

AGENDA ITEM NO: 9

Report To:	Policy & Resources Committee	Date:	17 September 2024
Report By:	Head of Legal, Democratic, Digital & Customer Services	Report No:	LS/064/24
Contact Officer:	Carol Craig-McDonald	Contact No:	01475 712725
Subject:	Complaint Handling Annual Report	1 April 2023 –	31 March 2024

1.0 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 ⊠For Decision □For Information/Noting
- 1.2 This is an agreed routine annual monitoring report to provide the Policy & Resources Committee with details of the annual performance of all complaints received and handled by Inverclyde Council, Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP), and both Arms-Length Organisations (ALEOs), Inverclyde Leisure and Riverside Inverclyde, for the period from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.
- 1.3 The appended report (appendix 1) provides the annual complaint handling statistical information for the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. The report has been prepared by the Council's Information Governance Team and provides the following information:
 - i. Performance Information.
 - ii. Analysis of complaint activity; and an
 - iii. Update on learning from complaints.
- 1.4 The SPSO has provided statistical information on the Council's complaint handling during the above period, which is included in section 4.10 of this report. There have been no cases involving the Council or the HSCP investigated by the SPSO in this reporting period.
- 1.5 The Council remains committed to investigating, learning from, and taking appropriate action where it is found that standards have fallen below the level expected or where it is recognised that services could be improved. The Council has over the course of the year taken action to centralise resources and expertise to handle complaints for the HSCP and the Council within Legal, Democratic, Digital & Customer Services' Information Governance Team.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Committee:
 - (1) notes the annual performance of Inverclyde Council's complaint handling procedure; and
 - (2) approves the publication of the Annual Complaint Handling Report on the Council's website.

Lynsey Brown Head of Legal, Democratic, Digital & Customer Services

3.0 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- 3.1 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. The Council's Complaints Officer alongside representatives represents Inverclyde Council at this forum from 32 Scottish Local Authorities. The Scottish Public Service Ombudsman (SPSO) attends these meetings to support the ongoing development of complaint handling within local authorities and to achieve consistency in approach.
- 3.2 There is a requirement for Councils to report complaint handling performance for ALEOs. Inverclyde Council have two ALEOs, Inverclyde Leisure and Riverside Inverclyde, and they both require to report on complaints handled. Inverclyde Council is adhering to the reporting requirements for ALEOs set out by the SPSO.
- 3.3 The SPSO has confirmed that they will be moving to a quarterly submission of complaint handling statistical data from all Councils. This is intended to ease the collation of management information on an annual basis. Inverclyde Council has agreed to supply this statistical data each quarter, as it is currently prepared on a quarterly and annual basis. The draft report is issued to LACHN for discussion at the network meeting and any inconsistences in data interpretation and analysis is resolved before the formal annual submission to the SPSO each year.
- 3.4 Inverclyde Council, the HSCP and both ALEOs implemented revised model complaint handling procedures on 1 April 2021.

4.0 PROPOSAL

- 4.1 Inverclyde Council, the HSCP, Inverclyde Leisure and Riverside Inverclyde received and handled 288 complaints and closed 272 complaints within the relevant period.
- 4.2 Section 3 of the appended report provides a comparison of the complaint handling performance by the Council from 2019/20 to 2023/24. Members will note that, in comparison with volumes received during 2022/23, there has been a decrease in the overall number of complaints dealt with by Inverclyde Council. However, for the number of complaints dealt with by the HSCP, and Inverclyde Leisure, statistics show an increase in the complaints received. This is in line with a normal volume distribution post pandemic.
- 4.3 Section 3.6 to 3.7 of the appended report shows the breakdown of complaint volumes per service and the percentage of complaints per service area against the total number of complaints received for the reporting period. The numbers remain low within some services; however, they are proportionately higher in those services that have historically received higher complaint volumes based on the nature of work undertaken. Riverside Inverclyde was the only area which did not receive a complaint during the reporting period and some individual service areas within Inverclyde Council did not receive any complaints across the year which is in line with previous year trends.
- 4.4 Section 3.8 3.9 of the appended report shows the outcome of complaint investigations at each stage of the complaint handling procedure by area, the collective view of which is summarised below:
 - 74 complaints were upheld across all complaint stages.
 - 54 complaints were partially upheld across all complaint stages.
 - 114 complaints were not upheld across all complaint stages: and
 - 30 complaints were resolved across all complaint stages.

- 4.5 Section 3.10 to 3.18 of the appended report details the Council's responses to complaints at each of the complaint stages and the average timescales for resolving complaints. The HSCP's performance has shown strain in timescale management due to the complexity of complaints being received at both complaint stage 1 and stage 2. This should remain an area of focus for the HSCP. When comparing in isolation the Council's complaint handling performance it is noted that the timescales taken to resolve complaints have increased at stage 1 and stage 2, which affects the average days reported. There is scope to improve timescale management in some complaints that exceed the expected timescales across all stages of the complaints. A further recommended action is for proactive actions to be taken on receipt of complaints to reduce the number of late responses or responses that are running very close to timescales to support remaining within the timescales expected for each stage of the complaint. Some responses are being issued but outside the normal expected procedure result in a number of complaints being escalated to stage 2 to remedy the complainant receiving their rights to review.
- 4.6 Stage one of the complaint handling procedure should be attempted where there are straightforward issues potentially easily resolved with little or no investigation. This should be completed within five working days. If the service user remains unhappy following the stage one complaint investigation, they can request that their complaint be escalated to stage two of the procedure. The performance of complaints handled at stage one of the complaint handling procedure has been summarised in the table below.

