

Midlothian



MIDLOTHIAN COUNCIL
ANNUAL COMPLAINT HANDLING REPORT 2018/2019



Welcome

to Midlothian Council's
Annual Complaint Handling Report 2018/19

Midlothian



We are replacing our online system to improve the way we deal with customers and handle complaints

We have provided compliments in this report

We upheld **3772** (75%) of complaints

We handled **5107** complaints in 2018/19 and closed **5066** complaints

We recorded **112727** customer interactions through our Contact Centre

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Midlothian Council takes pride in its responsibility to respond to the people it serves, and recognises that responding positively to complaints is essential to achieving that responsibility.

This report is the third of its kind, and it reflects how the Council values customers, and uses the feedback they provide to grow and evolve. The information is mainly centred on the 8 statutory indicators that all Scottish local authorities are required to report on, and it provides a comprehensive analysis of the statistics associated with complaints.

The data in the report is of customer complaints received by the Council for the performance cycle from 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019, and it also reflects the quarterly information that is reported through the Council's established reporting process where complaints information is measured and discussed by senior management before being published.

In addition to an analysis and evaluation of the statistics associated with complaints information, the report also presents other feedback data that reflects the Council's endeavour to value its customers in the most efficient way. This information is also used to plan, to learn from, and as a means of analysis that enables monitoring of change/outcomes and thereby inspiring council services to evolve.

It is difficult not to express disappointment when communicating information about services that have fallen below the expected standard, but it is reassuring to know that there is open acknowledgement of this and that issues are captured and assessed, followed by improvement actions being identified and implemented. This ensures that services are being continually refined as a result of the feedback provided by the residents of Midlothian Council.

As a final point, the report demonstrates accurate and robust benchmarking that comprises comparative information to similar Scottish local authorities, as well as to Scottish averages. Accordingly, Midlothian's commitment to the duties outlined by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) is thorough, and vigorously illustrated in the most proficient way.



Dr Grace Vickers,
Chief Executive

The Complaint Handling Procedure (CHP) defines how Midlothian Council handles, processes and reports on complaints. It is thoroughly recognised that complaints information is critical in detecting areas that are not working for customers.

Reporting complaints data is a national objective that is monitored by Audit Scotland in conjunction with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO), and it is in line with Best Value arrangements. Complaint information is also used in the shared risk assessments of local authorities that Audit Scotland conducts with other regulators such as Education Scotland. It helps to build up an overall picture of particular services within the local authority.

The SPSO handles the final stage of complaints about public services in Scotland. The Ombudsman service is independent of government and has a duty to act impartially. The Complaints Standards Authority (CSA) was established by the SPSO to work with public bodies to standardise and simplify complaints handling procedures and to help drive improvement. In addition, the CSA has taken forward new responsibilities provided to the SPSO by the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010, including requiring the SPSO to monitor and promote best practice in complaints handling. These responsibilities allow the SPSO to take forward recommendations made by the Crerar Review (2007)¹ and Sinclair (2008)² reports which concluded that there is a need for a quicker, more consistent, more user focused approach to handling complaints.

Midlothian Council defines a complaint per the SPSO's recommended description as follows:

“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.”

To supplement Midlothian’s commitment to valuing complaints, the report also illustrates comparative data to the indicator figures from last year, along with benchmarking information that measures Midlothian Council’s complaints information to similarly likened local authorities known as a Family Group³. Additionally, comparisons to the Scottish average complaints statistics are presented.

1 The Crerar Review: The Report of the Independent Review of Regulation, Audit, Inspection and Complaints Handling of Public Services in Scotland, 2007. <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Government/PublicServiceReform/IndependentReviewofReg/latest-news/TheCrerarReview>

