



Glasgow City Council

Operational Performance and Delivery Scrutiny Committee

Report by Director of Communication and Corporate Governance

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COMPLAINTS HANDLING PERFORMANCE 2024 - 25

Purpose of Report:

To advise elected members of the council family's performance in complaints handling for the year April 1 2024 - 31 March 2025 with the exception of Social Work complaints, which were covered in a separate report to this committee in October.

Recommendations:

The Operational Performance and Delivery Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the content of this report.

Ward No(s):

Citywide: ✓

Local member(s) advised: Yes ☐ No ☐ consulted: Yes ☐ No ☐

1. Executive Summary

- a. This report covers the Glasgow family of organisations' complaints handling performance for the period 1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025. Since April 2013 all Scottish councils have been required to monitor and report their performance on handling complaints under their Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP) against a suite of high level performance indicators to meet the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) statutory requirements.
- b. All core GCC service departments and ALEOs use the model Complaints Handling Procedure, introduced in the Glasgow family of organisations in June 2013. This consists of three stages: frontline resolution (stage 1); investigation stage (stage 2) and external review (stage 3), where a referral is made to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO), either by the complainant or the authority.
- c. Compliance with the model CHP is a statutory requirement. The relevant legislation is contained in the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman Act 2002.
- d. There are a number of different outcomes to formal complaints: upheld; partially upheld; not upheld; withdrawn, transferred to another process and resolved. The majority of complaints received by the Glasgow family continue to be upheld or partially upheld, either at Stage 1 or 2.
- e. Complaints can be dealt with either at the frontline resolution stage, or the investigation stage. Most complaints are dealt with at the frontline stage.
- f. Frontline stage resolution is generally applied where the complaint is reasonably straightforward and involves a one-off or limited service failure. The Service Level Agreement for a frontline complaint resolution is five working days.
- g. Staff are encouraged to try to resolve a customer complaint at the time it is made. Training is provided to assist staff in customer-facing roles, who may take a customer complaint, via courses on GOLD.
- h. Where a complaint is upheld in whole or part, a suitable apology can be made to the customer and actions taken, wherever possible, to address their concerns and/or improve service provision.
- i. Where complaints identify issues of persistent service failure, these should be addressed by managers in the relevant Service. Analysis of complaints data should be carried out regularly by Service senior managers and embedded in change and improvement processes.
- j. Investigation stage complaints are more complex and can generally be categorised as maladministration, or persistent service failure. Complaints

handlers can immediately move a complaint received to the investigation stage where they consider it will not be possible to investigate or resolve within five working days (due to its complexity). Customers who have had their complaint dealt with at the frontline stage are offered the option to have it considered at stage 2, if they are dissatisfied with the frontline response. Complaints considered at stage 2 (after a referral from stage 1) should be investigated by more senior staff not connected to the initial complaint to ensure objectivity. The SLA for investigation stage is 20 working days and will always be concluded with a formal, written response to the complainant, advising of the outcome and signposting the complainant to the SPSO. At that point the council's investigation is considered to be concluded and further correspondence with the customer is not necessary.

- k. Extensions to the above timescales for responses may be granted – for example, where the case has a degree of complexity or seriousness that does not allow for a response within SLA, or where staff absence will impact on response times. We always try to agree extensions with the customer. Requests by complainants to move a complaint immediately to stage 2 are at the discretion of the council. This is to help avoid relatively trivial matters being considered at Stage 2 and to give the relevant Service the opportunity to respond at Stage 1.
- l. At the conclusion of stage 2, customers are referred to the SPSO, should they remain unhappy. The SPSO may decide to investigate the complaint and this is considered the third, and final, stage of the complaint's journey. Once a complaint has exhausted the council's CHP, dialogue with the complainant should cease pending the SPSO investigation to avoid prejudicing the outcome. Where the SPSO makes a decision on a complaint, it cannot be investigated again by the council.
- m. Complaints can be made in a variety of ways: in person, by telephone, using a paper form or increasingly, online using a bespoke complaints form. More than 80 per cent of complaints are now made online, via the council's website. Making a complaint online has advantages both for the customer and the council: for the customer it means the complaint is expressed in their own words and can be entered on a 24/7 basis and for the council it saves time processing the complaint. While complaints made via social media channels are noted by the digital teams, customers are always signposted to the online complaints procedure, should they wish their complaint to be progressed formally. This process is embedded in the CHP. Complaints made on social media are not recorded in council systems due to the difficulties of establishing complainants' identities and tracking such complaints.
- n. Complaints are recorded, tracked and managed in an IT system called Lagan. This system will be retired during 2025 and replaced by an integrated complaints recording solution called Granicus. More detail on this new system is included at Section 5 of this report.

