

SOCIAL CARE COMPLAINTS REPORT

April 2025 – March 2026

Glasgow City
HSCP
Health and Social Care Partnership



Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership

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Section 1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report covers complaints about social care services in the period April 2025 – March 2026 considered under the appropriate complaint procedure for Social Work Services. This consists of three stages of: Stage 1: 'Front-line resolution' (timescale 5 working days that may be extended to a maximum of 10 working days in certain circumstances); Stage 2: formal Investigation and written response (timescale 20 working days); Stage 3: Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (independent review that may lead to formal investigation, decision and recommendations or to a decision not to take matters further).
- 1.2 Figures are given separately for Social Work (including Homelessness) and Care Services Stage 1 complaints (primarily home care) as until 2026 these have been processed within two different recording systems. Stage 2 complaints relating to Care Services are incorporated into the Stage 2 totals, as these are all handled by the Complaints, FOI and Investigations Team (CFIT).
- 1.3 Development has now been completed on an integrated complaints recording solution, which ultimately went live on 21st January 2026, and the introduction of this new complaints system will have a significant impact in terms of improving management information around all complaints. For this reporting year, however, figures have been amalgamated from multiple sources – the previous complaints reporting system, C4; an interim backup spreadsheet used to log complaints information during a period of failure of C4 related to widespread IT issues in summer 2025; the new Contact Us system; and Care Services records.
- 1.4 While every effort has been made to amalgamate the various sources, there is a possibility that figures in this years report are not as accurate as in previous years. This is due to the multiple variations across the format of each record, and the challenges in comparing records across each source – there is a risk that a small number of duplicate cases have been missed, or that there have been some inconsistencies in recording leading to data quality issues that are difficult to identify in this unusually complex context.
- 1.5 Following the implementation of the new complaints system, in future reports we will be in a position to report fully on both complaint cases and complaint activities. The distinction between the two is that a complaint case may include multiple stages – for example, Stage 1, Stage 2 and Stage 3 activities – but should be classed only as a single complaint against the service. Complaints activities are the individual stages – these are handled in different ways and represent workload impact on different areas of the business, as Stage 1 complaint activities are handled by frontline services and staff, and Stage 2 and 3 complaint activities are handled by CFIT.
- 1.6 Total volumes of Social Work complaint activities increased in 2025/26, rising by 16% from 769 in the previous year to 895. As it remains impossible to link Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints from the 2025/26 data available, it remains unclear how many complaint cases this represents, however from 2026/27 onwards our new recording system will allow for reporting on complaint cases as well as complaints activities.

- 1.7 Care Services Stage 1 complaints decreased by one from 290 to 289.
- 1.8 There has been no significant change in the distribution of Social Work complaints proportionately between the localities, although totals have gone up across every area. Within Centre, with the most notable increase in complaints activity relates to Subject Access Request delays, and complaints regarding Homelessness issues have decreased very slightly. Almost all Care Services complaints focus on Home Care, with more in South locality than the other localities, in line with the greater population and scope of services in South area.
- 1.9 Performance against timescale for Stage 2 complaint activities has improved in terms of volume, but has decreased in terms of percentage of the total number processed. In percentage terms, 58.5% of Stage 2 investigations were responded to on time during 2025/26, against 62% in the previous year, however the team completed 73 more complaints within timescale than in the previous year. While there has been a decrease in compliance, and the team remain below the target of 70% compliance, the current rate of compliance is primarily attributed to the high volume of Stage 2 complaints – in any previous year, the total number of complaints responded to in time would have well exceeded the 70% target. In addition to the impact of the ongoing challenges relating to Subject Access processing, one experienced Senior Officer left the team in early December 2025, reducing the pool of investigating officers for four of the 12 months.
- 1.10 Timescales for Stage 1 complaint activities were met for Social Work complaints in both Centre and North West areas, however there were reductions in compliance rates in both North East and South. The target was, therefore, not met for complaints across both stages, with only 59% of all responses being within deadline, broadly consistent with the previous reporting year but in the context of having received 16% more complaints.
- 1.11 Section 3.3 summarises the particular Social Work Services (SWS) client groups submitting complaints, with all areas seeing an increase. As in previous reports, the majority of complaints relate to Children and Families involvement – this is typical, and directly related to the general dissatisfaction that many complainants feel towards social work involvement in their family lives. Complaints from those in the Homelessness Client Group remain high, and have increased overall despite the reduction in Centre Homelessness Stage 1 activities. Older People complaints also continue to rise, and volumes are now comparable to Homelessness complaints.
- 1.12 Many of the significant number of complainants in the 'Not Known' client group are known to relate to complaints regarding delays to Subject Access Request processing – these complainants may not be current service users, or even where they are, any current SWS involvement is not ordinarily relevant to the matter complained about, and therefore these complainants will not generally be logged as belonging to one of the recognised client groups. Some complaints relating to Social Care Connect and Finance also fall within this grouping, as the complainants themselves may not be current service users.
- 1.13 Section 3.4 summarises the main issues raised by service users across social work complaints and across care services complaints.

