

Midlothian



MIDLOTHIAN COUNCIL
ANNUAL COMPLAINT HANDLING REPORT 2021/22



Welcome

to Midlothian Council's Annual Complaint Handling Report for 2021/22

Midlothian



We have provided compliments in this report

We upheld 75.5(%) of complaints at stage 1 and 7% at stage 2

We handled 6450 complaints and closed 6305 complaints during the year 2021/22

We are nearing the end of the significant ongoing project where we have procured a new customer focused online platform that will enable better customer relations including improved complaint handling.

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Midlothian takes its commitment to the duties required by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) very seriously. This year's Annual Complaint Handling report presents information about the way Midlothian Council manages complaints between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2022.

The material in the report centres on the 8 statutory key performance indicators, and the data reflects the detail about how the council is performing when processing complaints from the beginning through to resolution. The information is shared internally where it is measured and discussed by the council's senior management on a quarterly basis. We also look towards making improvements in our complaints process and we continue to monitor the way we deal with complaints.

Midlothian Council recognises that valuable lessons can be learnt from the feedback we receive from customers, and although it is disappointing to report that we fall short in some areas, we value complaints by viewing them in a positive way and using the information to continually improve the way

we do things. The council's complaints procedure provides our customers with a clear and structured way to provide feedback on what has gone wrong with a council service.

We have included some examples of what improvements we have made to our services as a result of complaints. We strive to be thorough, transparent, objective and fair in our approach to complaints, and we make every effort to ensure that the process is accessible, straightforward and timely.

The report also takes account of other additional feedback data that contributes towards the council's determination to value its customers in the most efficient way, also using this information to learn, to plan and to monitor change/outcomes and thereby inspiring council services to continually evolve.



Dr Grace Vickers,
Chief Executive
Midlothian Council

Complaints are crucial in identifying areas or processes 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.

The Complaint Handling Procedure (CHP) specifies how Midlothian Council handles complaints. The 8 key indicators, developed by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) along with other public sector experts, are reported on a quarterly cycle.

The CHP has thus far:

- introduced a uniform two stage procedure for dealing with complaints, with timescales for each stage;
- encouraged the use of early resolution methods wherever feasible;
- allocated responsibility for complaint handling in organisations;
- included requirements for recording complaints and publishing complaint data and for
- reporting on complaint performance;
- provided a definition of 'complaint'; and
- encouraged learning from complaints.

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.

The local authority complaint handler network (LACHN) is a national forum for local authority complaint handlers to meet quarterly to assist in the development of professional practice in relation to complaint handling. Midlothian Council are represented at this forum by the complaint officer alongside representatives from 32 Scottish Local Authorities. The SPSO attend these meetings to support the ongoing development of complaint handling within local authorities and to achieve consistency in approach.

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.

The information provided in this report is generated from the records that staff have input into the established complaints system – the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. The report is presented in a way that provides insight about what the figures may suggest.

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

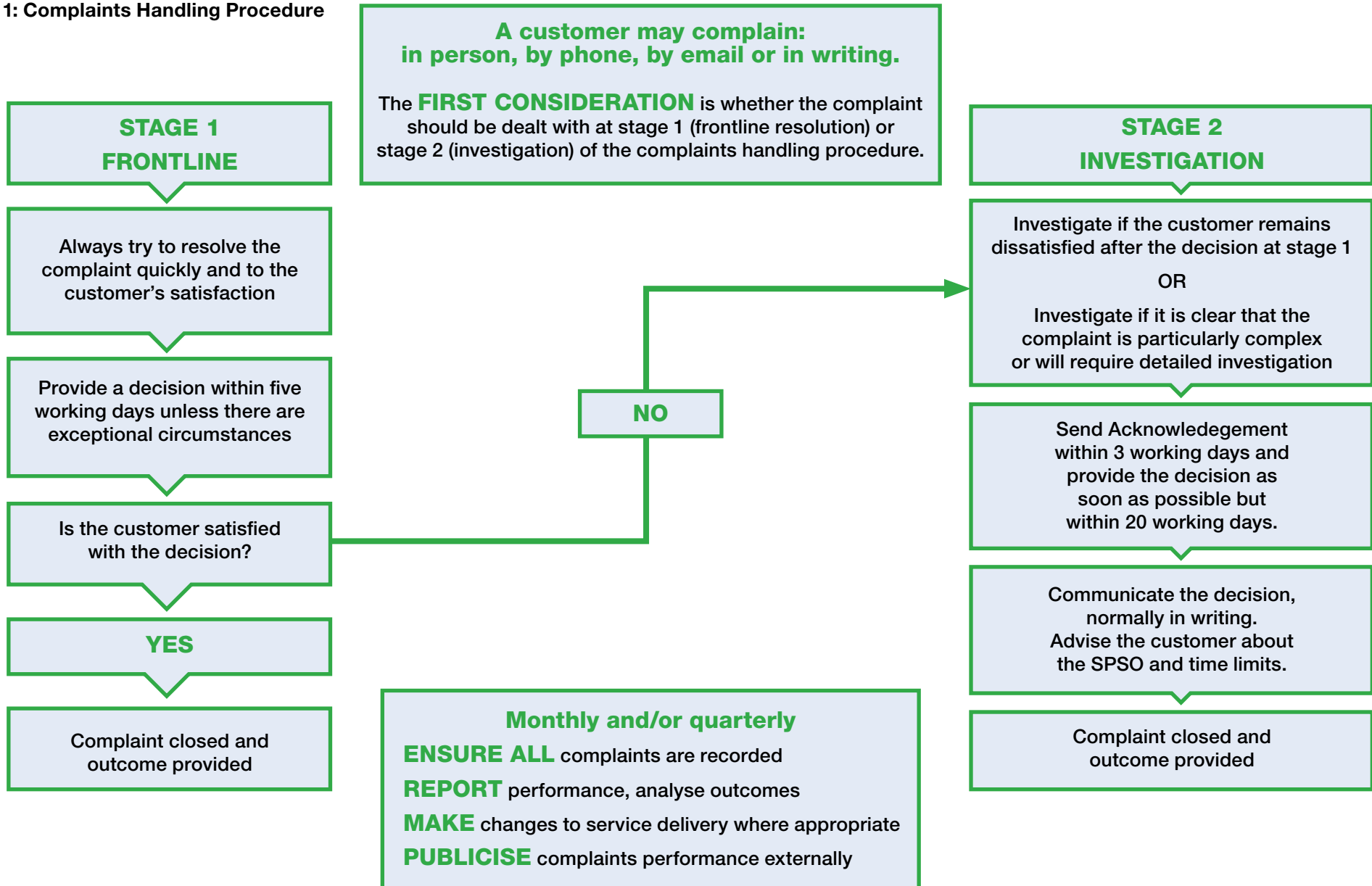
2 Fit-for-Purpose Complaints System Action Group (FCSAG), 2008. <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/923/0063564.doc>

