



Midlothian Council Annual Complaints Report **2016/17**



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Foreword

As with all Councils in Scotland, Midlothian Council has a Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP) in place that reflects our commitment to valuing feedback from our customers.

This year, I am pleased to present the council's annual Complaints Performance Report in this format. The report provides information on customer complaints received between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017, and it is in addition to the way we regularly report complaints to both Heads of Service, and our Corporate Management Team.

We are committed to providing high quality services to our communities, but we recognise that occasionally things can go wrong. The CHP means that we can directly engage with our customers and get the valuable feedback that we need to drive our service plans. We are continually changing both the way that we investigate and analyse complaints, and the methods that we use to connect with our customers. We ensure that we take the most appropriate action to resolve complaints and identify areas for improvement as a result, and we take value in the lessons that can be learned so that future service delivery is improved.

This report allows us the opportunity to share our performance with you. The key performance indicators that we report on are standardised across all Scottish Councils, and we will share some case studies that demonstrate what we have learned, and how we have improved some of our service areas as a direct result of the feedback that you have given us.

Our focus remains on achieving a high level of positive outcomes for complainants at the Frontline Resolution Stage 1, where the decisions to uphold complaints have successfully helped us to resolve matters early, learn from any mistakes and to enhance our services and business operations.

Thank you for your encouraging support. Please keep supporting us by providing your feedback on any aspect of Midlothian Council's services, all of which have contributed to the production of this Annual Complaints Performance Report.

Kenneth Lawrie
Chief Executive
Midlothian Council

Background

Since April 2013 all Scottish Councils are required to monitor and report their performance on the handling of complaints under their Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP) against a suite of eight high level performance indicators that meet the statutory requirements of the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). The statistics gathered in this report outlines in this respect Midlothian Council's performance for the period 2016/17.

What is a complaint?

Midlothian Council has adopted the recommended description by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman:-

'An expression of dissatisfaction by one or more members of the public about Midlothian Council's action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on Midlothian Council's behalf.'

Complaint Handling Procedure (CHP)

The procedure comprises of two stages

• STAGE 1 – Frontline Resolution

Aim is to resolve the complaint at the initial point of contact with immediate action or within 5 working days.

• STAGE 2 – Investigation

Stage 2 complaints require detailed investigation. Complex complaints would go straight to this stage, and if a customer is dissatisfied with the response they receive at stage 1, they can escalate it to a stage 2. We will acknowledge receipt of a stage 2 complaint, and provide a response within 20 working days.

When customers are dissatisfied with our decision to a stage 2 complaint, or if they are unhappy with the way that the Council has dealt with their complaint, they can ask the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman to investigate it.

This report will summarise the Council's performance on how complaints have been handled in relation to the performance indicators that satisfy the statutory requirement of the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman.

Midlothian Council has a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system that tracks and monitors complaints, and enables statistical data to be produced and analysed. The data helps to identify a variety of factors including the prioritisation of activities to meet the changing needs of the community, the identification of staff training requirements, and informing service improvement.



Complaints Data Overview

During 2016/17, we received a total of 5936 complaints. By year end, and at time of reporting, 5885 of those complaints were completed. There is therefore a difference of 51, which can be explained as follows:- the complaints have been raised by customers near to year end reporting time, and their target dates fall beyond the year end date. They will therefore be dealt with, and completed in the new quarter. For the purposes of tables 1 and 2, which displays customers preferred methods of contact; all complaints received have been included.

It should be noted that complaints about missed bins account for circa 2/3 of Midlothian Councils complaints. However this particular service area has circa

300,000 customers per week and so when it is put into this context it can be rationalised, though it is not to say that they are treated as unimportant. In fact, there have been a number of significant improvements made within the service area as a result, and some of these are listed in the case studies that follow.

Since the missed bin complaints dominate the result, they can make the other results seem insignificant in comparison, even though this is not the case. Tables 1 and 2 therefore highlight the results both with and without the missed bin complaints to ensure a more accurate view of the results, but not to the detriment of dealing with the data for missed bins as a separate piece of work.

