % all complaints	84.6%	87.1%	88.8%	85.0%
2b Number of complaints closed at stage 2 as % all complaints	9.3%	2.6%	8.4%	9.8%
2c Number of complaints closed at stage 2 after escalation as % all complaints	6.1%	10.3%	2.8%	5.2%

Indicator 3 Number of complaints upheld/partially upheld/not upheld at each stage as a percentage of complaints closed in full at each stage

With the introduction of the new Model Complaints Handling Procedure in April 2021, a new category of outcome, "**resolved**", was introduced. A complaint is **resolved** when both the Council and the customer agree what action (if any) will be taken to provide full and final resolution for the customer, without making a decision about whether the complaint is upheld or not upheld.

Not upheld remains the most common outcome for complaints closed at stage 1. However, a higher proportion (57.1%) of complaints dealt with at stage 2 were either upheld or partially upheld.

	2019/20	2020/21		2021/22
	Clacks	Clacks	Scotland	Clacks
3a Number of complaints upheld at stage 1 as % of all complaints closed at stage 1	36.5%	29.6%	47.2%	25.9%
3b Number of complaints not upheld at stage 1 as % of all complaints closed at stage 1	46.4%	53.3%	35.9%	42.4%
3c Number of complaints partially upheld at stage 1 as % of all complaints closed at stage 1	17.1%	17.2%	14.2%	14.0%
NEW Number of complaints resolved at stage 1 as % of all complaints closed at stage 1				17.7%
3d Number of complaints upheld at stage 2 as % of all complaints closed at stage 2	25.0%	0.0%	24.4%	10.7%
3e Number of complaints not upheld at stage 2 as % of all complaints closed at stage 2	55.0%	60.0%	48.4%	42.9%
3f Number of complaints partially upheld at stage 2 as % of all complaints closed at stage 2	20.0%	40.0%	19.3%	46.4%
NEW Number of complaints resolved at stage 2 as % of all complaints closed at stage 2				0.0%
3g Number of escalated complaints upheld at stage 2 as % of all escalated complaints closed at stage 2	23.1%	10.0%	21.2%	6.7%
3h Number of escalated complaints not upheld at stage 2 as % of all escalated complaints closed at stage 2	61.5%	60.0%	49.5%	46.7%
3i Number of escalated complaints partially upheld at stage 2 as % of all escalated complaints closed at stage 2	15.4%	30.0%	23.6%	40.0%
NEW Number of escalated complaints resolved at stage 2 as % of all escalated complaints closed at stage 2				0.0%

Indicator 4 Average time in working days for a full response to complaints at each stage

The average time for responding to complaints at stages 1 and 2 has increased, with both categories failing to reach their targets of closure within 5 and 20 days respectively.

The average time for dealing with complaints that had been escalated to stage 2 has improved significantly during 2021/22, although it should be borne in mind that some of these complaints may have been escalated because of failure to meet the deadline for closure at stage 1.

	2019/20	2020/21		2021/22
	Clacks	Clacks	Scotland	Clacks
4a Average time in working days to respond to complaints at stage 1	7.6	5.8	6.5	6.1
4b Average time in working days to respond to complaints at stage 2	20.9	19.6	22.9	20.4
4c Average time in working days to respond to complaints after escalation	20.7	26.9	20.7	17.9

Indicator 5 Number and percentage of complaints at each stage which were closed in full within the set timescales of 5 and 20 working days

The proportion of complaints closed within their target times has declined significantly across the board during 2021/22. This could be partly due to the increase in the volume of complaints received, as well as the impact of work backlogs caused by Covid.

	2019/20	2020/21		2021/22
	Clacks	Clacks	Scotland	Clacks
5a Number of complaints closed at stage 1 within 5 working days as % of total number of stage 1 complaints	69.6%	78.7%	71.1%	60.9%
5b Number of complaints closed at stage 2 within 20 working days as % of total number of stage 2 complaints	85.0%	80.0%	62.7%	75.0%
5c Number of escalated complaints closed within 20 working days as a % of total number of escalated stage 2 complaints	84.6%	70.0%	65.5%	66.7%

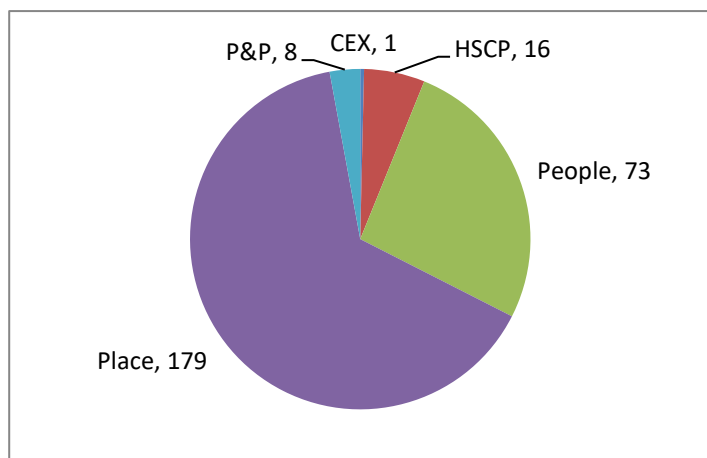
Indicator 6 Number and percentage of complaints at each stage where an extension to the 5 or 20 working day timeline has been authorised

Extensions authorised at stage 1 complaints continued to fall last year, while extensions at stage 2 continued to increase. Extensions for complaints that had been escalated to stage 2 fell last year, but remain higher than historic levels.

	2019/20	2020/21		2021/22
	Clacks	Clacks	Scotland	Clacks
6a Number of complaints closed at stage 1 where extension was authorised, as % all complaints at stage 1	5.5%	4.7%	4.6%	3.7%
6b Number of complaints closed at stage 2 where extension was authorised, as % all complaints at stage 2	10.0%	20.0%	14.3%	21.4%
6c Number of complaints closed after escalated where extension was authorised as % of all complaints escalated	7.7%	25.0%	16.1%	20.0%

Why people complain

Complaints by Service



Complaints by Subject



Complaints referred to the SPSO

During 2021/22, 12 complaints against Clackmannanshire Council were received and 12 determined by the SPSO. None of the complaints was upheld.

Complaints received by SPSO, by service

Subject Group	Number of Complaints
Economic Development	1
Education	2
Environmental Health & Cleansing	1
Housing	2
Legal & Admin	1
Planning	3
Roads & Transport	1
Social Work	1
Total	12

Outcome of complaints determined by SPSO

Stage	Outcome Group	
Advice	Premature	4
	Unable to proceed	1
Early Resolution	Discretion – Insufficient benefit would be achieved by investigation	1
	Discretion - Good complaint handling	6
Total		12

