

# **Scottish Borders Council Annual Complaint Performance Report 2023/24**

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# 1. Overview

## 1.1. Introduction

This is the council’s annual complaints performance report that provides information on customer complaints received and closed between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024.

Scottish Borders Council always aims to provide the highest possible quality of service to the residents, business owners and service users within the Scottish Borders. However, there are times when things go wrong and we fail to meet the expectations of our customers.

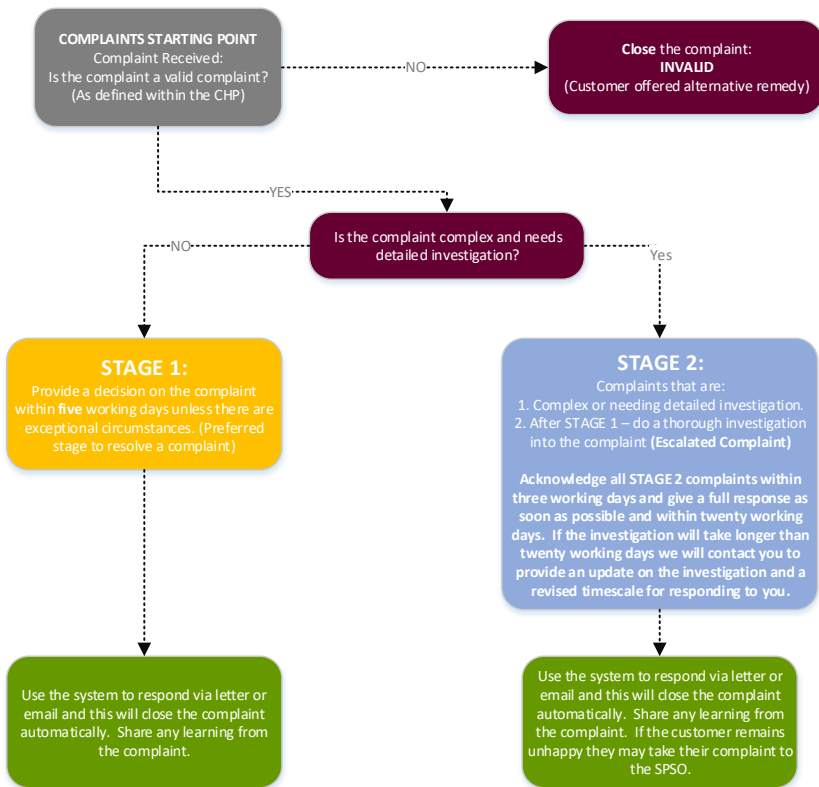
The council’s complaints procedure provides a clear and structured way to provide feedback on what has gone wrong with a council service. The process to resolution should be straightforward and timely. Listening to our customers helps us to put things right, improve our services and learn from our mistakes.

This report provides us with an opportunity to share how well we are performing.

## 1.2. Corporate Complaints Procedure

The objective of the Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP) is to resolve customer dissatisfaction as close to the point of service delivery and as soon as possible at Stage One in the procedure. Figure 1 is a flow chart of SBC’s CHP. Complaints can be raised online, by email, in person, by telephone or by letter.

**Figure 1: Complaints Handling Procedure**



Complaints performance is reported on a quarterly basis to both the council’s Corporate Management Team and the council’s Executive Committee. Complaints performance statistics are reported to the public and are available on the council’s website.

## 2. Complaint Performance Statistics

This report presents how SBC performs based on eight performance indicators, four of which are key performance indicators. These were developed by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) in conjunction with all 32 Scottish Local Authorities.

The number of valid complaints closed in 2023-24 was 876. This is an increase of 63 on the number closed in the previous year. The council will continue to analyse complaints to help inform service improvement, identify training opportunities for our staff and to help prioritise our activities to meet the changing needs of the residents of the Scottish Borders.