Table 1 – preferred methods of contact including waste complaints

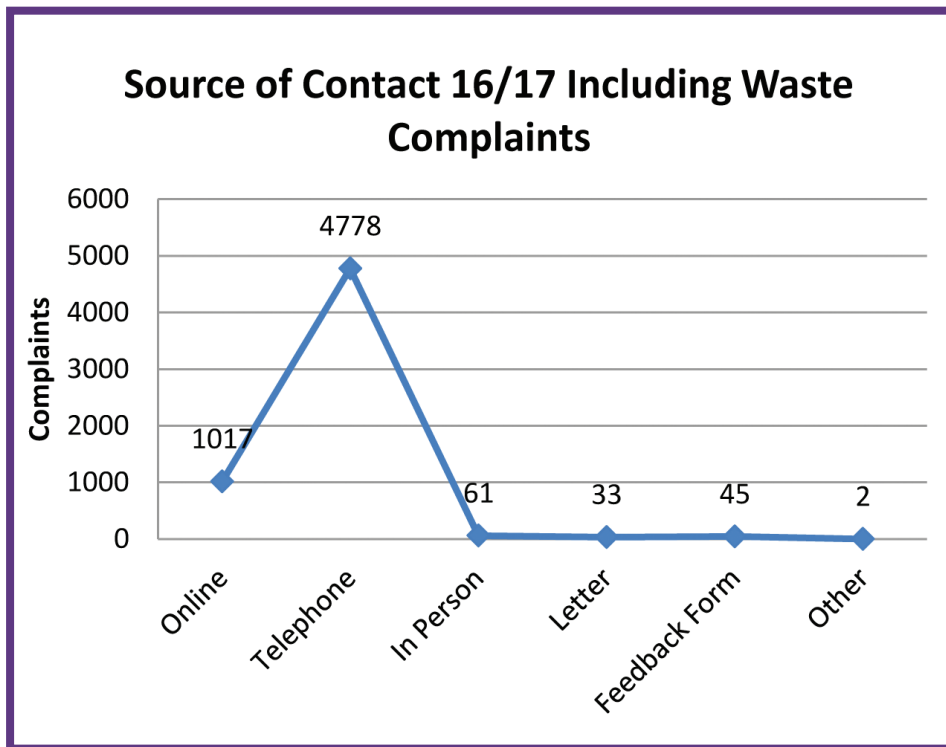
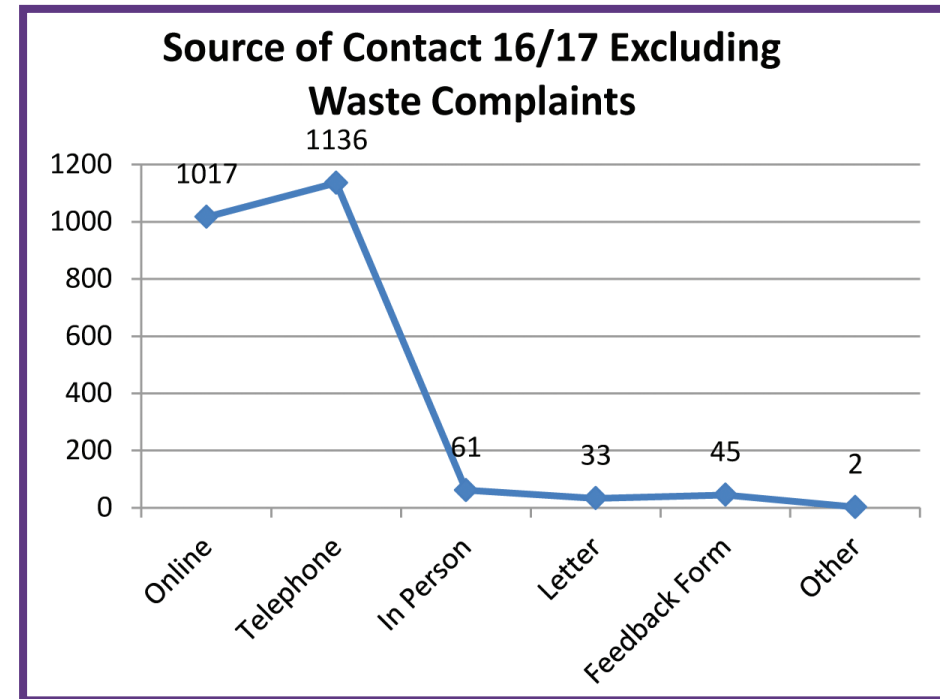


Table 2 – preferred methods of contact excluding waste complaints



The Customer Relationship Management system enables a variety of functions, and the data can be used in a number of ways. Table 3 below highlights a breakdown of Midlothian Council's 8 service areas, and the total number of complaints received to each. Breaking the data down, and categorising the complaints in this way facilitates the service area to

better review their complaints, and to identify areas that require improvements. Further categorisations are obtainable, and will be utilised in future to supplement the evaluation process and to profile our customers so that service areas can better identify target groups and areas within Midlothian from which we receive the complaint information.

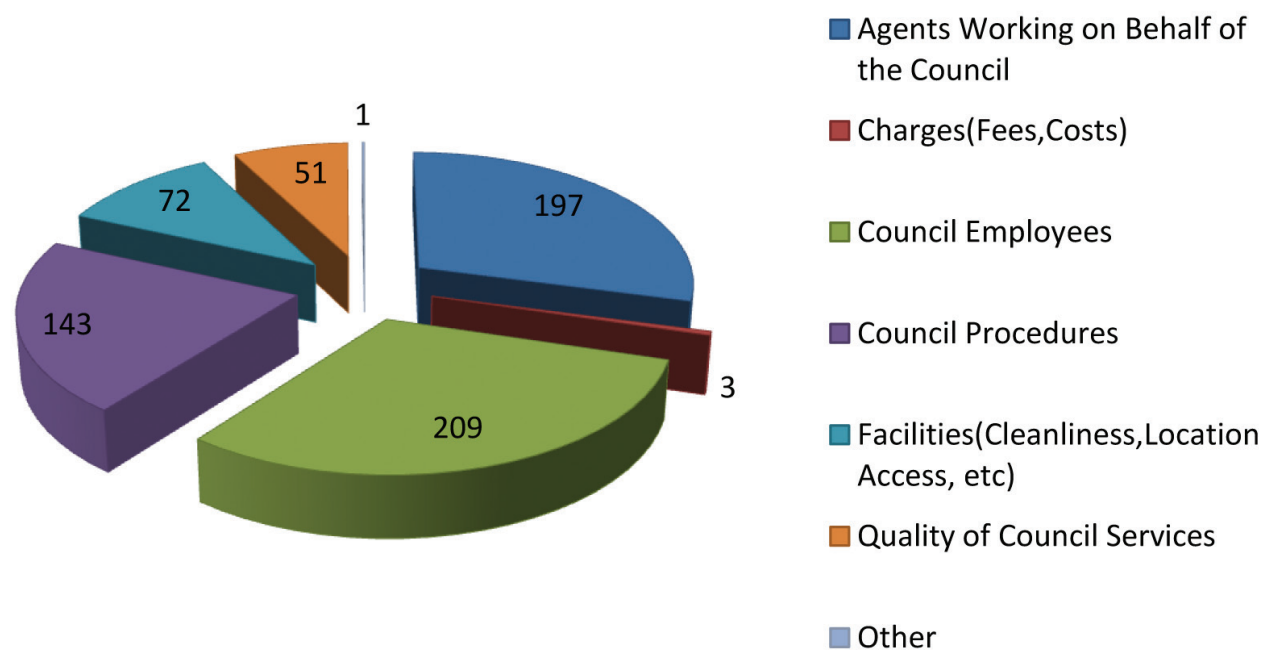
Table 3 – complaints received per service area

