

ITEM No ...5.....

REPORT TO: SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 6 DECEMBER 2023

REPORT ON: BI-ANNUAL REPORT ON COMPLAINTS

REPORT BY: CHIEF EXECUTIVE

REPORT NO: 346-2023

1. PURPOSE

To report on performance regarding complaints in the first half of 2023/2024, with comparisons to previous periods, and to show how the Council continues to learn from complaints.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Committee notes:

- a the key performance indicators on complaints closed between 1 April 2023 and 30 September 2023, with trends from previous periods;
- b a summary of complaints about the Council received by and determined by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman during 2022/2023;
- c examples of the range and volume of transactions the Council has with customers and citizens as a context for the number of complaints;
- d examples of how complaints have been used to improve services;
- e results of the satisfaction survey sent to people who made complaints; and
- f examples of compliments received about Council services.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The model Complaints Handling Procedure for Local Authorities requires that regular reports are produced for elected members. This report covers complaints closed between 1 April and 30 September 2023. It also includes information about the complaints regarding the Council which were dealt with by the Ombudsman in 2022/2023.
- 4.2 In terms of performance management, the report includes data on key complaint handling indicators (Appendix One) and results from the satisfaction surveys sent to those who had complaints closed in the period (Appendix Four). The report also gives examples of how we have used complaints to improve processes (Appendix Three), another requirement of the model procedure.
- 4.3 Appendix Two includes infographics giving examples of the range and number of transactions the Council has with customers and citizens in a typical year, providing a context for the number of complaints received, while Appendix Five gives examples of compliments received about Council services during the first half of 2023/2024.
- 4.4 Benchmarking information from other Scottish Councils, based on analysis by the Scottish Local Authorities Complaint Handlers Network, is referred to at various points in the report.

5. OVERVIEW OF PERFORMANCE

- 5.1 Detailed information is included in the Appendices. Key issues to highlight include:
- a The number of complaints recorded in the first half of 2023/2024 was 524, compared to 380 in the first half of 2022/2023.
 - b Performance in terms of the % of complaints closed within the target times dipped in the first half of 2023/2024 compared to 2022/2023. For stage 1, the % meeting the 5 day target was 56.4% compared to 71.7% (although a further 16.1% of cases were closed within an extended target), while for stage 2 the % meeting the 20 day target was 51.7% compared to 57.8%. Stage 2 complaints can be about complex and sensitive issues, but the services concerned will be reminded about the importance of meeting performance targets.
 - c The average number of days taken to close complaints at stage 1 in the first half of 2023/2024 was 7.1 days compared to 4.3 days in the first half of 2022/2023. For stage 2, the average number of days taken to close complaints was 26.1 days in the first half of 2023/2024 compared to 26.2 days in the equivalent period last year.
 - d For comparison, benchmarking with other Councils shows that, in 2022/2023, Councils across Scotland took an average of 7.0 days to respond to complaints at stage 1, with this figure rising to 12.1 days in our 'family group' of comparable authorities. For stage 2 complaints, the Scottish average was 20.8 days and the family group average 21.3 days.
 - e The % of complaints fully upheld at both stages (23.6% at stage 1 and 25.9% at stage 2) was higher than the 2022/2023 figures (20.9% at stage 1 and 14.5% at stage 2).
 - f Failure to provide a service (which on detailed analysis often turns out to be a delay in providing a service, rather than not providing it at all) has remained the most common reason for complaint, although such complaints represent a smaller % of the total than in the equivalent period last year.
 - g The satisfaction surveys sent to those who have made complaints were changed from the start of 2021/2022 as the Council adopted a new standard questionnaire agreed by the Scottish Local Authorities Complaint Handlers Network. This means that there is still only limited trend information based on the new questions, but this is now building up over time.
- 5.2 All of the issues raised by this report will continue to be discussed with the Council Leadership Team, the Complaints Review Group and within individual services. The examples given in Appendix Three demonstrate the Council's commitment to learn from complaints and improve processes to prevent the same issues recurring, in addition to those complaints which lead to managers speaking to individual employees or arranging training for teams.

6. STATISTICS FROM THE SCOTTISH PUBLIC SERVICE OMBUDSMAN

- 6.1 18 complaints were received by the Ombudsman about Dundee City Council in 2022/2023 (down from 20 in the year before). This represented 1.7% of complaints received by the Ombudsman about all local authorities in the year, the same % as in 2021/2022.
- 6.2 Of these 18 cases:
- 8 were about Housing
 - 4 were about Social Work
 - 2 were about Planning
 - 2 were about Finance
 - 1 was about Education
 - 1 was categorised as subject unknown or out of jurisdiction

- 6.3 15 complaints about the Council were determined by the Ombudsman during 2022/2023:
- 8 were recorded as 'advice given'.
 - 7 were 'early resolution' (eg where the Ombudsman found the complaint had already been handled well or there would be insufficient benefit from further investigation).
 - 0 went to 'investigation'.
- 6.4 No complaints about the Council reached the 'investigation' stage in 2022/2023 (compared to none in 2021/2022, one in 2020/2021 and two in each of 2018/2019 and 2019/2020).
- 6.5 Officers continue to monitor the regular newsletters from the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman which highlight their decisions on complaints upheld against other Councils, and these are shared with our own services in case the findings are of interest and could avoid us being in the same situation. Recently, these have included complaints upheld against other Councils relating to housing repairs and the condition of properties before being let, how a school responded to an assault on a pupil, and the administration of Council Tax.

7. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 This report has been subject to the Pre-IIA Screening Tool and does not make any recommendations for change to strategy, policy, procedures, services or funding and so has not been subject to an Integrated Impact Assessment. An appropriate senior manager has reviewed and agreed with this assessment.
- 7.2 The complaints recording database includes a feature that asks those dealing with complaints to note whether any complaints relate to an equalities issue - age, disability, gender, LGBT, race or religion. During the first half of 2023/2024, there were two such complaints recorded, one relating to disability and one relating to gender. These complaints have been drawn to the attention of the lead officer with responsibility for equality and diversity and he has no concerns about how they were dealt with.

8. CONSULTATIONS

The Council Leadership Team was consulted in the preparation of this report.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

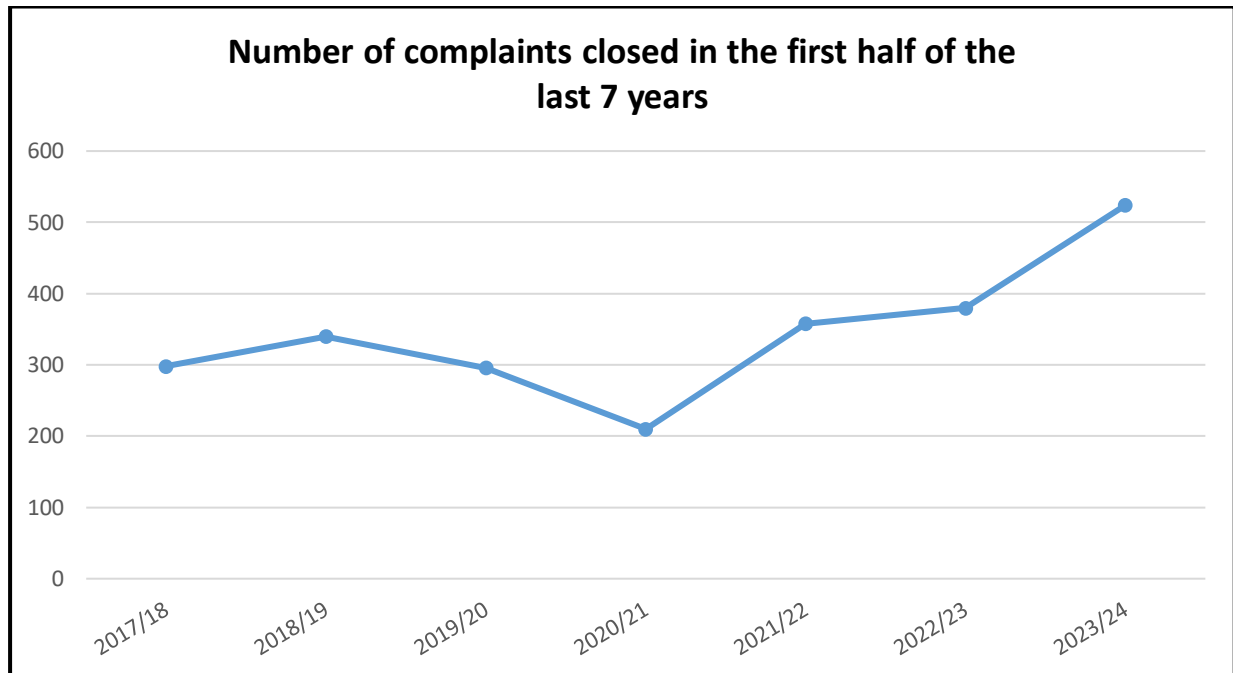
None.