Stage 1 Complaints	Indicators 2023/24	Indicators 2022/23	Trend when comparing to 2022/22
No of complaints closed	189	187	An increase of 2 stage 1 complaints
% Of complaints closed on time within 5 days (including cases where a time extension was approved)	84.7	79.7%	An increase of 5% for on time responses
Average number of days taken to close complaints	4.3 days	4.4 days	A decrease by 0.1 on the average days,

Outcome of complaints	No of cases 2023/24	%	No of cases 2022/23	%	Trend when comparing to 2022/23
No of complaints upheld & as % of all stage 1 complaints	60 cases	31.7%	70 cases	37.4%	A decrease of 5.7%
No of complaints partially upheld & as % of all stage 1 complaints	29 cases	15.3%	28 cases	15%	An increase by 0.3%
No of complaints not upheld & as a % of all stage 1 complaints	72 cases	38%	65 cases	34.8%	An increase of 3.2%
No of complaints resolved & as a % of all stage 1 complaints	28 cases	14.8%	24 cases	12.8%	An increase of 2%

4.6 A stage two complaint is for complex complaints, or for serious issues where a thorough investigation will be undertaken. It should also be used for complaints that cannot be resolved at the stage one of the procedure. This typically requires a more thorough investigation to establish facts prior to

reaching conclusion and allows 20 days for the investigation to be completed. The performance of complaints handled at stage two of the complaint handling procedure has been summarised in the table below.

Stage 2 Complaints	Indicators 2023/24	Indicators 2022/23	Trend when comparing to 2022/23
No of complaints closed	74	76	An increase of 38 complaints
% Of complaints closed on time within 20 days & where we applied time extension	59.5%	67.1%	A decrease of 7.5%
Average number of days taken to close complaint	21.5 days	20.8 days	A 0.7 day increase in days to close complaint

Outcome of complaints	No of cases 2023/24	%	No of Cases 2022/23	%	Trend when comparing to 2022/23
No of complaints upheld & as % of all stage 2 complaints	11 cases	14.9%	17 cases	22.4%	A decrease of 7.5%
No of complaints partially upheld & as % of all stage 2 complaints	20 cases	27%	23 cases	30.3%	A decrease of 3.3%
No of complaints not upheld & as a % of all stage 2 complaints	41 cases	55.4%	36 cases	47%	An increase of 8.4%
No of complaints resolved & as a % of all stage 2 complaints	2 cases	2.7%	0 cases	0%	An increase by 2.7% as no complaints were

4.7 Escalated stage two complaints are ones where the service user remains dissatisfied with the way the Council dealt with their complaint at frontline resolution, the complainant can request a detailed investigation under stage two of our complaints handling procedure. This allows 20 days for completing the investigation. This must be undertaken before the complainant can take their complaint to the SPSO to review. The performance of complaints handled at escalated stage two of the complaint handling procedure has been summarised in the table below. It is noted that the HSCP have not seen any complaints escalate from stage 1 to stage 2 during the year.

Escalated Stage 2 Complaints	Indicators 2023/24	Indicators 2022/23	Trend when comparing to 2022/23
No of complaints closed	9	15	A reduction of 6 complaints
% Of complaints closed on time within 20 days & where we applied time extension	66.7%	80%	A 13.3% decrease in those complaints meeting timescale
Average number of days taken to close complaints	17.4 days	20.5 days	A decrease of 3.1 days

Escalated stage 2 outcomes	No of cases 2023/24	%	No of cases 2022/23	%	Trend when comparing to 2022/23
No of complaints upheld & as % of all escalated stage 2 complaints	3 cases	33.3%	1 case	6.7%	An increase by 26.6%
No of complaints partially upheld & as % of all escalated stage 2 complaints	5 cases	55.5%	6 cases	40%	A 10.5 increase
No of complaints not upheld & as % of all escalated stage 2 complaints	1 case	11.1%	8 cases	53.3%	A decrease of 42.2%
No of complaints resolved & as a % of all escalated stage 2 complaints	0 cases	0%	0 cases	0%	No change

- 4.8 Section 4 of the appended report provides further detail on the next steps that the Council requires to take in implementing the Customer Satisfaction Survey for complaint handling to meet the expectations set out by the SPSO. Implementation has been delayed and will be revisited in the coming year to develop the technical process for implementing the survey once the new complaint system is implemented. The HSCP, Inverclyde Leisure and Riverside Inverclyde will also be required to develop their processes for implementation to meet this requirement. Engagement with the appropriate officers will be undertaken to support the delivery of this work.
- 4.9 Section 5 of the appended report provides an overview of service improvement recording which commenced in November 2016. This has been embedded within services and is reported quarterly to Directorate Management Teams. The HSCP requires to implement this process within their complaint handling process in the coming year. Training has been delivered to officers to highlight the importance of learnings being taken from complaints. The process to record and report service improvements quarterly as part of the management information provision the HSCP requires to be developed and delivered within the year. The Council publishes learnings taken from complaints on a quarterly basis, along with statistical information, in compliance with the SPSO's expected requirements of all Scottish local authorities. The Council has procured a new complaint handling relationship management system through the Digital Modernisation Project Board. This will replace the current system, Verint, which has come to its end of life, and this will be implemented during 2024/25. The Council has over the course of the year taken action to centralise resources and expertise to handle complaints for the HSCP and the Council within Legal, Democratic, Digital & Customer Services' Information Governance Team.
- 4.10 Section 6 of the appended report provides detailed information on the complaints which were taken to the SPSO. The SPSO received 12 complaints for Inverclyde Council which is the same number of cases reviewed last year. Four complaints were dealt with under the advice stage and 8 complaints were dealt with at early resolution stage. No complaints were investigated. The SPSO received that the Council had demonstrated good complaint handling in 5 of the complaints they reviewed. The SPSO received 8 complaints for the HSCP which is an increase from the 1 received last year. One complaint was dealt with at early resolution stage, and seven complaints were reviewed, 5 complaints were recognised as examples of good complaint handling, 1 complaint was unable to be progress and 1 complaint was dealt with under discretion and an alternative action was proposed. No complaints were investigated in the period. This reflects an increase in the complaints received by the SPSO for the HSCP and the Council's performance showed no change in the numbers being received. It is also an indication of good complaint handling where a right of review was exercised, as the complainant remained dissatisfied with the Council's handling of their complaint.