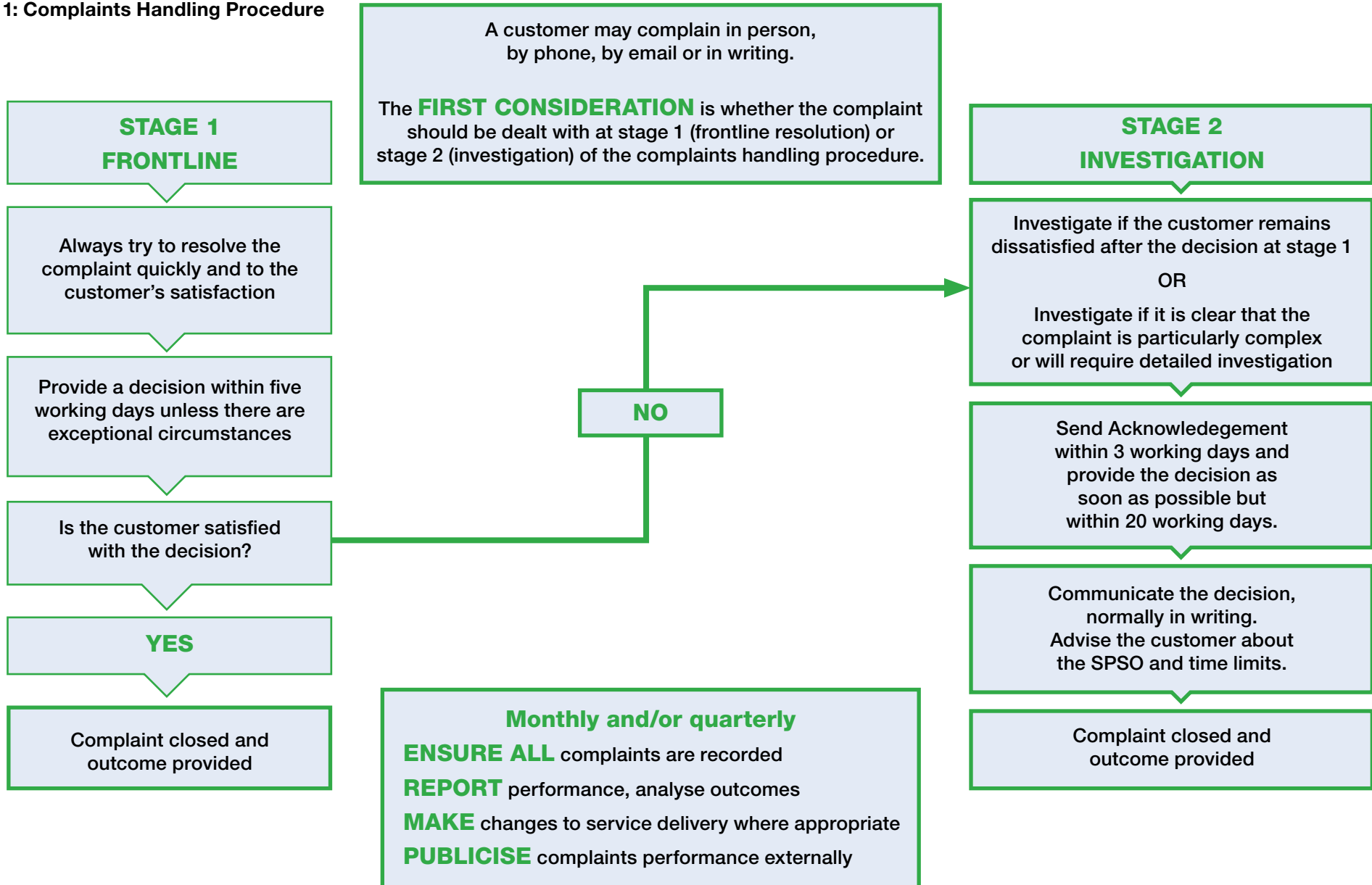
2 Fit-for-Purpose Complaints System Action Group (FCSAG), 2008. <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/923/0063564.doc>

3 Councils are arranged in ‘Family Groups’, as agreed by Local Authority Officers in association with the Improvement Service, so that councils that are similar in terms of the type of population that they serve (e.g. relative deprivation and affluence) and the type of area in which they serve them (e.g. urban, semi-rural, rural) can be compared. The point of comparing like with like is that this is more likely to lead to useful learning, sharing good practice, and working together to improve services. Midlothian Council’s Family Group includes Angus; Clackmannanshire; East Renfrewshire; Inverclyde; Renfrewshire; South Lanarkshire and West Lothian.