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



Complaints received and channel used 2021/22

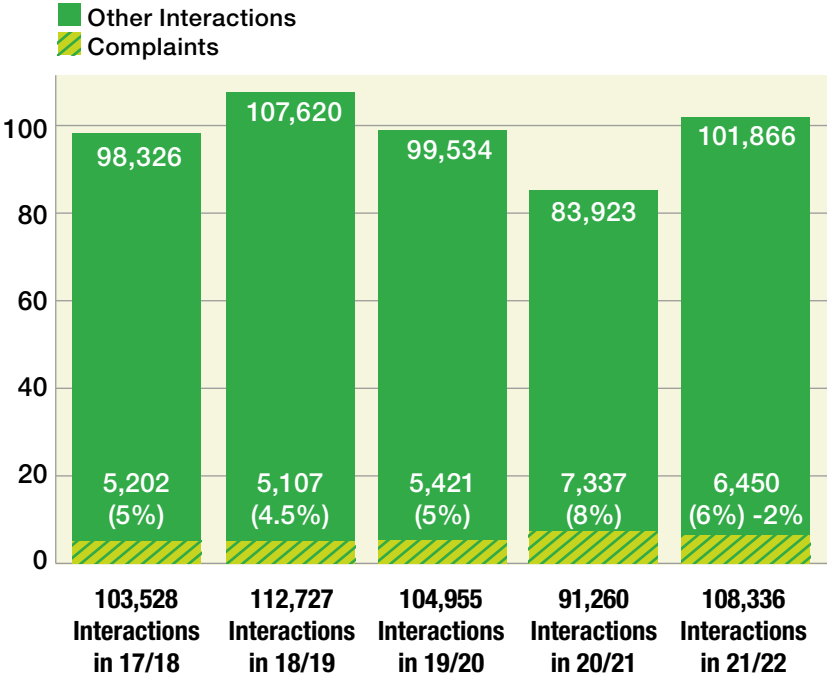


Figure 2 illustrates the difference in complaints received in relation to the total amount of interactions received by the CRM system for the years 2017/18, through to 2021/22.

The figure shows that for the current year 2021/22, there is a total of 108,336 customer interactions through the CRM, and that 6450 were complaints. This equates to 6%.

Although the number of complaints that are logged on the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system are proportionately fairly small when compared to the overall number of recorded dealings, it is interesting that there is a reduction in complaints relative to interactions as it looks like it is reverting back to the consistent trend of the years prior to 20/21 at 5%, 4.5% and 5%. Last year's 3% increase was presumed to be a result of the pandemic, and this year's reduction to 6% from 8% is demonstrating that the assumption is valid. Another quantifying observation is that the total interactions at 108,336 is also returning to that of the previous (before 20/21) years.

FIGURE 2:
Total CRM interactions relative to complaints for years 17/18, through to 21/22 with percentage figures representing total interactions to complaints ratio



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 timescales 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 the complaints service provided.

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

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 2019 obtained from the National Records of Scotland (NRS).** ”

- The population of Midlothian Council is estimated to be 93,150
- Midlothian Council handled 6450 complaints
- This equates to an average of 69 complaints received per 1000 population
- Expressed another way, 1 in every 15 people made a complaint about a service

TABLE 1: Figures for Performance Indicator 1: Complaints received per thousand population

	Internal Benchmarking						External Benchmarking	
	Midlothian 16/17	Midlothian 17/18	Midlothian 18/19	Midlothian 19/20	Midlothian 20/21	Midlothian 21/22	Family Group 21/22	Scotland 21/22
Population Total	88,610	88,610	90,090	91,340	92,460	93,150	938,020	5,292,350
Total Number of Complaints	5936	5202 (↓734)	5107 (↓95)	5421 (↑314)	7337 (↑1916)	6450 (↓887)	12,646	57,015
Complaints Per 1000 Population	67	59	57	59	79	69	14	11

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 2021/22 closed complaints were received in 2019/20, while some of the 2021/22 received complaints will be closed in 2022/23 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.