Scottish Public Services Ombudsman – Complaints Determined by Authority and Outcome (Tab 4 Joint Health & Social Care Cases Determined and tab 6 Local Authority) <u>https://www.spso.org.uk/statistics-2023-24</u>

- 4.11 The Council is responsible for ensuring the services provided by Inverclyde Leisure and Riverside Inverclyde meet the required standards and adhere to the complaint handling procedure. In doing this, the Council must establish mechanisms to identify and act on complaint handling performance issues found.
- 4.12 Invercive Leisure implemented their complaint handling procedure in March 2017 and have provided their management information for inclusion into the Council's quarterly and annual reporting requirements to the SPSO.
- 4.13 Riverside Invercelyde implemented their complaint handling procedure from 1 April 2018 and provide quarterly statistical information for inclusion in the reporting for the Council. The volume of complaints from this ALEO continue to be extremely low with an entire year noted where no complaints were received.
- 4.14 Section 7 of the appended report explains that quarterly reports on progress throughout the year are submitted to the Directorate Management Teams for overall review and any actions on a service specific basis and to ensure awareness of the impact on staff resources. Some delays with presentation of these reports has been encountered due to business pressures within the Service.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The table below shows whether risks and implications apply if the recommendation(s) is(are) agreed:

SUBJECT	YES	NO
Financial		Х
Legal/Risk		х
Human Resources		Х
Strategic (Partnership Plan/Council Plan)	Х	
Equalities, Fairer Scotland Duty & Children/Young People's Rights &		х
Wellbeing		
Environmental & Sustainability		Х
Data Protection		Х

5.2 Finance

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

One off Costs

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Years	Proposed Spend this Report	Virement From	Other Comments
n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact	Virement From (If Applicable)	Other Comments
n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

5.3 Legal/Risk

There are no legal or risk implications arising from this report.

5.4 Human Resources

There are no human resource implications arising from this report.

5.5 Strategic

This report will help deliver the outcomes in the Council Plan Theme 3 – Performance - high quality and innovative services are provided giving value for money.

6.0 CONSULTATION

6.1 The Corporate Management Team has been consulted on this report.

7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 None.



Inverclyde Council Annual Complaints Report 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024

Classification : Official

Contents

1.	INTRODUCTION	2
2.	THE COMPLAINT HANDLING PROCEDURE	2
3.	SUMMARY OF COMPLAINT HANDLING PERFORMANCE BY INDICATORS	3
4.	CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY	. 16
5.	LEARNING FROM COMPLAINTS	16
6.	SCOTTISH PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN (SPSO) – RIGHT OF REVIEW	. 16
7.	PERFORMANCE INDICATORS	. 19
8.	POSITIVE COMMENTS	19
9.	TRAINING	19
10.	CONCLUSION	20

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Inverclyde Council, along with all other Scottish Local Authorities, follows a model complaint handling procedure (MCHP) which was created by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). This report demonstrates how Inverclyde Council has performed against the 8 key performance indicators that are set by the SPSO and provides an overview of improvements made to services along with positive feedback from service users.

2. THE COMPLAINT HANDLING PROCEDURE

- **2.1.** Inverclyde Council co-ordinates the reporting of complaints to the SPSO and this includes the HSCP, Inverclyde Leisure and Riverside Inverclyde. Each area is responsible for recording their own complaints and providing their management information to Inverclyde Council to enable the consolidated statistical report to be produced quarterly and annually.
- **2.2.** The procedure provides a quick, simple, and streamlined process with a strong focus on local, early resolution. This enables issues or concerns to be dealt with as close as possible to the event which gave rise to the service user making the complaint. As far as possible, the complainant should be actively and positively engaged with the process from the outset.
- **2.3.** Stage one of the complaint handling procedure should be attempted where there are straightforward issues which are potentially easily resolved with little or no investigation. This should be completed within 5 working days. If the service user remains unhappy following the stage one complaint investigation, they can request that their complaint be escalated to stage two of the procedure.
- **2.4.** Stage two of the complaint handling procedure should be used for those matters which are complex, or for serious issues where a thorough investigation will be undertaken. It should also be used for complaints that cannot be resolved at stage one of the procedure. This typically requires a more thorough investigation in order to establish facts prior to reaching conclusion. The complaint points and resolution outcome sought is agreed with the complainant. This complaint should be completed within 20 working days. Should the service user remain unhappy with the investigation of the stage 2 complaint they can exercise their right of review and request the SPSO to look at the issues raised and determine whether they can investigate the matter further.
- **2.5.** Escalated stage two of the complaint handling procedure can be used where the service user remains dissatisfied with the way the Council dealt with their complaint at frontline resolution. The complainant can request a detailed investigation under stage two of our complaints handling procedure. This must be undertaken before the complainant can take their complaint to the SPSO to review.
- **2.6.** The SPSO reviews complaint outcomes that are referred to them by the service user and decide whether they should investigate the complaint.

3. SUMMARY OF COMPLAINT HANDLING PERFORMANCE BY INDICATORS

Indicator 1: the number of complaints received per 1,000 of the population.

- **3.1.** To allow a fair comparison to be made across all 32 Scottish Local Authorities, this indicator looks at the figure of "Complaints per 1,000 of the population". The total number of complaints received per 1,000 of the population in Inverclyde Council during the reporting period 1 April 2023 31 March 2024 was 3.8 complaints. This reflects a decrease of 0.2 when comparing the indicator to the same period last year. The population of Inverclyde Council is estimated to be at around 76,700 residents.
- **3.2.** This means that there were 3.8 complaints per 1,000 of the population, or one resident in 250 made a complaint about services. A comparison of this indicator over the past 5 years is shown in the table below.

Year	No of Complaints	Complaints Per 1,000 of the population
2023/24	288	3.8
2022/23	306	4.0
2021/22	317	4.1
2020/21	269	3.5
2019/20	389	5.0

Table: Number of Complaints received per 1,000 of the population

Indicator 2 the number of complaints closed at each stage of the complaint handling procedure.

3.2 In the reporting period 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024 Inverclyde Council, Inverclyde Leisure and the HSCP received and handled 288 complaints and closed 272 complaints. It should be noted that Riverside Inverclyde did not receive any complaints. The table below shows the percentage of complaints received at each stage of the complaint procedure.