Complaints handling procedure

Figure 1 illustrates a summary flow chart of the complaints procedure, which is used for the corporate Complaints Handling Procedure.

FIGURE 1: Complaints Handling Procedure



Statutory Performance Indicators

Midlothian Council assesses complaints handling performance to provide assurance in relation to their performance, to facilitate continuous improvement and to assist in benchmarking performance between local authorities.

Indicator 1 – Complaints received per thousand population

Indicator 2 – Complaints closed at each stage as a percentage of all complaints closed

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

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

Indicator 5 – The number and percentage of complaints at each stage which were closed in full within the set timescale of 5 and 20 working days

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

Indicator 7 – Customer satisfaction statement about complaints service provided

Indicator 8 – A statement outlining changes or improvements to services or procedures as a result of the consideration of complaints.

Complaints received and channel used during 2018/19

The number of complaints that are logged on the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system are proportionately very little when compared to the overall number of recorded dealings.

With a total of 112,727 interactions on CRM, only 5107 were complaints. This equates to 4.5%.

Figure 2 illustrates the difference in complaints received in relation to the total amount of interactions received by the CRM system and table 1 reflects the channels used in 2018/19.

When comparing one year to the next, it can be seen in Figure 2 that demand has been greater in the year 18/19 in terms of total interactions.

Percentage of response for the Annual Complaints

TABLE 1

	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Online	17%	21%	26%
In Person	1%	1%	1.1%
Telephone	81%	78%	71.7%
Letter	0.6%	0.3%	0.8%
Feedback Form	0.8%	0.3%	0.4%
Total Complaints	5936	5202	5107

CHP development actions – what's happened during 2018/19

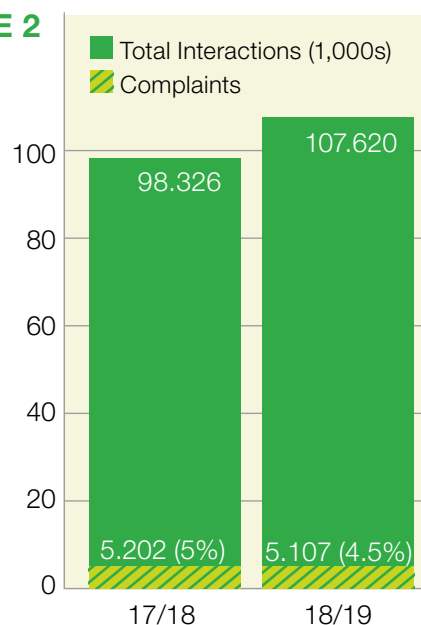
Development of dashboard using Tableau for senior staff to have regular, consistent access to complaints data.

Maintained engagement with the Local Authority Complaint Handler's Network (LACHN) to ensure benchmarking is accurate to enable learning.

As part of the procurement of a new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) platform, input to ensure that the new complaints system provides a more robust and efficient arrangement.

Reviewed and updated customer feedback leaflets.

FIGURE 2



INDICATOR 1 Complaints received per thousand population

This indicator records the total number of complaints received at stage 1, or directly at stage 2. The sum is divided by the estimated population size of Midlothian Council. Population size data is a Mid-Year Population Estimate from 2015 obtained from the National Records of Scotland (NRS).

- The population of Midlothian Council is estimated to be 90,090
- Midlothian Council handled 5,107 complaints
- This equates to an average of 57 complaints received per 1000 population
- The indication is that 1 in every 17 people made a complaint about a service

TABLE 2: Figures for performance indicator 1

Complaints received per 1000 population					
	Internal Benchmarking			External Benchmarking	
	Midlothian 16/17	Midlothian 17/18	Midlothian 18/19	Family Group 18/19	Scotland 18/19
Population Total	88,610	88,610	90,090	1,107,650	5,424,800
Total Number of Complaints	5936	5202 (↓734)	5107	12,508	56,178
Complaints per 1000 population	67	59	57	11.29	10.36

Internal Benchmarking

The number of complaints per 1000 population has continued to decrease from 59 in 2017/18 to 57 in 2018/19. Both sets of statistics include Social Work data. This continuing reduction in complaints from one year to the next could reflect tangible evidence that there has been improvements to the way the Council is managing services.