- 1.14 For Care Services the top three issues were quality of service, competency of staff and staff attitude, which differs from previous years where late arrivals were the second highest area of concern. Complaints about failure to arrive have dropped noticeably again to only 4, having previously dropped from 112 in 2023/24 to 51 in 2024/25.
- 1.15 Care Services carried out over 4.2 million visits during 2025/26, so less than 0.01% of care visits generated any sort of complaint.
- 1.16 25% of Social Work complaints have been upheld or partially upheld in 2025/26, 5% lower than figures from the preceding year. Care Services complaints upheld or partially upheld have decreased slightly, from 65% to 62%.
- 1.17 31 cases were considered by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) at stage 3 of the complaints process. Outcomes are presented at section 3.6 of this report, alongside indicators for the classification of each complaint. None of the cases considered by the SPSO were upheld, although two await the final decision of the SPSO.
- 1.18 That each case that reached Stage 3 during 2025/26 and has been concluded was either not upheld, or not taken further by the SPSO following initial assessment, which equates to agreement with the stage 2 response issued to the complainant generally gives reassurance that the internal complaints process is functioning correctly, both in relation to the small percentage of complaints that reach the SPSO, and the small proportion of those that lead to any action by the SPSO.
- 1.19 For social work complaints that were upheld at any stage, there is good evidence that actions were then taken to offer redress to complainers and/or to improve services or processes, and available information relating to the areas of improvement is presented at section 3.8.
- 1.20 In addition to the detailed report on complaints performance, some additional context and information in relation to the development activity of the Complaints, FOI and Investigations team is summarised at Section 3.9.

Section 2 Complaints Processes and report format

This report covers social care (Social Work, Homelessness and Care Services) delivered by GCHSCP during the period April 2025 to March 2026. Operational Care Services subsume home care and related services, together with Day Care and Residential Services.

During 2025/26 these complaints were all subject to the model Complaints Handling Procedure, as directed by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman Complaints Standards Authority. The procedure has three stages:

- Stage 1: 'Front-line resolution'. This has a timescale 5 working days that may be extended to 10 working days at the discretion of the service manager or with the agreement of senior staff in the Complaints, FOI and Investigations Team, if there is valid reason to do so. Complaint responses under this part of the process are composed and issued locally, either verbally or in writing.
- Stage 2: Formal Investigation. This has a timescale 20 working days and always involves written response. This part of the process is managed entirely by the central Complaints, FOI and Investigations Team (CFIT), who are responsible for fully investigating and responding to these complaints. Stage 2 may follow from an unresolved Stage 1 complaint, or one that is not responded to within appropriate timescales. A complaint may also be immediately escalated to Stage 2 based on complexity or seriousness of complaint.
- Stage 3: Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) review. This is an independent review with no fixed timescale that may or may not lead to further formal investigation, decision and recommendations by that body.

Due to arrangements predating the transfer of Home Care and some related services from Cordia to GCHSCP, administration of complaints about those services has continued to be managed at Stage 1 of the process by Operational Care Services management, within their own systems. Because of this difference in management and recording, data is presented separately within this report for Stage 1 Home Care services and for Social Work and Homelessness complaints, however from 2026/27 onwards a consistent recording system is in place.

The introduction of the new Contact us system will eliminate any inconsistencies in producing reports on complaints handled. All complaints received will be recorded as a single case, in line with SPSO requirements, with each stage of any multi-stage complaint registered within that single case record, removing the necessity to log each stage of a multi-stage complaint as a single 'complaint' in its own right. The ability to report on volumes of complaints activities at each stage will be retained.

In this report, Care Services Stage 1 complaint figures are produced based on raw data provided by Operational Care Services staff from their local recording processes. Social Work and Homelessness figures are produced via reporting arrangements based on C4 data records, an interim spreadsheet implemented as part of standard business continuity processes during a C4 system outage in 2025, and from the new Contact Us system which was launched on 21st January 2026.

As noted above, considerable care has been taken to amalgamate the information from these multiple sources to ensure an accurate picture of the complaints landscape for 2025/26 can be presented, however there may be a degree of inaccuracy resulting from the challenges of incorporating these multiple sources into a single data set given the difference in the formats and fields included in those sources. Particular risks relate to possible duplicates being missed or data quality errors, including classification errors.

Figures are presented on overall activity, timescales, client group, issue and outcome for the HSCP as a whole and by four localities - North West, North East, South and Centre. While Social Work and Care Services complaints are often complex, complaints are assigned to a primary service area only.

There are separate sections on third stage complaints considered by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) and on service improvements.

Methodology, definitions and data limitations

For this report, a complaint activity means a recorded action at Stage 1, Stage 2 or Stage 3. A complaint case means the underlying matter raised by a complainant, which may progress through one or more stages. As reporting systems cannot reliably link all stages to a single case record, figures should be read as relating to complaint activities rather than unique complaint cases.

Issue coding should be interpreted with a degree of caution; this information is presented in isolation as issues cannot be directly linked to either outcomes or service areas in cases where complaint activities span multiple service areas (e.g. both locality activities and Finance matters). A single complaint may involve more than one issue, and issue categorisation involves professional judgement by complaint handlers. Improvements in capturing data where multiple issues are raised in a single complaint have led to an increase in issues captured, in addition to the increased volume linked to the increase in complaints.