Complaint benchmark data for 2023-24 is accurate at the time of publishing this report. Where applicable, this report has included the Scottish local authority national average and Family Group performance indicators for comparative information.

The council's performance relating to the processing of complaints performs well against the Family Group and Scottish National averages in some indicators, specifically those relating to Stage One, but performance is poorer in relation to indicators that measure timeliness of responses specifically at Stage Two and Stage Two - Escalated.

### 2.1. Indicator 1: Complaints received per 1,000 population

This indicator records the total number of 'Valid' complaints received by SBC during the financial year (April to March) as a rate per 1,000 population. In 2023-24 SBC received **1081** complaints of which **214** were closed as 'Invalid'. The remaining **867** were handled as 'Valid' complaints. This is equivalent to 7.4 received complaints per 1,000 population.

Table 1 provides SBC's total complaints closed per 1,000 population over the past 6 years along with the Scottish and Family Group Averages for 2023-24. The table shows an increase of 1 valid complaint received and a marginal reduction in the complaints received per 1,000 population in 2023-24.

**Table 1: Complaints received per 1,000 population**

Measure	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	FG 1 Average 2023-24	Scottish Average 2023-24
Population Total	115,020	115,270	115,510	115,240	116,020	116,820	921,130	5,219,730
Total number of Valid	625	725	780	849	866	867	6,380	52,081
Number of complaints per 1,000	5.4	6.3	6.8	7.4	7.5	7.4	6.9	10.0

### 2.2. Indicator 2: Closed complaints

This indicator provides information on the number of complaints closed at Stage One, Stage Two and Stage Two – Escalated complaints as a percentage of all complaints closed. Table 2 provides the performance information for this indicator.

The term 'closed' refers to a complaint that has had a response sent to the customer and at the time, no further action was required to respond to the customer.

Stage Two - Escalated complaints are those complaints that have been resolved at Stage One initially, but the customer was not satisfied with the response they received. When the customer requests that the same issue is considered again at Stage Two, of the CHP, these complaints are called 'Stage Two - Escalated' complaints.

**Table 2: Closed Complaints**

<b>Complaints Closed</b> as a % of all complaints closed	<b>2018/19</b>	<b>2019/20</b>	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2021/22</b>	<b>2022/23</b>	<b>2023/24</b>	<b>FG 1 Average 2023-24</b>	<b>Scottish Average 2023-24</b>
Stage One	78%	75%	85.4%	83.0%	85.6%	87.9%	77.2%	85.6%
Stage Two	17%	21%	12.2%	13.6%	9.3%	6.7%	17.6%	8.3%
Stage Two - Escalated	4%	5%	2.4%	3.4%	5.0%	5.4%	5.2%	6.1%

### 2.3. Indicator 3: Complaint Outcomes

There is a requirement for a formal outcome to be recorded for each complaint. There are five outcomes, upheld, not upheld, partially upheld, resolved or invalid. In 2021 the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) introduced the fifth “Resolved” outcome for complaints. SBC was able to measure the numbers of Resolved and partially upheld complaints from October 2022 when the new system was introduced.

This indicator measures the percentage of complaints, which were upheld, not upheld, partially upheld, or resolved at each stage. The results can be seen in Tables 3a, 3b, 3c and 3d.

Additional information has also been included in relation to the reasons for invalid complaints (table 4).

**Table 3a: Upheld Complaints**

<b>Complaints upheld</b>	<b>2018/19</b>	<b>2019/20</b>	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2021/22</b>	<b>2022/23</b>	<b>2023/24</b>	<b>FG 1 Average 2023-24</b>	<b>Scottish Average 2023-24</b>
Stage One	37%	48%	36.6%	50.5%	39.5%	42.6%	35.1%	32.1%
Stage Two	45%	47%	38.5%	37.4%	38.2%	16.9%	17.4%	18.5%
Stage Two - Escalated	39%	30%	22.2%	44.8%	43.9%	19.1%	23.9%	27.8%