Area		Stage 2 % of all closed complaints	Esc stage 2 % of all closed complaints
Inverclyde Council	72.5	23%	4.4%
HSCP	33.9%	66.1%	0%
Inverclyde Leisure	85.7%	14.3%	0%
Riverside Inverclyde	0%	0%	0%
Collective Performance	67.3	27.3%	5.4%

Table: Percentage of complaints closed at each stage of the procedure

3.3. The tables below show the number of complaints received and closed in total, as well as at each stage of the complaint handling procedure for each area over the last 5 years for comparison purposes.

Area	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20
Inverclyde Council	209	225	244	213	274
HSCP	61	70	61	39	73
Inverclyde Leisure	17	14	12	14	40
Riverside Inverclyde	0	0	0	0	2

Table: Total number of complaints received by each area

Table: Total number of complaints received by each area at stage 1

Area	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20
Inverclyde Council	148	156	195	162	220
HSCP	23	19	20	25	39
Inverclyde Leisure	17	12	7	13	40
Riverside Inverclyde	0	0	0	0	2

Table: Total number of complaints received by each area at stage 2

Area	2023/24	2023/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20
Inverclyde Council	47	37	30	24	20
HSCP	30	37	38	10	27
Inverclyde Leisure	0	2	5	0	0
Riverside Inverclyde	0	0	0	0	0

Table: Total number of complaints received by each area at escalated stage 2

Area	2023/24	2023/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20
Inverclyde Council	9	15	20	12	21
HSCP	0	0	0	1	3
Inverclyde Leisure	0	0	0	1	0
Riverside Inverclyde	0	0	0	0	0

3.4. The table below shows the comparative performance across areas for timescale management across all complaint stages.

Area	Complaints Closed Stage 1	No of complaints meeting timescale	% meeting timescale at Stage 1	Complaints Closed Stage 2	No of complaints meeting timescale at stage 2	% meeting timescale at Stage 2	Complai nts Closed Esc Stage 2	No of complaint s meeting timescale at Esc stage 2	% meeting timescale at Esc Stage 2
Inverclyde Council	148	122	82.4%	47	35	74.5%	9	6	66.7%
HSCP	23	15	65.2%	30	11	35.7%	0	0	0%
Inverclyde Leisure	17	15	88.2%	0	0	0	0	0	0
Riverside Inverclyde	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Invercive Council had a further 2 complaints at Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the complaint handling procedure where a time extension was used this resulted in the complaints being responded to on-time when using this. The HSCP used a time extension for 8 complaints at stage 1 and for 3 complaints at Stage two.

3.5. The tables below provide a quarterly breakdown of complaints closed and the percentage of complaints received within Inverclyde Council, the HSCP, Inverclyde Leisure and Riverside Inverclyde for each quarter covering the reporting period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. The volumes of complaints being received has returned to pre-pandemic norms when comparing to previous years.

Service Area	Qtr. 1 23/24	% complaints	Qtr. 2 23/24	% complaints	Qtr. 3 23/24	% complaints	Qtr. 4 23/44	% complaints	Total	%
Inverclyde Council	48	72%	51	66%	44	72%	66	71%	209	73%
HSCP	15	22.3%	19	25%	13	21%	25	27%	61	21%
Inverclyde Leisure	4	6%	7	9%	4	7%	2	2%	17	6%
Riverside Inverclyde	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Total	67	100%	77	100%	61	100	93	100%	287	100%

3.6 The tables below provide a monthly breakdown of complaints closed and the percentage of complaints received within each service each quarter covering the reporting period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. For Inverclyde Leisure, Riverside Inverclyde and HSCP the breakdown is only provided for the annualised volume.

Service Area	Oct 23	Nov 23	Dec 23	Qtr. 3 23/24	% complaints	Jan 24	Feb 24	Mar 24	Qtr. 4 23/44	% complaints
Chief Exec Office	1	0	0	1	2.4%	0	0	1	1	1.5%
Education	1	3	4	8	20%	0	11	9	20	30%
Culture, Comm & Educ Resources	7	1	0	8	20%	0	1	2	3	4.5%
Org Dev, Policy & Comms	0	0	0	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0%
Finance	1	2	2	5	12.2%	2	3	6	11	16.6%
Legal, Democratic, Digital & Cust Svs	1	0	0	1	2.4%	0	4	1	5	7.5%
Physical Assets	0	0	0	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0%
Regeneration & Planning	0	0	0	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0%
Environmental Services	2	3	1	6	15%	5	2	4	11	16.6%
Public Protection	3	3	1	7	17%	3*	5*	1	9	13.6%
Roads	2	2	1	5	12.2%	1	3	3	7	10.6%

Table: Breakdown of closed complaints by service areas each quarter Q3 & Q4

- In quarter 3 there were 2 invalid complaints, which are excluded from the table below, and 3 Services who did not receive any complaints, including Riverside Inverclyde.
- In Quarter 4, there were 2 invalid complaints which are excluded from the table below and 3 services did not receive any complaints and Riverside Inverclyde

Service Area	Jul 23	Aug 23	Sept 23	Q2 23/24	% complaints	Apr 23	May 23	Jun 23	Qtr. 1 23/24	% complaints
Chief Exec Office	0	0	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	-
Education	1	3	5	9	17.64%	2	9	2	13	28.2%
Culture, Communities & Educational Resources	0	0	0	0	-	3	0	0	3	6.5%
Org Dev, Policy & Comms	0	0	0	0	-	0	1	0	1	2.2%
Finance	1	1	4	6	11.8%	4	4	3	11	23.9%
Legal, Democratic, Digital & Cust Svs	1	1	1	3	5.9%	0	1	1	2	4.34%
Physical Assets	0	0	1	1	1.96%	0	1	0	1	2.2%
Regeneration & Planning	1	2	1	4	7.8%	0	1	0	1	2.2%
Environmental Services	6	2	6	14	27.5%	2	4	1	7	13.4%
Public Protection	1	2	2	5	9.8%	4	1	1	6	13.0%
Roads	2	6	3	11	21.6%	1	0	2	3	6.5%

Table: Breakdown of closed complaints by service areas each quarter Q2 & Q1

• In quarter 1, all complaints have been closed for this period and one complaint was withdrawn. It should be noted that the Chief Executive Office received no complaints in the period 1 April – 30 June 2023.