Outcomes are recorded against the complaint activity rather than each individual issue raised. Where a complaint is partially upheld, reporting may not identify which specific element was upheld.

Section 3 Statistical information and commentary

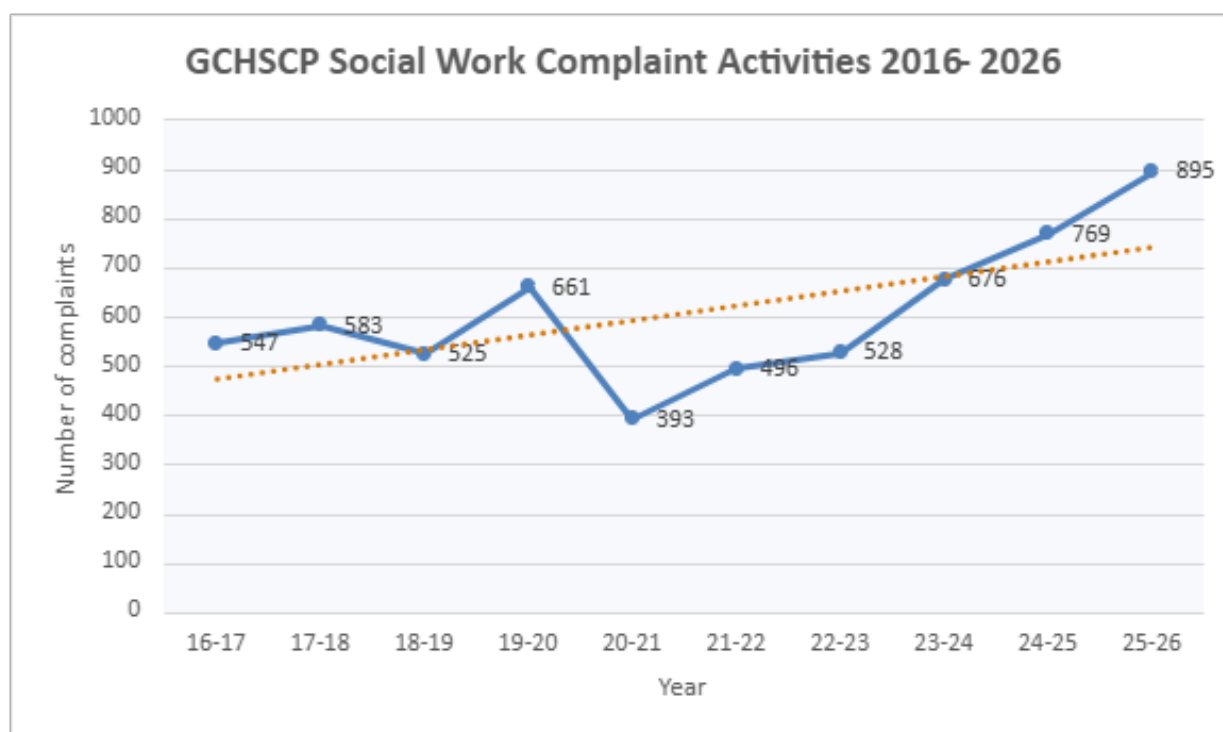
3.1 Overall volume and volume by stage and locality

Complaint activity counts record each Stage 1, Stage 2 or Stage 3 action separately. They should not be read as the number of unique complaint cases as our source systems cannot confirm and link to previous stages in a complaint case.

For consistency with previous reporting, and due to the complexities of the data sets relating to complaints for this reporting period, this year's report again uses complaint activities as the main measure.

895 complaint activities were recorded in relation to Social Work and Homelessness services in 2025/26, representing a 16% increase compared with the previous year. Chart 1 below shows the 10-year trend in complaint activities received and actioned by the HSCP, either locally or by CFIT

Chart 1. Trend in total Social Work complaint activities across all stages, 2016-2026



The trend upwards has continued and the year-on-year increases in received complaint activities now means that volumes of complaint activities have more than doubled in five years, although it should be noted that the historic low in 2020-21 related to reduced complaints as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and related matters.

Of the 895 complaint activities, 307 (34%) were Stage 1 activities (frontline resolution), 557 (62%) were Stage 2 (formal investigation), and 31 (3%) were Stage 3 complaint activities referred to CFIT by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). There has again been a substantial increase in Stage 2 complaint activities, both as a count and as a percentage

share over the previous year. The proportion of Stage 2 complaint activities has reached the highest level recorded, as has the total number of Stage 2 complaint activities investigated by CFIT.

Table 1. SWS Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints by service area and locality, 2025/26

Locality	Stage 1	Stage 2	Total
Centre	133	253	386
North East	50	71	121
North West	37	75	112
South	63	117	180
Care (non-HCS)	24	41	65
Total	307	557	864

'Centre' encompasses a range of teams. These are set out below in order of decreasing volume.