GREGORY COLGAN
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Date: 7 NOVEMBER 2023

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KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

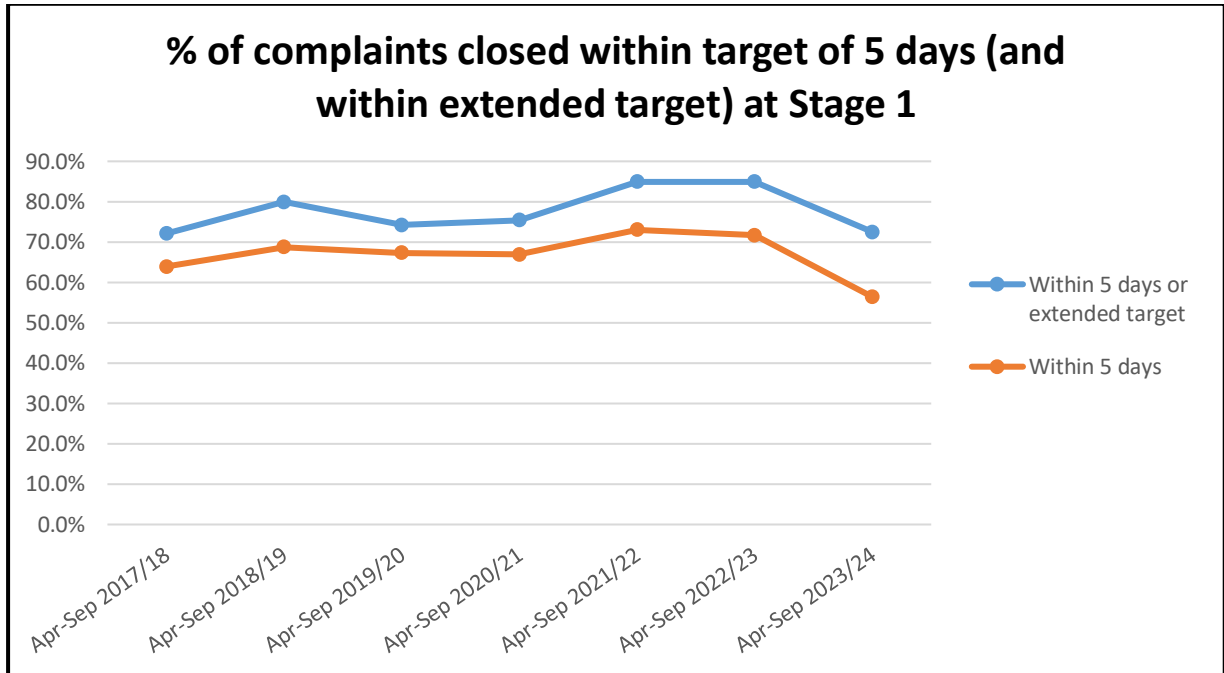


BREAKDOWN BY SERVICE

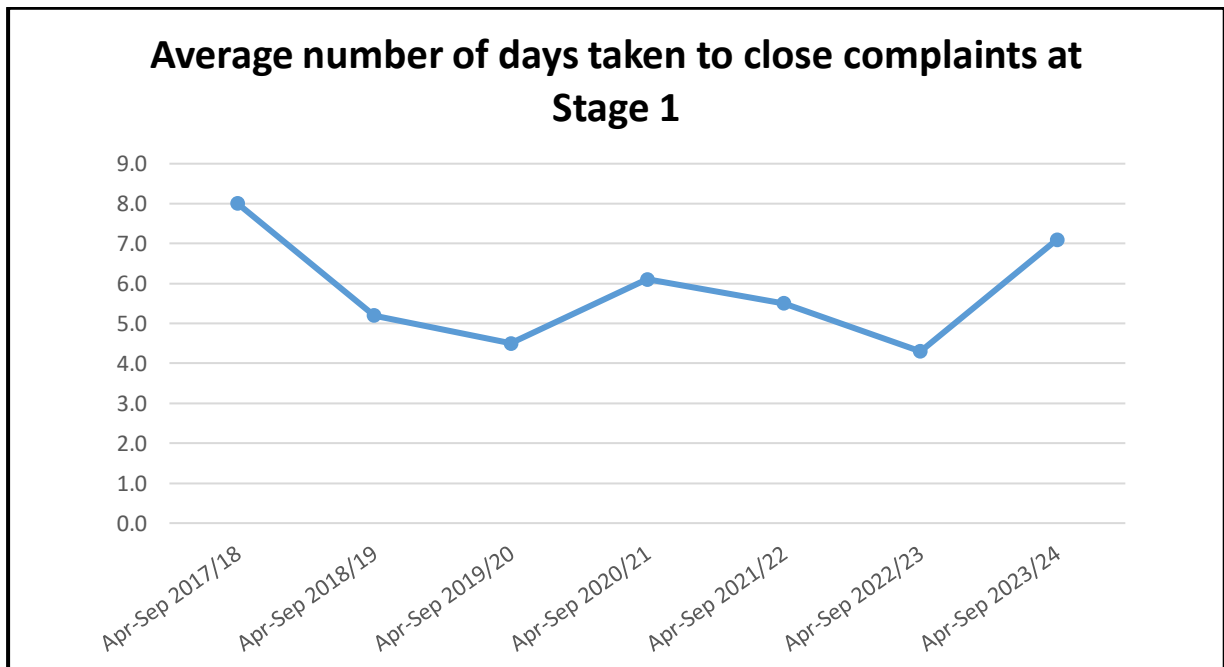
Service	Apr-Sep 2017/2018	Apr-Sep 2018/2019	Apr-Sep 2019/2020	Apr-Sep 2020/2021	Apr-Sep 2021/2022	Apr-Sep 2022/2023	Apr-Sep 2023/2024
Corporate Services	43	51	35	36	44	47	53
Children and Families							
- Education	44	47	47	7	29	29	37
- Children's Services	10	21	22	19	22	29	25
- Criminal Justice	2	1	5	0	2	3	1
Neighbourhood Services							
- Housing and Construction	64	93	78	49	82	69	150
- Environment	95	79	58	61	107	138	148
- Communities, Safety and Protection	N/A	N/A	7	12	17	20	34
City Development	18	29	19	15	25	27	59
Chief Executive's	1	4	2	1	1	0	1
Dundee Health and Social Care Partnership: Social Work	20	15	23	10	29	18	16
TOTAL	297	340	296	210	358	380	524

The most significant change since last year is the increase in complaints concerning Housing and Construction.