• In quarter 2, 7 complaints remained in progress at the time of reporting statistics. The Chief Executive, Culture, Communities & Educational Resources & Organisational Development, Policy & Communications Service received no complaints in the quarter.

3.7 Outlined in the chart below is the percentage of complaints received by each service compared against the total number of complaints received for the reporting period. Riverside Inverclyde, Property Services and the Chief Executive's Office are the only areas that that did not receive any complaints in the reporting period.

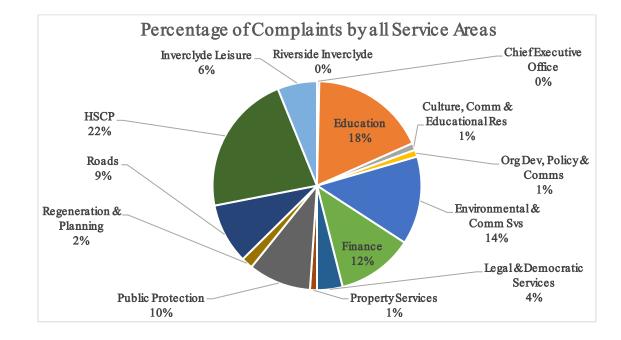
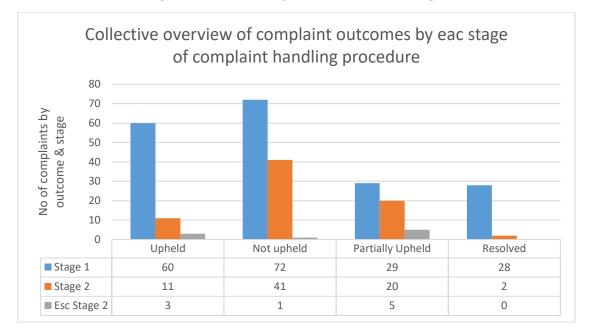


Chart: Annual complaint volumes received 2023/24

Indicator 3 Outcome of Complaint Investigation

3.8 The graph below outlines the outcomes of investigations of all complaints at each of the complaint stages. For every complaint the Council investigates, the service user will be contacted and an explanation of the outcome of the complaint investigation will be confirmed as being either upheld, not upheld, partially upheld, or resolved.

Chart: Complaint Investigation Outcome by each complaint stage all areas



3.9 In summary of all the complaints investigate the outcome reached at each stage are:

- 74 complaints were upheld across all complaint stages.
- 54 complaints were partially upheld across all complaint stages.
- 114 Completed were not upheld across all complaint stages.
- 30 complaints were resolved across all complaint stages.

Chart: Inverclyde Council only - outcome by each complaint stage

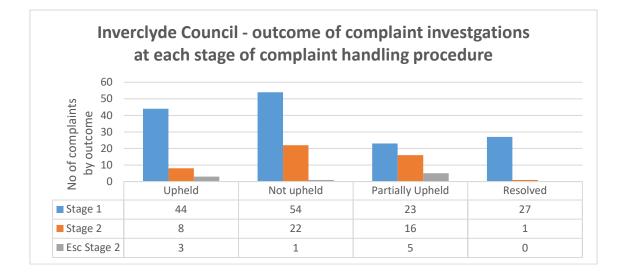


Chart: HSCP only – outcome of each complaint stage of the complaint handling procedure

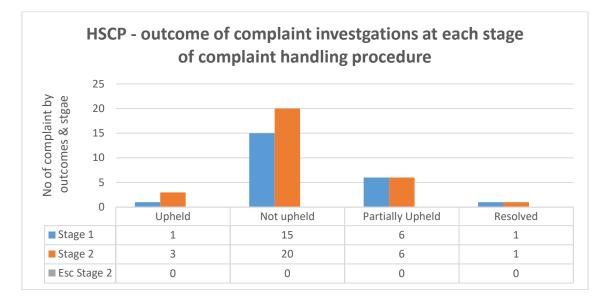
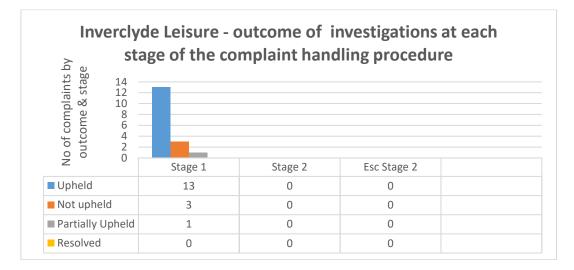


Chart: Inverclyde Leisure only – outcome of each complaint stage of the complaint handling procedure



Indicator 4 – average timescales for resolving complaints.

3.10 The table below outlines each areas performance on the average time taken to close complaints at each stage of the complaint handling procedure. The key performance indicators for complaints that are handled at stage 1 of the procedure should be closed by day 5 or sooner. Complaints handled at stage 2 or escalated stage 2 should be closed by day 20 or sooner. The only exception to this is where a time extension is used at any complaint stage which allows a further 5 days on top of the key performance indicator. The average time taken to close a complaint at each complaint stage has been:

Area			Escalated Stage 2– Average time to close complaint		
Inverclyde Council	4.6 days	15.6 days	17.4 days		
HSCP	4.7 days	32.1 days	-		
Inverclyde Leisure	1.7 days	-	-		
Riverside Inverclyde	-	-	-		
Collective	4.3 days	21.5 days	17.4 days		

3.11Inverclyde Council's collective performance measures on timescale management across all stages of the complaint procedure and covering the last 5 years for comparison purposes.