”

FIGURE 3: Data for performance indicator 2: Complaints closed at each stage as a percentage of all complaints closed, including comparative data from previous years

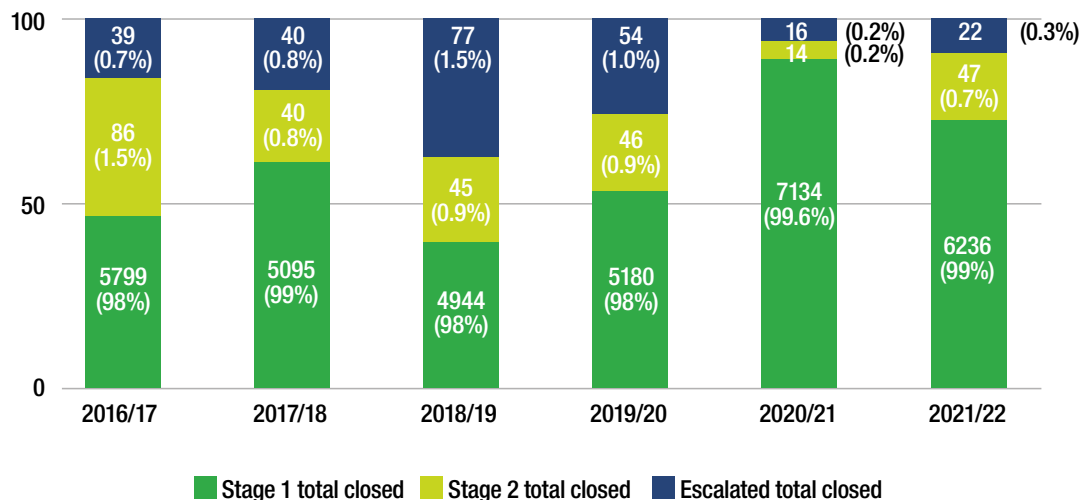
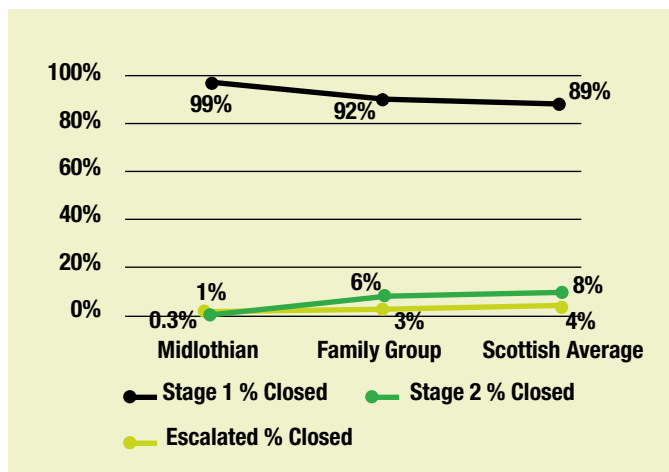


Figure 3 shows that the most recent percentage of complaints closed at stage 1 is 99%. The percentage closed at stage 1 when compared to how they look on other years remains fairly consistent across the 6 years listed at 98%, 99%, 98%, 98%, 99.6% and 99%.

When the amount of closed escalated complaints are viewed, the proportionate percentage also remains consistent. This is an indication that there is a small but steady number of complainants who remain dissatisfied at stage 1. Midlothian Council's stats for this indicator supports the SPSO's aim to close complaints at as early a stage as possible to prevent the need for lengthy and costly investigations.

CHART 2: Data for performance indicator 2: Complaints closed at each stage as a percentage of all complaints closed, including comparative data for family group and Scottish average



It can be seen in chart 2 above that Midlothian Council closed proportionately more stage 1 complaints in 2021/22 (99%) than the family group and Scottish total at 92% and 89% respectively.

However, for stage 2 and escalated complaints, it can be seen that Midlothian Council has comparatively less of these complaints in both instances, with 1% for stage 2 compared with 6% and 8% for the family group and Scottish amount. Midlothian's escalated complaints are more closely matched at 0.3%, 3% (family group) and 4% (Scottish total).

Midlothian Council's statistics for this indicator supports the SPSO's aim to close complaints at as early a stage as possible to prevent the need for lengthy and costly investigations. The data also shows that the council has a lower instance of escalated complaints than that of the family group average and the Scottish average. This is reflective of the fact that customers are happy with the response that they have received at stage 1.

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

“ 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. ”

FIGURE 4: 2021/22 data for performance indicator 3: The number of complaints upheld/partially upheld/not upheld and the new outcome, resolved at each stage as a percentage of complaints closed in full at each stage including comparative data for previous years.

	YEAR	UPHELD	NOT UPHELD	PARTIALLY UPHELD	RESOLVED
STAGE 1	2016/17	4872 (84%)	629 (11%)	298 (5%)	
	2017/18	3820 (75%)	614 (12%)	320 (6%)	
	2018/19	3750 (76%)	579 (12%)	163 (3%)	
	2019/20	4229 (82%)	380 (7%)	179(4%)	
	2020/21	6826 (96%)	234 (3%)	74 (1%)	
	2021/22	4711 (76%)	204 (3%)	187 (3%)	1127 (18%)
STAGE 2	2016/17	13 (15%)	38 (44%)	35 (41%)	
	2017/18	8 (20%)	19 (48%)	11 (28%)	
	2018/19	12 (27%)	19 (42%)	14 (31%)	
	2019/20	6 (13%)	27 (59%)	11 (24%)	
	2020/21	2 (14%)	7 (50%)	5 (36%)	
	2021/22	8 (17%)	16 (34%)	13 (28%)	8 (18%)
ESCALATED	2016/17	5 (13%)	24 (62%)	10 (26%)	
	2017/18	4 (10%)	21 (53%)	12 (30%)	
	2018/19	10 (13%)	35 (46%)	20 (26%)	
	2019/20	12 (22%)	23 (43%)	12 (22%)	
	2020/21	2 (6%)	9 (56%)	5 (31%)	
	2021/22	4 (18%)	5 (23%)	8 (36%)	5 (23%)

