



MIDLOTHIAN COUNCIL
ANNUAL COMPLAINT HANDLING REPORT 2022/23

Welcome

to Midlothian Council's Annual Complaint Handling Report for 2022/23

Plans to go live with a new complaints management system using a customer focused online platform that enables better customer relations including improved complaint handling were finalised at the end of 2022/23.

We have provided compliments in this report

We upheld 52% of complaints at stage 1 and 0.1% at stage 2

We handled 6478 complaints and closed 5431 complaints during the year 2022/23



Midlothian takes its commitment to the duties required by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) very seriously. We recognise that valuable lessons can be learnt from the feedback we receive from customers, and the council's complaints handling procedure provides our customers with a clear and structured way to provide feedback on what has gone wrong with a council service.

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. 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 2022/23 Annual Complaint Handling report presents information about the way Midlothian Council managed complaints between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023. The material in the report centres on the 8 statutory key performance indicators, and the data reflects the detail about

how the council has performed 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 have included an example of what improvements we have made to our services as a result of complaints. 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 develop.



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

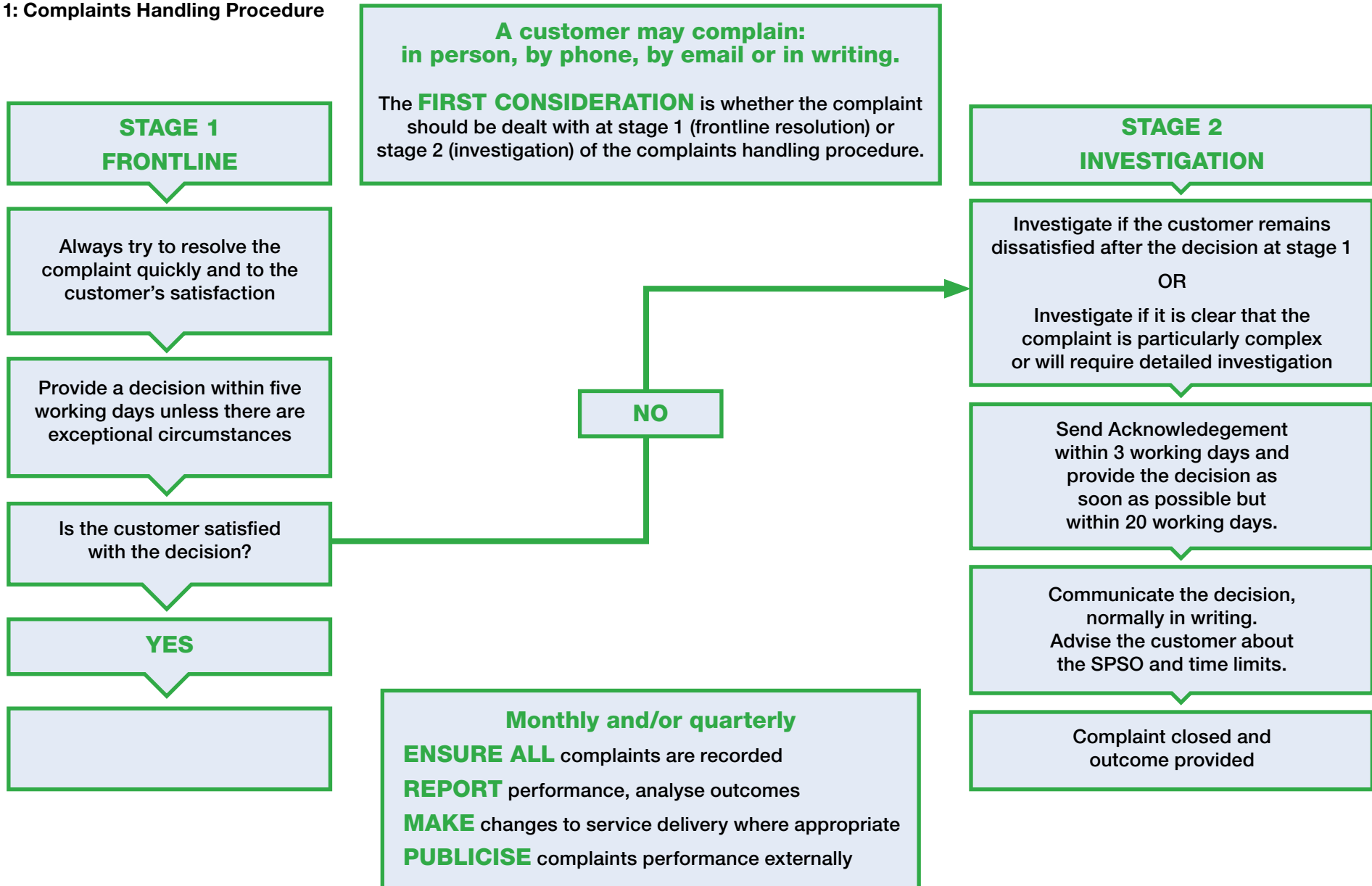
² Fit-for-Purpose Complaints System Action Group (FCSAG), 2008. www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/923/0063564.doc