Complaints Received by Service	2016/17
Adult Social Care	38
Communities and Economy	49
Customer and Housing Services	176
*Commercial Operations	4581
Children's Services	35
Education	58
Finance and integrated Service Support	17
Property and Facilities Management	982

*Note that the majority of Commercial Operations complaints are for missed bins. That particular service area has in excess of 300,000 customers per week.



Figure 1 – Overarching Complaint Reasons (Excluding Missed Bins)



Midlothian Council has identified 6 common complaint categories that are used during the recording process. Figure 1 highlights the overarching reasons for complaints, and lists the amalgamated amount of stage 1 and stage 2 complaints against that

category. The information, which excludes missed bin complaints, shows that the main areas complained about are Council Employees, Agents Working on Behalf of the Council and Council Procedures with totals of 209, 197 and 143 respectively.

Performance Indicators

The indicators, also mentioned earlier in this report are used to monitor and assess Midlothian Council's performance in the handling of complaints. They are designed to enable councils to capture important

information and drive service improvement as a result of both learning from complaints and analysing the statistical data to enable informed decisions, and also to benchmark between councils to facilitate the sharing of knowledge.

INDICATOR 1 – Complaints Complete per Thousand Population

This indicator denotes the total number of complaints collectively received at stage 1 and directly at stage 2. This sum is then divided by the estimated population size of Midlothian Council, the information of which is obtained from the National Records of Scotland.

Table 4 – Figures for Performance Indicator 1

Complaints received per thousand population			
Performance Indicator	Numerator	Denominator	Result
The total number of complaints received per thousand population	5936	88,610	67

Table 4 illustrates that the total population of Midlothian is estimated to be 88,610. The council handled 5936 complaints from customers, highlighting that an average of 67

complaints were received per 1000 citizens. This suggests that an average 1 in every 15 residents have registered a complaint about the council's services.

INDICATOR 2 – Closed Complaints

This indicator represents the number of complaints closed at stage 1, stage 2, and after escalation from stage one to stage 2 as a percentage of all complaints closed.

Customers who have undergone the complaints procedure at stage 1, but who remain dissatisfied are invited to escalate their complaint to a stage 2 investigation.

Closed complaints are those that have been allocated an outcome and a response has been given to the customer. At time of reporting, no further action was required.

Table 5 – Figures for Performance Indicator 2

Closed Complaints			
Performance Indicator	Numerator	Denominator	Result
Closed Complaints Stage 1	5799	5885	98.5%
Closed Complaints Stage 2	86	5885	1.5%
Closed Complaints after Escalation	39	5885	0.7%

It can be seen in table 5 that 98.5% of complaints were closed at stage 1. The council is satisfied with this result since one of the main objectives of the policy is to resolve complaints at this early stage. Further work is being done to explore whether these closed complaints are within the 1st point resolution (at point of contact) category of stage 1, or the service resolution (within 5 days) category of stage 1, and it is expected that the council will be in a position to report on this next year.

Table 5 also highlights that 86 complaints were closed at stage 2, demonstrating 1.5% of all complaints closed; and 39 complaints were

closed after escalation from stage 1, which is representative of 0.7% of all complaints closed.

When compared, the total complaint figure in indicator 1 differs to indicator 2. The reason behind this is due to the potential for complaints to be left open on the system. Reasons for this are many and varied, but usually it is because the projected close date is beyond the report print date. This is unavoidable, but the council does make sure that the open complaints are checked to ensure that it is not due to human error, such as not using the system correctly, or that there are cases that have been forgotten about.



INDICATOR 3 – Complaints Upheld/Not Upheld/Partially Upheld

The Complaint Handling Procedure requires an outcome to be recorded against each complaint. The outcomes are categorised as Upheld, Not Upheld and Partially Upheld

Table 6 – Figures for Performance Indicator 3

Complaints Upheld/Not Upheld/Partially Upheld			
Performance Indicator	Numerator	Denominator	Result
Stage 1 Complaints Upheld	4872	5799	84.0%
Stage 1 Complaints Not Upheld	629	5799	10.8%
Stage 1 Complaints Partially Upheld	298	5799	5.1%
Stage 2 Complaints Upheld	13	86	15.1%
Stage 2 Complaints Not Upheld	38	86	44.2%
Stage 2 Complaints Partially Upheld	35	86	40.7%
Escalated Complaints Upheld	5	39	12.8%
Escalated Complaints Not Upheld	24	39	61.5%
Escalated Complaints Partially Upheld	10	39	25.6%

Table 6 shows that 4872 of the 5799 stage 1 complaints were upheld, which represents 84% of all complaints closed at stage 1. Additionally, 629 were not upheld and 298 were partially upheld, representing 10.8% and 5.1% respectively. Of the 86 closed stage 2 complaints, 13 were upheld, 38

were not upheld and 35 were partially upheld. This corresponds to 15.1%, 44.2% and 40.7%. Lastly, the escalated complaints, of which there was a total of 39 closed, 12.8% (5) were upheld, 61.5% (24) were not upheld, and 25.6% (10) were partially upheld.

