
Report To:	Policy & Resources Committee	Date:	19 September 2023
Report By:	Head of Legal, Democratic, Digital & Customer Services	Report No:	LS/68/23
Contact Officer:	Carol Craig-McDonald	Contact No:	01475 712725
Subject:	Complaint Handling Annual Report 1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023		

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 2022 to 31 March 2023.
- 1.3 The appended report (appendix 1) provides the annual complaint handling statistical information for the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023. 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.

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.

Iain Strachan
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 inconsistencies 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 306 complaints and closed 278 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 2018/19 to 2022/23. Members will note that, in comparison with volumes received during 2021/22, 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 3.9 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 3.10 – 3.13 of the appended report shows the outcome of complaint investigations at each stage of the complaint handling procedure, the collective view of which is summarised below:
- 88 complaints were upheld across all complaint stages.
 - 57 complaints were partially upheld across all complaint stages.
 - 109 complaints were not upheld across all complaint stages: and
 - 24 complaints were resolved across all complaint stages.

- 4.5 Section 3.13 to 3.21 of the appended report details the Council's responses to complaints at each of the complaint stages. 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 escalated 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.
- 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 2022/23	Indicators 2021/22	Trend when comparing to 2020/21
No of complaints closed	187	222	A reduction of 35 stage 1 complaints
% Of complaints closed on time within 5 days (including cases where a time extension was approved)	79.7%	83%	3.3% decrease of on time responses
Average number of days taken to close complaints	4.4 days	4.1 days	An increase by 0.3 on the average days, but still below the figure for 2020/21

Outcome of complaints	No of cases 2022/23	%	No of Cases 2021/22	%	Trend when comparing to 2021/22
No of complaints upheld & as % of all stage 1 complaints	70 cases	37.4%	68 cases	30.6%	An increase of 6.8%
No of complaints partially upheld & as % of all stage 1 complaints	28 cases	15%	36 cases	16.2%	A reduction of 1.2%
No of complaints not upheld & as a % of all stage 1 complaints	65 cases	34.8%	103 cases	46.4%	A reduction of 12%
No of complaints resolved & as a % of all stage 1 complaints	24 cases	12.8%	15 cases	6.8%	An increase of 6%

- 4.7 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 2022/23	Indicators 2021/22	Trend when comparing to 2020/21
No of complaints closed	76	73	An increase of 38 complaints
% Of complaints closed on time within 20 days & where we applied time extension	67.1%	63%	An increase of 4.1%
Average number of days taken to close complaint	20.8 days	23.1 days	A 2.3-day decrease

Outcome of complaints	No of cases 2022/23	%	No of Cases 2021/22	%	Trend when comparing to 2020/21
No of complaints upheld & as % of all stage 2 complaints	17 cases	22.4%	9 cases	12.3%	An increase of 10.1%
No of complaints partially upheld & as % of all stage 2 complaints	23 cases	30.3%	16 cases	21.9%	An increase of 8.4%
No of complaints not upheld & as a % of all stage 2 complaints	36 cases	47%	42 cases	57.5%	A decrease of 10.5%
No of complaints resolved & as a % of all stage 2 complaints	0 cases	0%	6 cases	8.2%	A decrease by 8.2%

- 4.8 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 2022/23	Indicators 2021/22	Trend when comparing to 2021/22
No of complaints closed	15	20	A reduction of 5 complaints
% Of complaints closed on time within 20 days & where we applied time extension	80%	65%	A 15% increase in those complaints meeting timescale
Average number of days taken to close complaints	20.5 days	19.8 days	An increase of 0.7 days

Escalated stage 2 outcomes	No of cases 2022/23	%	No of cases 2021/22	%	Trend when comparing to 2021/22
No of complaints upheld & as % of all escalated stage 2 complaints	1 case	6.7%	1 case	5%	No change in case numbers 1.7% change in percentage
No of complaints partially upheld & as % of all escalated stage 2 complaints	6 cases	40%	6 cases	30%	No change in the case numbers although a decrease of 10%
No of complaints not upheld & as % of all escalated stage 2 complaints	8 cases	53.3%	13 cases	65%	A decrease of 11.76%
No of complaints resolved & as a % of all escalated stage 2 complaints	0 cases	0%	0 cases	0%	No historic data to compare due to introduction of new outcome 1/4/21