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 2022/23

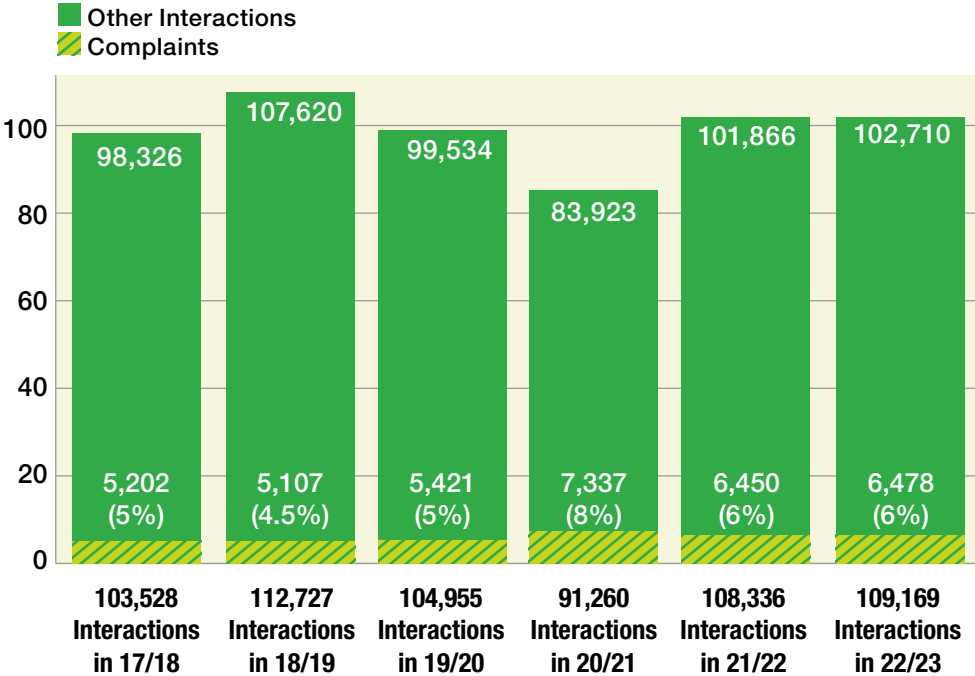


Figure 2 illustrates the difference in complaints received in relation to the total amount of interactions received by the CRM system for the years 2017/18, through to 2022/23.

The figure shows that for the current year 2022/23, there is a total of 109,169 customer interactions through the CRM, and that 6478 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 return to a more consistent level at 6% for both 22/23 and the previous year following the spike of relative percentage in the 2020/21 pandemic year. Another observation is that the total interactions at 109,169 is also similar to the total in the previous year.

FIGURE 2:
Total CRM interactions relative to complaints for years 17/18, through to 22/23 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 2021 obtained from the National Records of Scotland (NRS).** ”

- The population of Midlothian Council is estimated to be 94,680
- Midlothian Council handled 6478 complaints
- This equates to an average of 68 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 17/18	Midlothian 18/19	Midlothian 19/20	Midlothian 20/21	Midlothian 21/22	Midlothian 22/23	Family Group 22/23	Scotland 22/23
Population Total	88,610	90,090	91,340	92,460	93,150	94,680	1,026,890	5,292,350
Total Number of Complaints	5202 (↓734)	5107 (↓95)	5421 (↑314)	7337 (↑1916)	6450 (↓887)	6478 (↑28)	21,988	55,851
Complaints Per 1000 Population	59	57	59	79	69	68	14	11

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

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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 2022/23 closed complaints were received in 2021/22, while some of the 2022/23 received complaints will be closed in 2023/24 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.

