

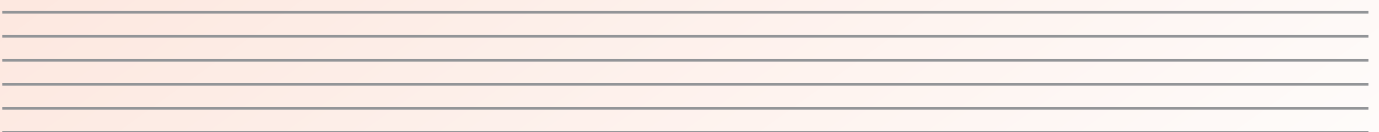
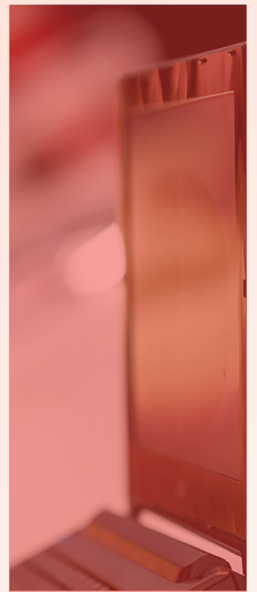
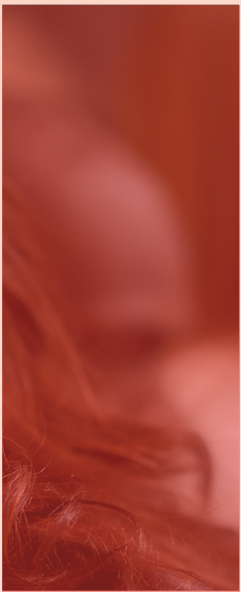
East Dunbartonshire Council

# Complaints

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## Annual Report

2023-24



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**East Dunbartonshire Council**

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# Complaints Annual Report 2023/24

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## **1. BACKGROUND**

This Report outlines the Council's performance against the complaints indicators set by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) from 1st April 2023 until 31st March 2024. The Council implemented the revised Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP) during 2021/22 to comply with the SPSO expectations and to ensure our CHP can be benchmarked against other Local Authorities within Scotland.

The Council is committed to providing quality services that reflect the needs of our customers. We value complaints and use information from them to help us improve our services. The Council publishes its performance of complaints handling to provide assurance on performance, and to deliver continuous improvement.

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction about our action or lack of action, or about the standard of the service provided by or on behalf of the Council. The CHP also explains what does not constitute a complaint advising that a complaint is **not** a routine first time request for a service or a first time report of a fault.

During 2023/2024, the Council received 497 complaints (compared to 409 in the previous year), all of which are recorded on the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system by Executive Officer Portfolio and under the relevant categories.

### **1.1 Complaints By Executive Officer\* Portfolio**

<b>Executive Officer Portfolio</b>	<b>Complaints Received 2023/24</b>	<b>Complaints Received 2022/23</b>
Assets & Facilities	90	37
Customer & Business Support Services	40	37
Education	57	49
Finance, Audit & Performance	2	1
Health & Social Care Partnership	36	46
Housing	44	40
Land, Planning & Development	18	33
Legal & Democratic Services	4	5
Neighbourhood Services	80	71
Place & Community Planning	11	21
Roads & Transportation	114	69
Organisational Transformation	1	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>497</b>	<b>409</b>

\* By Executive Officer portfolio as defined at the start of 2023/24. Portfolios changed in-year, and new portfolios will be reflected in 2024/25 reporting.

## **1.2 Complaints Categories**

<b>Category of Complaint</b>	<b>Complaints Received 2023/24</b>	<b>Complaints Received 2022/23</b>
Services/Standards	368	287
Disagreement with Council decision	52	43
Council Policy	1	2
Employee (attitude/behavior)	59	58
Other	17	19
<b>Total</b>	<b>497</b>	<b>409</b>

## **2. SPSO INDICATORS**

The SPSO requires organisations to report on six indicators. The following tables detail the Council's performance under each indicator, showing comparison with the previous year.

