

Annual Complaints Performance Report 2021/22

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Our customer comments and complaints procedure

Listening to You

We regard a complaint as an expression of dissatisfaction about our action, or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by us, or on our behalf.

We take **all** complaints seriously. Our staff are trained in handling complaints effectively by focusing where possible on resolution at the **first point of contact**.

Our complaints procedure 'Listening to you' has two stages:

Stage 1

We will always try to resolve complaints quickly, within five working days.

Stage 2

If customers are dissatisfied with our response at Stage One, they can escalate their complaint to Stage Two. We will also look at some complaints immediately at this stage if it is clear they are complex or need detailed investigation. We will acknowledge all Stage Two complaints within three working days and provide a response to customers within 20 working days, unless there is clearly a good reason for needing more time to investigate.

Where customers are dissatisfied with our decision regarding a Stage Two complaint, they can ask the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) to consider their complaint further.

How customers have complained

Our Performance – Key Figures

The following sections of this report provide performance information which is based on indicators outlined by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO).

Indicator 1 – Complaints Received Per 1,000 of Population

This section details the total number of complaints handled by South Ayrshire Council in the reporting period 2021/22. To allow for a fair comparison across all 32 Scottish Councils the figure of complaints per 1,000 of population is used.

- The population of South Ayrshire is estimated at **112,470**
- In 2021/22 South Ayrshire Council handled **456** complaints from customers
- Meaning that an average of **4** complaints were received per **1,000** residents
- This indicates that **1** in every **246** South Ayrshire residents have registered a complaint about our services

-In 2020/21, the Council received 3 complaints per 1,000 South Ayrshire residents. The increase is as a result of the impact of increased services following the COVID 19 outbreak.

Indicator 2 – Closed Complaints

This indicator provides information on the number of complaints closed at Stage One and Stage Two, as a percentage of all complaints closed.

The term “closed” refers to a complaint that has had a response sent to the customer and at the time no further action is required (regardless of which stage it is processed at and whether any further escalation takes place).

- **373** complaints were closed at Stage One. This represents **82%** of all complaints closed.
- **51** complaints were closed at Stage Two. This represents **11%** of all complaints closed.
- Of the **373** Stage One complaints, **32** were escalated to Stage Two, showing that only **7%** of our customers were dissatisfied with their Stage One outcome.

-82% of complaints received in 2021/22 were closed at Stage One compared to 76% in 2020/21 representing an annual increase of 6%

-18% of all complaints received in 2021/22 were closed at Stage Two, compared to 24% in 2020/21 representing an annual decrease of 6%

Indicator 3 – Complaints Upheld, Partially Upheld, Not Upheld and Resolved

Having considered a complaint, we contact every complainant to explain whether their complaint has been upheld, not upheld or partially upheld and why. During this reporting period a new outcome has been introduced, Resolved, whereby the complainant and investigating officer agree on a resolution without making a decision on whether or not the case has been upheld.

This indicator provides information on the number and percentage of complaints which were upheld, partially upheld, not upheld and resolved at each stage.

Outcome of Stage One Complaints

- **96** complaints were upheld at Stage One (**26 %**)
- **47** complaints were partially upheld at Stage One (**12 %**)
- **194** complaints were not upheld at Stage One (**52 %**)
- **36** complaints were resolved at Stage One (**10 %**)

Complaints made: year-by-year comparison

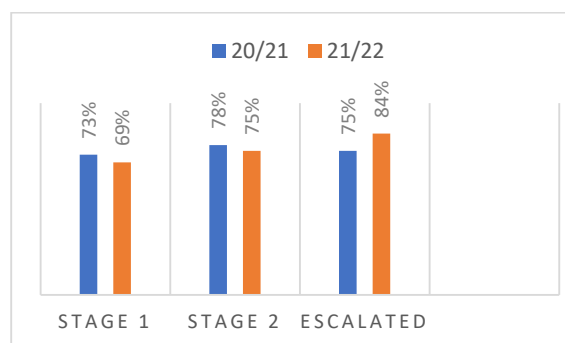
-In 2021/22, **38%** of all Stage One complaints were either upheld or partially upheld indicating that more than a third of our customers raised genuine concerns with our service provision. This is **32%** lower than 2020/21 when **60 %** of Stage One complaints were upheld or partially upheld.

-In 2020/21, **40 %** of all Stage One complaints were not upheld. This number has increased to **52 %** in 2021/22.