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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

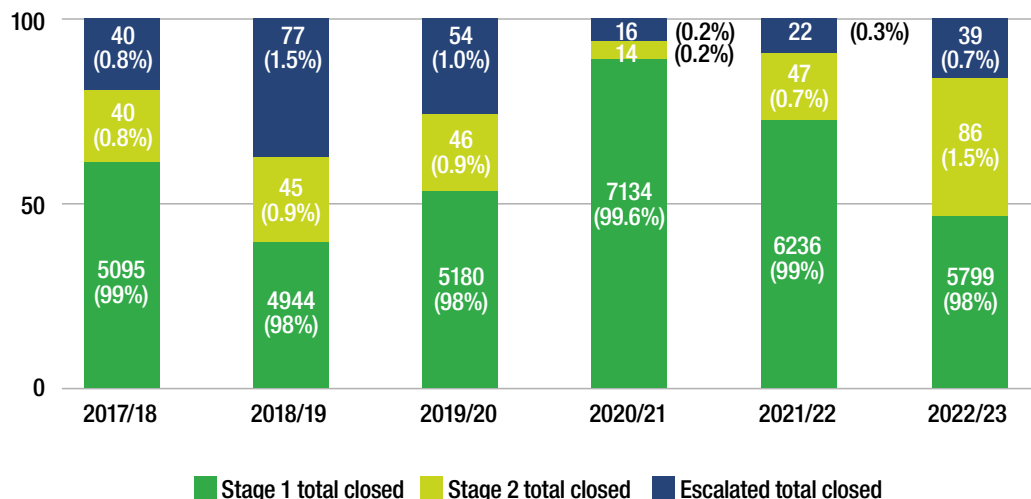
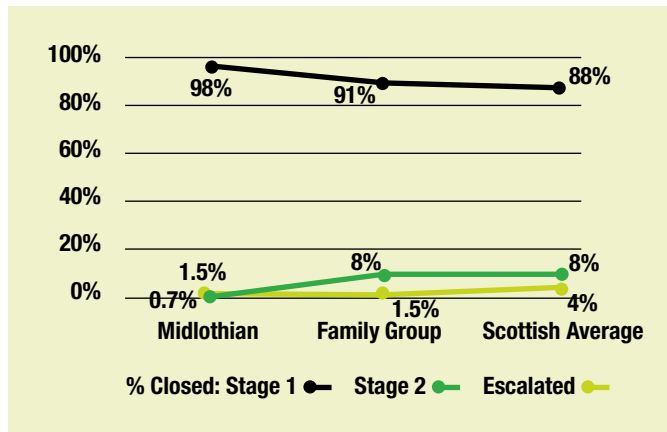


Figure 3 shows that the most recent percentage of complaints closed at stage 1 is 99%. The percentage closed at stage 1 when compared to how they look on other years remains fairly consistent across the 6 years listed at 99%, 98%, 98%, 99.6% and 99% and 98%.

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.

FIGURE 4: 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 Figure 4 above that Midlothian Council closed proportionately more stage 1 complaints in 2022/23 (98%) than the family group and Scottish total at 91% and 88% 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 1.5% for stage 2 compared with 8% for both the family group and Scottish average amount. Midlothian's escalated complaints are more closely matched at 0.7%, 1.5% (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, partially upheld and resolved. ”

TABLE 2: 2022/23 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	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%)
	2022/23	3524 (66%)	101 (2%)	646 (12%)	779 (15%)
STAGE 2	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%)
	2022/23	7 (14%)	21 (43%)	11 (22%)	10 (20%)
ESCALATED	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%)
	2022/23	1 (6%)	9 (50%)	8 (44%)	0 (0%)

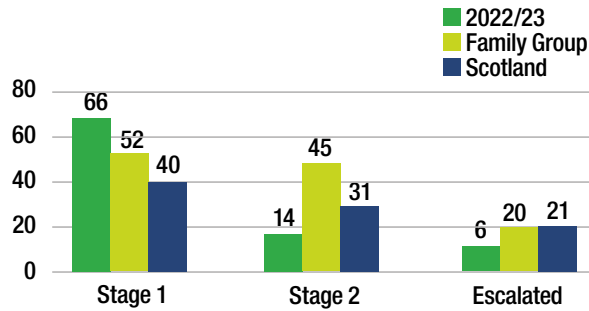
Table 2 illustrates the outcome totals for each stage, as well as the relative percentage. There is an identified anomaly within our Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system that should be observed. If incorrect practice is applied, the known anomaly permits staff to close off complaints without stating a reportable outcome. This explains why the percentage figures from 2017/18 onwards for each stage fall slightly below 100%. To mitigate this, Midlothian Council has procured a new customer platform solution that includes a CRM, which will overcome this problem but as it is a large-scale system to purchase and implement, it is not a quick solution. Also, due to 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 22/23 is 66%, a 10% 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. 2% of stage 1 complaints were not upheld, a 1% decrease from last year, while 12% were partially upheld, and 15% were resolved.