### **2.1 Indicator 1: Complaints Received Per 1,000 Population**

The number of complaints per thousand population allows benchmarking across all authorities. The number of complaints received in 2023/2024 has increased by 21.52% compared to the previous year.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total Complaints Received</b>	<b>Per 1,000 Population</b>
<b>2022/2023</b>	409	3.8
<b>2023/2024</b>	497	4.6

### **2.2 Indicator 2: Closed Complaints**

The total number of complaints closed in the reporting year was 501 compared to 432 in the previous year.

The difference between the volume of complaints closed (501) compared to complaints received (497) in the current year, is due to a number of complaints being finalised within the reporting year that were actually received in the previous reporting year, and also a number of complaints received in the reporting year that remained open at the end of the year.

Each complaint is categorised in the CRM into one of 5 categories. The two tables below, show the split of complaints closed across both Category of Complaint and Executive Officer Area.

<b>Category of Complaint</b>	<b>No. of Complaints Closed 2023/24</b>	<b>No. of Complaints Closed 2022/23</b>
Services/Standards	372	307
Disagreement with Council decision	47	46
Council Policy	1	3
Employee (attitude/behavior)	60	57
Other	21	19
<b>Total</b>	<b>501</b>	<b>432</b>

<b>Executive Officer Portfolio</b>	<b>No. of Complaints Closed 2023/24</b>	<b>No. of Complaints Closed 2022/23</b>
Assets & Facilities	90	33
Customer & Business Support Services	39	52
Education	53	47
Finance, Audit & Performance	2	1
Health & Social Care Partnership	35	49
Housing	45	40
Land, Planning & Development	21	34
Legal & Democratic Services	4	7
Neighbourhood Services	80	74
Place & Community Planning	13	22
Roads & Transportation	118	73
Organisational Transformation	1	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>501</b>	<b>432</b>

The complaints process comprises 2 stages. Stage 1 known as the frontline response and is generally for issues that are simple and straightforward, and Stage 2 known as the investigation stage, for more complex or serious issues, or where a customer remains dissatisfied following the outcome of a Stage 1 complaint. These latter complaints are known as escalated complaints.

The total number of complaints closed in 2023/2024 is higher than last year, reflecting the increased number of complaints received. Compared to the previous year, during 2023/24 a slightly lower of complaints were handled at Stage 1 with a slightly higher percentage handled at Stage 2 and escalation.

	<b>2023/2024</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>2022/2023</b>	<b>%</b>
Total complaints closed at stage 1	292	58%	268	62%
Total complaints closed at stage 2	157	31%	127	29%
No. of complaints closed at stage 2 after Escalation	52	10%	37	9%
Total complaints Closed	501		432	

### **2.3 Indicator 3: Complaints Upheld, Partially Upheld & Not Upheld**

Each complaint is closed with one of four outcomes:

- Upheld
- Partially Upheld
- Not Upheld
- Resolved

This indicator shows a breakdown of how complaints were closed for each of the stages.

Stage 1 complaints – the percentage of Stage 1 complaints upheld or partially upheld this year is higher than in the previous year. There is also an increase in the percentage of complaints not upheld compared to the previous year, but a decrease in the percentage of complaints with the “Resolved” outcome compared to the previous year.

Stage 2 complaints – the figures show a reduction in the percentage of complaints upheld or partially upheld compared to the previous year, with an increase in the number and percentage of complaints not upheld.

Escalated complaints (a complaint previously handled at Stage 1 then escalated to Stage 2) – this year show a reduction in the percentage of complaints upheld or partially upheld. The percentage of escalated complaints not upheld has increased compared to the previous year. It should be borne in mind that a partially upheld outcome does mean that some elements of the complaint have not been upheld.

### 2.3.1 Stage 1 Complaints

Number of Complaints	2023/2024	2022/2023
Closed at Stage 1	292	268
Upheld at Stage 1	117	89
Upheld at stage 1 as a Percentage (of all Stage 1 closed)	40%	33%
Partially upheld at stage 1	80	84
Partially upheld at stage 1 as a Percentage*	27%	31%
Upheld/partially upheld at stage 1 as a Percentage*	67%	64%
Not upheld at stage 1	87	71
Not upheld at Stage 1 as a Percentage*	30%	26%
Resolved at Stage 1	8	24
Resolved at Stage 1 as a Percentage*	3%	9%