- **Homelessness** – not including fieldwork (done by the area teams) but including prison throughcare, property management, emergency accommodation, and asylum and refugee support: **Complaints = 131** (decrease from 135)
- **Business Development** – including the CFIT team and welfare rights: **Complaints = 113** (up from 79)
- **Social Care Connect** – Service replacing the former Social Care Direct: **Complaints = 48** (up from 42)
- **Finance** - including issues of invoicing, deprivation of assets and agreement of Disability Related Expenditure (DRE) waivers: **Complaints = 45** (equal to previous 45)
- **Children and Families** – including fostering and adoption and some residential care: **Complaints = 25** (down from 32)
- **Standby/Out of Hours** – **Complaints = 9** (up from 3)
- **Centre Criminal Justice** – including Prison-based SW, Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) and specialist resources: **Complaints = 8** (up from 5)
- **Addictions** - **Complaints = 3** (equal to 3)
- **Centre Residential care** - Not including homecare etc: **Complaints = 2** (up from 0)

Many of the Business Development complaint activities received relate to delays in the handling of subject access requests (SAR), following a trend established over the past three years. Each of these were upheld or partially upheld. The wider team continue to prioritise SAR activity, however there is a current backlog of over 600 cases, and many of these are

significantly overdue and are generating complaints activity – these cases are resource intensive to resolve, and so further dissatisfaction in relation to failures in this area is expected until the backlog can be cleared. There has been significant investment in the area of the team who specialise in SAR processing, and a substantial increase in SAR processing, as well as a substantial decrease in wait times, however this remains a live issue subject to continual development, review and scrutiny.

Homelessness complaints decreased slightly, despite ongoing challenges within the context of the housing emergency declared by the Council in late 2023, and with Glasgow acting as the main dispersal city in Scotland for successful asylum seekers, as well as historic problems with a shortage in social housing and unaffordable costs of private rent in the City. Homelessness Services continue to develop their strategy to address Homelessness in the City.

For Care Services, 289 new Stage 1 complaints were received and managed locally. In addition, 41 Stage 2 complaints handled by CFIT related to Care Services, giving 330 complaint activities across both Stage 1 and Stage 2 for the year.

The Care Services Stage 1 complaint activities are broken down by service area/locality in Table 2, below. Complaints are focussed on Home Care, as has been the case in previous years, with very few complaints about the Alarms service. The highest proportion of complaints were in South Glasgow, consistent with figures for the previous four years, however this area represents the largest Home Care Service in terms of geography, number of service users and staff so a higher number of complaints in South is expected.

Table 2. Care Services complaints by service area and locality, 2025/26

Valid Care Services complaints 2025-26		
Service Area	Count	%
Alarms	12	4
Equipu	1	<1
Home Care - North East	72	25
Home Care - North West	63	22
Home Care - South	140	48
Operations	1	<1
Total	289	

Please note that additional demographic information which may add further context to these figures is available separately in reports that can be found at:
<https://glasgowcity.hscp.scot/performance-and-demographics>.

3.2 Timescales overall and by service area

The complaint handling performance target is that 70% of complaint activities should be dealt with within the specified time period for each stage. Stage 1 complaints should be answered within 5 working days (or up to 10 working days with a management approved extension). Stage 2 complaints should be answered within 20 working days, although the SPSO's Model Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP) for Local Authorities allows for extension to this timescale where appropriate. Stage 3 complaints are excluded from timescale reporting because SPSO timescales are outside GCHSCP control and there are no timescales laid out in the Model CHP for Stage 3 complaints.

326 of 557 Stage 2 complaints (58.5%) were responded to on time during 2025/26. In 2024/25, 253 of 411 Stage 2 complaints (62%) were responded to on time.

In percentage terms, this appears to be a decrease in performance, however the number of Stage 2 complaint activities responded to within time has increased by 29%. The number of on-time responses achieved in 2025/26 would have been sufficient to exceed the 70% target in any previous year, however due to the increase in Stage 2 activities received, the target has again not been achieved for the fourth consecutive year. While this real-terms increase in complaints performance has not translated into greater compliance, this can partially be attributed to the loss of a Senior Officer in December 2025, as well as the competing demands on the resources available to the team resulting from the ongoing challenges around SAR processing.

Table 3 illustrates the performance against timescale for Stage 1 complaint activities by locality. The target of 70% of complaint activities responded to within the relevant time was not met for GCHSCP, with only 61% of Stage 1 complaints responded to within timescale. This is a slight improvement in percentage terms over the previous year, where 57% of Stage 1 complaint activities were responded to in time.

Table 3. Stage 1 Social Work complaint timescale compliance by locality, 2025/26

Locality	Within time		Total Stage 1
	n	%	n
Centre	96	72	133
N. East	33	66	50
N. West	28	76	37
South	20	32	63
Total	188	61	307

In the two of the three previous years, no areas met the 70% target. In 2024/25, North East were the only area where the 70% target was exceeded, however this year both Centre and North West exceeded the target. There remains a failure to apply the extension available to stage 1 complaints in all cases, and this has been consistent since the introduction of this facility, and CFIT continue to look to encourage locality use of this facility to increase the number of complaints that are responded to within appropriate timescales. In addition, during 2025/26 CFIT introduce a new process whereby localities are required to provide narrative to

explain late response times – as this is a new process, full context in relation to these figures is not available for 2025/26, but will be available in future reports.