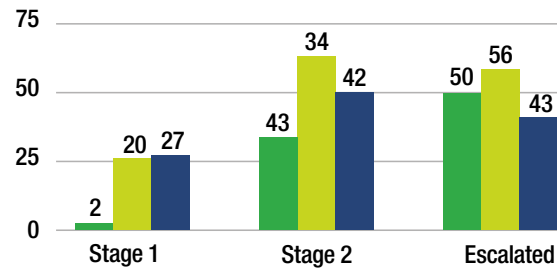
The proportion of stage 2 complaints that were upheld has decreased slightly by 3%. There had been a notable decrease in upheld complaints at stage 2 from the previous (19/20 & 20/21) and this figure is consistent with those over last years slightly increase figure at 17%. This will be closely monitored 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 increased from 34% in 21/22 to 43% in 22/23. This is favourable and may the increased percentage trend on this indicator continue.

FIGURE 5: 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

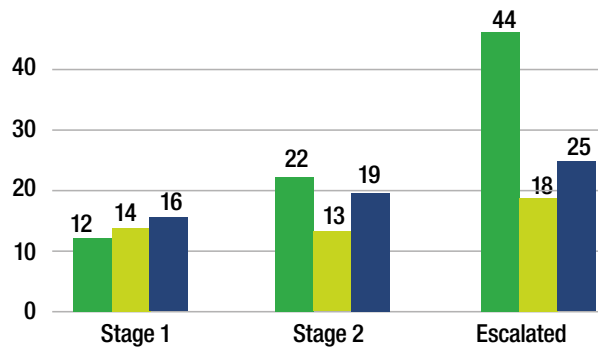
Upheld at Each Stage (%)



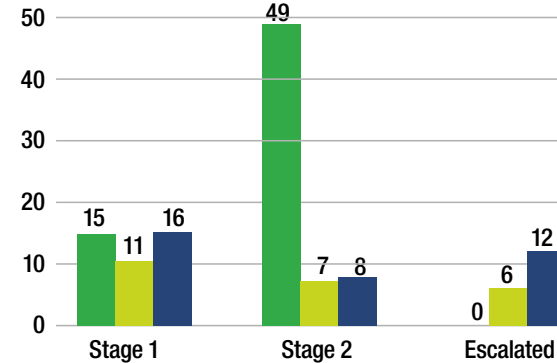
Not Upheld at Each Stage (%)



Partially Upheld at Each Stage (%)



Resolved at Each Stage (%)



Figures between upheld stage 1 complaints in 2022/23 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 2022/23 are 31% less than the Family Group and 17% less than the Scottish average with 14% compared with 45% and 31% respectively. 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 Midlothian, the Family Group and Scotland at 15%, 11%, and 16% respectively for stage 1s. However, Midlothian has a much higher percentage in stage 2 at 49% and 0% for escalated, compared with 7% (Family Group) and 8% (Scotland) for stage 2 and 6% (Family Group) and 12% (Scotland) for escalated. There is work to be done explore why there is such a differential on these, and whether this will continue in forthcoming years. With it being a new outcome there is not a lot of historical comparative data.

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.

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FIGURE 6: 2022/23 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