External Benchmarking

With 57 complaints received per 1000 population for Midlothian Council, and 11.29 and 10.36 complaints per 1000 population for the Family Group and the Scottish average respectively, there is a considerable difference.

This indicator has been widely discussed at the Local Authority Complaint Handlers Network (LACHN) as there is a diverse variation when individual data can be seen. Factors for consideration that might have an impact on complaint totals when comparing Local Authorities are events, tourism, weather, locale - rural/town and demographics.

Discussion also often takes place around waste related complaints about missed bins. In relation to the overall number of waste complaints missed bins and missed pull outs account for 70% approximately and approximately 50% of all recorded complaints.

**TABLE 3: Waste complaints
1st April 2018 – 31st March 2019**

Waste Category	Volume
Bin/boxes missed or not emptied properly	2,025
Missed pull out	569
Delivery of bins/boxes	460
Missed food caddy	120
Bulky not completed	83
Attitude of waste staff	41
Street needs swept	34
Illegal dumping	25
Abandoned vehicles	11
*Uncategorised	344
Total waste complaints 18/19	3712

Currently, some Local Authorities report this matter as a complaint, and some report the issue as a service request as they might have a policy whereby for example, reported missed bins within 24 hours after the scheduled pick up are categorised and processed as a service request. Midlothian records missed bins as a complaint, a practice that is supported by the SPSO, but at the moment this continues to be an unresolved matter. However, it is a subject that should be considered during benchmarking exercises, and might explain why Midlothian's complaint statistics are higher for this indicator.

INDICATOR 2 Complaints closed at stage 1 and stage 2, and escalated as a percentage of all complaints closed

“ 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.

The number of closed complaints differs to the number of received complaints because some of the 2018/19 closed complaints were received in 2017/18, while some of the 2018/19 received complaints will be closed in 2019/20 as their target date falls into the next reporting cycle.

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. ”

TABLE 4: 2018/19 data for performance indicator 2 including comparative data

Stage 1	Stage 2	Escalated
16/17 5799 (98%)	16/17 86 (1.5%)	16/17 39 (0.7%)
17/18 5095 (98.5%)	17/18 40 (0.8%)	17/18 40 (0.8%)
18/19 4944 (97.6%)	18/19 45 (0.9%)	18/19 77 (1.5%)

INDICATOR 3 Complaints upheld/partially upheld/not upheld at each stage (as a % of complaints closed in full)

“ The procedure states that there is a requirement to record an outcome for each complaint received. The outcomes are categorised as upheld, not upheld and partially upheld. ”

TABLE 5: 2018/19 data for performance indicator 3 including comparative data

	YEAR	UPHELD	NOT UPHELD	PARTIALLY UPHELD
STAGE 1	2016/17	4872 (84%)	629 (10.8%)	298 (5.1%)
	2017/18	3820 (75%)	614 (12%)	320 (6%)
	2018/19	3750 (76%)	579 (12%)	163 (3%)
STAGE 2	2016/17	13 (15.1%)	38 (44.2%)	35 (40.7%)
	2017/18	8 (20%)	19 (47.5%)	11 (27.5%)
	2018/19	12 (26.7%)	19 (42.2%)	14 (31%)
ESCALATED	2016/17	5 (12.8%)	24 (61.5%)	10 (25.6%)
	2017/18	4 (10%)	21 (52.5%)	12 (30%)
	2018/19	10 (13%)	35 (45.5%)	20 (26%)

Note:

- 2016/17 Outcomes keyed for all closed complaints (100%)
- 2017/18 Outcomes keyed for 95% of closed complaints
- 2018/19 Outcomes keyed for 90.8% of closed complaints

INDICATOR 4 Average time in working days to provide a response to complaints at each stage

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

“ 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.




 ”

“ This indicator represents the number and percentage of complaints at each stage which were closed in full within the predetermined timescales of 5 and 20 working days. Cases where an extension to the timescales has been authorised are included.