As only 514 of the 864 total complaints activities across Stage 1 and Stage 2 (59%) were responded to in time, the target was not met overall, however this is the compliance percentage as the previous year despite the 16% increase in complaint activities. Stage 3 (SPSO) complaints are excluded from these figures as they have no indicative timescale.

It has previously been suggested that, if local managers wish to improve complaint performance they must either turn around Stage 1 complaints more quickly, or apply appropriate extensions in line with the terms of the Complaints Handling Procedures, or both. A further option highlighted in previous years for local managers to consider to improve Stage 1 performance was whether or not Stage 1 complaints allocated to them are, in fact, appropriate for frontline resolution. It would appear likely that more complaints are being escalated to Stage 2 at an earlier point, as suggested by the slight reduction in Stage 1 complaint activities and significant increase in Stage 2 complaint activities.

The overall performance for Stage 1 Care Service complaints was that 62% of complaints were dealt with in time, a significant drop from the 86% performance in the previous year. It is, however, possible that previous performance was overestimated, with some discrepancies in recording practices having been identified following implementation of the new complaints handling system. Table 4 below shows the stage 1 timescale compliance for individual Care Service teams, showing that complaint activities regarding Alarms, Operations (1) and North West areas remained above the 70% target, whereas Equipu (1), North East and South did not meet target.

Table 4. Care Services complaint timescale compliance by service area, 2025/26

Stage 1 Valid Care Services complaints 2025/26	
Service Area	% in time
Alarms	75
Equipu	0
Home Care - North East	57
Home Care - North West	79
Home Care - South	56
Operations	100

3.3 Complaint activities by client group overall and by locality

Table 5 below first gives a summary of complaints by client group and then by client group for each locality. Not known (NK) is used where the complainant is not a service, user, or where the complaint does not relate to services used by the complainant, and in other circumstances where no suitable client group can be correctly applied. There is no client group breakdown for Care Services Stage 1 complaint activities processed by Care Services, as the client group is broadly consistent across Care Services complaints, where almost all complainants will be older people and adults with disabilities, or their representatives, however some classification takes place in relation to centrally-processed Care-related complaint activities.

Table 5. SWS Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaint activities by client group and locality, 2025/26

Client group	Locality					
	Centre (inc Centre Care)	North East	North West	South	Care	Total
Addictions	0	7	2	6	0	15
Children and Families	52	50	35	78	1	216
Criminal Justice	8	1	8	3	0	20
Homelessness	138	16	12	15	0	181
Learning Disability	5	9	9	15	0	38
Mental Health	7	15	9	17	0	48
Older People	39	14	29	38	60	180
Physical Disability	6	3	4	5	1	19
Not known	133	6	4	3	3	147
Total	386	121	112	180	65	864

3.4 Complaints by issue

The number of issues ordinarily exceeds the number of complaints, as complaints can be logged as related to more than one issue, although this can be complex to accurately capture with current recording limitations. As such, 'issues' do not map directly to numbers of complaints received. There is a degree of subjectivity involved by complaints handlers in categorising these issues.

Tables 6 and 7, below, show the relative percentage of each issue as a percentage of all issues and compares them with annual figures from 2024/25, first for Social Work and Homelessness and then for Care Services.

Table 6. Main Social Work and Homelessness complaint issues, 2025/26 compared with 2024/25

Issue	2024/25	% 2024/25	2025/26	% 2025/26
Finance	47	6	41	3
Policy	6	1	6	<1
Attitude/conduct of staff	220	26	248	19
Lack of response to customer	134	16	123	10
Poor information or communication	87	10	159	12
Breach of confidentiality/privacy	15	2	31	2
Discrimination or breach of Human Rights	19	2	20	2
Poor quality of service	122	14	201	16
Poor level of service	14	2	99	8
Short-term wait issues	2	<1	1	<1
Long-term delay issues	71	8	105	8
Procedures not followed by SWS	88	10	187	15
Service refused or withdrawn	28	3	64	5
Total of main issues	853		1285	

A high proportion of complaints focussing on issues related to staff (particularly around staff attitude, lack of response to customer, or information/communication issues) is a typical feature of social work complaints. The fact such complaints are made should not be assumed to indicate generally unacceptable performance or personal conduct on the part of staff.

There is a tendency on the part of some service users to focus their complaints on the person with whom they are engaging, even if the circumstances to which they are objecting stem from policy and procedure or decisions and actions taken collectively. This is particularly true in cases where the relationship is an enforced one such as in criminal justice, child and adult protection cases. It remains the case that the majority of such complaints are not upheld.

It is not possible to make a definitive link between issues and outcomes with available reporting arrangements as systems do not allow for outcomes to be mapped directly to issues – for example, where a complaint covering three issues (e.g. attitude or conduct of staff; lack of response to the customer; and a financial issue) is partially upheld, current recording and reporting arrangements do not allow us to identify which element or elements of the complaint were the matters which were upheld and which were not. Given that many complaints are identified by either complainant or staff as relating to staff conduct when they might be more accurately considered relating to the policy or processes that staff are required to adhere to, it is likely that this figure is exaggerated.