Table 3b: Not Upheld Complaints

Complaints not upheld	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	FG 1 Average 2023-24	Scottish Average 2023-24
Stage One	63%	52%	63.4%	49.5%	34.5%	32.5%	37.7%	35.9%
Stage Two	55%	53%	61.5%	62.6%	46.1%	50.8%	53.0%	52.2%
Stage Two - Escalated	61%	70%	77.8%	55.2%	34.1%	44.7%	41.1%	42.8%

Table 3c: Partially Upheld Complaints

Complaints partially upheld	2022/23	2023/24	FG 1 Average 2023-24	Scottish Average 2023-24
Stage One	4.7%	19.4%	14.1%	16.6%
Stage Two	15.8%	28.8%	25.7%	25.1%
Stage Two - Escalated	22.0%	36.2%	26.7%	22.6%

Table 3d: Resolved Complaints

Complaints resolved	2022/23	2023/24	FG 1 Average 2023-24	Scottish Average 2023-24
Stage One	21.3%	5.6%	13.1%	15.4%
Stage Two	0.0%	3.4%	4.0%	4.2%
Stage Two - Escalated	0.0%	0.0%	8.3%	6.9%

**Table 4: Reasons for Invalid Complaints**

Reason for Invalid Outcome	No. of Invalid Complaints	
	2022/23	2023/24
Council is not responsible for the service the complaint is about	63	78
First time request for a service	126	61
There is insufficient information	28	24
Matters raised have previously been considered	7	21
There is an alternative right to appeal	4	15
Request for compensation only i.e. insurance	15	7
HR Related Matter	7	7
Matters you raised occurred more than six months ago (out of time)	-	1
Matters complained about are in court or have already been heard in court	1	-
Logged in Error or Duplicate Complaint	14	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>265</b>	<b>214</b>

Of these invalid complaints approximately 63% are logged by customers themselves using an online form.

## 2.4. Indicator 4: Average times

Indicator 4 represents the average time in working days to close complaints. Indicator 4 performance can be seen in Table 5.

**Table 5: Average times**

Average times	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	FG 1 Average 2023-24	Scottish Average 2023-24
Stage One	4.6	5.3	5.9	7.1	5.7	8.1	8.4	9.0
Stage Two	18.2	22.5	23.1	30.5	27.7	38.0	28.9	23.0
Stage Two - Escalated	14.9	32.4	41.6	42.2	31.6	41.9	28.2	20.2

The average time taken to close complaints at Stage One, Stage Two and Stage Two - Escalated has increased in 2023/24, and SBC's performance is worse than that of the Family Group and the Scottish Averages at Stage Two and Stage Two – Escalated, but better than both at Stage One.

## 2.5. Indicator 5: Performance against timescales

This indicator reports the percentage of complaints at each stage that were closed in full within the set timescales of 5 and 20 working days. These include cases where an extension to the timescale has been authorised. Indicator 5's performance can be seen in Table 6.

**Table 6: Performance against timescales**

Performance against timescales	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	FG 1 Average 2023-24	Scottish Average 2023-24
Stage One	81%	77%	80%	80.6%	77.3%	73.4%	66.7%	66.0%
Stage Two	74%	60%	66%	49.6%	39.5%	33.9%	57.4%	61.3%
Stage Two - Escalated	79%	24%	22%	27.6%	26.8%	36.2%	48.2%	62.2%

SBC’s average working days to close a Frontline complaint is better than the Family Group and Scottish Average. Looking at the Family Group and the Scottish Average data there is an improving Family Group and national picture of performance for this indicator at Stage 1, whereas SBC’s performance has a worsening trend. Performance at investigation stage shows an improving national picture but the Family Group and SBC trends are worsening, and following escalation there is a worsening Family Group and national picture of performance.