 ”

TABLE 6: 2018/19 data for performance indicator 4 including comparative data for previous years

TABLE 7: 2018/19 data for performance indicator 5 including comparative data for previous years

Stage 1 Complaints	TARGET	5 Working Days	
	16/17	0.3 Working Days	
	17/18	3.3 Working Days	
	18/19	3.96 Working Days	
Stage 2 Complaints	TARGET	20 Working Days	
	16/17	7.3 Working Days	
	17/18	19.5 Working Days	
	18/19	18.31 Working Days	
Escalated Complaints	TARGET	20 Working Days	
	16/17	26.7 Working Days	
	17/18	20.2 Working Days	
	18/19	21.07 Working Days	

YEAR	STAGE 1	STAGE 2	ESCALATED
2016/17	5463 (94.2%)	55 (64%)	25 (64.1%)
2017/18	4475 (87.8%)	28 (70%)	27 (67.5%)
2018/19	4337 (87.7%)	33 (73.3%)	47 (61%)

It can be seen in table 7 that the relative amount of Midlothian Council’s complaints that were closed against timescales has decreased for stage 1 complaints. However, the proportion of stage 2 complaints has increased, and complaints that were escalated from stage 1 to stage 2 shows a decrease for complaints that were closed within target.

INDICATOR 6 The number and percentage of complaints 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 a further 5 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 and escalated 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 8: 2018/19 data for performance indicator 6 including comparative data for previous years

YEAR	STAGE 1	STAGE 2	ESCALATED
2016/17	3 (0.1%)	6 (7%)	3 (7.7%)
2017/18	0 (0%)	14 (35%)	4 (10%)
2018/19	3 (0.1%)	4 (9%)	4 (5.2%)

INDICATOR 7 Customer satisfaction about the complaint handling procedure

The Local Authority Complaint Handlers Network (LACHN), working alongside the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) finalised a generic set of survey questions to be used as a minimum set of questions. This will enable better benchmarking of complaint handling satisfaction across Scotland.

Due to a poor uptake in responses to previous questionnaire attempts, Midlothian Council decided to cease further development work in this area and await the generic survey from the LACHN network group.

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.

Compliments throughout 2018/19

There were 173 compliments received during the year 2018/19. They covered a range of services and each Director received the information relevant to their areas to ensure that staff were informed. Many of the compliments were broad and covered factors on a larger scale such

as the good work of the general council during adverse weather conditions, whereas many were specific to staff whom our customers felt had gone above and beyond. Table 9 highlights an excerpt of some of these, and includes the service areas in which they belong.

TABLE 9: 2018/19 Compliments Received Data

COMPLIMENTS

Adults and Social Care	Our Social Worker is a kind, caring, wonderful girl and I can't thank her enough for being a wonderful Social Worker. The work you have done will remain in our hearts.
	Well done to the Midlothian CPO Team, always first in the books. Thanks for all your invaluable support and help over the years.
	I made contact with your Social Work department to discuss additional support aids for my dad, who has dementia. The staff member was able to advise on what assistance may be available and passed my information and request to Midcare. My call was dealt with in a professional, sensitive manner; an excellent customer service. One week later the aids were installed by Midcare and the gentleman provided an excellent service and took the time and care to ensure that both my husband and I understood how the aids worked. Extremely satisfied with the service provided by both members of your Department.
Customer Services	Customer wants to express her appreciation for the high level of service and how quickly the staff member dealt with her situation yesterday. She was spot on and deserves 10 out of 10.
	Customer called to say thank you very much to the very helpful and understanding staff member and would like to pass on how grateful she is for all her help.
	Customer in Midlothian reception advised that all the staff she has been speaking with recently when she comes into Midlothian Reception have been so helpful.
Registrars	I wish to express thanks and appreciation for the careful and sensitive assistance when the registrar registered the death of my father on 4th march. They were in touch once the service was over which was also extremely helpful at such a difficult time.
Libraries	We feel so incredibly lucky to have our lovely local librarian.
	Customer called to say that he was very impressed by the polite and efficient service he received while at Lasswade Library yesterday. A staff member assisted him in signing up for Garden Waste Collections.
Building Standards	Customer wrote to Chief Executive to express their sincere thanks and appreciation to the Building Standards Team for an excellent service. Customer very impressed.
Environmental Health	Customer called to thank the dog warden for the safe return of her son's dog yesterday. She is very grateful.
	Please pass on our thanks regarding the service we received about our bed bug problem. It was handled with great efficiency and the advice we got was great.
Education	Parent called to say a huge thank you to all staff at Strathesk Primary in Penicuik for the care and support they have given for her daughter who suffers from diabetes. The Learning Assistant attended training courses which made it possible for the child to go to school camp. The other classroom staff have also gone above and beyond their duties throughout the years and would like this to be acknowledged.
	Letter of thanks received by Head Teacher, Beeslack High School for hosting a visit to the school by the Learning Directorate, Scottish Government. The HT and Senior Management Team were complimented on their planning and preparation prior to the visit.
	Thank you very much for the opportunity to be a part of the Summer 2018 programme. The range of activities on offer were outstanding and I hope this Summer programme can continue to help and support other children and families. My son grew in confidence and became more self-reliant, which was a massive learning curve for him and me. All the staff were amazing and very attentive to each and every child's needs and they knew each child's name personally.
	Customer wishes to pass his sincere appreciation of last nights' concert. The musical quality achieved by the youngsters was absolutely brilliant and indicated the dedication and sheer amount of work from them and their instructors. The evening was a resounding success and I thoroughly enjoyed the choice of music - particularly the piece which opened the second half after the interval. My thanks are due to all concerned.