Outcome of Stage Two complaints

- **7** complaints were upheld at Stage Two (**14 %**)
- **17** complaints were partially upheld (**33 %**)
- **26** complaints were not upheld (**51 %**)
- **1** complaint was resolved at Stage Two (**2 %**)

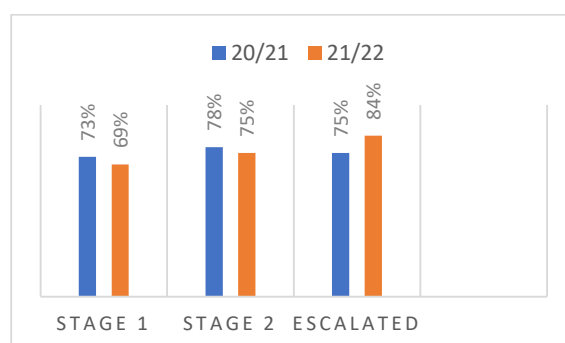
Stage 2 Outcomes: year-by-year comparison



Outcome of complaints escalated from Stage One to Stage Two

- **2** complaints were upheld (**6 %**)
- **6** complaints were partially upheld (**19 %**)
- **23** complaints were not upheld (**72 %**)
- **1** complaint was resolved (**3 %**)

Escalated Outcomes: year-by-year comparison



- **25 %** of complaints escalated from Stage One to Stage Two in 2021/22 were either upheld or partially upheld, compared to **27 %** in 2020/21, a decrease of **2 %**.

Indicator 4 – Average Times

Stage One complaints

- We aim to respond to and close Stage One complaints within **5** working days
- The average time to respond to complaints at Stage One was **7** working days

Stage Two complaints

- We aim to respond to and close Stage Two complaints within **20** working days
- The average time to respond to complaints at Stage Two was **25** working days

Complaints Escalated from Stage One to Stage Two

- The average time to respond to escalated complaints was **16** working days

-In 2021/22 we responded on average to a Stage One complaint within 7 working days, which is two days higher than the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) statutory time scale of 5 working days. This is a decrease from 8 working days in 2020/21

- 2021/22 we responded to Stage 2 complaints on average within 25 working days. This outwith the statutory timescale and an increase from 20 working days in 2020/21.

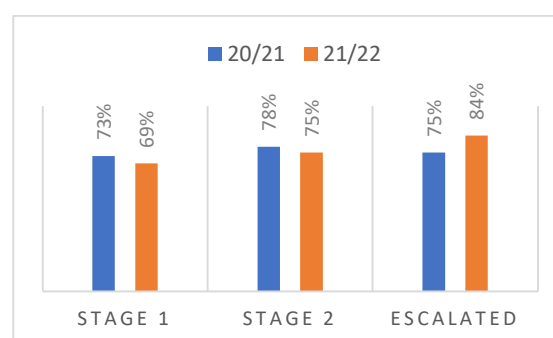
- 2021/22 – we responded on average to escalated complaints within 16 working days. This is within the statutory 20 working day timescale and a decrease from 22 working days in 2020/21.

Indicator 5 – Performance against Timescales

This indicator reports the number and percentage of complaints at each stage which were closed in full within the set time scales of **5** and **20** working days. These include cases where an extension to the timescale has been agreed with the complainant.

- **257** complaints were closed at Stage One within **5** working days, representing **69 %** of all Stage One complaints
- **38** complaints were closed at Stage Two within **20** working days, representing **75 %** of all Stage Two complaints
- **27** escalated complaints were closed within **20** working days, representing **84 %** of all complaints that were escalated from Stage One to Stage Two

Timescales Met: year-by-year comparison



Indicator 6 – Number of Cases where an Extension is authorised

We always aim to respond to complaints as quickly as possible. However there are times when a complaint is particularly complex and it is not feasible to fully investigate the issues within the prescribed timescales. In these situations we can agree with a complainant to extend the timescales for closing the complaint. This indicator outlines the number and percentage of complaints at each stage where an extension to the **5** or **20** working day timescale was authorised:

50 complaints closed at Stage One were granted an extension, representing **13 %** of all Stage One complaints. Taking into account extensions **82 %** of Stage One complaints met required timescales

6 complaints closed at Stage Two were granted an extension, representing **14%** of all Stage Two complaints. Taking into account extensions **86 %** of Stage Two complaints met required timescales

4 complaints closed at the escalation stage were granted an extension, representing **17 %** of all Stage Two complaints. Taking into account extensions **97 %** of all escalated complaints met required timescales

*-In 2020/21 **62** complaints were subject to an authorised extension, compared to **60** in 2021/22, a decrease of **2** cases. The council will discuss an extension with a complainant if a response cannot be provided within timescales, to ensure the Council can undertake a full investigation.*

Indicator 7 – Customer Satisfaction

We are currently in the process of restructuring our customer satisfaction survey.