### 2.3.2 Stage 2 Complaints

Number of Complaints	2023/2024	2022/2023
Closed at stage 2	157	127
Upheld at stage 2	19	28
Upheld at stage 2 as a Percentage (of all Stage 2 closed)	12%	22%
Partially upheld at stage 2	51	38
Partially upheld at stage 2 as a Percentage*	32%	30%
Upheld or partially Upheld at stage 2	45%	52%
Not upheld at stage 2	83	57
Not upheld at Stage 2 as a Percentage*	53%	45%
Resolved at Stage 2	4	4
Resolved at Stage 2 as a Percentage*	3%	3%

\* Denotes the same basis as that used previously in the table

### 2.3.3 Escalated Complaints

Number of Complaints	2023/2024	2022/2023
Closed after escalation	52	37
Upheld after escalation	14	9
Escalated and upheld at stage 2 as % of all escalated complaints closed in full at stage 2	27%	24%
Partially upheld after escalation	18	16
Number of escalated complaints partially upheld at stage 2 as a % of all escalated complaints closed in full at stage 2	35%	43%
Upheld or partially upheld after escalation as a percentage	62%	67%
Not upheld after escalation	19	10
Escalated but not upheld at stage 2 as a % of all escalated complaints closed in full at stage 2.	37%	27%
Resolved after escalation	1	2
Resolved after escalation as a % of all complaints closed in full at stage 1	2%	5%

### 2.4 Indicator 4: Average Response Times

The Complaints Handling Procedure sets out the SPSO timescales for handling complaints at Stage 1 and Stage 2. Stage 1 complaints should be closed and responded to within 5 working days, which can be extended to 10 on occasion. Stage 2 complaints should be closed and responded to within 20 working days.

This indicator shows our average time for responding to complaints. There has been a significant improvement in the response time for Stage 1 complaints compared to the previous year, bringing the average time within the 5 day timescale as indicated below.

STAGE 1	2023/24	2022/23
Number of complaints closed at stage 1 (frontline resolution)	292	268
Average time in working days for a full response at stage 1	4.9	15.3

Whilst the average time for handing Stage 2 complaints is still in excess of the 20 days, there has still been improvement from the previous year, with the figure reducing to 24.5 days from the previous year's 27.5 days. This improvement was due to a number of complex outstanding complaints having been concluded within the reporting period that impacted on the figures.

STAGE 2	2023/24	2022/23
Number of complaints closed at stage 2 (investigation)	157	127
Average time in working days for a full response at stage 2	24.5	27.5

Comparing the 2023/24 data with 2022/23 for Escalated complaints also shows a significant improvement, with complaints handling timescales reducing from 36.5 days down to 23.6 days.

<b>ESCALATED</b>	<b>2023/24</b>	<b>2022/23</b>
Number of complaints closed after escalation	52	37
Average time in working days for a full response after escalation	23.6	36.5

## **2.5 Indicator 5: Performance Against Timescales**

Indicator 5 assesses our performance compared to the timescales set out by the SPSO and our CHP. Overall, there has been further improvement in the percentage of complaints concluded within timescales at all Stages.

<b>STAGE 1</b>	<b>2023/24</b>	<b>2022/23</b>
Number of complaints closed at stage 1 (frontline resolution)	292	268
Number of complaints closed at Stage 1 within 5 working days	208	174
Number of complaints closed at stage 1 within 5 working days as a % of total stage 1 complaints.	71%	65%

<b>STAGE 2</b>	<b>2023/24</b>	<b>2022/23</b>
No. of complaints closed at Stage 2 (investigation)	157	127
No. of complaints closed at Stage 2 within 20 working days	101	73
No. of complaints closed at stage 2 within 20 working dates as a % of total stage 2 complaints.	64%	57%

<b>ESCALATED</b>	<b>2023/24</b>	<b>2022/23</b>
No. of complaints closed after escalation	52	37
No. of complaints closed after escalation within 20 working days	33	23
No. of complaints closed after escalation within 20 working days as a % of total escalated complaints	63%	62%

## **2.6 Indicator 6: Use Of Extensions**

This indicator measures extensions requested before the deadline has been reached. The figures for 2023/2024 show percentage reductions for Stage 1 and Stage 2 and status quo for Escalated complaints.