Complaints regarding both quality of service, level of service and failures to properly follow procedure have again risen significantly and while the majority of these have not been upheld, the significant increases mean there are more upheld complaints regarding these matters than in previous years. Many of the complaints in relation to delays relate to delays in processing Subject Access Requests – an issue that is known, recognised and which is being addressed – and so these complaints are generally upheld.

Table 7. Care Services complaint issues, 2025/26 compared with 2024/25

Issue	N 2024/25	% 2024/25	N 2025- 26	% 2025- 26
Unhappy with time of visit	10	3	22	8
Failed to arrive	51	18	4	1
Quality of service	129	44	163	56
Level of service	35	12	8	3
Staff attitude	27	9	28	10
Staff competency	33	11	56	19
Breach of confidentiality	1	<1	1	<1
Vehicle issues	4	1	7	2
Total issues addressed	290		289	

Previous recording practices in place throughout 2025/26 only allow for one complaint category per complaint for Care Services complaints, and so these figures represent the primary matter of complaint in each case. There has been a notable decrease in complaints regarding failures to arrive and the level of service provided, however there has also been increased complaints activity relating to service quality and staff competency.

3.5 Complaint outcomes

Table 8 below shows the outcomes of Social Work complaint activities in terms of whether they were upheld for Stages 1 and 2. Table 10, below, shows the outcomes for Care Services. Third stage SPSO complaint outcomes for GCHSCP as a whole are given in section 3.6. Complaints that do not complete the process are those that are withdrawn, repeated or vexatious complaints, those addressed through other processes (claims, legal, HR, Child and Adult Protection) or fall within the complaints procedure of a different body. These can be considered a specific category of 'Not Upheld' complaints, in that they are not valid and cannot be upheld. They are equivalent to those that are recorded as 'withdrawn/invalid' for Care Services.

Table 8. Social Work complaint activity outcomes, 2025/26 compared with 2024/25

Outcome	2024/25	2025/26
Transfer To Other Process	7	7
Not Accepted	61	87
Informally Resolved	24	12
Not Upheld	389	506
Partially Upheld	122	119
Upheld	99	98
Withdrawn	11	16
None (failed to respond or escalated to Stage 2)	31	19
Total	744	864

Where locality teams fail to respond within a reasonable timescale and without reasonable explanation, complaints may be closed as having no outcome – these complaints are then escalated to Stage 2 for response by CFIT due to the locality failure to respond. Failure to respond may also very occasionally be an outcome noted for outstanding extended Stage 2 complaints not resolved by the reporting deadline.

Table 9, below, provides the breakdown of outcomes per team.

Table 9. Social Work complaint outcomes by team, 2025/26

Outcome	Centre	North East	North West	South	Care	Sum
Transfer To Other Process	4	1	1	0	1	7
Not Accepted	55	11	8	12	1	87
Informally Resolved	4	6	0	2		12
Not Upheld	199	79	73	117	38	506
Partially Upheld	45	16	12	31	15	119
Upheld	65	4	10	9	10	98
Withdrawn	7	3	2	4	0	16
None	7	1	6	5	0	19
Total	386	121	112	180	65	864

For 2024/25, the proportion of complaint activities with either an ‘upheld’ or ‘partially upheld’ outcome – meaning some kind of failure was identified – was 30%. This rate has dropped slightly to 25% for 2025/26. However, it should be noted that only a very small number of complaints – 23 – have been fully upheld across each of the locality areas – between four and ten complaints in each area – and the bulk of fully upheld complaints activity sits with Centre. Much of this upheld complaint activity related to delays in Subject Access Request processing, with the second most common area of complaint relating to Homelessness services.

There has been a decrease in the number of complaints that have been informally resolved, suggesting that complainant are less willing to accept the resolution approach, or that staff are less aware of the resolution approach despite available guidance which reinforces the messaging around this useful route to addressing complaints. While informal resolution is a viable outcome at any stage of the complaint handling process, it is most likely to be appropriate and effective at Stage 1. However, it is clear that many complainants are now supported by AI tools in making their complaints, and this may represent a barrier to resolution-oriented complaints handling.

Table 10. Care Services complaint outcomes by service area, 2025/26

Service Area	Upheld	Not Upheld	Partially Upheld	Total
Alarms	8	0	4	12
Equipu	0	1	0	1
North East	21	29	22	72
North West	25	19	19	63
South	54	61	25	140
Ops	0	1	0	1
Total	108	111	70	289

Table 10 above shows Care Services Stage 1 complaints by outcome overall and by service area for 2025/26. Care Services generally uphold or partially uphold around 60% of Stage 1 complaints received, although in 2024/25 this rose to 65%. The 62% figure for 2025/26 is in line with 2023/24 figures.