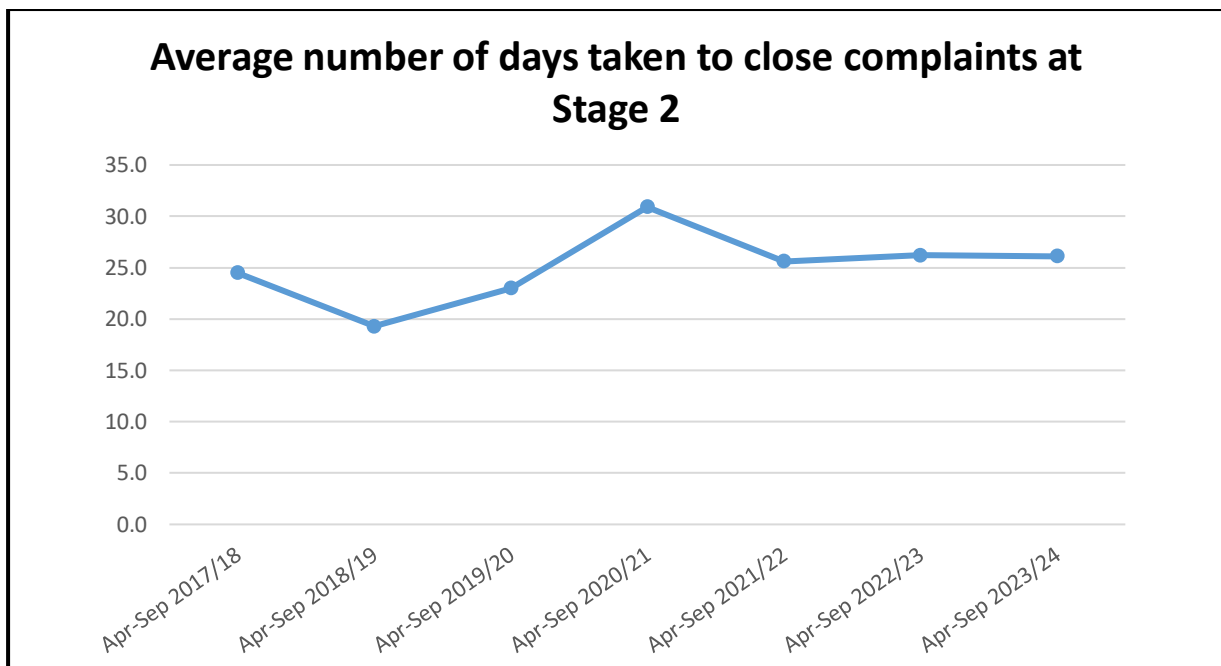
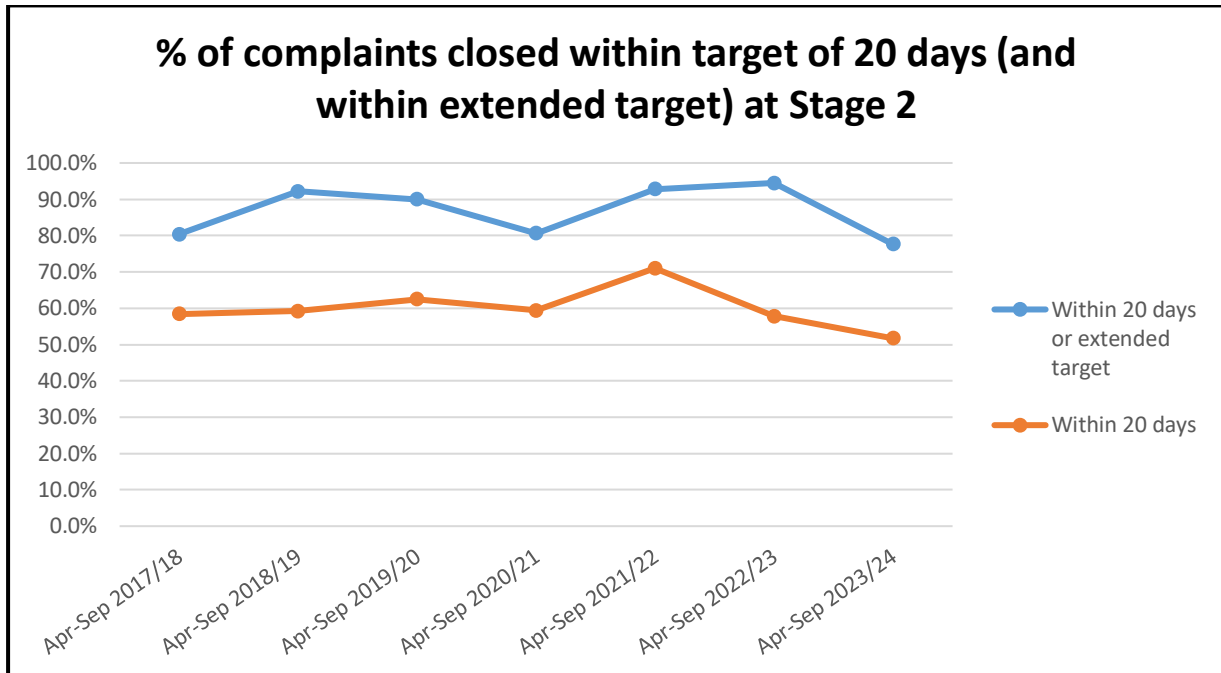
The complaints handling procedure includes targets at each stage which can be extended. The chart below shows the % of stage 1 cases closed within target and the % which met either the target or the extended target.



Another key measure of promptness in dealing with complaints is the average number of days taken to close cases. Having been on a positive trend for stage 1 complaints, this measure of performance declined in the first half of 2023/2024:



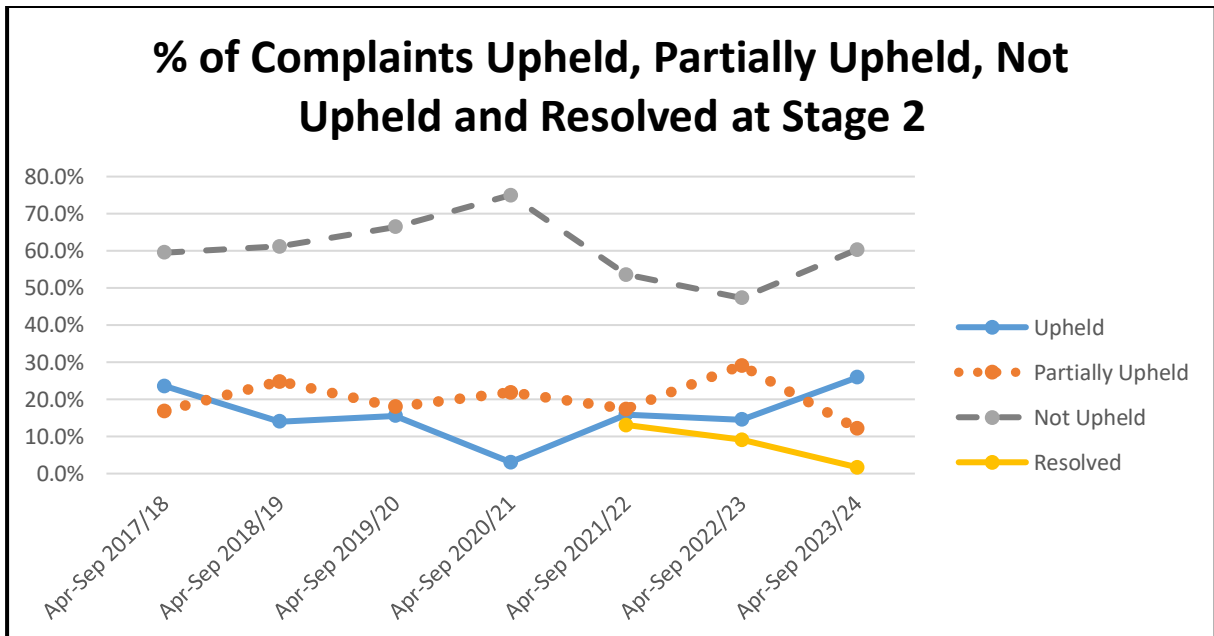
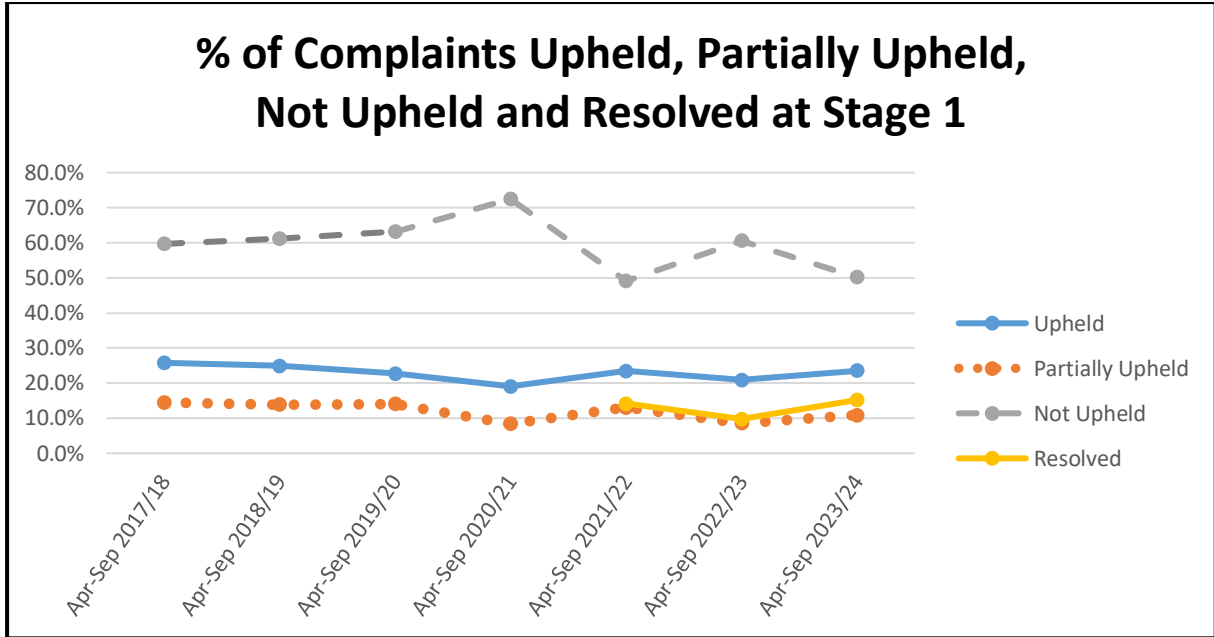
The equivalent charts for stage 2 complaints are:



NOTE: Both the 5 day and 20 day targets are designed to drive improvement in the promptness of responses to complaints - they are not absolute standards that every case is expected to meet.