- 4.9 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. 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.
- 4.10 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 by the Complaint Manager for 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 is currently in the process of procuring 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 is likely to be implemented during 2023/24.
- 4.11 Section 6 of the appended report provides detailed information on the complaints which were taken to the SPSO. The SPSO received 10 complaints for Inverclyde Council which is a reduction from the 12 cases reviewed last year. One complaint was dealt with under the advice stage and 9 complaints were dealt with at early resolution stage. No complaints were investigated. The SPSO recognised that the Council had demonstrated good complaint handling in 3 of the complaints they reviewed. The SPSO received 1 complaint for the HSCP which is a reduction from the 4 received last year. The complaint was dealt with at early resolution stage, and no complaints were investigated. This reflects a reduction in the complaints received by the SPSO for both Inverclyde Council and the HSCP. 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.

(Tab 4 Joint Health & Social Care Cases Determined and tab 6 Local Authority)
<https://www.spsso.org.uk/statistics-2022-23>

- 4.12 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.
- 4.13 Inverclyde 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.
- 4.14 Riverside Inverclyde 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.
- 4.15 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.

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		x
Legal/Risk		x
Human Resources		x
Strategic (Partnership Plan/Council Plan)	x	
Equalities, Fairer Scotland Duty & Children/Young People’s Rights & Wellbeing		x
Environmental & Sustainability		x
Data Protection		x

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
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n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
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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

Appendix 1

Annual Complaints Report

1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023

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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 2022 - 31 March 2023 was 4.0 complaints. This reflects a decrease of 0.1 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 4.0 complaints per 1,000 of the population, or roughly one resident in 250 made a complaint about services. A comparison of this indicator over the past 4 years is shown in the table below.

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

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

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

- 3.2 In the reporting period 1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023 Inverclyde Council, Inverclyde Leisure and the HSCP received and handled 306 complaints and closed 278 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.

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

Area	Stage 1 % of all closed complaints	Stage 2 % of all closed complaints	Esc stage 2 % of all closed complaints
Inverclyde Council	75%%	17.8%	7.2%
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%

- 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.

Table: Total number of complaints received by each area

Area	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19
Inverclyde Council	225	244	213	274	256
HSCP	70	61	39	73	44
Inverclyde Leisure	14	12	14	40	*29
Riverside Inverclyde	0	0	0	2	13

*Inverclyde Leisure had a loss of data for the data covering the period 1 January 2018 to 31 March 2018 which will have impacted the extent of complaints finally recorded in 2018/19 the collective reporting of complaint

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

Area	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19
Inverclyde Council	156	195	162	220	214
HSCP	19	20	25	39	17
Inverclyde Leisure	12	7	13	40	29
Riverside Inverclyde	0	0	0	2	12

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

Area	2023/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19
Inverclyde Council	37	30	24	20	8
HSCP	37	38	10	27	22
Inverclyde Leisure	2	5	0	0	0
Riverside Inverclyde	0	0	0	0	1

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

Area	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19
Inverclyde Council	15	20	12	21	13
HSCP	0	0	1	3	0
Inverclyde Leisure	0	0	1	0	0
Riverside Inverclyde	0	0	0	0	0

3.4. 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 2022 to 31 March 2023. For Inverclyde Leisure, Riverside Inverclyde and HSCP the breakdown is only provided for the annualised volume. The volumes of complaints being received has returned to pre-pandemic norms when comparing to previous years.

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

Service Area	Apr 22	May 22	Jun 22	Qtr. 1 22/23	% Of complaints	Jul 22	Aug 22	Sept 22	Qtr. 2 22/23	% Of complaints
Chief Exec Office	0	0	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	0%
Education	1	11	6**	18	20.6%	1	2	6	9	15%
Culture, Comm & Educational Resources	1	0	1	2	2.3%	0	1	8	9	15%
Org Dev, Policy & Communication	0	2	0	2	2.3%	0	0	0	0	0%
Finance	7**	9	10**	26	29.8%	1	2	5	8	14%