INDICATOR 4 – Average Time in Working Days Spent Responding to Complaints

This indicator takes the sum of the total number of working days for all complaints to be dealt with and closed at stage 1; at stage 2; and escalated complaints.

An average time in working days for a full response to be given is then calculated by dividing the sum by the total number of closed complaints for each stage.

Table 7 – Figures for Performance Indicator 4

Average Time in Working Days Spent Responding to Complaints			
Performance Indicator	Numerator	Denominator	Result
Stage 1 Average Time in Working Days	1746	5799	0.3
Stage 2 Average Time in Working Days	625	86	7.3
Escalated Complaints in Working Days	1041	39	26.7

Table 7 shows that the average time in working days to respond to stage 1 complaints remain well within the prescribed time scale (5 days). This result of 0.3 days suggests that most of the complaints are dealt with at 1st point resolution, a pleasing outcome since this is an objective that the council strives to sustain within the policy. This informs the query noted at Indicator 2 above, although it is still intended that more work will be done in this area to provide a more descriptive overview.

The working days taken to resolve Stage 2 complaints show an average of 7.3 days. Although this is ultimately a very good result as it is well within the 20 day boundary, it does bring into question whether some of these cases could have, or should have been dealt with at stage 1. This may be a

staff training issue on either understanding the procedure and the difference between each stage, or indeed how the system works in terms of data input. This will be monitored and if comparative results are similar, work will be done to ensure this is rectified.

It is disappointing to report that escalated complaints fall outside the prescribed 20 day limit with an average of 26.7 days. The reason for this is unclear; however it is known that some service areas such as Education have difficulty providing an outcome in time due to the prolonged holiday period during the summer, and they are therefore not in a position to speak with necessary staff in order to draw a conclusion to investigations. More work will be carried out to explore other possibilities with a view to resolving the issue.

INDICATOR 5 – Percentage of Complaints Closed Against Timescales

This indicator reports the number and percentage of complaints at each stage which were closed in full within the predetermined timescales of 5 and 20 working days.

Also included in these statistics are the cases where an extension has been authorised to the timescales.



Table 8 – Figures for Performance Indicator 5

Percentage of Complaints Closed Against Timescales			
Performance Indicator	Numerator	Denominator	Result
Stage 1 Percentage Closed Against Timescales	5463	5799	94.2%
Stage 2 Percentage Closed Against Timescales	55	86	64.0%
Escalated Percentage Closed Against Timescales	25	39	64.1%

The results for this indicator show that of the 5799 stage 1 complaints, 5463 were closed within the 5 day target, which reflects a 94.2% outcome. For stage 2 complaints, 55 of the 86 cases were closed within the 20 day target. This represents 64%, this is similar to the 64.1% outcome for escalated complaints, where 25 of the 39 cases were closed on time.

It can be seen that improvements are needed in terms of ensuring that timescales are met. Refresher training on the Complaints Handling Procedure, as well as system management is underway and it is hoped that next year's statistics will show progress.

INDICATOR 6 – Complaints Closed at each Stage where an Extension was Authorised

With authorisation from a senior manager such as a Head of Service, the pre-determined 5 day limit to respond to a stage 1 complaint may be extended to 10 days if there are extenuating circumstances in which the complaint cannot be dealt with within the 5 day limit. Similarly, an extension may be approved by management to the 20 day limit for stage 2 complaints.

This indicator looks at the number and percentage of complaints at each stage where authorisation was agreed to extend the 5 or 20 working day timeline.

It does not include complaints that were late but authorisation was not requested and/or logged accordingly.

Table 9 – Figures for Performance Indicator 6

Complaints closed at each stage where an extension was authorised			
Performance Indicator	Numerator	Denominator	Result
Stage 1 Percentage Closed with Authorised Extension	3	5799	0.1%
Stage 2 Percentage Closed with Authorised Extension	6	86	7.0%
Escalated Percentage Closed with Authorised Extension	3	39	7.7%

The number of complaints that have required an extension is low in relative terms, particularly for stage 1 complaints. It can be seen that stage 1 shows 3 out of 5799, stage 2 is 6 out of 86, and those that were escalated illustrate 3 out of 39. This represents 0.1%, 7.0% and 7.7% respectively.

Although the results of this indicator show a fairly low percentage, the council will ensure during training sessions that the workforce is aware of this category within the procedure, and system options. Whilst this is not to be used as a matter of routine, it may be of interest to see if indicator 5 above would show better results, had the option to extend been utilised more.

INDICATOR 7 – Customer Satisfaction about the Complaints Procedure

The council has identified the area of satisfaction about the complaint handling procedure as one that requires some development work. There has been a very poor uptake in responses about satisfaction of the complaint handling procedure in the past, and therefore a new survey is being developed along with a methodology in which surveys are distributed and dealt with. This is being done on a larger, corporate scale and will involve other service areas using the survey too. It is hoped that this will allow for satisfaction data to be better collated and reported about all council services.

It is anticipated that the new format will improve the return rate of this particular indicator so that robust, informative data can be provided about whether or not customers are pleased with the way that their complaint has been handled. This will also enable informed decisions to be made about any improvements to the procedure that might be required.