Table: Collective complaint handling – average timescale for resolving complaints

	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20
Stage 1 Frontline Resolution				2020/21	2010/20
No of complaints received	189	187	222	200	287
No of complaints – closed at stage 1 within 5 days	160	146	187	138	229
% Complaints meeting timescale (includes complaints that were time extended & completed on time)	84.7%	78.1%	84.3%	85.2%	83.6%
No of complaints closed at stage 1 as a % of all complaints closed	69.5%	67.3%	70.5%	80%	80.2%
Ave working days taken stage 1 complaints	4.3 days	4.4 days	4.1 days	4.6 days	3.7 days
Stage 2 Investigation	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20
No of complaints received	74	76	73	35	47
No of complaints – closed at stage 2 within 20 days	48	51	46	19	34
% Complaints Meeting timescale (includes complaints that were time extended & completed on time)	59.5%	67.1%	63%	79.2%	76.7%
No of complaints closed at stage 2 as a % of all complaints closed	27.2%	27.3%	23.2%	14%	13.1%
Ave working days taken stage 2 complaints	21.5 days	20.8 days	23.1 days	15.2 days	18 days
Escalated Stage 2 Investigation	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20
No of complaints received	9	15	25	15	24
No of complaints – closed at escalated stage 2 within 20 days	6	12	13	11	14
% Complaints Meeting timescale (includes complaints that were time extended & completed on time)	66.7%	80%	65%	91.7%	75%
No of complaints closed at escalated stage 2 as a % of all complaints closed	3.3%	5.4%	6.3%	6%	6.7%
Ave working days taken escalated stage 2 complaints	17.4 days	20.5 days	19.8 days	16.6 days	18.3 days

- **3.12** The key overarching action that is required is to reduce the time taken to investigate and close complaint handled at stage 2 of the complaint handling procedure as we have exceeded the 20-day timescale. The impact that one area's deteriorating performance has on the overall performance achieved is where the opportunity to improve exists.
- **3.13**The tables below outline the management of complaints within the prescribed timescale for each complaint stage and broken down by each area's complaint handling performance.

Stage 1	2023/24	2022/23	2021 /22	2020 /21	2019/20
No of complaints – closed at stage 1 within 5 days	148	129	167	138	172
% Complaints Meeting timescale inc those time extended	83.6%	83.6%	87.4%	85.2%	87%
Ave working days taken stage 1	4.6 days	4.0 days	3.6 days	4.6 days	3.9 days
Stage 2 Investigation	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20
No of complaints – closed at stage 2 within 20 days	47	31	23	19	14
% Complaints Meeting timescale inc those time extended	78.5%	83.8%	76.7%	79.2%	80%
Ave working days taken stage 2	15.6 days	13.9 days	17 days	15.2 days	16.1 days
Stage 2 Escalated Investigation	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20
No of complaints – closed at esc stage 2 within 20 days	9	12	13	11	14
% Complaints Meeting timescale inc those time extended	66.7%	80%	68.4%	91.7%	81.8%
Ave working days taken esc stage 2	17.4 days	20.5 days	20.8 days	16.6 days	15.7 days

Table: Inverciyde Council performance – average timescale for resolving complaints

Table: HSCP performance- average timescale for resolving complaints

Stage 1	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20
No of complaints – closed at stage 1 within 5 days	23	7	15	14	39
% Complaints Meeting timescale inc those time extended	100%	36.84%	75%	56%	72%
Ave working days taken stage 1	4.7 days	9.7 days	4.4 days	9.3 days	5.3 days
Stage 2 Investigation	2023/24	2022/23	2021 /22	2020/21	2019/20
No of complaints – closed at stage 2 within 20 days	30	20	20	6	27
% Complaints Meeting timescale inc those time extended	46.7%	54.1%	52.6%	60%	74%
Ave working days taken stage 2	32.1 days	28.5 days	30.8 days	22.3 days	19.5 days
Stage 2 Escalated Investigation	2023/24	2022/23	2021 /22	2020/21	2019/20
No of complaints – closed at esc stage 2 within 20 days	0	0	0	1	3
% Complaints Meeting timescale inc those time extended	0	0	-	0%	0%
Ave working days taken esc stage 2	0	-	-	27 days	31 days

Stage 1	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22	2020 /21	2019/20
No of complaints – closed at stage 1 within	17	12	6	13	40
5 days					
% Complaints Meeting timescale	100%	100%	85.7%	100%	100%
Ave working days taken stage 1	1.7 days	1 day	1 day	1 day	1 day
Stage 2 Investigation	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22	2020 /21	2019/20
No of complaints – closed at stage 2 within	0	2	5	1	0
20 days					
% Complaints Meeting timescale	0	100%	100%	100%	0
Ave working days taken stage 2	0	5 days	10 days	10 days	0
Stage 2 Escalated Investigation	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22	2020 /21	2019/20
No of complaints – closed at esc stage 2	0	0	0	0	0
within 20 days					
% Complaints Meeting timescale	0	0	0	0	0
Ave working days taken esc stage 2	0	0	0	0	0

Table: Inverclyde Leisure performance – average timescale for resolving complaints

Table: Riverside Inverclyde performance – average timescale for resolving complaints

Stage 1	2023/24	2022/23	2021 /22	2020/21	2019/ 20
No of complaints – closed at stage 1 within 5 days	0	0	0	0	2
% Complaints Meeting timescale inc those time extended	0	0	0	N/A	2
Ave working days taken stage 1	0	0	0	N/A	2 days
Stage 2 Investigation	2023/24	2022/23	2021 /22	2020/21	2019/ 20
No of complaints – closed at stage 2 within 20 days	0	0	0	0	0
% Complaints Meeting timescale inc those time extended	0	0	0	N/A	0
Ave working days taken stage 2	0	0	0	N/A	0
Stage 2 Escalated Investigation	2023/24	2022/23	2021 /22	2020/21	2019/ 20
No of complaints – closed at esc stage 2 within 20 days	0	0	0	0	0
% Complaints Meeting timescale inc those time extended	0	0	0	N/A	0
Ave working days taken esc stage 2	0	0	0	N/A	0

- **3.13**Services must maintain focus on ensuring complaints received are recorded and that officers follow the complaint handling procedure. Particular attention should be given to the timescales for resolving complaints at all stages of the complaint handling procedure. When comparing in isolation the Council's complaint handling performance it is noted that the timescales taken to resolve complaints have increased at all stages, which affects the average days reported.
- **3.14**The average days taken to resolve complaints in stage 2 complaints have increased in HSCP's complaint performance. Most of the delays have been during periods when HSCP services were under considerable pressure within particular service areas who are seeing the highest volume of complaints, this is coupled with increased Freedom of Information Requests and Subject Access Requests, which have increased considerably in response to the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry and the related Redress Scheme. Additionally, the complexity of some of the complaints has seen thorough and considerable investigations being undertaken. This will be an area for focus in the

coming year. Training has been rolled out across the HSCP on the importance of complaints, together with support from the management team and greater collaboration within service areas supporting the improvements required. The training programme seen many officers completing the SPSO training to support the ongoing improvement actions.

