



Glasgow City Council

Operational Performance and Delivery Scrutiny Committee

Report by Head of Communication and Strategic Partnerships

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**COMPLAINTS HANDLING PERFORMANCE 2021 - 22**

**Purpose of Report:**

To advise elected members of the council family's performance in complaints handling for the year April 1 2021 – 31 March 2022. This report covers all Glasgow family complaints handling, with the exception of Social Work complaints, which are covered in a separate report to this committee.

**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 2021 – 31 March 2022. 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. Social Work Services began using the model CHP in April 2017 (with minor differences), replacing statutory procedures that had existed previously. SWS complaints data is covered in a separate report to this committee.
- c. Slight changes to the model CHP were introduced on April 1, 2020. A new customer-facing guide to making a complaint was published on the council website at that point. There remain some resource and technical barriers to implementing the full changes required from an internal perspective although the changes for the customer making a complaint are not significant.
- d. Contingency arrangements were put in place to manage complaints during the pandemic. The council website was changed to make it clear there may be delays to responses as a result of staff being deployed to other frontline activities, or absent. The SPSO is currently advising complainants of delays of up to 10 months before a complaint brought to its office can be investigated.

**2. The general trends and issues in 2021 – 22 for complaints handling can be summarised as follows:**

- a. The overall number of complaints received has risen slightly from the total for 2020 – 21. This was to be expected as more services re-opened after lockdowns, particularly Glasgow Life venues.
- b. The proportion of complaints upheld or partially upheld accounts for more than 80 per cent of complaint outcomes.
- c. Most complaints opened during 2021 – 22 were closed in the same period, reflecting a good throughput of complaints handling.
- d. There is a shortfall in performance in terms of meeting timescales for responses, at stage 1. The average time to resolve a Stage 1 complaint during 2021 - 22 was 12 working 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.
- e. Performance at Stage 2 is 35 working days on average for complaints to be closed. This is above the national performance target of 20 days. Complex complaints which take significantly longer to resolve can affect the overall average number of days.
- f. Complaints performance should be 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 2021 - 22

This period has seen a small overall 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
2021 - 22	6753	6517	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	41%
Partially upheld complaints	42%
Not Upheld complaints	12%
Withdrawn or transferred to another process	5%

Average time taken to resolve complaints	Glasgow family	National performance target
Stage 1 (frontline)	12 days	5 days
Stage 2 (investigation)	35 days	20 days

Service Improvements made as a result of complaints	
Financial Services	2
Glasgow Life	96

#### 4. Complaints recorded against each Service or ALEO 2021 –22.

Service/ALEO	Frontline (Stage 1)	Investigation (Stage 2)
Chief Executive	61	4
City Building	19	0
City Property	3	0
Education Services	181	92
Financial Services	1248	12
Glasgow Life	429	36
Neighbourhoods, Regeneration and Sustainability	4576	92

### Policy and Resource Implications

#### Resource Implications:

*Financial:* None

*Legal:* Compliance with the Complaints Handling Procedure is a statutory requirement. The relevant legislation is contained in the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman Act 2002.

*Personnel:* None

*Procurement:* None

#### Council Strategic Plan:

Good complaint management, clear and detailed reporting and service improvements learned as a result of complaints within the council generally support its core values of transparency, upholding citizen's rights and partnership working with citizens by allowing contributions to be made from any source on the subject of how service delivery might be improved.

The complaints handling process supports the following specific themes:

Resilient and Empowered Neighbourhoods, with specific outcomes:

- Citizens and neighbourhoods can influence how services are developed and budgets spent

Priorities: 77, 83

A well-governed city that listens and responds, with specific outcomes:

- Improve the council's communication with residents, including through updating our website, facilitating engagement on social media and by webcasting council committee meetings.

Priority: 105

### **Equality and Socio-Economic Impacts:**

*Does the proposal support the Council's Equality Outcomes 2017-22*

This process supports Equality Outcome 8 - Service users with protected characteristics are provided with targeted, improved and more accessible information about the services provided by the Council Family.

*What are the potential equality impacts as a result of this report?*

Not required as this is not a new/updated strategy, policy or service and has no significant equality impact. However, the overarching complaints process commits to making reasonable adjustments to support individuals with protected characteristics ensuring that it is accessible for all.

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

Not required as this is not a new/updated strategy, policy or service and has no significant equality impact

### **Climate Impacts:**

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

None.

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

None.

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

No.

**Privacy and Data  
Protection impacts:**

Customer complaints' data is stored in a secure case management system, Lagan.

**3 Recommendations**

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