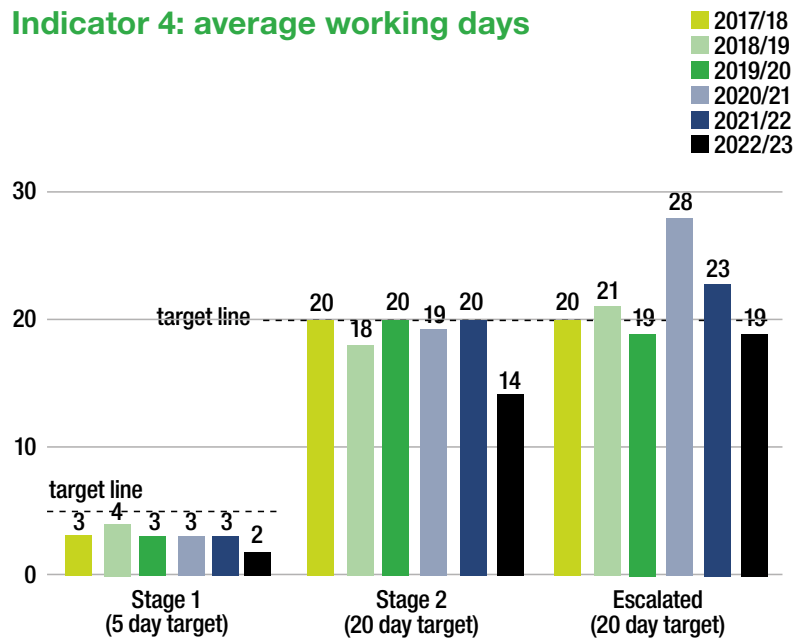
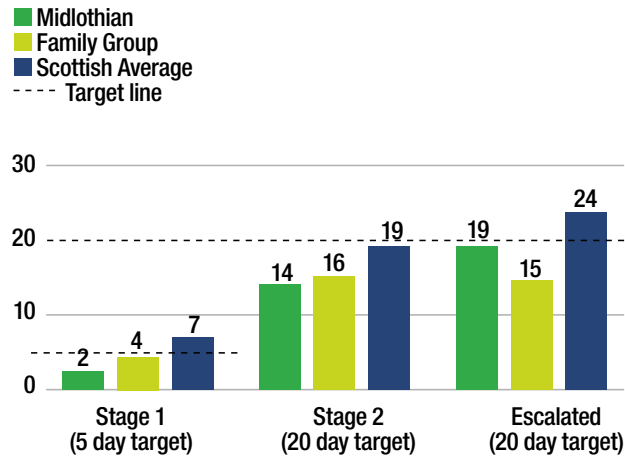


Figure 6 indicates that Midlothian Council has remained within the pre-determined target of 5 days for stage 1 complaints. The average number of days over the years illustrated is fairly consistent.

Also shown in Figure 6 is the average time for stage 2 complaints for each year. The council have kept within the 20 working day limit, and unusually this has dropped from a consistent higher end at mostly 19/20 days to a much lower average of 14 days for 22/23. More work would need to be done to explore reasons behind this.

It is good to see that the indicator 4 data for escalated complaints has reduced from 23 in 21/22 to 19 days in 22/23. However, there is still a need to focus on ensuring that the maximum limit is not exceeded remains.

FIGURE 7: 2022/23 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



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 7 days, Midlothian Council shows good performance in this area with an average of 2 days to complete stage 1 complaints.

Figure 7 also illustrates that the average time for stage 2 complaints for Midlothian Council during 22/23 is well within target at 14 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 19 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 8: 2022/23 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 8 that the relative amount of Midlothian Council’s complaints that were closed against timescales for stage 1 complaints has increased from 88% in 2021/22 back to 91% in 2022/23. This could be because there are slightly more overall complaints, or simply because we are good at closing them down early to avoid escalation. The proportion of stage 2 complaints closed against timescales shows an increase from 70% in 2021/22 to 78% for the current year. This is a good improvement. 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 again this year from 68% in 2021/22 to 72% in 2022/23. Similar to stage 2 complaints, there is still work required to get this statistic higher.