Indicator 5 - Performance against timescales for Stage 1 Complaints:

In the current year

3.15 The Council aims to close all stage 1 complaints within 5 working days. In 2023/24 the collective performance noted for stage 1 complaint was 187 complaints were closed, with 146 of these closed within timescale which equates to 78.1% response within timescale. 3 (1.6%) complaints were closed after an extension was agreed with the service user.

Table: Number of complaints closed within timescale and percentages stage 1

Reporting period	No of complaints closed	Within timescale	%	No with extension	%
2023/24	189	150	79.4%	10	5.3%
2022/23	187	146	78.1%	3	1.6%
2021/22	222	186	83.8%	7	3.2%
2020/21	200	169	84.5%	5	2.5%
2019/20	287	229	79.8%	27	9.4%

Indicator 5 – performance against timescales for Stage 2 Complaints

3.16The Council aims to close all stage 2 complaints within 20 working days. In 2023/24, the Council closed 76 complaints, with 51 of these complaints being closed within timescale, which equates to 67.1% response within timescale.

Table: Number of complaints closed within timescale and percentages stage 2

Reporting period	No of complaints closed	Within timescale	%	No with extension	%
2023/24	74	44	59.5%	4	5.4%
2022/23	76	51	67.1%	0	0%
2021/22	73	46	63%	5	6.8%
2020/21	35	26	74.3%	3	8.6%
2019/20	47	34	72.3%	11	23.4%

Indicator 5 - performance against timescales escalated stage 2 complaints.

3.17 The Council aims to close all escalated stage 2 complaints within 20 working days. In 2023/24, the Council closed 15 complaints, with 12 of these complaints being closed within timescale which equates to 80% response within timescale.

Table: Number of complaints closed within timescale and percentages escalatedstage 2

Reporting period	No of complaints closed	Within timescale	%	No with extension	%
2023/24	9	6	66.7%	0	0%
2022/23	15	12	80%	0	0%
2021/22	20	13	65%	2	10%
2020/21	15	12	80%	0	0%
2019/20	24	14	58.3%	6	25%

Table: Showing each areas performance against timescales at each stage of the complaint handling procedure.

	of closed	No of Stage 1 complaints within timescale	% Include time ext. complaints	No of complaints with time ext.	%
Inverclyde Council	148	122	82.4%	2	1.4%
HSCP	23	15	65.2%	8	35.8%
Inverclyde Leisure	17	15	88.2%	0	0%

	Stage 2 no of closed complaints	No stage 2 complaints within timescale	% Include time ext. complaints	No of Complaint with time ext.	%
Inverclyde Council	47	35	74.5%	2	4.3%
HSCP	30	11	36.7%	3	10%
Inverclyde Leisure	0	0	0%	0	0%

		No of esc stage 2 complaints within timescale	time ext.		%
Inverclyde Council	9	6	66.7%	0	0%
HSCP	0	0	0%	0	0%
Inverclyde Leisure	0	0	0%	0	0%

Indicator 6 - Extensions to Complaint Timescales

3.18The complaint handling procedure allows officers to seek an extension to the timescales permitted for stage one and stage two complaint investigations. The maximum period permitted to extend the timescale of a complaint is 5 days for both complaint stages. This indicator reports the number and percentage of complaints at each stage of the procedure, which were closed after an extension to the 5 days, or 20-day timescale was authorised.

Complaint stage	No of extemsions agreed	% as a total of all complaints
Stage 1 complaints	10 extensions were agreed	5.3% of total complaints
Stage 2 complaints	4 extensions were agreed	5.4% of total complaints
Escalated stage 2 complaints	0 extensions were agreed	0% of total complaints

4 CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY

4.1 The SPSO has recommended that all Local Authorities should be completing customer satisfaction surveys with service users regularly to gain true insight on how well they are handling complaints. This standardised approach has been delayed this year to allow the development of a straight through process within the complaint handling system to support capturing this feedback in an efficient manner. The Council is developing the process to enable a customer satisfaction survey to be automatically issued once a complaint is closed. The survey will seek feedback using a standard set of questions that have been agreed for use by the SPSO as part of the collection of feedback to assist with suggestions and opportunities for improvement. The HSCP, Inverclyde Leisure, Riverside Inverclyde are also required to implement the survey being issued to complainants. The implementation will be planned for once the new complaint handling system is implemented and the process embedded.

5 LEARNING FROM COMPLAINTS

- **5.1** The Council is committed to reflecting on occasions when it does not get it right in order to highlight opportunities for improvement. As such, where a complaint has been upheld or partially upheld, the service determines what actions are required to support improvement and prevent a repeat of circumstances that led to the complaint.
- **5.2** Service improvement recording commenced in November 2016 for Inverclyde Council only. Service improvement tracking requires to be developed for the HSCP as this is not currently in place, although work is underway to implement this once the new complaint handling system is implemented across the Council and the HSCP which enables tracking of this information in a centralised way.
- **5.3** The Council shares the outcomes of complaint investigations and a selection of actions taken as a result of complaints on a quarterly basis with the Corporate Management Team. The learnings are published on the Council's website each quarter along with the quarterly statistics although there has been so noted delays in this being actioned timely due to pressure within the wider team.