South area represents around 40% of the overall service delivery, and so it would be reasonable to expect slightly higher numbers of complaints and upheld complaints – 50% of upheld complaints were in South area, which is a higher proportion than the demographics might suggest. This is an increase over last year, during which only 38% of upheld complaints related to South area.

3.6 Stage 3 Referrals to Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO)

Across Social Work, Care Services and Homelessness Services, 31 complaints were recorded as being referred to the SPSO during 2025/26, up from 25 in the previous reporting year.

The disposition of these cases is as below followed by a brief summary of each case. No Stage 3 complaint activities first raised with the SPSO during 2025/26 were upheld by the SPSO following investigation, although two cases remain open awaiting SPSO decision. In each concluded case, the SPSO decided not to take the matter further following either a preliminary screening assessment, or a brief investigation and consideration of the response already issued by the Complaints, FOI and Investigations Team. In the majority of cases, the SPSO recognised that the Stage 2 response issued by GCHSCP has been satisfactory and nothing further could be achieved by SPSO investigation, with the remaining cases being refused by the SPSO as inappropriate for their consideration either due to time passed since events complained about, or for other reasons relating to the complainants or competence of the complaints themselves.

The fact that so few complaints are escalated to SPSO and that none of those that have been escalated to Stage 3 during 2025/26 were upheld, is a strong indication that the second stage of the process is generally operating in correct manner - identifying failings and offering redress when these are accepted and otherwise stating a full and well-evidenced rebuttal of the complaint.

Case A: SPSO Ref 202407228

Classification of Case: North West Physical Disabilities

SPSO Findings/Outcome: Not taken further by SPSO as they deemed the Stage 2 response to have been reasonable.

Case B: SPSO Ref 202411622

Classification of Case: North East Children and Families

SPSO Findings/Outcome: No further action from SPSO following preliminary investigation.

Case C: SPSO Ref 202500171

Classification of Case: North West Physical Disabilities

SPSO Findings/Outcome: Not taken further by SPSO as they deemed the Stage 2 response to have been reasonable.

Case D: SPSO Ref 202411468

Classification of Case: North West Older People

SPSO Findings/Outcome: Not taken further by SPSO as they deemed the Stage 2 response to have been reasonable.

Case E: SPSO Ref 202409967

Classification of Case: North East Learning Disabilities

SPSO Findings/Outcome: Not taken further by SPSO as they deemed the Stage 2 response and subsequent apology issued to have been reasonable.

Case F: SPSO Ref 202502174

Classification of Case: North West Older People

SPSO Findings/Outcome: Not taken further by SPSO as they deemed the Stage 2 response to have been reasonable.

Case G: SPSO Ref 202501527

Classification of Case: Central Homelessness

SPSO Findings/Outcome: Not taken further by SPSO as they deemed the Stage 2 response to have been reasonable.

Case H: SPSO Ref 202501672

Classification of Case: South

SPSO Findings/Outcome: Not taken further by SPSO as they deemed the Stage 2 response to have been reasonable, however, feedback provided regarding relevant staff training and scope for improvement regarding case recording.

Case I: SPSO Ref 202506085

Classification of Case: Homecare

SPSO Findings/Outcome: Not taken further by SPSO as they deemed the Stage 2 response to have been reasonable.

Case J: SPSO Ref 202500404

Classification of Case: North East Older People

SPSO Findings/Outcome: Awaiting SPSO decision.

Case K: SPSO Ref 202507703

Classification of Case: Central Homelessness – Temporary Accommodation

SPSO Findings/Outcome: Not taken further by SPSO as they deemed the Stage 2 response to have been reasonable.

Case L: SPSO Ref 202502137

Classification of Case: North West Children and Families

SPSO Findings/Outcome: Not taken further by SPSO as they deemed the Stage 2 response to have been reasonable.

Case M: SPSO Ref 202503083

Classification of Case: North West Adult Services

SPSO Findings/Outcome: Not taken further by SPSO as they deemed the Stage 2 response to have been reasonable. Feedback provided in relation to some elements of tone in complaint response.

Case N: SPSO Ref 202503425

Classification of Case: Central Homelessness – Temporary Accommodation

SPSO Findings/Outcome: Not taken further by SPSO as they deemed the Stage 2 response to have been reasonable.

Case O: SPSO Ref 202506826

Classification of Case: North East Children and Families

SPSO Findings/Outcome: Not taken further by SPSO as they deemed the Stage 2 response to have been reasonable. In addition, the SPSO considered the matter to have been raised outwith the time limit for complaints.

Case P: SPSO Ref 202509028

Classification of Case: Children and Families/Social Care Connect

SPSO Findings/Outcome: The SPSO concluded that the complainant had withdrawn their complaint due to lack of response to their requests for further information.

Case Q: SPSO Ref 202510923

Classification of Case: North West Older People

SPSO Findings/Outcome: Not taken further by SPSO as they deemed the Stage 2 response to have been reasonable.

Case R: SPSO 202500747

Classification of Case: North East Children and Families

SPSO Findings/Outcome: The SPSO considered the matter to have been raised outwith the time limit for complaints.

Case S: SPSO Ref 202513853

Classification of Case: North West Older People

SPSO Findings/Outcome: Not taken further by SPSO as they deemed the Stage 2 response to have been reasonable.