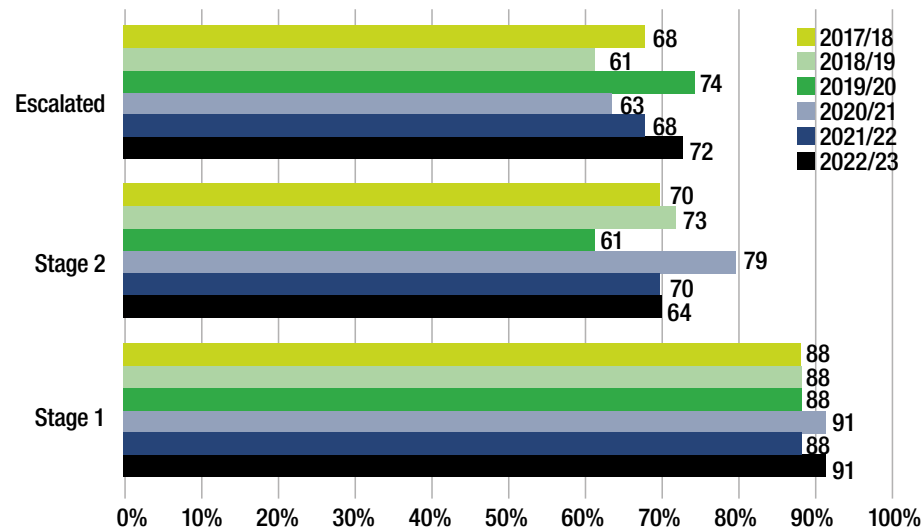
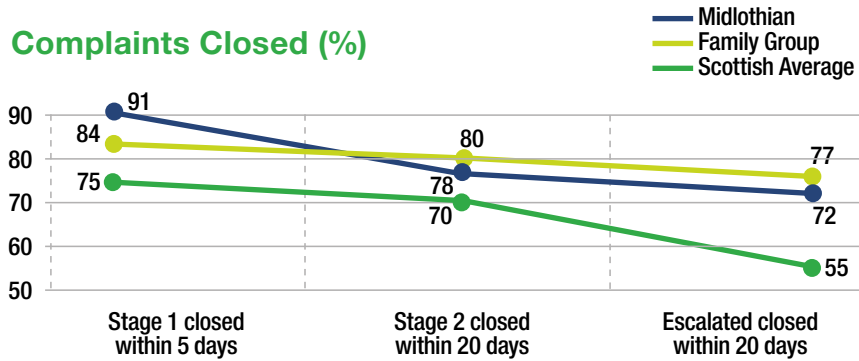


FIGURE 9: 2022/23 data for performance indicator 5: The number and percentage of complaints at each stage which were closed in full within the set timescales of 5 and 20 working days, including comparative data with family group and Scottish average



It can be seen in Figure 9 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 at 78% for Midlothian is close to the family group at 80% and a slightly lower 74% for the Scottish Average.

The percentage of escalated complaints closed on time is 72% for Midlothian Council. This is somewhat higher

than the Scottish average at 55%, but not as high as the family group average which is 77%. 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.

“ 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. ”

INDICATOR 6: The number and percentage of complaints at each stage which were granted an authorised extension.

FIGURE 10: 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

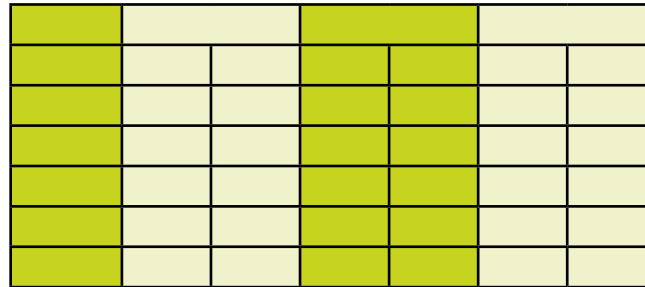
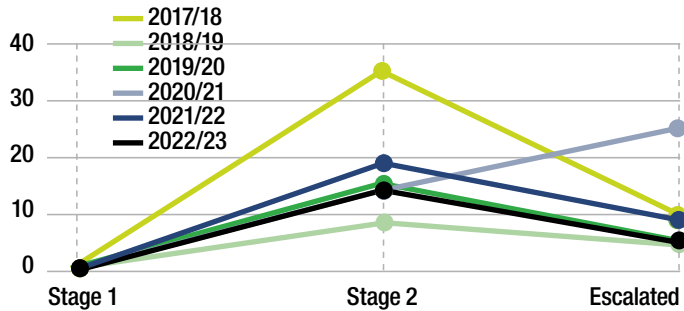
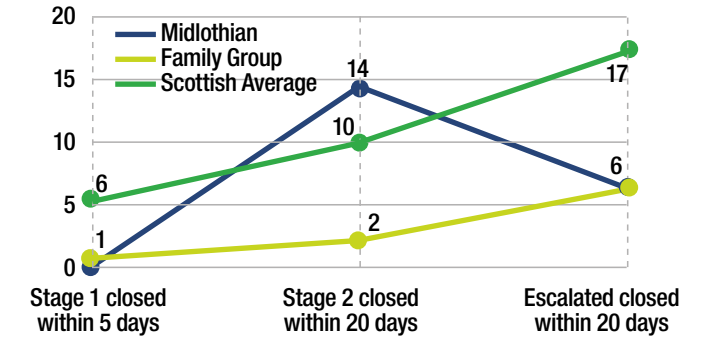


Figure 10 shows that the function to extend stage 1 complaints is used minimally. This could be a training issue on functionality of the CRM system, or it could mean that there just hasn't been a great need to extend stage 1 complaints. On further analysis of the stage 1's that are not closed and not 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 as for many of the complaint indicators on this year, is remarkably different.