INDICATOR 8 – Learning, changes and improvements made to service areas as a result of the feedback given from complaints.

All complaints received are taken seriously, and the council has a clear commitment to listening to our customers and to act on their feedback. The information that customers take the time to provide to the council is appreciated and in relation to each complaint, it is used to continually improve services. Learning from complaints is a continuous process and there are different aspects of the information that can be used to improve. For example, making changes and/or learning can be a result of individual complex cases, or as a result of identifying a common theme of many frontline resolution complaints, so that recurrences of the same or similar instances are prevented. Since implementing the Complaint Handling Procedure in 2013, there have been many improvements made as a result of listening to our customers, learning from specific cases or workloads, and implementing changes. Some recent examples are highlighted in the case studies that follow.

Learning, Changes and Improvements made to Service Areas as a Result of Complaints

Case Study 1



Service: Waste Services

Complaint Analysis: There were a number of complaints about the lengthy application process for the 'Pull Out' service.

Service Improvement Actions: The process was reviewed and changed as a consequence. Customers now have access to the scheme much quicker, resulting in a better customer experience and reduced complaints.

Case Study 2



Service: Children's Services

Complaint Analysis: There was a complaint following an accident that a child had at one of the council's children and families centres. The complaint was not about the accident itself, but rather the time afterwards that it was brought to the parent/carers attention.

Service Improvement Actions: There now must be management involvement/oversight when verbally passing on any information

about a child. This includes when staff are telephoning parents/carers following accidents or mishaps, so that a decision can be made about who will make the call i.e. Manager or Nursery Officer, and when. Everything in relation to contact made with parents/carers is now logged, including the time.

Case Study 3



Service: Landscape and Countryside

Complaint Analysis: There were a number of complaints/concerns raised by both members of the public and staff about productivity when maintaining the Midlothian landscapes during the dark winter months.

Service Improvement Actions:

The matter was considered and in agreement with staff, seasonal working hours were introduced within the Land and Countryside section. This predominantly consisted of a 39 hour week during the summer months, and a 31 hour working week during winter, averaging the contracted 36 hour week per annum. This has also reduced costs and increased output since temporary staff are required to a much lesser extent.

Case Study 4



Service: Property and Facilities Management

Complaint Analysis: Some complaints were received from both customers and Contact Centre staff alike as there was no easy way of obtaining information regarding scheduled upcoming work, or following repair jobs within properties. Enquiries could not be dealt with at time of call and often resulted in return calls needing to be carried out.

Service Improvement Actions: The process was reviewed, and now additional notes about repair jobs are placed onto the established system by the Repairs Service staff, so that contact centre staff have access to continuous, up to date information and they are in a position to communicate this to customers. This has saved costs, time and therefore improved efficiency and the customer experience.

Case Study 5



Service: Education

Complaint Analysis: There was a complaint that a Midlothian school had failed to formally record concerns about bullying. Although the case was investigated and the school did not consider the incident to be bullying, the complaint was in regards to the fact that the correct paperwork had not been filed. Namely, that a 'Bullying Concern Initial Referral Form' had not been filled in despite the instance of bullying being unfounded.

Service Improvement Actions:

The council's policy guidance has been reviewed and this is now reflected in the school's anti-bullying policy.

Case Study 6



Service: Waste Services

Complaint Analysis: Following some complaints about recycling boxes not being collected despite being placed correctly onto the kerbside, an investigation was carried out. Findings were such that the boxes were being left because operatives considered there to be contamination within them.

Service Improvement Actions:

The outcome was to revise the instructions to waste operatives to reduce time spent looking for contamination. The decision was made with support from the waste management company, Viridor who were satisfied that Midlothian had an excellent record of presenting waste with minimal contamination. This improved 1st time pick-ups and reduced complaints as well as repeat visits.

Case Study 7



Service: Property and Facilities Management

Complaint Analysis: In such circumstances when there is a mixture of privately owned and council owned properties within a building, there are situations where there is a need to do repair/maintenance work relating to the building. In these situations the



cost is shared between the council and the private tenants within the building and this is known as 'mutual repairs'.

We have received a number of complaints from private tenants in relation to mutual repairs, stating that they were not receiving the correct information.

Service Improvement Actions: On reviewing these complaints, the service area has devised a new information document with all the essential criteria needed in such a situation.

This has alleviated the number of complaints.

Case Study 8



Service: Landscape and Countryside

Complaint Analysis: There were complaints concerning a Midlothian Park, and a near fatality that occurred due to old mine working in the park.

Service Improvement Actions:

The Land and Countryside section sought both Capital and external funding to develop the park.

This work has recently been completed. Geogrid, a ground stabilising mesh has been installed by Council staff over the area of mine working. The park has also been extensively landscaped, which included the installation of paths, gates, an orchard and some woodland planting along with shrub beds at the entrance to the park. Further work to include a play area is planned.

Case Study 9



Service: Public Private Partnership (PPP) – Schools

Complaint Analysis: There were several complaints concerning classrooms within some PPP schools being too hot. The agreement between the PPP contractor and the council was that classrooms were to have a temperature between 21-25 degrees Celsius.

Service Improvement Actions:

This requirement was reviewed and it was mutually agreed that it should be reduced to 19-25 degrees Celsius.



Annual Complaints Handled by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO)

The **Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO)** is the organisation that handles complaints about public services in Scotland. The Ombudsman service is independent of government and has a duty to act impartially. The SPSO also shares learning from its work to improve service delivery across the public services spectrum in Scotland. The office carries out awareness-raising activities with the general public, and bodies under their jurisdiction and promotes good complaints handling by public service providers in Scotland. The SPSO has a separate website to support best practice in complaints handling.