Legal & Democratic Services	2	1*	0	3	3.4%	1	0	1	2	3.5%
Property Services	0	0	0	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0%
Regeneration & Planning	0	0	0	0	0%	0	0	1	1	1.8%
Environmental Services	3	7	2	12	13.7%	2	1	1	4	7%
Public Protection	1	2***	0	3	3.4%	0	4*	0	4	7%
Roads Shared Service	1	0	1	2	2.3%	0	1	1	2	3.5%
Inverclyde Leisure	-	-	-	6	6.9%				3	5%
Riverside Inverclyde	-	-	-	0	-	0	0	0	0	0%
HSCP	-	-	-	13	14%				15	26%

includes *indicates a withdrawn complaint & ** indicates complaint remains open, the table does not contain the complaints that have been identified as invalid or service requests

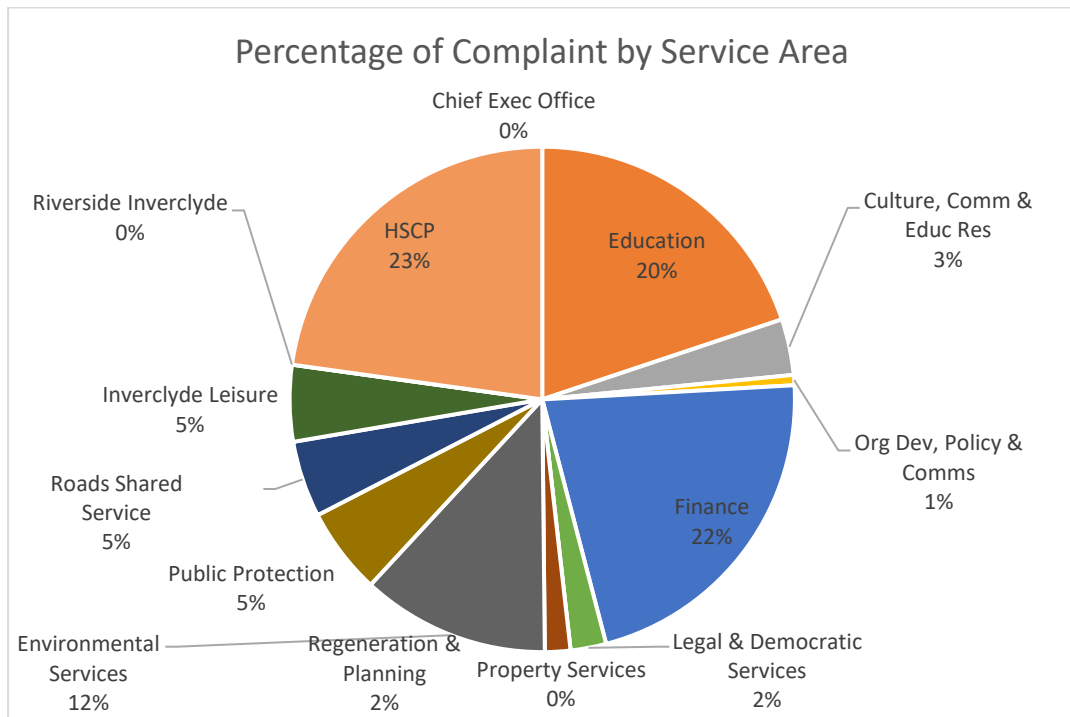
Table: Breakdown of closed complaints by service areas each quarter Q3 & Q4

Service Area	Oct 22	Nov 22	Dec 22	Qtr3 22/23	% Of complaints	Jan 23	Feb 23	Mar 23	Qtr. 4 22/23	% Of complaints	22/23 Year End Total	% Of Complaint
Chief Exec Office	0	0	0	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0%	0	0%
Education	2	7	6	15	21.73%	7	9	3	19	21.11%	61	19.86%
Culture, Comm & Educational Resources	0	0	0	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0%	11	0%
Org Dev, Policy & Comms	0	0	0	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0%	2	0.65%
Finance	4	7	7	18	26.08%	2	6	7	15	16.66%	67	21.82%
Legal & Democratic Services	1	0	0	1	1.446%	1	0	0	1	1.11%	7	2.28%
Property Services	0	0	0	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0%	0	0%
Regen & Planning	1***	1	0	2	2.89%	0	0	2***	2	2.22%	5	1.62%
Environmental Services	3	2	1	6	8.69%	6*	6	3	15	17.77%	37	12.05%
Public Protection	2	0*	2*	4	5.79%	2*	2	2	6	6.66%	17	5.53%
Roads Shared Service	1**	4	1	6	8.69%	1	1	3	5	5.55%	15	4.88%
Inverclyde Leisure	-	-	-	2	2.89%	-	-	-	3	3.33%	15	4.88%
Riverside Inverclyde	-	-	-	-	0%	-	-	-	-	0%	-	0%
HSCP	-	-	-	17	24.63%	-	-	-	25	27.77%	70	22.80%