TABLE 9: 2018/19 Compliments Received Data (continued...)

COMPLIMENTS

Landscape and Countryside	Customer reported grass verges which needed cut and wished to pass forward a compliment to say that it was done, and that the gent even came to the door to ask if this was all okay and short enough
	How uplifting to turn the corner by the Police Station and see the beautiful lights on a dreary December late afternoon. My 3 year old grand daughter was equally appreciative. I would like to say thanks to the team who worked on this. This time of year is difficult for many people so this display must help to raise spirits. Well done.
	Thank you for the attention that you have given to the Rowan Tree which was falling in Lowrie Avenue, Pencuik.
	I used one of your walking routes (Penicuik Circular) last weekend to explore area around Penicuik House. The route was well explained and provided a great walk. Very much looking forward to trying more of the routes to explore more of Midlothian. Providing these routes is a great way to get people walking.
Waste Services	Customer would like to thank the Waste Team for their prompt delivery of the brown bin
	Customer has called to say a big thank you to the gentlemen who do customer's pull out service, customer often tries to say thanks when she sees the bin men but doesn't always get the chance
	Customer called to pass on thanks to waste crew as she forgot to put out her food waste bin on Friday but crew actually lifted this from her garden and returned it which she very much appreciates and would like to pass on her thanks.
	Customer called to congratulate the Waste Team for dealing with his request to have the street swept so quickly. He said Midlothian Council is amazing and he is so pleased that not only Polton Road was swept but Polton Bank was done as well.
	The wheelie bin guys are always super friendly, waving to the kids and nothing is ever a problem. They helped me out today & went above what is their job. Just wanted to say thanks
	Customer called to thank waste services very much for managing to get the garden waste payment service to work for him. The payment worked today.
Roads Services	Customer would like to thank the Roads guys for their quick response to the pot hole on his street.
	Customer would like to say thank you for the quick response to my email the drains were cleared this morning.
	Customer called in to thank team responsible for painting white lines at her driveway yesterday, she is very grateful for this.
	Customer called re- mini tractor on the streets of Bilston gritting the paths Good to see them planning ahead.
Property and Facilities Maintenance	Customer would like to pass on her thanks to the heating engineer who attended yesterday. She says that the noise has gone and would like to thank him for being so thorough.
	Thanks for the speedy, efficient installation of a new bannister by joiner yesterday, to help me mobilise after a broken hip greatly appreciated.
	Just to say many thanks to the men who did an excellent job in removing old fashioned coal bunker from my garden. They were polite, friendly and efficient, ensuring that all the concrete from bunker was uplifted the same day. I realise it's his job, but it was first class customer service and really made my day.
	Tenant called in to say thank you for the excellent service yesterday - he reported on standby he had a fault with his heating and an engineer was out within an hour and repaired the fault - he is very happy with this service on a Sunday
Healthy Living	I would like to comment on the excellent customer service that Penicuik Leisure Centre provides. One lady in particular is always welcoming, attentive and helpful. She is an inspiration to others.
	Customer wrote, in relation to Mayfield Tonezone membership: Just a note to thank the staff at the leisure centre. The staff have been excellent and shown a bit initiative and flexibility in accommodating silver members at off peak times. Please pass on my thanks.
Revenues Services	Customer wanted to pass on her thanks to the Revenues officer on the enquiry desk in Buccleuch House today - she did not get her name but wanted to say she had been really kind and helpful and this was much appreciated.