**2.6. Indicator 6: Number of cases where an extension is authorised**

SBC always aims to respond to complaints as quickly as possible. There are, however, times when a complaint is particularly complex and it is not feasible to fully investigate the issues within the prescribed timescales. In these situations SBC agree with a complainant to extend the timescale for closing the complaint.

This indicator reports the percentage of complaints at each stage where an extension to the 5 or 20 working day timeline has been authorised. Indicator 6’s performance can be seen in Table 7.

**Table 7: Number of cases where an extension is authorised**

Percentage of cases where an extension is authorised	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	FG 1 Average 2023-24	Scottish Average 2023-24
Stage One	3%	2%	1%	1.3%	3.9%	4.4%	26.0%	8.7%
Stage Two	11%	5%	3%	8.7%	23.7%	10.2%	25.9%	19.9%
Stage Two - Escalated	4%	6%	6%	10.3%	7.3%	6.4%	8.3%	13.9%

**2.7. Indicator 7: Customer Satisfaction**

SBC runs a Complaint Handling Customer Satisfaction Survey on an ongoing basis. Customers are contacted approximately one week after their complaint is closed inviting them to provide feedback on their experience.

In 2023/24 we had a concern arise relating to the reuse of customers email addresses to issue surveys. To alleviate the concern we now ask customers raising their complaints face to face, via telephone or online to opt into receiving a survey. Complaints from customers received via any other channel are all opted out of receiving a survey.



While the discussions around this issue took place and the solution was built, the survey functionality was taken offline for all surveys SBC issued through Customer Services. Unfortunately, when the solution was implemented, complaint handling surveys were missed. This error was not corrected until May 2024. We therefore have very little survey data for 2023/24. Due to the possibility that the limited data presented a skewed picture, it has not been included in the report for 2023/24.

In addition to recording complaints, SBC also records compliments. These compliments are submitted by customers online, are received by Customer Advice and Support Services officers over the phone on the 0300 number, in emails sent to the enquiry mailbox or sent directly to officers. It should be noted that not all compliments sent directly to officers are recorded, and therefore cannot be included in these figures.

In 2023/24, the Council recorded approximately 216 recorded unsolicited comments and compliments for the services provided. This was an increase from 110 in 2022/23. Of these 151 were compliments. These compliments related to areas such as curb-side waste and recycling, roads, community recycling centers, parks and environment, cemeteries, environmental health, education, planning and regulatory services, adult social care, social work and customer services. Some examples of these compliments are as follows:

*"I would like to commend the staff on how quickly and efficiently my blue badge was processed. I have never had this kind of service anywhere else".*

*"Both myself and my family will be eternally grateful for the level of care and compassion provided by the teams from SB Cares".*

*Just wanted to take a moment (seldom time these days to find one) to pass on how impressed I have been with SB Cares support for my client. X has MND and complex needs. The progression of his condition has been extremely challenging and the carers have done a great job adapting and supporting X along the way.*

*"Please can you thank the nice road sweeper operative who has cleaned the gullies and the pavement at X town today. I am so grateful as there was a lot of surface water and hedge cuttings on the pavement and was difficult for dog walking. He has done a fantastic job please tell him it is very much appreciated".*

*"I just wanted to say thanks for your help with the Energy Grant Payment I applied for on behalf of my Mother-In-Law, which was paid really quickly and the whole process was really simple for me to navigate. Thanks again".*

*X and I would like to say a massive thank you to everyone who looked after and cared for our Dad over the last 26 months. Thanks also for the care and attention you showed us over the last few days. We were both very touched to see so many of you attend Dad's cremation, it meant such a lot to us.*

*"Can you please pass on my thanks to the cleansing team for organising for a bin lorry to come round X area this morning to empty the missed bins from last Friday, it is much appreciated. Thank you".*

*"I conducted several conversations with X, all of which were an absolute pleasure, as X's patience, and excellent manner, shone through. I appreciate that employees, are only conducting their duties, however, as an old school person I sometimes witness that customer service has become a fading quality, in many organisations. I have always encountered, friendly, professional employees whilst undertaking conversations with Scottish Borders Council".*