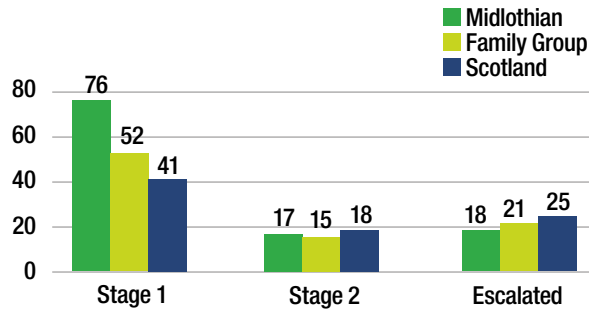
Figure 4 illustrates the outcome totals for each stage, as well as the relative percentage. There is an identified anomaly within our Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system that should be observed. If incorrect practice is applied, the known anomaly permits staff to close off complaints without stating a reportable outcome. This explains why the figures from 2017/18 onwards for each stage fall slightly below 100%. Midlothian council has procured a new customer platform solution that includes a CRM, which will overcome this problem, and meantime due the current in-house developed system having reached the end of its 'lifespan', no further development work is being carried out on it. Worsening of the statistics relating to this loophole is prevented or reduced through regular system reporting, engagement with services who use the system, and training.

The relative amount of upheld complaints for stage 1 in 21/22 is 76%, a 20% decrease from the previous year. This is a noteworthy amount and is reflective of the decrease in complaints back in line with the previous years of 2020/21 when we had lockdown to contend with. 3% of stage 1 complaints were not upheld, remaining the same as last year, while 3% were partially upheld, and 18% were resolved.

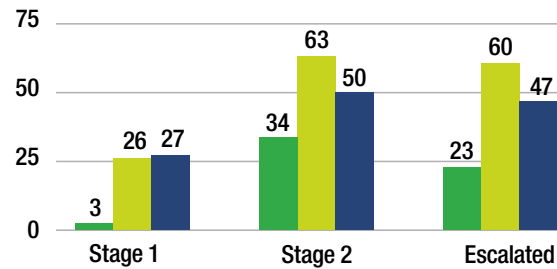
The proportion of stage 2 complaints that were upheld has increased slightly with a 3% increase from 14% in 20/21 to 17% in 21/22. There had been a notable decrease in upheld complaints at stage 2 from the previous (19/20 & 20/21) years so hopefully this slight increase will not continue on as a trend. This will be closely monitored since it is a key focus of the council to decrease the number of upheld complaints at stage 2. Those that were not upheld have decreased from 50% in 20/21 to 34% in 21/22.

CHART 3: data for performance indicator 3: the number of complaints upheld/partially upheld/not upheld and resolved at each stage as a percentage of complaints closed in full at each stage, including comparative data for family group and Scottish average

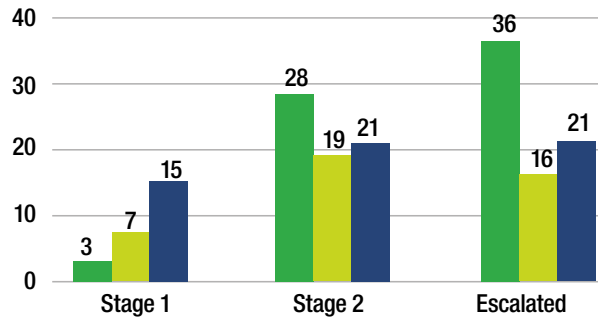
Upheld at Each Stage (%)



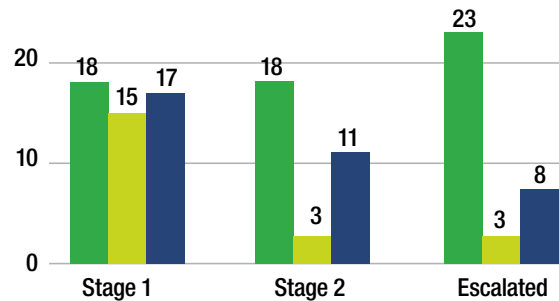
Not Upheld at Each Stage (%)



Partially Upheld at Each Stage (%)



Resolved at Each Stage (%)



Figures between upheld stage 1 complaints in 2021/22 are higher than the Family Group and also the Scottish Average. This supports the theory proposed in Indicator 2, that customers are happy with the response that they have been provided at this early stage i.e. to apologise and uphold complaints early on.

Midlothian Council's upheld stage 2 complaints and escalated complaints in 2021/22 are not too dissimilar to the Family Group and Scottish average. This supports the SPSO's concept that dealing with complaints at an early stage can help to avoid situations becoming a complex issue.

The 'not upheld' and 'partially upheld' outcomes for stage 1 complaints is much lower than both the family group and Scotland. Midlothian has a higher instance of not upheld outcomes in stage 2 and escalated complaints when compared with both the family group and Scotland's data.

The new outcome 'resolved' has interesting data where it is similar across the Midlothian, the Family Group and Scotland at 18%, 15%, and 17% respectively. However, Midlothian has a much higher percentage in stage 2 and escalated at 18% and 23% respectively compared with 3% (Family Group) and 11% (Scotland) for stage 2 and 3% (Family Group) and 8% (Scotland) for escalated.