Stage 2 extended complaints have lowered this year from 19% (21/22) to 14% (22/23), and this year, extended escalated complaints has decreased to 6% from last year's 9%.

FIGURE 11: 2022/23 Comparative Figures between Midlothian Council, Family Group and Scottish Average for indicator 6

Complaints Closed (%)



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 1%. At stage 2 both Midlothian and the Scottish average had the highest proportion of extended complaints with 14% and 10% respectively. This was reasonably higher than the family group (2%). Midlothian Council and the family group both have 6% for extended escalated complaints and the Scottish average is higher with 17%.

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 early 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: Waste Service/Building Maintenance Services/Roads

Complaint Analysis

Service requests not being actioned resulting in an influx of complaints about lack of response.

Service Improvement Actions

Whole system approach, although in the early stages, is underway to review channels used to process service requests. Process mapping exercise looking at “as is” and “to be” through use of a customer service platform already in use for other areas.

Compliments throughout 2022/23

There were 160 compliments received during the year 2022/23, compared with 115 in 2021/22.

The compliments covered a range of services and each Head of Service 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, 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 2022/23

SERVICE AREA	COMPLIMENTS
Adult Health and Social Care	"I am writing to thank Midlothian Health and Social Care Partnership for the care they provided to our family. The staff particularly the nursing staff, Occupational Therapy, and Social Worker were very supportive and considered the family's needs throughout. Family were welcomed for a look at Newbyers and staff provided a really positive visit which we were grateful for. Sadly, he passed away at the hospital in March, the nursing team were excellent to support end of life care and looking after his family. Their kindness and compassion is something we will remember. Please pass on our thanks to the above staff and teams".
Facilities	"Just to pass on compliments to the attendants of the public toilets in Station Road, Loanhead that the ladies toilet was immaculate, so clean and smelled lovely. Well done to the staff".
Customer Services	"Each time I needed to speak to you I had excellent advisers who helped us with so much more than we expected. We have recently moved to Midlothian and the welcome & support have been outstanding. Our bins were waiting for us, a gentleman registered our address for me to order the brown bins, and another advisor ensured my Council Tax assessment was speeded up, advised about the recycling queries I had, informed me of where I could take waste whilst waiting for the brown bins and today took my CT payment over the phone. A very big thank you to all of you".
Registrars	"Thank you for presiding over our little wedding with such care and professional zeal. Your energy and enthusiasm really set the tone for the ceremony, leaving us to do the easy part. Thank you so much, and thanks to your colleague who opened the building for us specially. You conducted the ceremony in a businesslike yet friendly and informal way, which was perfect for us".
Libraries	"The ladies at Newtongrange Library are lovely, they were very friendly at the Christmas art session that was on and informed us about the facilities they offer. Looking forward to returning and using the library more often".
Economic Development	"Business gateway is one of the best services to have been created to assist with economic growth and help improve people's lives However, it also all comes down to the staff behind the service and that is why I am writing this compliment today. I would like to say a massive thanks to them for all there professional, expert advice and assistance. These staff members are a credit to Midlothian Council. It has been a pleasure working with business gateway and I look forward to working with them more in the future. I would like this compliment to also be highlighted at senior management level".
Landscape and Countryside	"Hi council, just want to say that the gardeners you have this year are great. All the beds across the estates and in the parks are looking braw and healthy. Whoever is doing all the bark work and weeding etc is doing a great job. Many thanks". "Midlothian Ranger Service - Your Ranger at Vogrie Park was very helpful today when I was visiting with my grandson. He was leading a pond dipping session with a school but let my grandson have a look at the animals too".
Leisure Centres	"I wish to compliment all the staff associated with the leisure centre at Loanhead. My husband and I have been members for 4+ years and feel the service provided is second to none. We have been members at some very expensive private health clubs, but feel much more at home at Loanhead. Reception staff are exceptionally welcoming and helpful, pool staff are so friendly yet always aware of what is going on , and as for the pilates teacher, the best ever. Thank you all, you are a credit to first of all yourselves but also Loanhead leisure centre".
Building Maintenance Services	"Customer wanting to pass on gratitude for the great job the workmen did in replacing his doors. They did a lovely job and tidied up behind them". "Very happy the group of lads who were carrying out window installations. It was really nice to have hard working and polite staff". "The bathroom fitters have done excellent work renewing the flooring and taking out the bathroom equipment and refitting the bathroom equipment. Tenant is very grateful for the work done and wants his thanks passed on to the operatives concerned".