*"We would just like to say how pleased we were to find the graveyard in such good condition with the grass well cut and the whole area very tidy. In these stringent times we recognise the difficulty of keeping such graveyards so well maintained. We therefore wanted to say thank you and we would be grateful if you would please pass on our sincere appreciation to all those responsible for their outstanding continuing care and work".*

*"A huge thank you to the Foreperson and staff at X. On very short notice they have cut the grass, and lifted it, on X Community Sports Field today. They have made a fantastic job and the field is looking great for the Music Festival which is being held in the village on Saturday".*

*"Thank you very much for keeping public toilets OPEN. I used them in X and Y towns. Much appreciated".*

*"Thank you so much, I honestly cannot thank you enough. I appreciate the pro-active and helpful response which is often quite difficult to find these days".*

*"I'd had to call in today to see if the bulky uplift guys had ended up with my cat in the back of their van when they left. I was quite worried and emotional. X was very kind and reassuring when speaking to me, which helped calm me down, and I was glad to hear that the team have a plan in place for nosy cats that might end up in the vans! I'd appreciate if you could pass on how much it helped me to hear a friendly, reassuring voice when I was feeling upset, and that I was grateful for the help".*

*"I just want to say what an excellent service Borders Care and Repair provides...Thank you".*

*Thank you so much for going to the aid of my mother in X House on Saturday night and for staying with her until the ambulance arrived, she may have lain on the floor all night! She has now had surgery on her broken hip and is recovering in hospital.*

*Was lovely to see Mum looking so smart with her hair all done and clothes matching. I had communicated in her review how important these things are to Mum and this has been passed to staff team. Lovely person-centered support.*

*"I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to all the home carers who helped to make my husband's final years very happy. He suffered from Parkinson's Disease for many. I could certainly not have looked after him alone without any help, and he hated being in hospital. All the carers, without exception, treated him with kindness, respect and humor. Both of us really looked forward to their visits four times a day, often laughing, always immensely cheered. He was beginning to lose control, and also had regular problems with catheters, but the carers' attitude was always matter of fact, and saved embarrassment as well as discomfort. They became very good friends, and even after X's death they continued to call in briefly to see if I was all right. I cannot commend them high enough. They made it possible for us to lead an almost normal life during very difficult times. We were very lucky".*

## 2.8. Indicator 8: Learning from Complaints

Formal complaint reports are provided to the Corporate Management Team on a monthly basis and complaints performance information is provided to Elected Members on a quarterly basis through our Corporate Public Performance Report.

We take all complaints seriously, and the information gathered from them is invaluable in helping to continually improve our services. Since the introduction of the Complaints Handling Procedure, many changes and improvements have been made to services as a result of complaints and some examples of case studies are detailed in this section.

### Case Study One

Two customers complained that after spending a significant amount of time drafting their complaints in our online form, they tried to submit them and found the system had logged them out and their drafted complaints were lost. Understandably they were very upset.

For security reasons, our system has a timeout function built into our online forms. This function means, where there is no activity on the form for 20 minutes, the form times out. Activity includes moving between pages on the form, unfortunately this currently doesn't include keystrokes on a page. This is universal on all our forms and not something we have control over.

There is a warning about the timeout at the start of the form, but we appreciate this can be overlooked or hard to track while completing the form. To reiterate the timeout functionality and allow customers to save their progress we have added a timeout pop up that will confirm when the page they are on is close to timing out. It also gives instructions on how to save progress.

### Case Study Two

A customer complained that for the 3<sup>rd</sup> fortnight in a row their recycling was not collected on their collection day. The customer had complained previously about this as it was an ongoing problem. Previously the customer had been told that the collection crew did not collect their waste because they ran out of time on the collection day and that we were reviewing our routes.