excludes complaints that are: * invalid complaint discovered during investigation and includes ** withdrawn complaint & *** complaint remains open

3.5. 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.

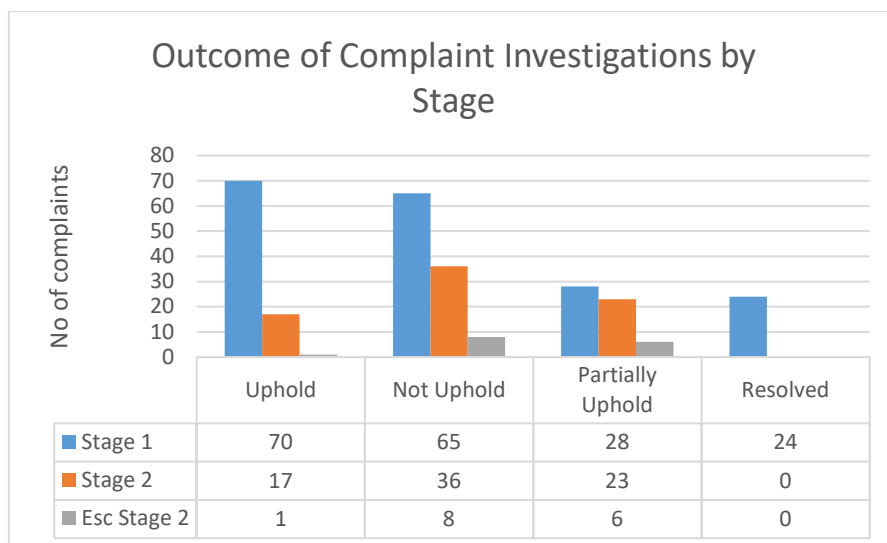
Chart: Annual complaint volumes received 2022/23



Indicator 3 Outcome of Complaint Investigation

3.6. 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



3.7. In summary:

- 88 complaints were upheld across all complaint stages
- 57 complaints were partially upheld across all complaint stages
- 109 completed were not upheld across all complaint stages
- 24 complaints were resolved across all complaint stages.

Indicator 4 – average timescales for resolving complaints

3.8. The table below outlines Inverclyde Council’s collective performance measures on timescale management across all stages of the complaint procedure and covering the last 5 years for comparison purposes. The average time taken to close a complaint at each complaint stage has been:

- Stage 1 - 4.4 days.
- Stage 2 – 20.8 days; and
- Escalated stage 2 – 20.5 days.

Table: Collective complaint handling – average timescale for resolving complaints

Stage 1 Frontline Resolution	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19
No of complaints received	187	222	200	287	272
No of complaints – closed at stage 1 within 5 days	146	187	138	229	222
% Complaints meeting timescale (includes complaints that were time extended & completed on time)	78.1%	84.3%	85.2%	83.6%	82%
No of complaints closed at stage 1 as a % of all complaints closed	67.3%	70.5%	80%	80.2%	86.1%
Ave working days taken stage 1 complaints	4.4 days	4.1 days	4.6 days	3.7 days	4.1 days
Stage 2 Investigation	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19
No of complaints received	76	73	35	47	31
No of complaints – closed at stage 2 within 20 days	51	46	19	34	21
% Complaints Meeting timescale (includes complaints that were time extended & completed on time)	67.1%	63%	79.2%	76.7%	68%
No of complaints closed at stage 2 as a % of all complaints closed	27.3%	23.2%	14%	13.1%	9.8%
Ave working days taken stage 2 complaints	20.8 days	23.1 days	15.2 days	18 days	18.1 days
Escalated Stage 2 Investigation	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19
No of complaints received	15	25	15	24	13
No of complaints – closed at escalated stage 2 within 20 days	12	13	11	14	13
% Complaints Meeting timescale (includes complaints that were time extended & completed on time)	80%	65%	91.7%	75%	100%
No of complaints closed at escalated stage 2 as a % of all complaints closed	5.4%	6.3%	6%	6.7%	4.1%
Ave working days taken escalated stage 2 complaints	20.5 days	19.8 days	16.6 days	18.3 days	14 days

3.9. 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.