Case T: SPSO Ref 202514139

Classification of Case: Central Homelessness – Temporary Accommodation

SPSO Findings/Outcome: Not taken further by SPSO as they deemed the Stage 2 response to have been reasonable. In addition, the SPSO considered the matter to have been raised outwith the time limit for complaints.

Case U: SPSO Ref 202503220

Classification of Case: South Children and Families

SPSO Findings/Outcome: The SPSO concluded that the complainant had withdrawn their complaint due to their refusal to consent to the SPSO investigating further.

Case V: SPSO Ref 202509993

Classification of Case: North East Children and Families

SPSO Findings/Outcome: The SPSO concluded that the complainant had withdrawn their complaint due to their refusal to consent to the SPSO investigating further.

Case W: SPSO Ref 202509887

Classification of Case: None

SPSO Findings/Outcome: No valid HSCP complaint identified by SPSO in correspondence from complainant.

Case X: SPSO Ref 202504744

Classification of Case: North West Older People

SPSO Findings/Outcome: The SPSO considered the matter to have been raised outwith the time limit for complaints.

Case Y: SPSO Ref 202509340

Classification of Case: Children and Families/Social Care Connect

SPSO Findings/Outcome: Not taken further by SPSO as they deemed the Stage 2 response to have been reasonable.

Case Z: SPSO Ref 202510355

Classification of Case: Finance Older People

SPSO Findings/Outcome: Not taken further by SPSO as they deemed the Stage 2 response to have been reasonable.

Case A1: SPSO Ref 202501496

Classification of Case: Care/Older People

SPSO Findings/Outcome: Awaiting SPSO Response

Case B1: SPSO Ref 202509633

Classification of Case: Centre Homelessness

SPSO Findings/Outcome: Not taken further by SPSO as they deemed the Stage 2 response to have been reasonable.

Case C1: SPSO Ref 202512904

Classification of Case: Centre Homelessness

SPSO Findings/Outcome: Not taken further by SPSO as they deemed the Stage 2 response to have been reasonable.

Case D1: SPSO Ref 202507425

Classification of Case: South Children and Families

SPSO Findings/Outcome: Not taken further by SPSO as they deemed the Stage 2 response to have been reasonable.

Case E1: SPSO Ref 202513722

Classification of Case: Children and Families/Social Care Connect

SPSO Findings/Outcome: Not taken further by SPSO as they deemed the Stage 2 response to have been reasonable.

3.8 Service Improvements / Customer Outcomes

A service improvement is defined as either some tangible outcome for the customer consistent with their objectives in making the complaint, or a more systematic organisational

benefit, learning or improvement process generalised throughout the particular team or whole service. 78 service improvements have been formally recorded.

Service Improvement by type and Stage identified			
Service Improvement Type	Stage 1	Stage 2	Total
Process & Procedures	5	13	18
Service Provision	10	2	12
Staff Issues	6	6	12
Staff Training , Knowledge	2	12	14
Business Process	3	3	6
Service Availability	1	1	2
Service Delivery Model/Approach	2	2	4
Communication	1	3	4
Equality / Disability Discrimination	0	1	1
Policy	0	1	1
Not specific, but will monitor to understand if any trends emerge and consider as part of ongoing service improvement reviews as required.	0	3	3
Equipment / Access Arrangements	0	1	1
Grand Total	30	48	78

3.8 Complaints Service Developments

In addition to the work undertaken around processing and investigation complaints, the Complaints, FOI and Investigations Team are continually reviewing and improving processes.

Current and ongoing developments are primarily focused on streamlining procedures, team resourcing, accountability for late complaints and the implementation of the new case management system for all complaints handling.

Streamlining procedures:-

Regular process review meetings take place within CFIT to identify matters of process or procedure that can be refined to increase efficiency.

- Refinements to CFIT communications and Duty process to ensure escalation to Stage 2 at an earlier stage where appropriate
- Increased recognition of duplicate or additional complaints, with details passed to relevant officers rather than being logged anew
- Advice given to localities in relation to Stage 1 activities where no mandate has been received, to reduce risk of disclosing personal data inappropriately

Team resourcing:-

Significant additional resource joined the team during 2025/26, although this resource is focused on SAR processing. This additional resource has allowed for Senior Officers to place additional focus on Stage 2 complaints processing. One experienced Senior Officer left the team in early December to take a promoted post elsewhere in the HSCP. Their replacement did not join the team until April 2026, and they continue to develop in their role.

New case management system:-

In development since 2018, the implementation of a new case management system was subject to repeated delay due to matters outwith the control of GCHSCP. This system went live on 21st January 2026, and has been adopted across both CFIT and Care Services, meaning that complaints are now logged on a consistent system across both areas. A suite of reports are available that provide a greater depth of data than previously available, and development continues in relation to reporting to ensure high quality reports to inform annual, quarterly and management reporting requirements. This will include the capacity to report fully in terms of complaint cases as well as complaint activities.

Training has been provided and training materials produced to support implementation, and these materials continue to be developed and refined.