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

SERVICE AREA	COMPLIMENTS
Revenues and Benefits	"Customer called to thank Scottish Welfare Fund staff for awarding him his grant. He is very grateful".
Roads	"Many thanks to the Road Service Officers and their appointed Contractors for the splendid carriageway resurfacing works on the Newbattle Road".
	"Thanks to the roads team for promptly fixing the pothole in the road between Roslyn and Rosewell. There were 7 cars all with burst tyres on Friday afternoon/evening caused by the pothole. The hole was repaired very quicky".
Waste	"Customer advising that he is very grateful that the bulky team assisted with his items this morning. Said the team were super helpful and it is really appreciated. Thanks".
	"Our bin was missed last week which I reported. I didn't expect them to come back and pick it up, but they did. Very nice gentlemen. What a great service. Can't praise the waste services staff enough. Everyone is always cheery and helpful at the recycling centre too".
	"Well done @midgov for a fast and efficient service in renewing blue/grey bins and removal of old ones. Phone staff and van employee all very helpful".

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 2022/23

Excerpt 1 illustrates the amount of complaints that have been received by the SPSO about Midlothian Council between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023. 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 and Social Work received 2 each, Environmental Health and Cleansing, and Finance received 1 each. Housing received 9, Planning 3 and there was 1 cases that were about subjects that were outwith their jurisdiction

SPSO Received Cases by Subject for Midlothian Council 1/4/22-31/3/23

Subject	Midlothian Council
Building Control	0
Consumer Protection	0
Economic Development	0
Education	2
Environmental Health & Cleansing	1
Finance	1
Fire & Police Boards	0
Housing	9
HSCP - Social Work	0
Land & Property	0
Legal & Admin	0
National Park Authorities	0
Other	0
Personnel	0
Planning	3
Recreation & Leisure	0
Roads & Transport	0
Social Work	2
Subject Unknown or Out of Jurisdiction	1
Valuation Joint Boards	0
Welfare Fund - Community Care Grants	0
Welfare Fund - Crisis Grants	0
Total	19

Excerpt 2 – Outcome of Complaints determined by the SPSO about Midlothian Council in 2022/23

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. This is because 1 of the figures received was determined to be outwith the SPSO's jurisdiction so it didn't move to an outcome. Other reasons these figures might not match in other years could be due to the SPSO still working on a case after the business year has ended, or 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 were 10 at this stage.

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 within their 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 19 complaint enquiries that the SPSO received, there were 0 that reached the investigation stage.

Outcome of Complaints determined by the SPSO about Midlothian Council

STAGE	OUTCOME GROUP	MIDLOTHIAN COUNCIL
Advice (Initial stage to determine whether SPSO will look at)	A&G - Complaint submissions - mature	3
	A&G - Complaint submissions - premature	4
	A&G - Enquiries	3
	Organisation not in jurisdiction	0
	Unable to proceed	0
	Total	10
Early Resolution (Once confirmed SPSO can look at Initial investigation stage may determine Resolved or no benefit from full investigation)	Cause and impact test not met (s 5 (3))	2
	Discretion - Insufficient benefit would be achieved by investigation	2
	Discretion - Alternative action proposed	0
	Discretion - Alternative route used or available	0
	Discretion - Good complaint handling	3
	Discretion - Referred back	0
	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 (Investigation carried out by SPSO)	Fully upheld	0
	Not duly made or withdrawn	0
	Not upheld	0
	Resolved	0
	Some upheld	0
	Total	0
TOTAL		18

Next steps



- Maintain engagement with the Local Authority Complaint Handler's Network (LACHN) to ensure benchmarking is accurate to enable learning.
- Continue work on the development new feedback system using newly purchased Granicus platform with focus on 'going live' in April.
- Continue with "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)

 facebook.com/MidlothianCouncil

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 ਰੂਪਾਂ 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 ابھرے 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