INDICATOR 4:

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

“ 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. ”

FIGURE 5: 2021/22 data for performance indicator 4: Average time in working days for a full response to complaints at each stage including comparative data for previous years

Indicator 4: average working days

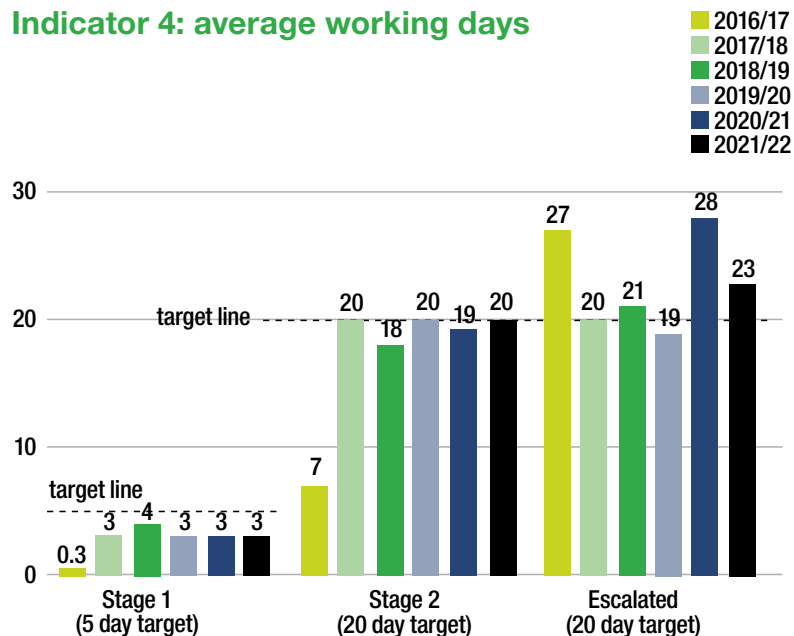
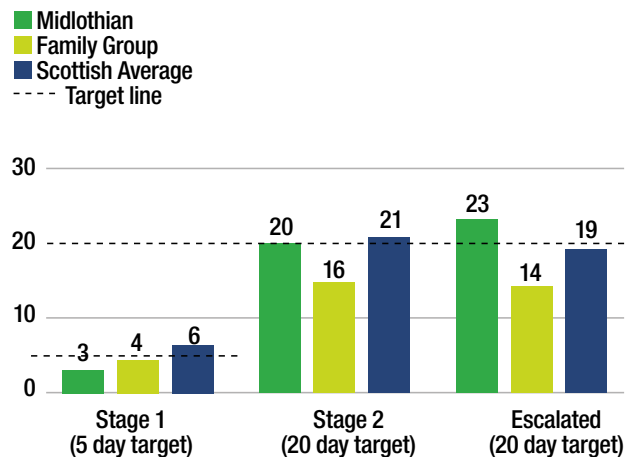


Figure 5 indicates that Midlothian Council has remained within the pre-determined target of 5 days for stage 1 complaints. Aside from the year 16/17, the average number of days over the past 4 years is fairly consistent with 3, 4, 3 and 3 for years 17/18, 18/19, 19/20, 20/21 and 21/22 respectively.

Also shown in Figure 5 is the average time for stage 2 complaints for each year. The council have kept within the 20 working day limit, but at the upper end (20) for 21/22, the need to focus on ensuring that the maximum limit is not exceeded remains.

Although there is an improvement on last years' (28 day average) indicator 4 data for escalated complaints, there is still an unfortunate drift over the 20 day target to a 23 day average in the current 21/22 year. Work is required to tighten this up. Further research will tell whether this should be through policy or system training for staff, but a review of how the system is configured to record escalations could also be helpful.

CHART 4: 2021/22 data for performance indicator 4: Average time in working days for a full response to complaints at each stage including comparative data with family group and Scottish average and Scottish average



Part of the SPSO's ethos is that complaints should be dealt with at as early a stage as possible, so the less time it takes to deal with complaints the better. Chart 4 shows that when compared to the Family Group average at 4 days, and the Scottish average at 6 days, Midlothian Council shows good performance in this area with an average of 3 days to complete stage 1 complaints.

Chart 4 also illustrates that the average time for stage 2 complaints for Midlothian Council during 21/22 is just within target at 20 days. There is a need to maintain this momentum to ensure there is a response to stage 2 complaints as quickly as is feasible. It can be seen that when compared to Scotland with an average of 21 days for stage 2 complaints, Midlothian is sitting comfortably in this area.

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 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. ”

FIGURE 6: 2021/22 data for performance 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, including comparative data with previous years

It can be seen in figure 6 that the relative amount of Midlothian Council’s complaints that were closed against timescales for stage 1 complaints has decreased from 91% in 2020/21 back to 88% in 2021/22. It is interesting that it has reverted back to the same pre-covid lockdown consistency, and could be reflective in the decreased overall amount of complaints coming through. The proportion of stage 2 complaints closed against timescales shows a decrease from 79% in 2020/21 to 70%. This is disappointing following the work done to increase this in the previous year. Stage 2 complaints require a substantial investigation since they can be complex. Prior to the council being in a position to provide a full, impartial and balanced outcome, there first needs to be a detailed assessment of all the elements made in the complaint case. At times, there are instances where responses cannot be provided with the pre-determined target due to either capacity issues, or an inability to proceed with meetings at the desired times.

The number of escalated complaints closed on time has increased from 63% in 2020/21 to 68% in 2021/22. Similar to stage 2 complaints, there is still work required to get this statistic higher.