Mentioned earlier in this report, customers who have used Midlothian Council's established Complaint Handling Procedure, and who remain dissatisfied with any aspect of the way in which their complaint has been handled, are signposted by the council to the Scottish Public Service Ombudsman (SPSO). Provided it is within their jurisdiction, the SPSO will review the complaint and consequently reach a decision. Depending on the decision, the SPSO will make recommendations to the authority accordingly. This is to encourage lasting improvements to services so that the trust and confidence of the public is re-established.

Table 10 – Number of Complaints to Areas (as Deemed by the SPSO) that were Handled by the SPSO in 2016/17

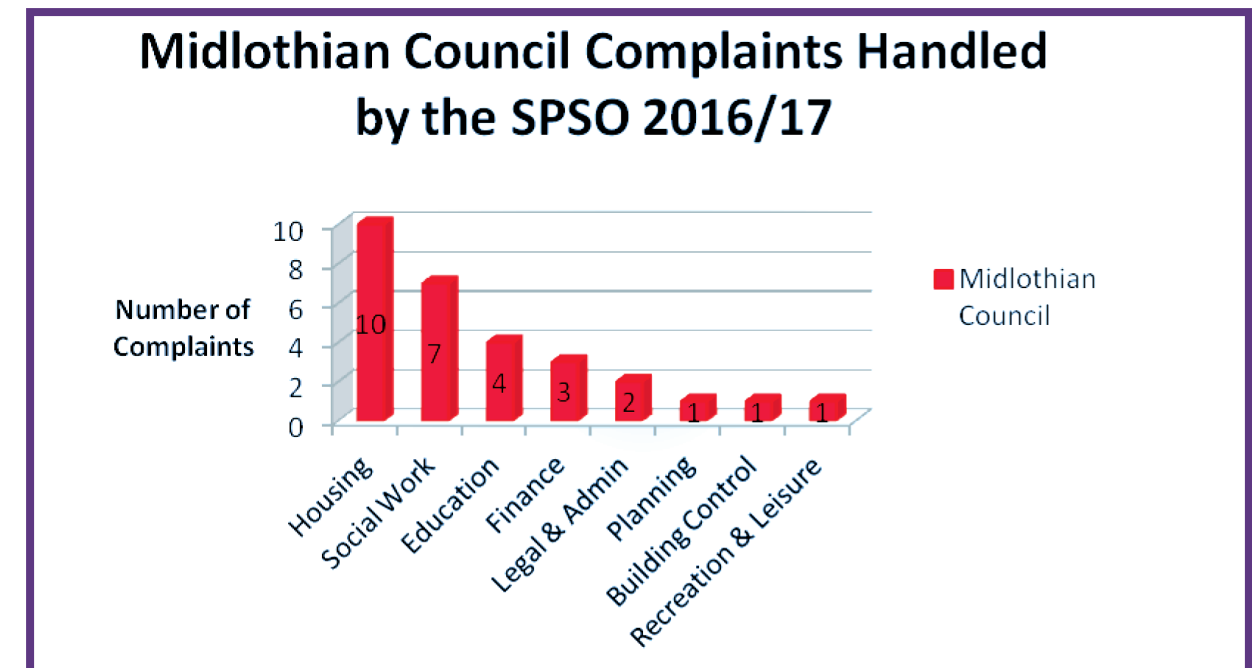




Table 10 illustrates the amount of complaints that have been **received** by the SPSO about Midlothian Council between 1 April 2016 and 30 March 2017. The main service areas have been given generic terminology by the SPSO since they deal with all local authorities in Scotland, and since each authority has locally named service areas/divisions.

The complaints have been ranked from the most complaints received to the least. It is interesting to note that Housing is not ranked highest in both the internal stage 1

and stage 2 statistics for Midlothian Council, however Social Work and Education are positioned highest in the internal stage 2 complaint figures, and so this corresponds to the SPSO figures.

Tables 11, 12 and 13 shows the outcomes of the complaints **determined** by the SPSO about Midlothian Council over the same period. Similarly to the council's statistics, the figures received (shown in table 10) and the figures determined don't tally because the SPSO were still working on a case after the business year had ended.