BENCHMARKING ON CLOSURE TARGETS

Benchmarking with other Scottish Councils (based on their 2022/2023 data) shows that the average number of days taken to close complaints at stage 1 in Dundee in the most recent period was similar to last year's Scottish average of 7.0 days, and better than the average for the family group of comparable authorities of 12.1 days. However, the average number of days taken to close stage 2 complaints in Dundee in the most recent period was higher than the 2022/23 figures for Scotland as a whole (20.8%) and our family group (21.3%).



A new option to categorise complaints as ‘resolved’ was only introduced from 1 April 2021 so there is limited trend data on that outcome. This category is designed to cover complaints which can be dealt with without any investigation into whether they should be upheld or not.

BENCHMARKING ABOUT OUTCOME OF COMPLAINTS

Benchmarking data from other Scottish Councils for 2022/2023 shows that Dundee City Council upheld and partially upheld a lower % of complaints than both the Scottish average and the average of the family group of comparable Councils, as shown in the tables below:

Stage 1 Outcomes 2022/2023

Outcome	Dundee	Family Group	Scottish Average
Upheld	21.4%	29.8%	39.3%
Not Upheld	59.1%	32.4%	27.2%
Partially Upheld	9.2%	24.5%	16.8%
Resolved	10.2%	13.3%	16.7%

Stage 2 Outcomes 2022/2023

Outcome	Dundee	Family Group	Scottish Average
Upheld	14.4%	28.4%	30.4%
Not Upheld	48.8%	38.9%	42.1%
Partially Upheld	27.2%	19.1%	20.0%
Resolved	9.6%	13.7%	7.7%

Discussions will be had through the Scottish Local Authorities Complaint Handlers Network to identify any reasons why other Councils appear to uphold a higher % of complaints.

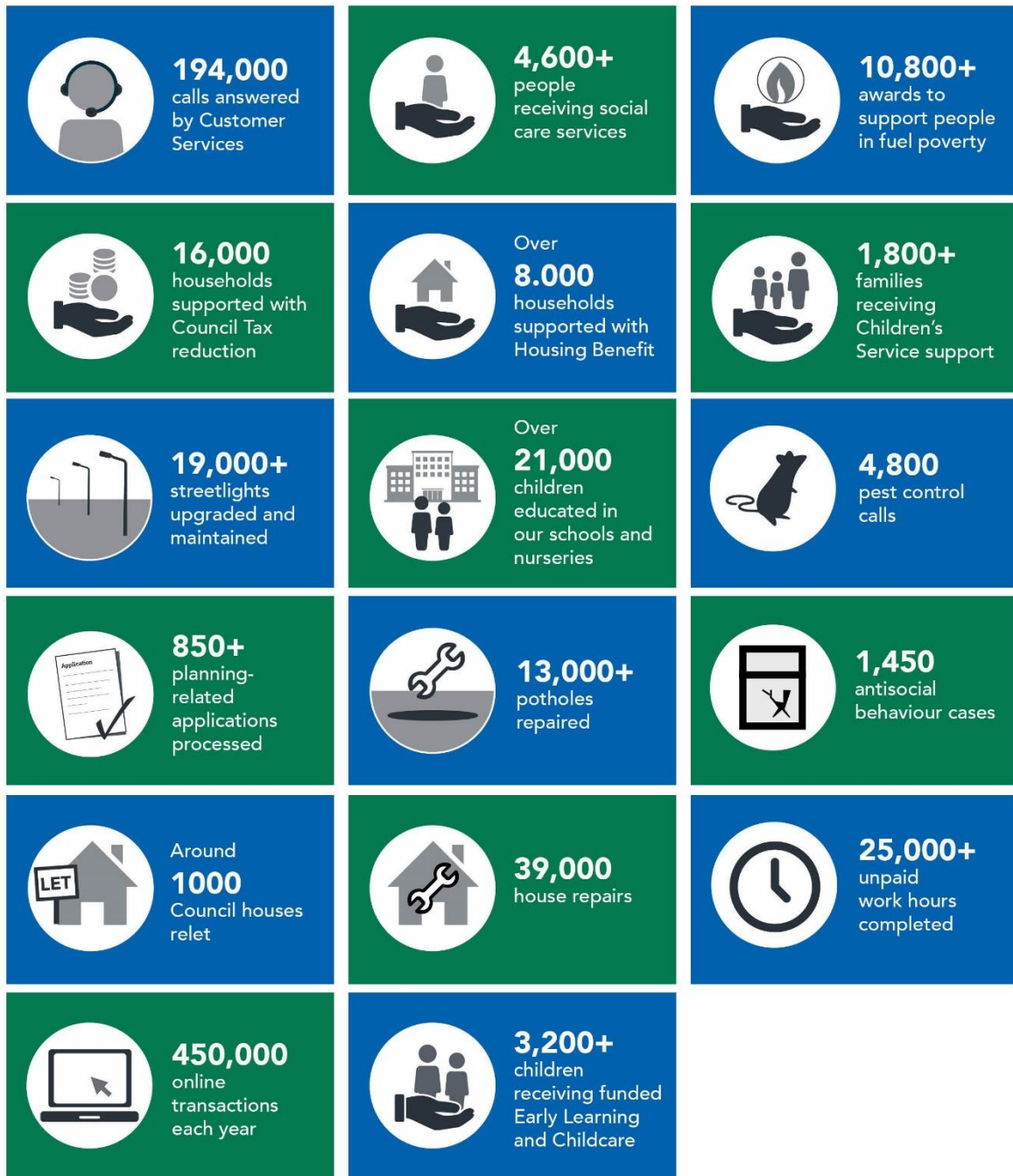
COMPLAINTS BY NATURE

	Apr-Sep 2017/2018	Apr-Sep 2018/2019	Apr-Sep 2019/2020	Apr-Sep 2020/2021	Apr-Sep 2021/2022	Apr-Sep 2022/2023	Apr-Sep 2023/2024
Delay in responding to enquiries and requests	10.9%	13.8%	16.3%	11.2%	18.2%	19.7%	23.1%
Failure to meet our service standards	19.7%	21.5%	17.8%	13.1%	19.0%	15.4%	14.4%
Treatment by or attitude of a member of staff	29.4%	25.1%	24.8%	23.8%	21.2%	19.5%	20.1%
Failure to provide a service	25.3%	21.1%	25.6%	27.1%	25.2%	36.7%	25.0%
Dissatisfaction with our policy	8.3%	12.3%	11.2%	15.9%	12.6%	6.2%	11.9%
Failure to follow the proper administrative process	6.3%	6.2%	4.3%	8.9%	3.8%	2.6%	5.5%

Failure to provide a service (which on detailed analysis usually turns out to be about a delay in providing a service rather than not providing it at all) continues to be the most common reason for complaint, along with delay in responding to enquiries and requests.

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EXAMPLES OF COUNCIL TRANSACTIONS IN A TYPICAL YEAR



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LEARNING FROM COMPLAINTS:**EXAMPLES OF HOW COMPLAINTS HAVE BEEN USED TO DRIVE SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS**

Officers closing off a complaint as upheld or partially upheld are asked to identify planned service improvements, designed to prevent similar issues recurring. These often involve speaking to individual employees, arranging training for teams on correct use of procedures and customer care standards, or close supervision for a period.