<b>STAGE 1</b>	<b>2023/24</b>	<b>2022/23</b>
Complaints closed at stage 1	292	268
Complaints closed at stage 1 where an extension authorised.	18	21
Total number of complaints closed at stage 1 where an extension was authorised as a % of total stage 1 complaints.	6%	8%



<b>STAGE 2</b>	<b>2023/24</b>	<b>2022/23</b>
Complaints closed at stage 2	157	127
Complaints closed at stage 2 where an extension was authorised.	35	33
Total number of complaints closed at stage 2 where an extension was authorised, as a % of total stage 2 complaints	22%	26%

<b>ESCALATED</b>	<b>2023/2024</b>	<b>2022/2023</b>
Complaints closed after escalation	52	37
Complaints closed after escalation where extension was authorised	14	10
Total number of complaints closed after escalation where an extension was authorised as a % of complaints escalated	27%	27%

The SPSO requires councils to have processes in place to help them learn from complaints and review and change service delivery if required. Complaints handling data is important feedback and an opportunity to improve our services and we will continue to monitor recommendations and outcomes/responses for learning opportunities in partnership with other Council services.

### **3. COMPLAINTS CONSIDERED BY SPSO**

If dissatisfied with our response, some customers will choose to take their complaint to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman whose office will review both our service delivery and our handling of the customer's complaint. If the Ombudsman upholds or partially upholds a complaint, they will make recommendations to the Council. These recommendations are discussed with the service teams and any required changes are implemented with evidence provided to the Ombudsman. Specific improvement actions will vary depending on the nature of each case.

The following table summarises the complaints considered by the SPSO in 2023/24. The vast majority of these, over 87% (21 out of 24) were not taken forward by SPSO. The one that was investigated was not upheld and we are awaiting a decision on the remaining two.

	<b>2023/2024</b>	<b>INVESTIGATION OUTCOMES</b>
Total number of complaints received by the SPSO	24	
Complaints investigated by the SPSO	1	1=Not Upheld
Complaints not taken forward by the SPSO	21	
Complaint still open - no decision yet	2	
Outcomes received for complaints submitted in a previous year.	2	2 = Not Taken On

Information from the previous year (2022/23) is shown below for comparison purposes. The data is broadly similar to 2023/24, with over 92% (24 out of 26) not being progressed by SPSO and one investigation ongoing.

	2022/2023	INVESTIGATION OUTCOMES
Total number of complaints received by the SPSO	26	
Complaints investigated by the SPSO	1	Ongoing
Complaints not taken forward by the SPSO	24	
Complaint still open - no decision yet	2*	
Outcomes received for complaints submitted in a previous year.	3	2 – partially upheld 1 - upheld

\* this figure includes the 1 complaint under investigation

#### **4. CHILD FRIENDLY COMPLAINTS**

The SPSO is introducing new guidance in 2024/25 called Child Friendly Complaints. This is intended to ensure that all complaints are handled in a manner that respects and promotes children’s rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (the UNCRC). The process requires to be used when:

- A child raises a complaint directly.
- An adult raises a complaint at the request of a child.
- An adult raises a complaint about matters affecting a child.

Once SPSO guidance is published, the Complaints Team will be engage with services to provide advice and guidance on this new process and to ensure the Council meets the requirements.

#### **5. NEXT STEPS**

The Complaints service area moved from Finance & Digital Services to Customer Services & Organisational Development in 2024/25, and a review of performance indicators is being undertaken, to better provide Executive Officers with data on complaints received to inform performance improvements.

The Complaints service area is also contributing to the design of the complaint handling management section of the new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, due to be launched in Quarter 3 of 2024/25. The enhanced reporting and analytics capabilities of the new CRM will facilitated better complaints data.

The Complaints Team is always keen to engage with any services who would like a discussion or training on the Council’s complaints handling process.

East Dunbartonshire Council

# Complaints

## Annual Report

2023-24



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ਇਸ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਦਾ ਮੌਜੂਦਾ ਕਰਨ ਤੋਂ ਪੈਨਾਬੀ ਵਿੱਚ ਅਨੁਵਾਦ ਕੀਤਾ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ। ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ 0300 123 4510 ਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ।

Gabhaidh an sgrìobhainn seo cur gu Gàidhlig ma tha sin a dhìth oirbh. Cuiribh fòn gu 0300 123 4510

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