Table: Inverclyde Council Only Performance – average timescale for resolving complaints

Stage 1	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19
No of complaints – closed at stage 1 within 5 days	129	167	138	172	171
% Complaints Meeting timescale inc those time extended	83.6%	87.4%	85.2%	87%	80%
Ave working days taken stage 1	4.0 days	3.6 days	4.6 days	3.9 days	4.4 days
Stage 2 Investigation	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19
No of complaints – closed at stage 2 within 20 days	31	23	19	14	7
% Complaints Meeting timescale inc those time extended	83.8%	76.7%	79.2%	80%	88%
Ave working days taken stage 2	13.9 days	17 days	15.2 days	16.1 days	18.4 days
Stage 2 Escalated Investigation	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19
No of complaints – closed at esc stage 2 within 20 days	12	13	11	14	13
% Complaints Meeting timescale inc those time extended	80%	68.4%	91.7%	81.8%	100%
Ave working days taken esc stage 2	20.5 days	20.8 days	16.6 days	15.7 days	14 days

Table: HSCP Complaint Handling Performance – average timescale for resolving complaints

Stage 1	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19
No of complaints – closed at stage 1 within 5 days	7	15	14	39	12
% Complaints Meeting timescale inc those time extended	36.84%	75%	56%	72%	71%
Ave working days taken stage 1	9.7 days	4.4 days	9.3 days	5.3 days	7.5 days
Stage 2 Investigation	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19
No of complaints – closed at stage 2 within 20 days	20	20	6	27	13
% Complaints Meeting timescale inc those time extended	54.1%	52.6%	60%	74%	59%
Ave working days taken stage 2	28.5 days	30.8 days	22.3 days	19.5 days	18.2 days
Stage 2 Escalated Investigation	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19
No of complaints – closed at esc stage 2 within 20 days	0	0	1	3	0
% Complaints Meeting timescale inc those time extended	0	-	0%	0%	0
Ave working days taken esc stage 2	-	-	27 days	31 days	0

Table: Inverclyde Leisure Performance * – average timescale for resolving complaints**

Stage 1	2022/23	2021/22	2020 /21	2019/20	2018/19
No of complaints – closed at stage 1 within 5 days	12	6	13	40	29
% Complaints Meeting timescale	100%	85.7%	100%	100%	100%
Ave working days taken stage 1	1 day	1 day	1 day	1 day	1 day
Stage 2 Investigation	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19
No of complaints – closed at stage 2 within 20 days	2	5	1	0	0
% Complaints Meeting timescale	100%	100%	100%	0	0
Ave working days taken stage 2	5 days	10 days	10 days	0	0
Stage 2 Escalated Investigation	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19
No of complaints – closed at esc stage 2 within 20 days	0	0	0	0	0
% Complaints Meeting timescale	0	0	0	0	0
Ave working days taken esc stage 2	0	0	0	0	0

*** Inverclyde Leisure data only available from the period 2017/18

Table: Riverside Inverclyde ** – average timescale for resolving complaints**

Stage 1	2022/23	2021 /22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19
No of complaints – closed at stage 1 within 5 days	0	0	0	2	12
% Complaints Meeting timescale inc those time extended	0	0	N/A	2	100%
Ave working days taken stage 1	0	0	N/A	2 days	1.6 days
Stage 2 Investigation	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19
No of complaints – closed at stage 2 within 20 days	0	0	0	0	1
% Complaints Meeting timescale inc those time extended	0	0	N/A	0	100%
Ave working days taken stage 2	0	0	N/A	0	14 days
Stage 2 Escalated Investigation	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21	2019/20	2018/19
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	N/A	0	0
Ave working days taken esc stage 2	0	0	N/A	0	0

****Riverside Inverclyde data only available from the period 2018/19

3.10. 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 stage one and stage two. 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. Most of the delays have been during periods when services were under considerable pressure responding to the COVID19 pandemic.