In addition to these actions following complaints, below are some examples of how complaints were used to identify wider process/service improvements during the first half of 2023/2024:

A customer complained that	We listened, we acted
She had received a letter saying she had not responded to a request to allow access for an annual gas safety check.	The service acknowledged that the letter was inaccurate and poorly worded and would be reviewed along with the other letters used for this process.
Pupils had trained for a sports event then were not given the opportunity to take part.	Head Teacher to review communication protocols with staff and parents and ensure robust planning is in place to allow pupils to attend events whenever possible.
There had been a delay in delivery of bins.	Stock recording system put in place to help avoid future delays.
Communal bins near their house were filling up quickly and not being emptied often enough.	Business Process Team to monitor situation to see if revised collection frequency had a positive effect and bin capacity is adequate.
He was unhappy with the information and assistance given in relation to recording noise from a neighbour.	Clearer information to be given to people making complaints about noise, specifically around the use of surveillance and other means of gathering evidence.

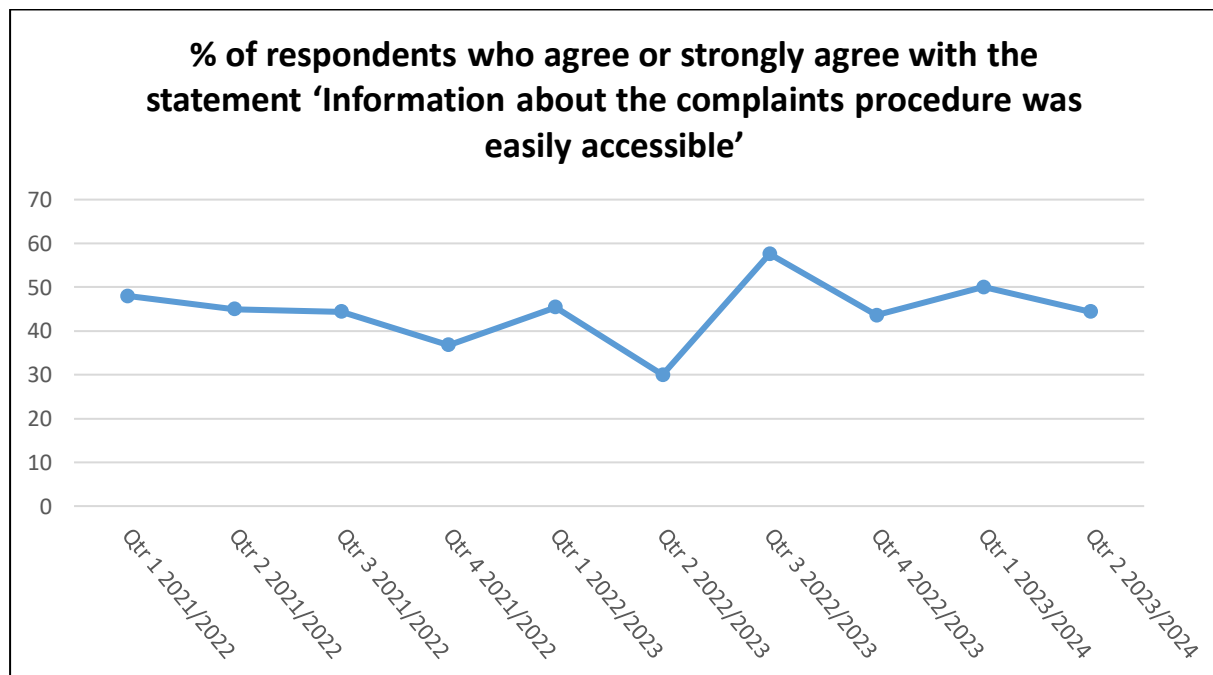
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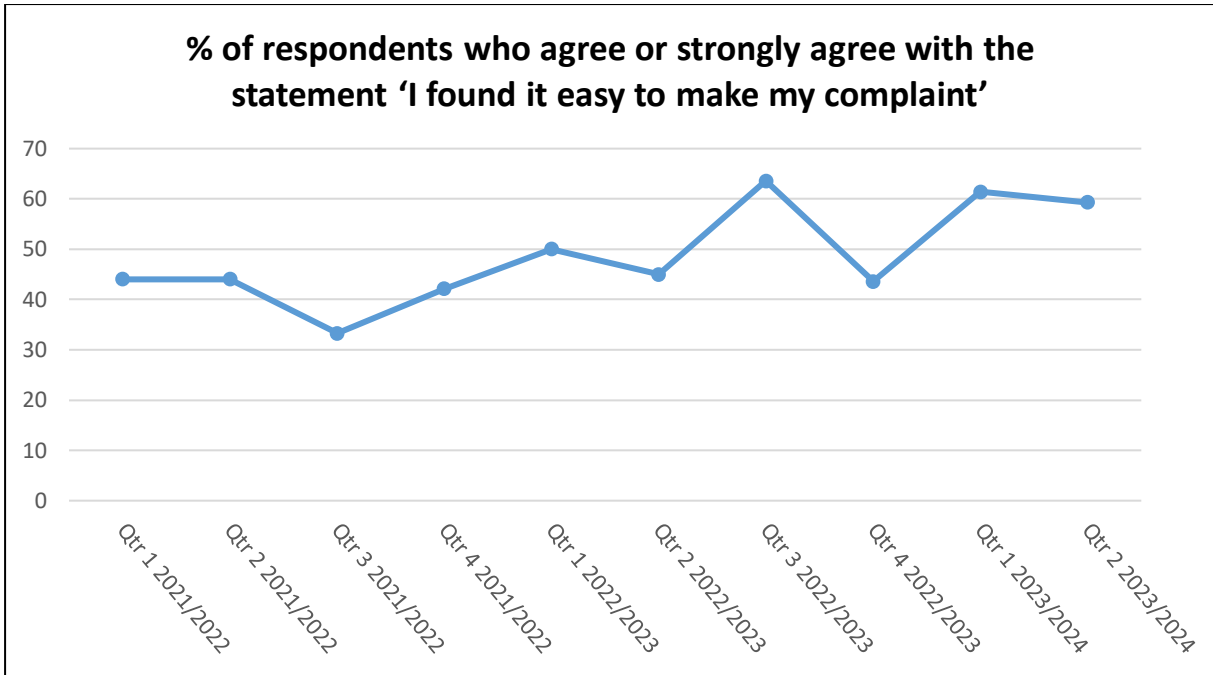
SATISFACTION WITH COMPLAINTS HANDLING

