

Annual Complaints Performance Report 2024/25

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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.

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).

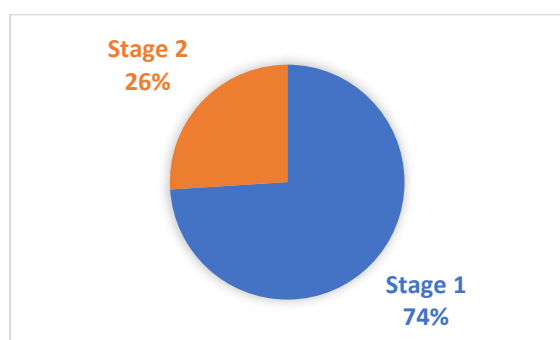
Indicator 1 – The total number of complaints received

This section details the sum of the number of complaints received at Stage 1 (including escalated complaints as they were first received at Stage 1), and the number of complaints received directly at Stage 2. In 2024/25 South Ayrshire Council handled **606** complaints from customers

-In 2023/24, the Council closed 650, showing a decrease of 7%

- **444** complaints were closed at Stage One. This represents **74%** of all complaints closed.
- **99** complaints were closed at Stage Two. This represents **16%** of all complaints closed.
- **63** complaints were escalated from Stage 1 to Stage Two, showing that only **10%** of our customers were dissatisfied with their Stage One outcome.

Complaints closed at Stage One and Stage Two:



-74% of complaints received in 2024/25 were closed at Stage One compared to 76% in 2023/24 representing an annual decrease of 2%

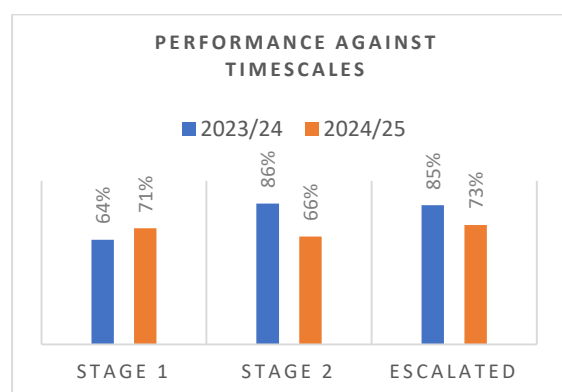
-26% of all complaints received in 2024/25 were closed at Stage Two, compared to 24% in 2023/24 representing an annual increase of 2%

Indicator 2 – The number and percentage of complaints at each stage that were closed in full within the set timescales of five and 20 working days

This section details the number of complaints closed in full at stage 1, stage 2 and after escalation within complaint timescales as % of all stage 1, stage 2 and escalated complaints responded to in full. These include cases where an extension to the timescale has been agreed with the complainant.

- **316** complaints were closed at Stage One within **5** working days, representing **71%** of all Stage One complaints
- **65** complaints were closed at Stage Two within **20** working days, representing **66%** of all Stage Two complaints
- **46** escalated complaints were closed within **20** working days, representing **73%** of all complaints that were escalated from Stage One to Stage Two

Timescales Met: year-by-year comparison



Indicator 3 – The average time in working days for a full response to complaints at each stage

This section details the average (mean) time in working days to respond at stage 1, stage 2 and after escalation.

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 **6** 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 **21** working days

Complaints Escalated from Stage One to Stage Two

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

-In 2024/25 we responded on average to a Stage One complaint within 6 working days, which is outwith the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) statutory timescale of 5 working days.

- In 2024/25 we responded to Stage 2 complaints on average within 21 working days which is outwith the SPSO statutory timescale of 20 working days.

- In 2024/25 we responded on average to escalated complaints within 16 working days, which is within SPSO statutory timescales of 20 working days.

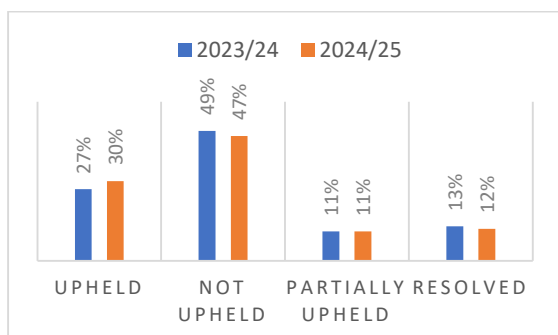
Indicator 4 – The outcome of complaints at each stage

This indicator provides information on the number of complaints upheld, partially upheld, not upheld and resolved at stage 1, stage 2 and after escalation as % of all complaints closed at stage 1, stage 2 and after escalation.

Outcome of Stage One Complaints

- **132** complaints were upheld at Stage One (**30 %**)
- **210** complaints were not upheld at Stage One (**47%**)
- **48** complaints were partially upheld at Stage One (**11 %**)
- **54** complaints were resolved at Stage One (**12 %**)

Stage 1 Outcomes: year-by-year comparison

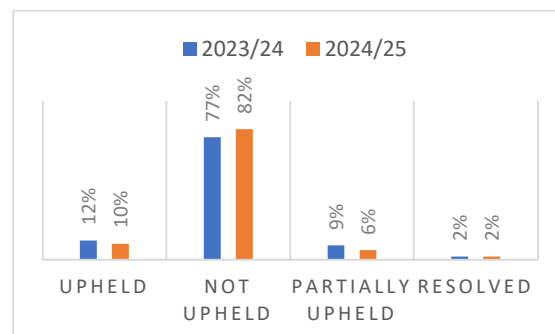


- **41 %** of Stage One complaints in 2024/25 were either upheld or partially upheld, compared to **38 %** in 2022/23, an increase of 3%.