Table 11 – Complaints that have Reached Advice Stage

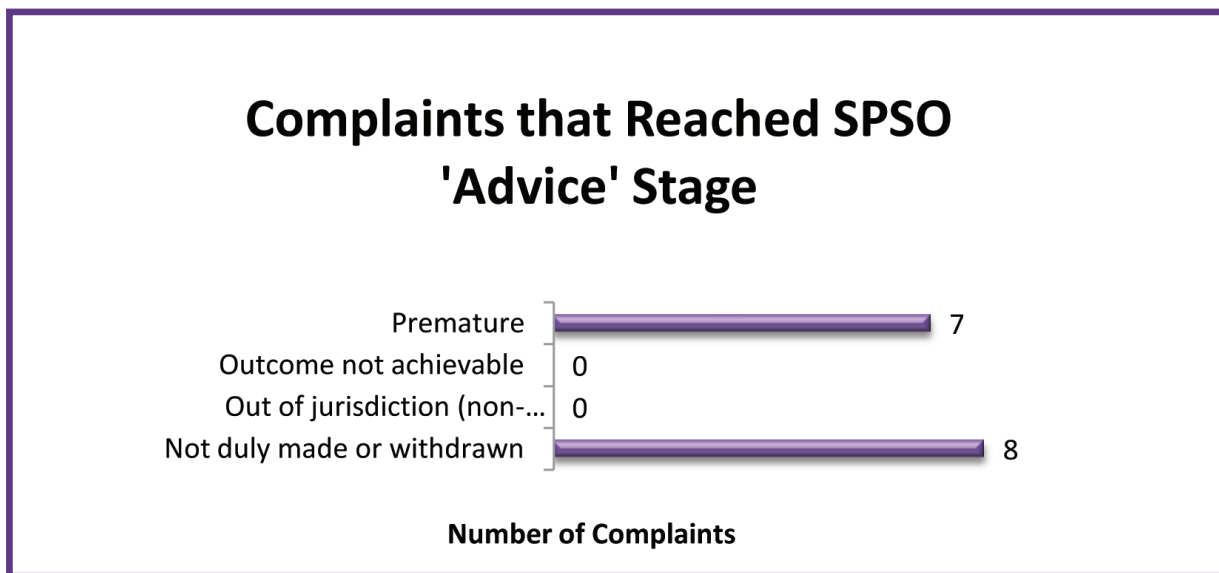


Table 12 – Complaints that have Reached Early Resolution Stage

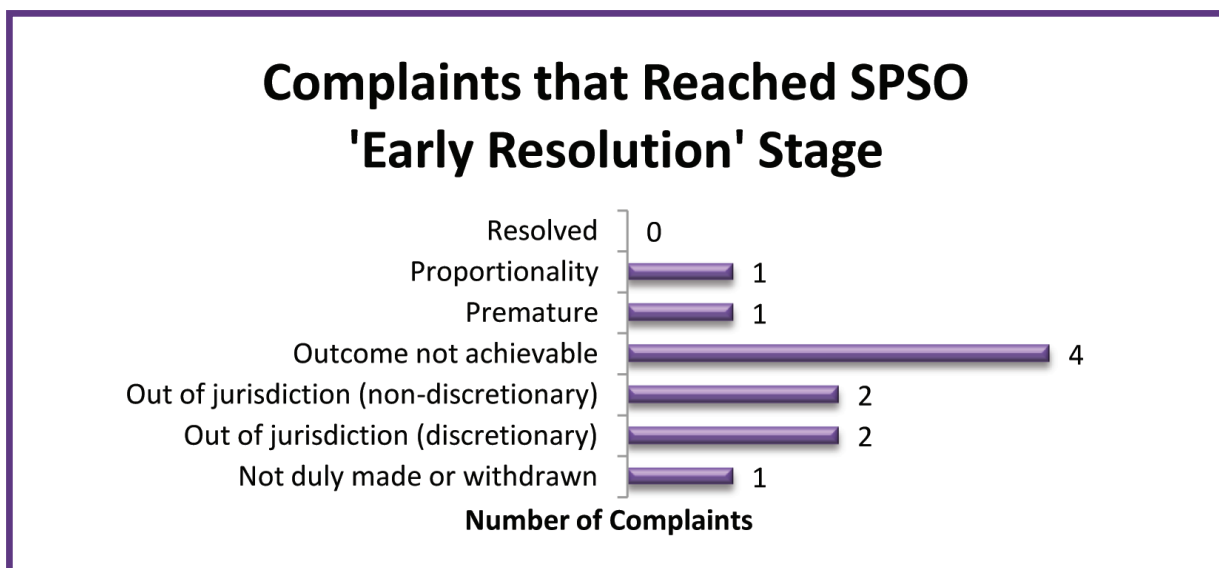
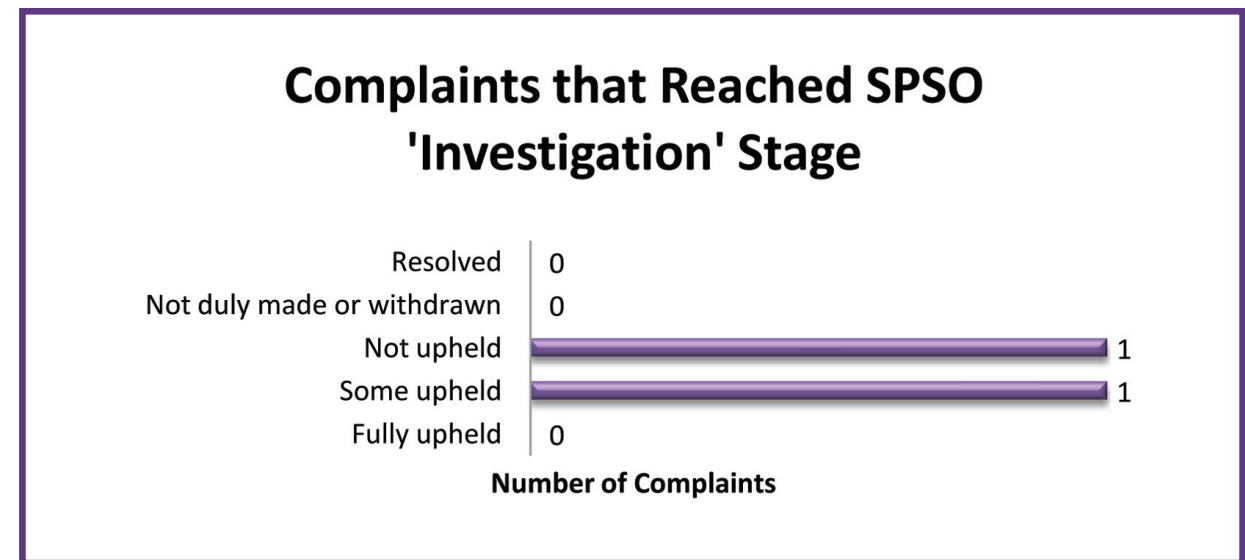


Table 13 – Complaints that have Reached Investigation Stage



The advice stage, shown in table 11 is the initial receipt stage where the SPSO will check if they have enough information, that the complainant has first of all complained to the relevant organisation, and that the matter is one that they are allowed to look at. It can be seen that there have been 15 at this stage. 7 were deemed premature (hadn't gone through authority's internal procedure first), and 8 were withdrawn (not taken any further).