6 SCOTTISH PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN (SPSO) – RIGHT OF REVIEW

6.1 Following a stage two investigation and written response, if a complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the complaint investigation, they have a right of review through the SPSO. The table below outlines the number complaints received at the SPSO for Inverclyde Council and HSCP.

Year	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19
Inverclyde Council	12	10	12	7	15	15
HSCP	7	1	4	3	11	6

Table: Complaints received by the SPSO for a review

- **6.2** The SPSO reviewed 12 complaints for Inverclyde Council of which 4 complaints were reviewed at the advice stage and these complaints was not taken forward. Eight complaints were reviewed at the early resolution stage of the procedure. The outcome of these reviews were as follows:
 - 5 complaints were recognised as examples of good complaint handling;
 - 1 complaints were reviewed and insufficient benefit would be gained from further investigation of the complaint;
 - 2 complaints were where there existed a right of appeal to court/tribunal/ or Scottish Ministers.
- **6.3** The SPSO reviewed 8 HSCP complaints of which 1 was conducted at early resolution stage and not taken forward. Seven complaints were reviewed at early resolution stage of their proceudre. The outcome of these reviews were as follows:
 - 5 complaints were recognised as examples of good complaint handling,
 - 1 complaint was unable to be proceed.
 - 1 complaint was under discretion and an alternative action was proposed.
- **6.4** . The table below outlines the SPSO's published statistics for Invercive Council. This reflects a reducation of 2 complaints being reviewed by the SPSO when comparing the data to the same period last year.

Stage	Outcome Group	Inverclyde Council
Advice	A&G - Complaint submissions - mature	(
	A&G - Complaint submissions - premature	:
	A&G - Enquiries	
	Organisation not in jurisdiction	
	Total	
Early Resolution	Cause and impact test not met (s 5 (3))	
	Discretion – Insufficient benefit would be achieved by investigation	
	Discretion – Alternative action proposed	
	Discretion – Alternative route used or available	
	Discretion – Good complaint handling	
	Discretion – Referred back	
	Discretion – Resolved - both parties satisfied with proposed outcome	
	Member of the public test not met (s 5 (6))	
	No response to contact	
	Organisation not in jurisdiction	
	Premature	
	Right of appeal to court/tribunal/Scottish ministers (s 7 (8))	
	Subject matter not in jurisdiction	
	Time limit (s 10)	
	Unable to proceed	
	Total	
Investigation	Fully upheld	
-	Not duly made or withdrawn	
	Not upheld	
	Resolved	
	Some upheld	
	Total	(

Table: SPSO breakdown by reviews by stage and outcomes for Inverclyde Council

6.5 The SPSO reviewed one complaint for the HSCP and no complaints were investigated. One complaint was taken through an alternative proposed action. Overall this reflects an decrease of 3 complaints when comparing data to the same period last year. The table below outlines the SPSO's published statistics for the HSCP.

Table:	SPSO breakdown	by reviews by stage a	and outcomes for HSCP
--------	----------------	-----------------------	-----------------------

Stage	Outcome Group	HSCP
Advice	A&G - Complaint submissions - mature	1
	A&G - Complaint submissions - premature	0
	A&G - Enquiries	0
	Total	1
Early Resolution	Discretion – Insufficient benefit would be achieved by investigation	0
	Discretion – alternative action proposed	1
	Discretion – Alternative route used or available	0
	Discretion - Good complaint handling	5
	Discretion – referred back to the area	0

	Discretion - Resolved - both parties satisfied with proposed outcome	0
	Premature	0
	Subject matter not in jurisdiction	0
	Time limit (s 10)	0
	Unable to proceed	1
	Total	7
Investigation	Fully upheld	0
	Not duly made or withdrawn	0
	Not upheld	0
	Resolved	0
	Some upheld	0
	Total	0
		8

7 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

7.1 The Council reports and publishes its complaint statistics in line with performance indicators published by the SPSO. Some aspects of the indicators are currently being developed and will be included in the core performance indicators applicable to all sectors (similar to those released in the draft MCHP).

8 POSITIVE COMMENTS

8.1 Throughout the year the Council receives positive comments and compliments from service users across all services. These recognise where employees have gone above and beyond the normal standard of service delivery and these compliments are shared with the service teams concerned.

9 TRAINING

- **9.1** Complaint handling training forms part of the induction process for all new staff joining the Council. Line managers identify which new staff require training, which involves completion of the complaint handling procedure e-learning module followed by attendance at a digital or face-to-face training course on the more practical aspects of dealing with complaints using the complaint handling procedure. Each year, the Education Service provides an induction training programme to all relevant staff who will be required to deal with complaints which also includes the use of the complaint handling system training.
- **9.2** Refresher training is provided on a regular basis on request from service areas and where it is deemed necessary. This includes the use of the complaint handling system. All training is tracked using personal individual development plans. A total of 154 hours training has been delivered during the course of 2023/24 for the Council.

10 CONCLUSION

- **10.1** The Council is committed to investigating, learning from and taking action as a result of individual complaints where it is found that standards have fallen below the level expected and where services could be improved. By listening to the views of service users who make a complaint, the Council can improve its services.
- **10.2** In the coming year, the key action for services to focus on is to reduce the time taken to respond to complaints at each stage of the complaint handling process. This is particularly relevant when the Council is seeing an increase in the complexity of complaints received by it. Balancing the need to deal with complex complaints timeously alongside all other priorities and challenges facing the Council will be essential whilst also managing the resources required to support this.
- **10.3** The Council will also be preparing for the implementation of the Child Friendly Complaint procedure, which will be included within the Model Complaint Handling Procedure. The principles of the Child Friendly Complaint Procedure will underpin how to handle and investigate complaints involving children in a way that respects their rights under the The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024. A pilot involving local authorities who agreed to test the process and guidance materials is underway. Feedback arising from the pilot will be factored into the materials in preparation for the wider roll out which will be implemented in 2024. Training will be undertaken in preparation for this change. The Council will also be preparing for the new complaint handling system which will be introduced in late 2024.