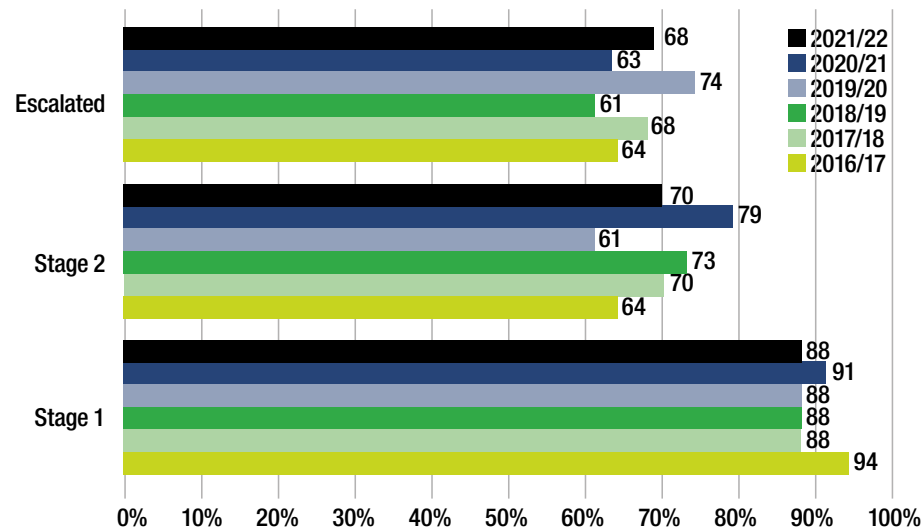
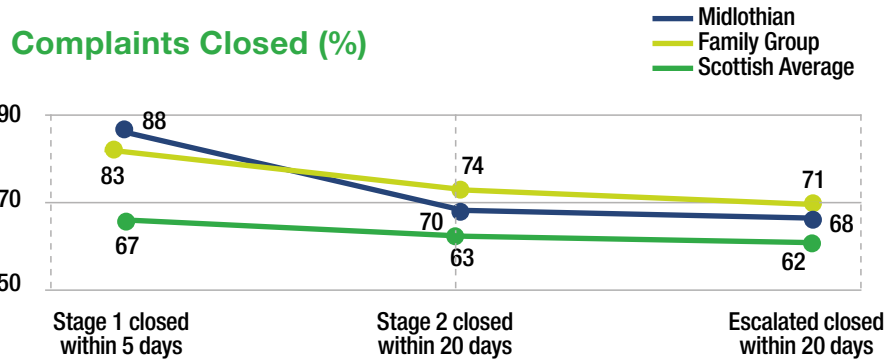


CHART 5: 2021/22 data for performance indicator 5: The number and percentage of complaints at each stage which were closed in full within the set timescales of 5 and 20 working days, including comparative data with family group and Scottish average



It can be seen in Chart 5 that Midlothian Council had a higher proportion of stage 1 complaints that were closed within the timescale of 5 days when compared to both the Family Group and the Scottish average. However the percentage of stage 2 complaints closed is close to the family group 70% for Midlothian Council and 74% for the family group. The Scottish Average remains somewhat lower at 63%.

The percentage of escalated complaints closed on time is in 68% for Midlothian Council. This is somewhat higher

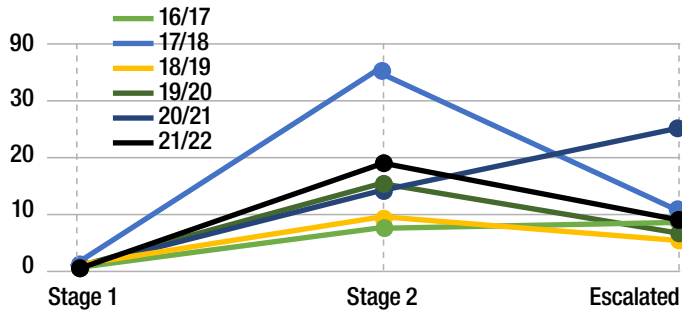
than the Scottish average at 62%, but not as high as the family group average which is 71%. Investigations tend to be complicated in nature and at times can require cross-service communication and/or include delays in scheduling mutually convenient times to discuss complaint cases with the customer/s. This can sometimes cause interruptions in providing a timely response but it is important to gather all the correct information to ensure that the council is positioned to provide an objective and proportionate response so that the council's standpoint can be provided to the customer.

INDICATOR 6

“ With authorisation from a senior manager such as a Chief Officer, 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. ”

The number and percentage of complaints at each stage which were granted an authorised extension.

FIGURE 7: data for performance indicator 6: number and percentage of complaints at each stage where an extension to the 5 or 20 working day timeline has been authorised, including previous year's data for comparison

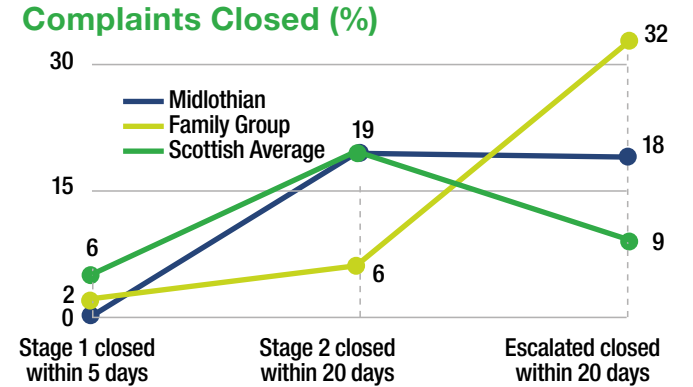


YEAR	STAGE 1		STAGE 2		ESCALATED	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
16/17	3	0.1%	6	7%	3	8%
17/18	0	0%	14	35%	4	10%
18/19	3	0.1%	4	9%	4	5%
19/20	4	0.1%	7	15%	3	6%
20/21	0	0%	2	14%	4	25%
21/22	23	0%	9	19%	2	9%

Figure 7 shows that the function to extend stage 1 complaints is used minimally. This could be a training issue on functionality of the CRM system, or it could mean that there just hasn't been a great need to extend stage 1 complaints. On further analysis of the stage 1's that are not closed and not extended using the system, it is likely to be the latter. It can be seen on the line graph that there is consistency across all the years, except from the covid/ lockdown year (20/21), which again is remarkably different.