Outcome of Stage Two complaints

- **10** complaints were upheld at Stage Two (**10 %**)
- **81** complaints were not upheld at Stage Two (**82 %**)
- **6** complaints were partially upheld at Stage Two (**6 %**)
- **2** complaints were resolved at Stage Two (**2 %**)

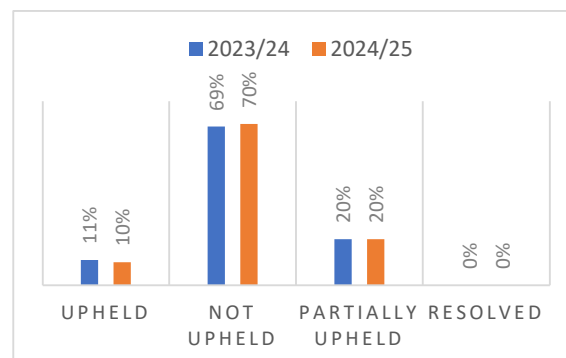
Stage 2 Outcomes: year-by-year comparison



Outcome of complaints escalated from Stage One to Stage Two

- **6** complaints were upheld (**10 %**)
- **44** complaints were not upheld (**70 %**)
- **13** complaints were partially upheld (**20%**)
- **0** complaints were resolved (**0 %**)

Escalated Outcomes: year-by-year comparison



Additional Information - Non-Mandatory Reporting Indicators

The following sections of this report provide additional information which is gathered in addition to the key performance indicators required by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO).

Complaints Received Per 1,000 of Population

This section details the total number of complaints handled by South Ayrshire Council in the reporting period 2023/24. 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 **120,750**
- In 2024/25 South Ayrshire Council handled **606** complaints from customers
- Meaning that an average of **7** complaints were received per **1,000** residents

-In 2023/24, the Council received 7 complaints per 1,000 South Ayrshire residents, showing that complaints per 1,000 population has stayed the same between reporting periods.

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:

42 complaints closed at Stage One were granted an extension, representing **10%** of all Stage One complaints. Taking into account extensions **81%** of Stage One complaints met required timescales

13 complaints closed at Stage Two were granted an extension, representing **13%** of all Stage Two complaints. Taking into account extensions **66%** of Stage Two complaints met required timescales

7 complaints closed at the escalation stage were granted an extension, representing **11%** of all Stage Two complaints. Taking into account extensions **84%** of all escalated complaints met required timescales

*-In 2023/24 **119** complaints were subject to an authorised extension, compared to **62** in 2024/25, a decrease of **42** cases.*

Customer Satisfaction

In conjunction with further guidance issued by the SPSO, South Ayrshire Council have recently updated our customer satisfaction survey.

Between 1st April 2024 and 31st March 2025, 120 requests were issued to members of the public inviting them to participate in our Customer Satisfaction Survey. 37 customer satisfaction surveys were completed which constitutes a 31% return.

	Agree/Strongly Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Information about the complaints procedure was easily accessible	51%	24.5%	24.5%
I found it easy to make my complaint	57%	24%	19%
I was happy that the Investigating Officer fully understood my complaint	38%	13%	49%
I was given the opportunity to fully explain my complaint	62%	11%	27%
The points of my complaint were identified and responded to	41%	16%	43%
The response to my complaint was easy to understand	62%	11%	27%
Overall I was satisfied with the handling of my complaint	22%	16%	62%
I was told if the response was going to take longer than the set timescales (<i>five working days at stage 1 and 20 working days at stage 2</i>)	27%	38%	35%
I was clearly told what the next stage of the complaints process was for me	41%	13%	46%

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 Service

A tenant in temporary accommodation complained that a copy of her tenancy agreement was not made available to her in an accessible format, and that the agreement did not make clear the Council's policy for entering resident's flats. As a result of this complaint, further training has been provided to staff on providing written communications in accessible formats and tenancy agreements have been revised to make service users aware of the Council's policy on entering resident's flats.

Neighbourhood Services

A customer raised a complaint regarding the requirement to provide a doctor's note as evidence when requesting an additional bin for medical waste. Following this complaint and after discussion with GP surgeries across South Ayrshire, the application for an additional bin for medical waste was updated to ask residents to provide any medical documentation that confirms the medical conditions detailed in the application rather than the previous request for a doctor's note.

Neighbourhood Services

A customer raised concerns regarding vehicle noise at Maybole Recycling Centre, which was affecting the surrounding residential streets particularly early in the morning. As well as offering an apology, as a result of the complaint, steps were taken to ensure that no chain lift operations are undertaken before 7am.

Compliments Received in 2024/25

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 2024/25.

Neighbourhood Services

Our Neighbourhood Services team continues to receive compliments from members of the public. One customer wrote in to express her gratitude to the crew when they noticed a fire on a property in the early hours of the morning. She wrote, "Thanks to their prompt action the only damage sustained was to 2 brown bins. It could have been much worse... please let these boys know how grateful we are for their prompt action."

Leisure

A customer of the Citadel wrote to our Sport and Leisure Team to express their gratitude to the team for helping a service user who was unwell. She went on to say, "The staff at the Citadel make it a special place and today was a prime example of this". Another service user wrote to express her appreciation for help with membership payments, writing, *"It's great to know that customer support at Leisure and Sport Team is both responsive and helpful, and I truly appreciate the effort put into resolving this matter smoothly."*

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: [Complaints - South Ayrshire Council \(south-ayrshire.gov.uk\)](https://south-ayrshire.gov.uk/complaints)
- 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