Case Studies 2018/19

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

CASE STUDY 1

“ Dr A called to advise that he was unable to complete a report which was due for a meeting to discuss a young person due to the timescales he was given. The dates were looked at and Dr A had only been given a few days to complete a very lengthy report. It was agreed this was not acceptable and a Service Manager met with the admin team to discuss the process. Both were able to identify areas which caused delays to sending out the report requests. The process was amended and has led to greater efficiency and an earlier despatch of report requests. This allows relevant professionals more time to complete and submit the reports. ”

CASE STUDY 2

“ Ms B asked her social worker if a school trip could be funded through the Self Directed Support (SDS) budget which had been allocated to her son. Ms B was advised that this would not be covered by the SDS budget and the mother complained that she was unsure of what the budget covered. The SDS assessment for children was a relatively new process and it was agreed the mother raised a very valid point. The SDS assessment did not specify what allocated funding should be spent on. It was decided that this should be added to the outcome section of the assessment indicating agreement for spend and parent/carer signature. Ms B's son was allocated the money for his trip. ”

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.

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: Comparative figures on the number of complaints and their corresponding areas that have reached the SPSO

Subject Group	2018/19	2017/18	2016/17
Social Work	8	6	7
Housing	3	7	10
Education	3	2	4
Planning	3	1	3
Finance	3	0	0
Legal & Admin	1	1	1
Building Control	1	0	0
Welfare Fund - Community Care Grants	1	0	0
Roads & Transport	0	1	1
Environmental Health & Cleansing	0	1	2
Recreation & Leisure	0	1	1
Land & Property	0	0	0
Personnel	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0
Economic Development	0	0	0
Valuation Joint Boards	0	0	0
National Park Authorities	0	0	0
Welfare Fund - Crisis Grants	0	0	0
Subject unknown or Out of Jurisdiction	2	1	0
Total	25	21	29

Table 10 illustrates the total number of complaints that have been received by the SPSO about a Midlothian Council service between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019. 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.

It is interesting to note that although the numbers differ between the years, the trend is similarly matched in terms of the most commonly complained about services.

Tables 11, 12 and 13 show 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 and the figures determined don't tally because the SPSO were still working on a case after the business year had ended.

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 10 at this stage compared to 13 the year before. 4 were deemed premature (hadn't gone through authority's internal procedure first), and 6 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 (i.e. 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 8 complaints in total that reached this stage compared with 8 the year before.

Table 13 illustrates the complaints that the SPSO conducted an investigation for. It can be seen that of the 25 complaints that the SPSO received, there were 2 that reached this stage. The decisions can be viewed in the table, which reflects that both were not upheld.

TABLE 11: Comparative figures on the number of complaints received by the SPSO that reached the ADVICE stage

	2018/19	2017/18	2016/17
Not duly made or withdrawn	6	3	8
Out of jurisdiction (discretionary)	0	0	0
Out of jurisdiction (non-discretionary)	0	0	0
Premature	4	10	7
Total	10	13	15

TABLE 12: Comparative figures on the number of complaints received by the SPSO that reached the EARLY RESOLUTION stage

	2018/19	2017/18	2016/17
Not duly made or withdrawn	0	0	1
Out of jurisdiction (discretionary)	2	1	2
Out of jurisdiction (non-discretionary)	0	0	2
Outcome not achievable	1	1	4
Premature	1	1	1
Proportionality	4	5	1
Resolved	0	0	0
Total	8	8	11

TABLE 13: Comparative figures between 17/18 and 16/17 on the number of complaints received by the SPSO that reached the INVESTIGATION stage

	2018/19	2017/18	2016/17
Fully upheld	0	1	0
Some upheld	0	0	1
Not upheld	2	1	1
Resolved	0	0	0
Total	2	2	2

The quantity of telephone calls relative to the total number of complaints for the years 17/18 and 2018/19 have reduced. It is a negligible amount at 6.3% but it is important to recognise that since the percentage of online complaint interactions (email and web-form) has increased by approx. 5%. This could be a consequence of the continual work to improve the user-friendliness of the council website, and is evidence that channel-shift work is moving in the desired direction. Work to enhance web-form accessibility has amplified the trend.