- o. There is occasional variance in the way complaints are recorded across the council family. Where this is persistent, matters will be addressed via the council's complaint handler's network which meets regularly. Better categorisation of complaints will assist with this process, leading to improved management information on which to base decision making.
- p. There is a considerable onus on a complaints handler to recognise at which stage the complaint should be handled. Some complaints are categorised as being fit for stage 1 when they should immediately be moved to stage 2 as it is apparent a resolution/response cannot be provided within the stage 1 SLA due to the complexities of the case. This has an adverse effect on the overall SLA response rate at stage 1.
- q. At the present time, it is not generally possible to quantify the amount of time spent by officers on dealing with complaints. Some complaints are straightforward and will involve little resource to resolve, while others will take much longer to resolve and potentially involve a larger group of officers. A small number of complainants can take up a disproportionate amount of officer resource, potentially to the disadvantage of the broader customer base. Where complainants persistently refuse to accept the council's explanation or decision on a matter, this may be managed via its Unacceptable Actions Policy (UAP) which aims to effectively manage the contact of vexatious customers, or those whose actions we consider unacceptable. Customers placed under some form of UAP restriction will always be given at least one point of contact within the council for the period of the restriction.
- r. Responsibility for complaints handling is operationally managed by the corporate Customer Care Team (within CBS) for the core council and by complaints handlers/managers within the specific ALEOs. Strategic responsibility for complaints reporting, compliance and governance resides with the Chief Executive's Department.

2. The general trends and issues in 2024 – 25 for complaints handling can be summarised as follows:

- a. The overall number of complaints received has increased. There were 1728 more complaints in 2024 – 25 than in the preceding period (2023 – 24). This represents an increase of 22 per cent on the previous year.
- b. At the Local Authority Complaint Handlers Network meeting on 3 October 2025, the SPSO reported an average increase in complaints received by authorities under its jurisdiction of 30 per cent.
- c. There is a significant shortfall in performance in terms of meeting timescales for responses, at stage 1. The average time to resolve a Stage 1 complaint during 2024 – 2025 was 20 days (the SLA is five working days). It should be noted, however, that complaints not recorded as closed within five working days may well have been dealt with operationally even though they have not been formally closed in the IT system. The onus to formally close complaints can often be on officers performing frontline service delivery, who may have competing priorities. This is being addressed with further training for complaints handlers to make sure a complaint is closed in the system at the time of redress or resolution.
- d. Performance at Stage 2 is 21 working days on average for complaints to be closed. This is just above the national performance target of 20 days.
- e. A number of Service Improvements were identified as a result of complaints received. The majority of these were by Glasgow Life. GL publicises the outcomes of complaints in the venue where they were received using a 'you said, we did' method of presentation on reception area notice boards. This is in line with good practice standards.
- f. Complaints performance is reported to Service/ALEO senior management teams on a regular basis. Cases investigated by the SPSO are brought to the attention of senior officials in the relevant service and to the Chief Executive.

3. Complaints statistical data 2024 - 25

This period has seen an increase in the number of complaints received about services provided by the Glasgow family of organisations.

Complaints received

Period	Total complaints received	Stage 1 (frontline) Complaints	Stage 2 (investigation) Complaints	Change from previous year
2024 - 25	9,475	9,158	317	+1728
2023 - 24	7,747	7,385	362	+1840
2022 - 23	5,854	5,621	233	-899
2021 - 22	6,753	6,517	236	+665
2020 - 21	6,097	5,929	168	-3,753
2019 - 20	9,850	9,437	413	+570
2018 - 19	9,280	8,840	479	-1,808
2017 - 18	11,088	10,057	1,031	-2,044
2016 - 17	13,092	11,737	1,355	-4,220
2015 - 16	17,312	15,764	1,544	+3,662
2014 - 15	13,650	12,139	1,511	+3,526
2013 - 14	10,124*	9,452	672	N/A

(Note: * only partial data available for year 2013 – 14 due to introduction of new Complaints Handling Procedure during that period.)