Stage 2 extended complaints have risen this year from 14% (20/21) to 19% (21/22), and this year, extended escalated complaints has decreased to 9% from last year's 25%.

CHART 6: 2021/22 Comparative Figures between Midlothian Council, Family Group and Scottish Average for indicator 6



The proportion of stage 1 complaints that were granted an authorised extension is generally low all round. The Scottish average is the highest with 6%. Midlothian Council had 0% whilst the family group only has 2%. At stage 2 both Midlothian and the Scottish average had the highest proportion of extended complaints with 19%. This was reasonably higher than the family group (6%). Midlothian Council has 9% for extended escalated complaints and the Scottish average is higher with 18%. The family group has jumped hugely for this indicator to 32% showing that the function to extend is being used more heavily across that group.

INDICATOR 7: customer satisfaction about the complaint handling 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. It is hoped that this will allow for satisfaction data to be better collated and reported about all council services. The Local Authority Complaint Handlers Network (LACHN) are working alongside the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) to finalise 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.

It is also anticipated that the new customer platform, scheduled to go live in 2022 will better accommodate this functionality. 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

CASE STUDY



Service: Complaints Handling and other Feedback

Complaint Analysis

Complaints were being received and services were not responding in a timely manner or using the established system to record all the necessary information that enables reports to be correctly attained.

Service Improvement Actions

In response the council have taken a “whole system approach” to review the way the council manages complaints and other feedback. The new process enables more quality assurance and support to service areas through a new central function.

The system itself is being built from scratch by a highly skilled professional consultant in tandem with the resourced project group who report on progress to the Customer Service Board. It is still underway but priorities are on ensuring it is easier to navigate for both the customer on the front end if using a web form, and front end staff who would process this on a customer’s behalf, as well as Officers who process the system in tandem with investigating and responding to the complaint. It is also more transparent with less scope/margin for error.



Compliments throughout 2021/22

There were 115 compliments received during the year 2021/22, compared with 216 in 20/21. As mentioned before, the data for 20/21 varied quite considerably compared with other years due to the pandemic, so the 21/22 figure of 115 is possibly more conventional. The compliments covered a range of services and each service receives 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, and also adverse weather conditions, whereas many were specific to staff whom our customers felt had gone above and beyond. Table 3 highlights an excerpt of some of these, and includes the service areas in which they belong.

TABLE 3: Excerpt of compliments received during 2021/22

SERVICE AREA	COMPLIMENTS
Adult Health and Social Care	"The members of staff who assisted me with my social care requirements were truly outstanding and a credit to the council. They were so friendly, supportive, and caring and made me feel so reassured that they wanted to do whatever they could to make my space as accessible and safe for me as it can be. They engaged me in the decision-making, and also made suggestions I wouldn't have thought of (such as a perching stool) but also helped me to understand and feel safe with things that wouldn't quite work, such as grab rails in particular locations. I am so grateful to the OT, the community care worker, and the installers of the equipment for all of this".
	HSC staff member has been working with our family for a number of months, primarily working with my father but also providing essential support to myself and the rest of the immediate family. The enthusiasm, professionalism and dedication that she has demonstrated over the time that I have known her is quite remarkable and I wanted to she gets the recognition that she deserves.
Customer Services	"Just a quick note to compliment the service & empathy provided by staff member from the contact centre after I recently complained. My complaint was a bit irrational and she handled it with professionalism, understanding and kindness, and that was and is very much appreciated".
	"Today i spoke with a lady in customer services (name provided) and I just wanted her to know how amazing she is at her job, i was so grateful for her patience and understanding. She was so helpful and is a complete asset to Midlothian council. If you could please pass on that she is doing a great job and is unknowingly appreciated by strangers that would be great. People are so quick to complain but not quick to recognise the good in people".
Education	"I am a teacher but work for another council. I spent a lot of time in the previous lockdown looking at ytubes made by your schools' digital team. I have been telling everyone about them. Your schools' digital team are fantastic and make Google Classroom so easy".
Landscape and Countryside	Hi I had requested some trees were cut back on the path at Kippielaw. It was great to come back after my holiday to see trees had been cleared so path could get the light. Thanks very much to everyone involved.
	Great service from the team with regards to improving planting and screening in Bogwood. Their help in trying to solve an ongoing problem in that area is much appreciated. Thank you very much
Libraries	"I visited Roslin library yesterday, the librarian is always pleasant, professional and ready to assist with anything, but on this occasion he went over and beyond my expectations. I help care for a lady with dementia, which includes reading literature of a particular type and level: Ryan has helped me source relevant books for this task for a few years now. However, yesterday, Ryan presented me with a pile of books, which I hadn't asked for, but which he'd identified as potential suitable reading material for this lady. I was most touched and impressed by his thoughtfulness in equal measure. Suffice to say, all the books were 'just right' too and I'm sure will provide interest, stimulation and enjoyment once they are shared. Thank you for really super service".
Building Maintenance Services	"Thank you to the workmen who were out yesterday and today for a job well done on the fence and they tidied up after themselves. Thank you very much".
	"Customer calling to pass her thanks on to the team who recently fitted her new kitchen they have done a great job and cleaned up after themselves".
	"Customer calling to say thank you to the plumber who attended to replace the taps and repair the leak, he was very helpful and friendly".

TABLE 3: Excerpt of compliments received during 2021/22 (continued...)