Between April 2021 and March 2022, **16 %** of complainants engaged and responded to the survey (based on a total of **8** email responses received as at 1 April 2022):

	<i>Strongly Agree or Agree</i>	<i>Disagree or Strongly Disagree</i>
It was easy for me to make a complaint to the Council	50%	25%
My Complaint was understood by the Council	62%	50%
My complaint was thoroughly investigated	50%	75%
My complaint was taken seriously	62%	75%
I was kept up-to-date with progress of my investigation	62%	75%
I was given a clear explanation of the decision made	62%	75%
The information was easy to understand	50%	75%
I am satisfied the investigation addressed my concern	62%	75%
My complaint was responded to within appropriate timescales	50%	50%
The procedure for taking my complaint to the next stage was clear	88%	75%

Indicator 8 – Learning from Complaints

We take all complaints seriously and information gathered from complaints is invaluable in helping us to continuously improve our services. Since the introduction of *Listening to You* we have made changes to our services and procedures as a direct result of complaints we have received. Some examples of these improvements are outlined as case studies in this section.

How we report on complaints performance and trends to senior managers and staff

- We report quarterly to Senior Managers, providing them with complaints performance information and highlighting any issues and complaints trends in their service areas.
- We provide bi-annual reports to our Elected Members. These reports contain complaints performance information and provide analysis of reasons for complaints and complaint trends. Service Managers attend Panels to discuss these reports and complaints trends with Panel Members.
- Council managers use information from these reports to identify and share any learning from complaints and to inform their service planning process.
- We have dedicated web pages which employees can access to

obtain information on our *Listening to You* process, complaint trends and patterns and learning from complaints.

- We actively train complaint co-ordinators, investigators, officers and administrators in complaints handling procedures and provide email updates and ongoing coaching as required.
- We provide bespoke guidance to Head Teachers and school staff on the implementation of new procedures.
- We train Customer Service advisors and frontline staff on how to handle customer complaints professionally.
- We also use complaints information to coach individual staff and teams, and provide in-house staff training. For example, we use information and learning from complaints as part of our Induction procedures for new Customer Services advisors, as well as ongoing Customer Services training, team briefs and individual Performance and Development Reviews.

Since the introduction of *Listening to You* we have made changes to our services and procedures as a direct result of complaints received. Some examples of these improvements are outlined in our case studies section.

Learning from Complaints – Case Studies

One of our key performance indicators is ensuring services are using complaints information to identify areas of improvement. Our Management Teams use complaints information to change and improve their services. The next few pages give a selection of case studies showing how services have used complaints to change the way we do things

Housing Services

A tenant complained about communal repairs relating to their flat property. Numerous repairs had been carried out to the door entry system, however the complaints investigating officer established that due to the age and lack of compatibility of spare parts, the system required renewal and the cladding at the front door of the flats also required to be repaired. The tenant also indicated they had contacted the Housing Service regarding inability to access the bin store, while no evidence of a lack of response to this contact was found, the investigating officer confirmed that arrangements would be put in place for a key to be cut to enable access. Housing and Property Maintenance are working together to ensure these improvements are made at the flats. These additional improvement works are continuing at the time of this Report.

Housing Services

A service user contacted our Housing service to raise a concern as his gas supply had been capped at the metre due to the annual gas safety check not being undertaken. An investigation into the complaint showed 3 letters had been sent to the tenant notifying him of when the appointment would take place and no access was granted on any of these occasions, however the service had failed to send a further letter before the final notification of the gas being capped was issued. The service apologised for the failure to send this letter and staff training was provided to ensure that all letters would be sent in any future cases.

Compliments Received in 2021/22

by our Services

Compliments are recorded by our complaints team to give us an indication of when services are meeting the needs and expectations of our service users. The following are a small sample of the compliments received during 2021/22.

Neighbourhood Services

Our Neighbourhood Services team continues to receive several compliments from members of the public. One service member wrote to compliment workers who went the extra mile to ensure bins that had become displaced during windy weather were returned to ensure bins were returned safely.

Community Care

We received a number of compliments regarding our Community Care team. One service user wrote in to thank us for the team's support, which they said, *"...showed kindness and compassion and helped make it easier for the family."*

Conclusion

The Council remains committed to listening to our customers and using customer feedback to actively change and improve the way we do things. We continue to benchmark our complaints

handling with our Scottish Local Authorities and work with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) to ensure best practice continues.

Contact Us

If you would like to find out more about our complaints procedure or about our annual report, please contact us.

- Phone: 0300 123 0900
- Email: listeningtoyou@south-ayrshire.gov.uk
- Log on to: www.south-ayrshire.gov.uk/listeningtoyou
- Visit: Our Customer Service Centres in Girvan, Maybole, Ayr, Prestwick and Troon
- In writing to:
South Ayrshire Council
Information Governance
Listening to You
County Buildings
Wellington Square
AYR, KA7 1DR