During 2018/19, Midlothian Council processed 95 fewer complaints compared with the year before. The year on year difference could be viewed in one of two ways. The reduction could be interpreted as tangible evidence that there has been improvement in terms of enhancing service provision. From another perspective, it could also mean that there is a wider consideration to ensure that customers know that the procedure exists and/or that staff are identifying complaints correctly and logging them accordingly per the Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP).

With a considerable difference between the complaints per 1000 population (57 for Midlothian Council) when externally benchmarked to the Scottish average (10.36) and family group average (11.29), it is important to bear in mind that factors for consideration might have an impact on complaint totals when comparing Local Authorities with this statistic. These are items such as events, tourism, weather, locale - rural/town and demographics.

The SPSO's aim to close complaints at as early a stage as possible to prevent the need for lengthy and costly investigations is reflected in Midlothian Council's ability to close off stage 1 complaints at the initial point of contact. The council has a lower instance of escalated complaints at 1.5% than that of the Family Group average of 2.3% and the Scottish average of 2.6%.

For stage 2 escalated complaints, Midlothian Council used the function to extend the time considerably more than our family group but less than the Scottish Average. With 7% for stage 2 compared to 10.1% (Scottish average) and 4.5% (Family Group), however when considering all escalated complaints Midlothian Council shows 6.1% compared with the Scottish average at 10.5%, and the Family Group at 12.1%.

173 compliments were received to a range of services during 2018/19. An excerpt of these can be viewed in table 9 above. Many were about staff whom our customers felt had gone 'above and beyond'. Compliments were shared with both officers and heads of service to ensure awareness of the good work. The practice of recording compliments as well as complaints is encouraged in all services to ensure that reports can be generated, and to enable some analysis work that will permit learning and continuous improvement.

Satisfaction is an area requiring fairly large scale effort to drive the process of administering the forms throughout the authority. Using the new generic form when available will enable better benchmarking and allows the opportunity to launch as a 'new look' form as one of best practice.

Next Steps



Rollout the complaints dashboard using Tableau for senior staff to have regular, consistent access to complaints data.

Maintain engagement with the Local Authority Complaint Handler's Network (LACHN) to ensure benchmarking is accurate to enable learning.

As part of the installation of a new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) platform, implement a new complaints system which will provide a more robust and efficient arrangement.

Use the new CRM system to relaunch the Complaint Handling Procedure (CHP) and correlate training on procedural matters with necessary system training.

Use training to work towards reducing time taken to respond to complaints.

Improve online accessibility for logging a complaint, with guidance to assist customers whilst submitting a complaint so they are better able to differentiate between a service request and a complaint.

In driving forward a disciplined culture of continuous improvement and to help ensure that the organisation learns from feedback and complaints received and improves service delivery the Council is adopting the Customer Service Excellence (CSE) standard. The standard has particular focus on delivery, timeliness, information, professionalism and staff attitude. Emphasis is also placed on developing customer insight, understanding the user's experience and robust measurement of service satisfaction.



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Körler için kabartma yazılar, kaset ve büyük nüshalar da dahil olmak üzere, istenilen bilgileri sağlamak ve tercüme etmekten memnuniyet duyarız.

اگر آپ چاہیں تو ہم خوشی سے آپ کو ترجمہ فراہم کر سکتے ہیں اور معلومات اور دستاویزات دیگر شکلوں میں مثلاً بریل (ناہینا افراد کے لیے) بھرے ہوئے حروف کی لکھائی) میں، ٹیپ پر یا بڑے حروف کی لکھائی میں فراہم کر سکتے ہیں۔

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