SERVICE AREA	COMPLIMENTS
Revenues and Benefits	"The Revenues Officer I dealt with today, on my brother's behalf, was very professional and helpful. I was able to achieve what I called to do with her support. Fantastic to receive such great customer service, even in such stressful circumstances."
Roads	"Called to report a broken drain cover on the field above Bellmans which had a six foot drop for anyone who did not see the large hole. Had been smashed by kids. Phone call answered immediately and efficiently by reception and put through to Roads. Details taken and actioned promised. Less than one hour later van drove up and MC worker (extremely polite and friendly) cleared the drain and made it safe for all walkers and school children who will head to school on Friday. Brilliant work well done".
Waste	"Thank you so much to the bin men who collected my bins in Croft Street today, their impromptu collection due to the thoughtless parking in our street meant that they came today for that very reason. They waited patiently while I ran to get all my bins for collection and I really appreciated them being so understanding, so a great big thank you to them".
	"This morning I noticed some contents of my blue bin scattered over the pavement. Before I could go out to clean it up the man emptying the bins came along and cleared it all up. Both my husband and myself are in our 80's, so are very grateful and would like to say thanks".
	"I want to say how much I appreciate all the regular collections. Please thank all the staff for their excellent work".

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 with 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 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, customers who have undergone 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. Excerpts 1 and 2 are taken from the SPSO website, and tell us how many customers they have dealt with about Midlothian Council. Excerpt 1 shows the service area that their enquiry related to. Excerpt 2 highlights the different stages in which each case was dealt with, and the outcome at that stage.

Excerpt 1 – Number of Complaints to Areas (as determined by the SPSO) that were Handled by the SPSO in 2021/22

Excerpt 1 illustrates the amount of complaints that have been received by the SPSO about Midlothian Council between 1 April 2021 and 31 March 2022. 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 can be seen that Education, Environmental Health and Cleansing, and Finance received 2 each. Housing received 5, Social Work 7, planning 1 and there were 3 cases that were about subjects that were outwith their jurisdiction.

Subject	Midlothian Council
Building Control	0
Consumer Protection	0
Economic Development	0
Education	2
Environmental Health & Cleansing	2
Finance	2
Fire & Police Boards	0
Housing	5
HSCP - Social Work	0
Land & Property	0
Legal & Admin	0
National Park Authorities	0
Other	0
Personnel	0
Planning	1
Recreation & Leisure	0
Roads & Transport	0
Social Work	7
Subject Unknown or Out of Jurisdiction	3
Valuation Joint Boards	0
Welfare Fund - Crisis Grants	0
Total	22

Excerpt 2 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 excerpt 1) and the figures determined don't tally because the SPSO are still working on a case after the business year has ended, or indeed that there wasn't a service to associate the case to.

The advice stage, 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. 13 were deemed premature, and 2 were withdrawn.

The early resolution stage, as seen in excerpt 2, 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 8 complaints in total that reached this stage.

Excerpt 2 also shows the complaints that the SPSO conducted an investigation for. It can be seen that of the 23 complaint enquiries that the SPSO received, there were 0 that reached this stage.

STAGE	OUTCOME GROUP	MIDLOTHIAN COUNCIL
Advice	Member of the public test not met (s 5 (6))	0
	Premature	13
	Unable to proceed	2
	Total	15
Early Resolution	Cause and impact test not met (s 5 (3))	0
	Discretion - Insufficient benefit would be achieved by investigation	0
	Discretion - Alternative action proposed	0
	Discretion - Alternative route used or available	0
	Discretion - Good complaint handling	6
	Discretion - Referred back	1
	Discretion - Resolved - both parties satisfied with proposed outcome	0
	Member of the public test not met (s 5(6))	0
	Organisation not in jurisdiction	0
	Premature	0
	Right of appeal to court/tribunal/Scottish ministers (s 7 (8))	0
	Subject matter not in jurisdiction	0
	Time limit (s 10)	0
	Unable to proceed	1
Total	8	
Investigation	Fully upheld	0
	Not upheld	0
	Outcome not achievable	0
	Resolved	0
	Some upheld	0
Total	0	
TOTAL		23

Next steps



- Maintain engagement with the Local Authority Complaint Handler's Network (LACHN) to ensure benchmarking is accurate to enable learning.
- Continue work on building new feedback system using newly purchased Granicus platform.
- Take “whole system approach” to implement a new complaints and feedback process that will provide a more robust and efficient arrangement.
- In implementing a new process as part of the new CRM platform, review the process for gathering, aggregating, cleansing, consolidating and analysing the data, and implement new business intelligence approach and where possible, dashboards.



Your feedback counts

Whether you want to know more about our performance, have something to say about this report, or want to suggest an alternative way of receiving this kind of information in the future.

Please contact the Continuous Improvement Team:
0131 270 8926 or Continuous.Improvement@midlothian.gov.uk

Visit: www.midlothian.gov.uk

or follow us on social media

 [Twitter@midgov.uk](https://twitter.com/midgov.uk)

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COMMUNICATING CLEARLY

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

如有需要我們樂意提供翻譯本，和其他版本的資訊與刊物，包括盲人點字、錄音帶或大字體。

Zapewnimy tłumaczenie na żądanie oraz dostarczymy informacje i publikacje w innych formatach, w tym Braillem, na kasecie magnetofonowej lub dużym drukiem.

ਅਸੀਂ ਮੰਗ ਕਰਨ ਤੇ ਖੁਸ਼ੀ ਨਾਲ ਅਨੁਵਾਦ ਅਤੇ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਤੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿੱਚ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼ਨ ਪ੍ਰਦਾਨ ਕਰਾਂਗੇ, ਜਿਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਬਰੇਲ, ਟੇਪ ਜਾਂ ਵੱਡੀ ਛਪਾਈ ਸ਼ਾਮਲ ਹਨ।

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۔

Contact **0131 270 7500** or email:
enquiries@midlothian.gov.uk