(Note: some complaints considered at Stage 2 will have been escalated at the complainant's request after a Stage1 outcome. Council officers may also decide to refer a complaint to the Stage 2 process immediately, depending on the nature of the complaint.)

Outcomes of complaints closed at all stages	
Upheld complaints	40%
Partially upheld complaints	35%
Not Upheld complaints	15%
Withdrawn or transferred to another process	10%

Average time taken to resolve complaints	Glasgow family	National performance target
Stage 1 (frontline)	20 days (20 days in 2023 – 24)	5 days

Stage 2 (investigation)	21 days (18 days in 2023 - 24)	20 days
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Service Improvements made as a result of complaints	
Glasgow Life	44

4. Complaints recorded against each Service or ALEO 2024 –25 and comparative figures for 2023 - 24.

Stage 1

Organisation	2024/5	2023/4
Chief Executive	34	41
City Building	4	0
Education Services	337	341
Financial Services	921	582
Glasgow Life	706	651
Jobs and Business Glasgow	0	2
Neighbourhoods, Regeneration and Sustainability	7156	5268
City Property	1	0

Stage 2 - Direct to Stage 2

Organisation	2024/25	2023/24
Chief Executive	2	1
Education Services	116	98
Financial Services	27	20
Glasgow Life	12	18
Neighbourhoods, Regeneration and Sustainability	107	176

Stage 2 - Escalated from Stage 1

Organisation	2024/25	2023/24
Education Services	0	1
Financial Services	9	9
Glasgow Life	43	35
Neighbourhoods, Regeneration and Sustainability	1	3
Total		

- Please note that any complaints escalated from Stage 1 to Stage 2 are only counted at the final stage of their journey to prevent them being counted at both Stage 1 and Stage 2.

5. Systems update

The Granicus system will be used for all 'Contact Us' processes, to receive, record and manage comments, compliments, complaints and for Glasgow Life enquiries. Officers and colleagues at CGI are working towards a 'go live' date of November 26, 2025. The new system will have a significant impact in terms of improving management information around all complaints.

6. Policy and Resource Implications

Resource Implications:

<i>Financial:</i>	There are no new financial implications arising from this report.
<i>Legal:</i>	This report raises no new legal issues.
<i>Personnel:</i>	There are no direct personnel implications arising from this report.
<i>Procurement:</i>	There are no procurement implications arising from this report.

Council Strategic Plan:	As a long-standing reporting requirement, this report does not relate to a specific commitment under the Council's Strategic Plan, however in general terms the function of complaints handling relates directly to 'Grand Challenge 4: Enable staff to deliver essential services in a sustainable, innovative and efficient way for our communities. In particular, the investigation of and learning from complaints relate directly to the following Missions: – Run an open, well governed council in partnership with all our communities – Enable staff to deliver a sustainable and innovative council structure that delivers value for money
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Equality and Socio-Economic Impacts:

<i>Does the proposal support the Council's Equality Outcomes 2021-25? Please specify.</i>	There are no proposals in this report having any relevant potential equality impacts.
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What are the potential equality impacts as a result of this report?

No significant impact

Please highlight if the policy/proposal will help address socio-economic disadvantage.

No significant impact

Climate Impacts:

Does the proposal support any Climate Plan actions? Please specify:

There are no proposals in this report having any relevant potential climate impacts.

What are the potential climate impacts as a result of this proposal?

No significant impact

Will the proposal contribute to Glasgow's net zero carbon target?

No significant impact

Privacy and Data Protection Impacts:

Are there any potential data protection impacts as a result of this report
Y/N

There are no proposals in this report that have any relevant privacy and data protection impacts.

7 Recommendations

The Operational Performance and Delivery Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the content of this report.