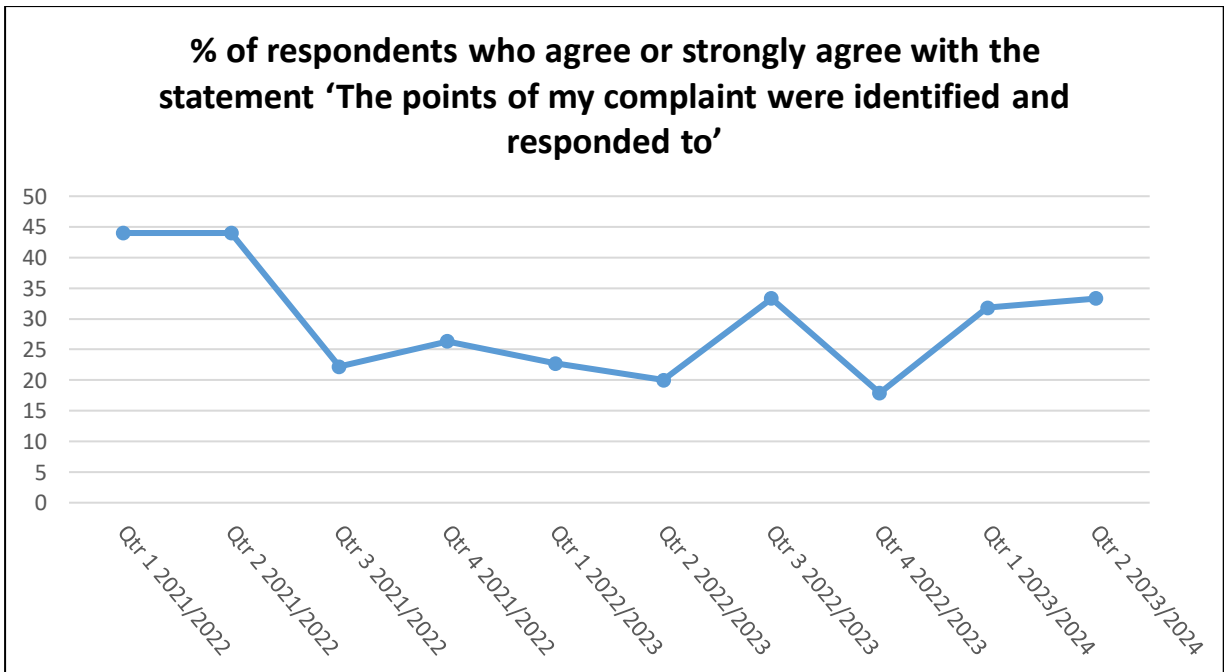
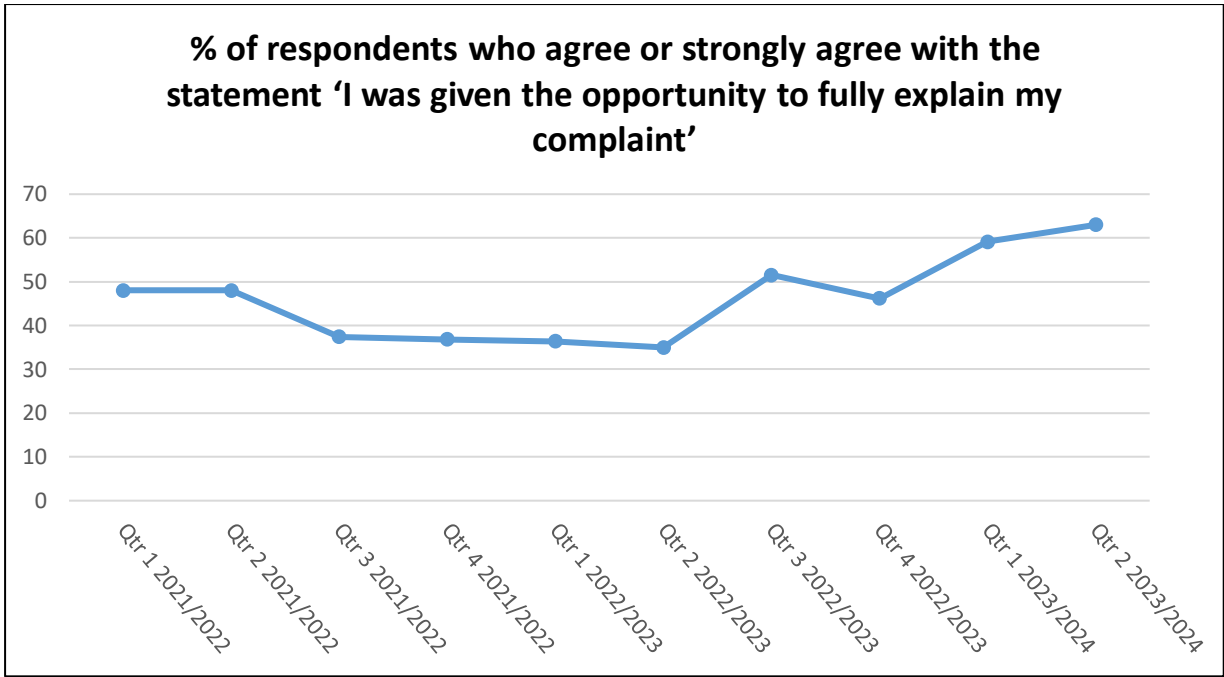
The model Complaints Handling Procedure requires the Council to report on a measure of customer satisfaction with its complaints process, and to do this we issue surveys every 3 months.

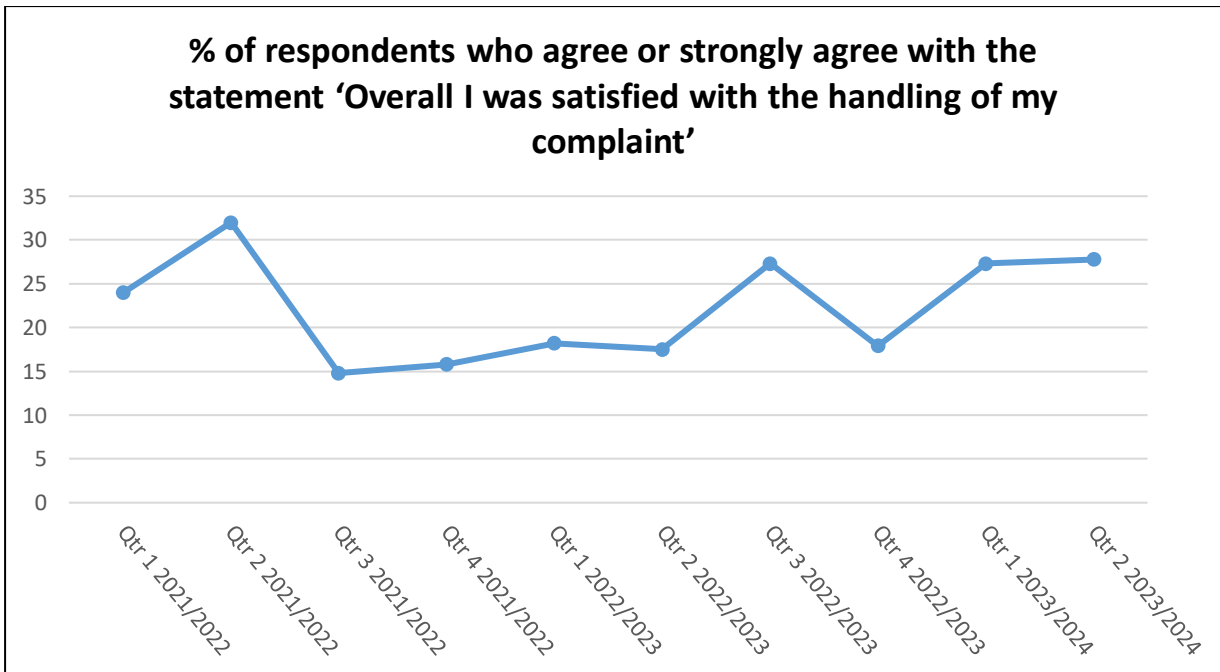
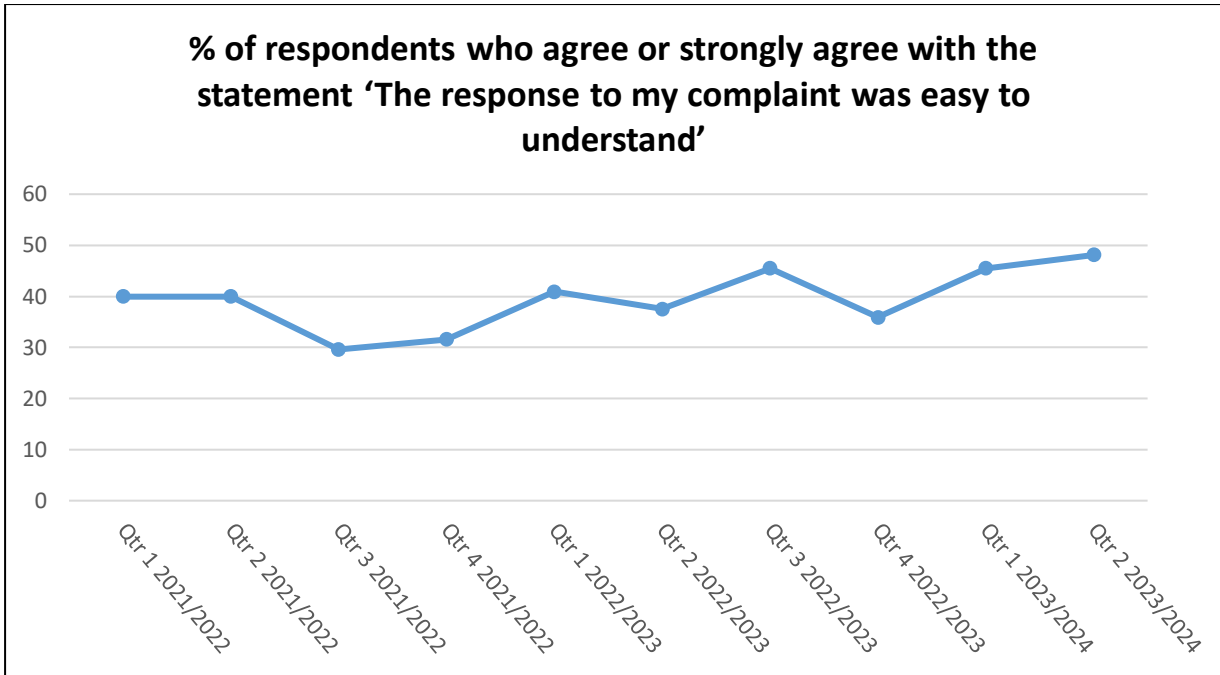
From the beginning of 2021/2022 we have been using a new questionnaire agreed by the Scottish Local Authorities Complaint Handlers Network which is why longer-term trends from previous years are not shown as they were previously. However, trend information is beginning to build up from the quarterly surveys.