The early resolution stage, referred to in table 12 is where the SPSO have confirmed that the complaint is mature (ie that the complaint has completed the organisation's complaint process) and is in jurisdiction. The SPSO will then begin gathering the information needed for an investigation. Some cases are closed at this stage if they are able to be resolved with the organisation, or if they consider there would be no significant benefit, or achievable outcome from a full investigation. There were 11 complaints in total that reached this stage.

Table 13 illustrates the complaints that the SPSO conducted an investigation for. It can be seen that of the 28 complaints that the SPSO received, there were 2 that reached this stage. The decisions can be viewed in the table, 1 was partly upheld (some aspects of the complaint were found to be supported), and 1 was not upheld (no aspects of the complaint were found to be supported). Further analysis informs that these were to Education and Planning respectively.



Complaint Handling Procedure – Summary and Future Considerations

Midlothian Council has seen a number of staff changes during recent service reviews and as a natural element of the process, staff have been deployed both into and away from roles within the overall corporate management of the complaint handling procedure. Reviewing service areas has become a matter of routine within the local authority setting for a number of reasons that includes enabling the continual evaluation of service areas to ensure customer/resident/constituent demand is sourced, recognised and then met, and that best practice is at the forefront of all processes and procedures. The role of the lead officer for complaints now sits within the Policy and Scrutiny team, and there are a number of objectives that are being looked at as part of the overall development of the service.

There are a number of areas that will be focused upon in the year ahead. There are also future considerations that are planned for beyond this year.

Current Year 16/17

• Education

There has been challenges embedding the complaint handling procedure in schools. A project is now underway to refresh training on both the procedure itself, and the system, amongst Education staff; to develop the system in which complaints are logged; and to encourage more ownership of complaints and in turn enhance relationships with pupils and parents.

• Contact Centre

Refresher training (and training for new staff) for Contact Centre staff on the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, and how to identify and log a complaint are within the Policy and Scrutiny team work plan. The service area is currently on a recruitment drive so work to train staff will commence after this period.

• Development of the End of Year Report

Following endorsement of, and publication of the report through the established pathway, the case studies included will be channeled more widely across the council.

The work behind the report i.e. generating the information and working with the raw data, has been enhanced to enable better statistical and comparative analyses that will in turn facilitate a more proficient report in the future.



Future Considerations

It is anticipated that the time to complete the above listed objectives will go beyond 16/17 since they include progressive projects that will become working practice. It is also not an exhaustive list as there are many routine and non routine matters that arise throughout the year. The following work is also in the pipeline.

• Corrective Action in relation to System Development and Statistical Data

There is a need for some development work to our Customer Relationship Management system around how Midlothian Council records the number of days. The statistical data that we report will be marginally impacted and the SPSO is aware of the matter, but have no concerns. Due to the resources that are required to achieve this position, the work is planned and will in place for the new reporting year in April 2018.

• Social Work

Midlothian Council's Social Work service is working to a new complaint handling procedure. Although there are noteworthy differences that relate more to social work practices, the new procedure is more in line with the corporate procedure. Currently, the council is working towards developing the process in which social work complaints are recorded with a view to streamlining systems of work that social work staff already do. This project is still in the early stages but once fully underway it will be a significant piece of work, as it will have an impact on wider council staff with some resource and marketing implications.

• Social Media

The council wants to enhance the way in which complaints are captured via social media. This is a project that has not yet commenced but is within the Policy and Scrutiny team work plan.

• Quality Control

From September, complaints will be a standing item at all directorate Divisional Management Team (DMT) meetings, to which all Heads of Service to the division are present, and the meetings are usually chaired by the corresponding Director. The meetings are at times also attended by third tier managers, and having the complaint handling procedure discussed in this way, at this level will ensure that the subject of complaints remains a high priority.

• Review of Satisfaction Questionnaire about the Complaint Handling Procedure

As mentioned previously under the 'Indicator 7' section above, there is a need to review both the method in which the information is sought, and the questions themselves. It is anticipated that with fewer questions asked, and by sending a questionnaire with every response letter in addition to the usual protocol, there will be a better response rate. Work to change this procedure is scheduled for the new year.

As mentioned, this report is the first in this format. It presents data from 1 April 2016 through to 31 March 2017, and going forward, the council intends to use the report, both in format and content as a benchmark for development. Next year, and in subsequent years, comparative data will be presented, analysed and any findings will be discussed as part of the report. It is expected that themes will transpire as the years progress and these themes will determine both the development of the function, and in turn both short and long term objectives of both the complaints process itself and the direction of service areas. Midlothian Council would like to thank those who have taken the time to read the report, and for their continual support and encouraging feedback that has enabled its formulation.



COMMUNICATING CLEARLY

We are happy to translate on request and provide information and publications in other formats, including Braille, tape or large print.

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