3.11. The average days taken to resolve complaints in all stages of the complaint procedure have increased in HSCP’s complaint performance. Most of the delays have been during periods when HSCP services were under considerable pressure with

increased volumes returning across complaints, 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.

Indicator 5 - Performance against timescales for Stage 1 Complaints:

3.12. The Council aims to close all stage 1 complaints within 5 working days. In 2022/23 the Council closed 187 complaints, 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	%
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%
2018/19	272	222	82%	21	7.7%
2017/18	265	214	80.8%	9	3.4%

Indicator 5 – performance against timescales for Stage 2 Complaints

3.13. The Council aims to close all stage 2 complaints within 20 working days. In 2022/23, 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	%
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%
2018/19	31	21	68%	10	32.3%
2017/18	40	31	77.5%	10	25%

Indicator 5 - performance against timescales escalated stage 2 complaints

3.14. The Council aims to close all escalated stage 2 complaints within 20 working days. In 2022/23, 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 escalated stage 2

Reporting period	No of complaints closed	Within timescale	%	No with extension	%
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%
2018/19	13	13	100%	1	7.7%
2017/18	21	18	85.7%	3	14.3%

Indicator 6 - Extensions to Complaint Timescales

3.15. The 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 extensions agreed	% as a total of all complaints
Stage 1 complaints	7 extensions were agreed	3.2% of total complaints
Stage 2 complaints	5 extensions were agreed	6.8% of total complaints
Escalated stage 2 complaints	2 extensions were agreed	10% 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.

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.
- 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.

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.

Table: Complaints received by the SPSO for a review

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

- 6.2. The SPSO reviewed 10 complaints for Inverclyde Council of which 1 complaint was reviewed at the advice stage and this complaint was not taken forward. Nine complaints were reviewed at the early resolution stage of the procedure. The outcome of these reviews were as follows:
- 3 complaints were recognised as examples of good complaint handling;
 - 2 complaints were reviewed and insufficient benefit would be gained from further investigation of the complaint;
 - 1 complaint was an alternative route used.
 - 2 complaints were where there existed a right of appeal to court/tribunal/ or Scottish Ministers. and,
 - 1 case was taken forward prematurely to the SPSO and not progressed.
- 6.3. There were no complaints taken through the investigation stage by the SPSO. The table below outlines the SPSO's published statistics for Inverclyde Council. This reflects a reduction of 2 complaints being reviewed by the SPSO when comparing the data to the same period last year.

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

Stage	Outcome Group	Inverclyde Council
Advice	Advice & Guidance - Complaint submissions - mature	0
	Advice & Guidance - Complaint submissions - premature	0
	Advice & Guidance -Enquiries	1
	Organisation not in jurisdiction	0
	Unable to proceed	0
	Total	1
Early Resolution	Cause and impact test not met (s 5 (3))	0
	Discretion – Insufficient benefit would be achieved by investigation	2
	Discretion – alternative action proposed	0
	Discretion – Alternative route used or available	1
	Discretion - Good complaint handling	3
	Discretion – referred back	0
	Discretion - Resolved - both parties satisfied with proposed outcome	0
	Member of the public test not met (s 5 (6))	0
	Organisation not in jurisdiction	0
	Premature	1
	Right of appeal to court/tribunal/Scottish ministers (s 7 (8))	2
	Subject matter not in jurisdiction	0
	Time limit (s 10)	0
	Unable to proceed	0
	Total	9
Investigation	Fully upheld	0
	Not duly made or withdrawn	0
	Not upheld	0
	Resolved	0
	Some upheld	0
Total	0	
Total	10	

6.4. 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 and outcomes for HSCP

Stage	Outcome Group	HSCP
Advice	A&G - Complaint submissions - mature	0
	A&G - Complaint submissions - premature	0
	A&G - Enquiries	0
	Total	0
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	0
	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	0
	Total	1
	Investigation	Fully upheld
Not duly made or withdrawn		0
Not upheld		0
Resolved		0
Some upheld		0
Total		0
		1

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 94 hours training has been delivered during the course of 2022/23 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 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (the UNCRC). 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 2023..