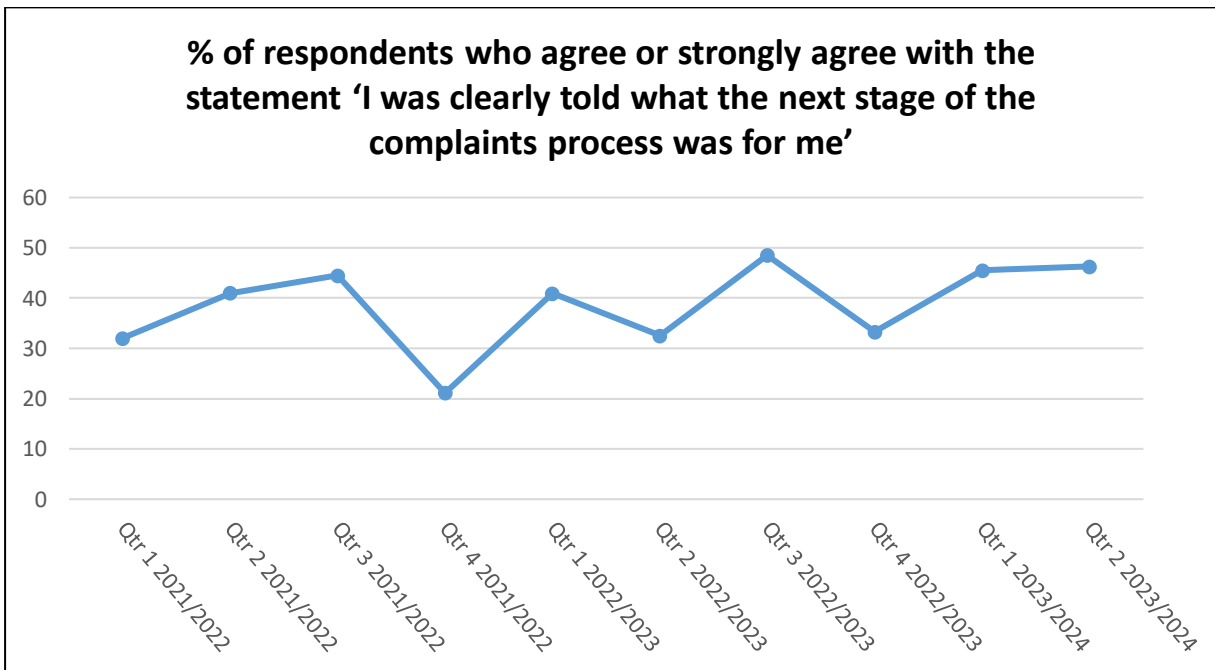
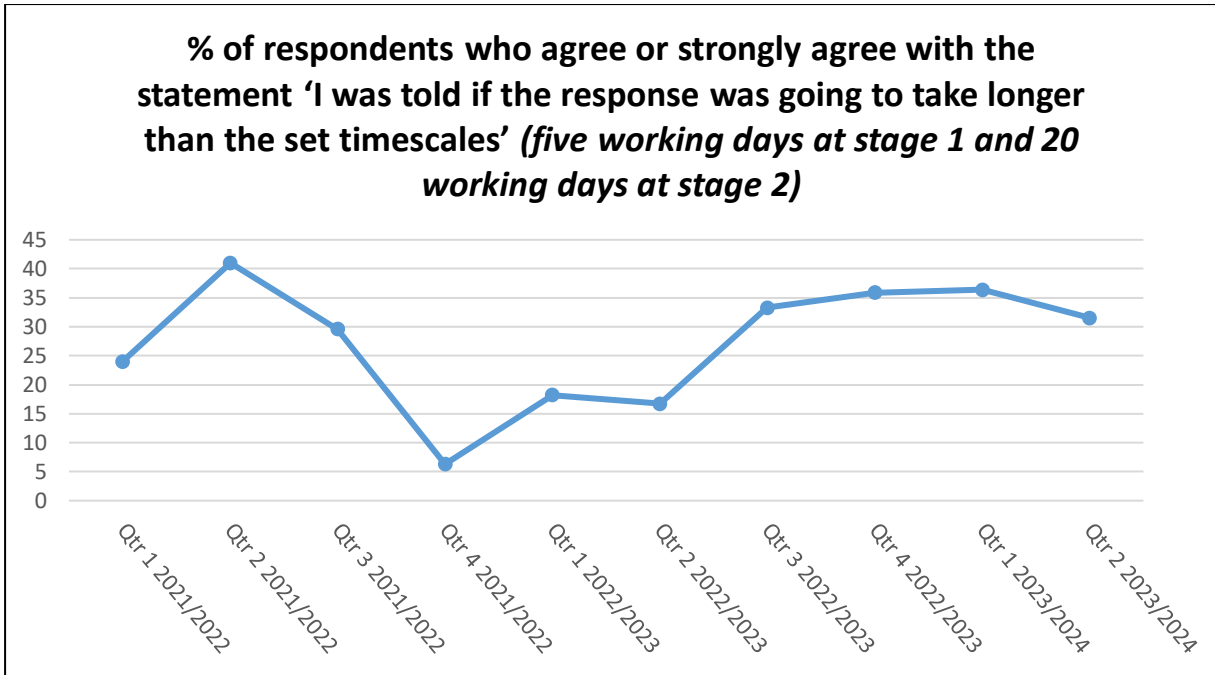
The charts below show the % of respondents who said they agreed or strongly agreed with each of the statements in the survey. Since the survey sample consists entirely of people who have made a complaint, many of which are not upheld, it may not be surprising that satisfaction levels are not particularly high. The aim is to increase the % of respondents who acknowledge that the process of dealing with their complaint was satisfactory and who feel they have at least been heard, even if they did not get the outcome they desired.











BENCHMARKING ON SATISFACTION SURVEY DATA

Some limited benchmarking information is now becoming available from other Councils in Scotland who use the same customer satisfaction survey. In 2022/2023, the average % of respondents who said they agreed or strongly agreed with the statements was 34.6% across all Scottish Councils who ran the survey, compared to the most recent figure of 44.3% in Dundee. The comparable figure for just our 'family group' of comparable authorities was 39.5%. Work will continue (through training, communication with services, discussion at the Complaints Review Group and discussion at Council Leadership Team) to improve responses and hopefully improve satisfaction scores.

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COMPLIMENTS

Members suggested that it would be useful to include in this report examples of compliments which have been received about Council services.

Below are some examples of the compliments which were submitted during the first half of 2023/2024 on the 'Tell Us About Good Service' form on the Council's website:

- Huge thank you to Environmental Health for following up a concern I spoke to them about yesterday. A lady visited myself this morning and is going to arrange for the contaminated bins of some of our neighbours to be uplifted and also arrange for letters to be issued in connection with keeping the area tidy. I have been trying for many months to sort out this problem with the company whom we pay fees to, to upkeep the area and although they have listened and replied, and they have tidied up some fly tipping problems by having the maintenance man remove goods which have been left, the problem has been ongoing. I really appreciate the speed and effort that Dundee City Council has put into this problem and the understanding they have shown towards it. I am very hopeful that the actions which have been taken will resolve our problem. Thank you again for all support given.
- (for Trading Standards) X listened to my tale of woe (about a private company) and gave me some glimmer of hope and a course of action that may represent a possibility of a result. My sincere thanks for listening and for those who provide the service from a very grateful old man.
- As people are quick enough to report bad workmanship/bad experiences with tradesmen, I think it is only fair to also report a well-mannered, efficient and competent tradesman also. The gas engineer who carried out my gas safety check this afternoon was all of the above and is an asset to Dundee Contract Services.
- Last year the walkway, cycle-path was greatly improved, between North Balmossie Street and Inchkeith Avenue but weeds were allowed grow creating an eye-sore on the north border spoiling the intended improvement. Today I used the path and very pleased to see the planting of many shrubs in the areas where weeds had previously been allowed to accumulate. Thanks for the planting of these new shrubs which finishes off a professional job. I guess the finances were not there last year, but thanks for improving the local environment. Well done.
- Hi, just to say thank you and the staff for coming back to Gowrie Street to empty the bins that had been missed. I notified you yesterday. It makes a big difference as there's quite a number of bins out and it's great you came back so soon. Thank you.
- X was in my street today strimming. Lived here 26 years and nobody has ever done it to his standard he has done today. What a pleasant hard working guy based at Caird Park depot just now. I hope he gets the recognition he deserves - a credit to the Council.
- I would like to thank you for arranging for the verges to be strimmed in John Grahame Avenue, and the application of weedkiller. This has made a tremendous difference already and there have been positive comments. Many thanks again.
- Just thank you for all you people did to make Radio 1 Big Weekend such a great event. I know it can't have been an easy task. Made me so proud of our city.
- I just want to email to say thank you for an amazing Big Weekend. The Council have done an amazing job at hosting. I would love to see more events in Dundee as it was very well organised. Thanks.
- Paper bin at Naughton Place was overflowing. Missed collection for several weeks, had been reported by various residents. I emailed dcc yesterday, uploaded a photograph of bin, and it was emptied early this morning. Many thanks for your efficient response to this problem. Very much appreciated.

- We recently requested a Bulky Uplift of a Large Fridge/Freezer and a Garden Swing Seat. I was concerned that the Fridge/Freezer may prove too heavy for two persons to lift and may not be taken. However, the two young men who attended made short work of removing the doors and, much to our appreciation, removed all of the items. They performed all of the work with speed, efficiency and with great pleasantness. They were a joy to have in our home.
- Thanks to the chaps that cut hedge, picked up and emptied grass bin for homeless network flat. Left a real nice job done... thank you chaps... much appreciated, leaving the area lovely.
- Hi, just want to pass on my grateful thanks to Environmental staff along with Scottish Water for responding to the blocked drain at Bridge Street. Very professional and understanding. Drain cleared.
- I recently put in a request to have my shower fixed as it was hanging off my wall and the outer case was broken. My request was sent in on 6th July and by 11th July workman had been out to check. Decided I needed a new shower and the shower was then fitted by two really professional guys, presented themselves well and nothing was any bother for them. I am extremely happy with the service I have received as a long-term tenant who pays their rent and having heard that getting repairs done can be a lengthy process I am more than happy to say that for me this has not been the case. Well done to the repairs department and thanks so much for being there and getting a new shower fitted in such a quick time.
- Hi, I just wanted to drop a message to praise your event as I'm sure most people message for a moan. I was at Slessor Gardens for Bastille on Saturday. It was so well organised, toilets were plentiful and clean. I was especially impressed by the fact you could take in sealed water, then free Scottish Water top up and lovely young guy going around with free chilled bottled water. Too often at events etc there is a mile long queue for a £4 warm water and mile long queue to disgusting toilets. All the staff were lovely and friendly and helpful. Thanks again for a lovely time. The Gardens are lovely.
- I would like to thank you for your prompt response to my request on 26 May to spray weedkiller along the outside of the wall. This has made a huge difference to the street entrance, thank you.
- (For Customer Services) From the outset x readily assisted me. His professional and friendly manner was much appreciated. My Dad's issue has now been resolved and I would be grateful if our thanks could be passed on.
- Spoke with x from customer services who was lovely and had my query answered in minutes. Such a friendly, happy attitude over the phone which was really appreciated. Wanted to pass on my compliments to her!
- I contacted the Rapid Response Team yesterday about a couch having been dumped right next to my house by someone. When I arrived home from work today, the couch has been removed! What a fantastic service, thank you so much. Within 24hr I got house repair done thanks for the quick service thanks.
- My mum had lost her pendant for her Community Alarm. Phoned this morning and it was replaced within an hour - excellent service.
- Two repairs reported and I wanted to say thanks for the fast repair. Seems Council are getting better.

In addition to the compliments made using the online form, services often receive comments, cards, phone calls etc direct from service users, and often from their families in the case of social care. Examples of those compliments received directly in the first half of 2023/2024 include:

- (about gravedigger at Barnhill Cemetery) Went above and beyond to help us find the plot and we couldn't thank him enough. He is a credit to the Council and city.
- I wanted to record our genuine and sincere thanks to all of the staff at Eastern Primary School. Both our boys have had the privilege of going through nursery and early primary years at

Eastern and we could not have asked for a more dedicated team to teach and guide them. Our boys get so much from going to Eastern and I wanted to send you a genuine and heartfelt message to ensure this positivity is recognised at "the centre". We are so lucky to send our boys to such a wonderful school. We cannot praise them enough!

- Have to say I am really happy to see that the Council starting to rewild a number of areas. It's a big switch and will help enormously moving forward.
- I want to thank you and your team - particularly x for addressing my complaint timeously and effectively. He was very pleasant to deal with and showed empathy, whilst explaining the current barriers and constraints experienced by the local authority. I returned yesterday from a work trip away to find that the communal garden has been cut and all weeds strimmed. What a difference it makes. It's now safe to use the steps to my shed. Thanks for your integrity.
- Thought I would say a very big thank you for the doors on our close. I appreciate so much you organising the automatic closure on the doors it makes such a difference for me getting in and out. X was just a gem, so kind and thoughtful. Also we had two of the nicest lads doing a lot of the work in the close. Really pleased.
- Tenant called wishing to pass on his thanks and feedback to tradesman who was very helpful and no job has been too much. Jobs have been completed very well and he took time to show tenant what he had done and what exactly the problem was.
- I would like to thank you for the support with my discretionary housing payment.
- (About OT service / Dundee Independent Living and Community Equipment Centre) X was singing your praises, and also that of the service provided. He is really pleased with the workmanship carried out at his home. Big thank you from him.
- Every year I mean to write to you - and sometimes I remember to do so - to say THANK YOU for all the wonderful work that you and your team of gardeners and landscapers do to enhance our environment here in Dundee. I have the pleasure of being able to walk in Victoria and Balgay Park (what a beautiful job you have made of the entrance at the corner of Blackness and Balgay Road) and also I frequently walk/drive along Perth Road where the planting and landscaping of Seabraes is absolutely delightful. Please let all your colleagues (designers, gardeners, whoever) know that I have written to thank them for brightening up my life. I realise that your work must become more and more difficult as each year passes given the cutbacks on finances and staff and so I congratulate you on what you accomplish on our behalf and for our pleasure.
- I would like to formally express my gratitude and respect for all those involved with my daughter at Harris Academy. From P7 transitional preparations through to this day, x has shown incredible interest, warmth and care in ensuring her needs are met. X has been such a supportive Guidance, and x has been exceptional in supporting her daily. As a whole, ESA staff have provided a safe and caring space for her, she speaks of them highly, and I have observed beautiful relationships. Staff have also extended great warmth and care to me as our family have experienced very difficult circumstances over the past year. I have been moved by the level of care and support provided, and could not be more grateful. You have an amazing team there at Harris Academy, giving so much in a very demanding job, and I am very keen that this is recognised.
- For Social Work Adult Services - It was lovely to meet you today. X has a resistance to anything relating to social work. I've seen him at his worst but today was marvellous. I know that you won't have any idea of how well you did with him, but to have him engage with you the way he did, on a first meeting, was as rare as it was brilliant.
- (in relation to financial help given vis the Discretionary Housing Payment Fund) I would like to inform you that I have now secured full-time employment. Thank you very much for the assistance I have received from your department over the last year - it was greatly appreciated during what was an extremely difficult time.

- Bulky uplift completed today. Impressed with the team in attendance - they were extremely courteous, polite and hard working. Request they are commended for their hard work and professionalism.
- (For the Benefits Delivery Team) This is a note to say THANK YOU THANK YOU very much, I greatly appreciate your assistance in relieving me from such great stress, I can breathe now.
- Huge appreciation for the quick delivery of shower chair.
- Lot of praise received from service users stating how happy they are with the delivery of equipment from the equipment store. They have all expressed how pleasant and helpful staff have been and are impressed with the efficiency of the service.
- (For Customer Services) Thank you to X. He has been a great help through all of this. Fantastic customer services from him - 5 out of 5.
- I contacted customer services this morning for advice. I had an extremely nice and very helpful lady helping me. I would just like to say that she is a credit to your workforce.
- X signed for a tenancy yesterday. Her mum has just phoned to say how grateful she is for the support and help you gave to her daughter while she has been living in x. She was amazed at how X opened up to you about issues she has had in her life as she had not really opened up to anyone so openly before. Mum could not have sounded more appreciative of the difference you made to her daughter. The whole family are elated with the offer. She told me she feels we, as Tenancy Officers are not given enough credit for the work we do