We were reviewing the routes in the customers area and fortunately we were able to advise that the review was complete. Starting the next week some streets would be added onto another lorries route which was also in the area on the customers collection day. This would allow the customers normal crew to be able to complete all streets in the working day.

### Case Study Three

A customer complained about the practice of spraying weed killer around the edge of a playing field near their home and around the base of the mature trees at the end of their drive. Officers contacted the customer and we agreed not to use weed killer, but agreed we would trim the area once a year instead to keep the areas tidy and the wildflowers & grass under control.

### Case Study Four

A customer complained that there had been no notification to parents or carers when a school bus had been cancelled. They pointed out that someone must have known the bus would not be running and should have notified parents and carers so they could make alternative arrangements.

As a result of this complaint the transport team have been given access to Groupcall so they are able to issue messages in the event of something happening outwith school hours.

### 3. SPSO LEARNING AND IMPROVEMENT

Customers can ask the SPSO to look at their complaint once we've fully investigated, if they're still not satisfied with our decision or the way we handled the complaint.

In 2023/24, the SPSO received 35 and closed 35 complaints about SBC. This is equal to 2.5% of all complaints received by the SPSO in relation to the Local Authority sector. The numbers of complaints that go to the SPSO are a very small proportion of all the complaints made about Scottish Local Authorities; this is illustrated in Figure 3.

**Figure 1: Illustration of SPSO complaints of all complaints for 2023/24**

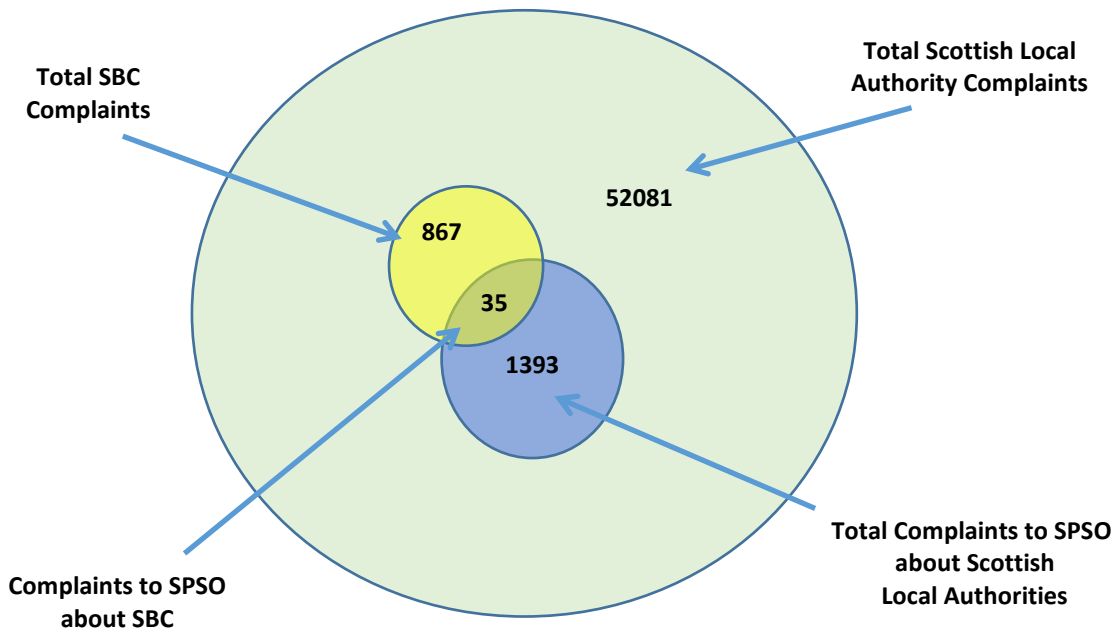


Table 9 below shows the number of complaints about SBC received by the SPSO and this as a percentage of the Local Authority Sector

**Table 9: SPSO Complaints Received by Year**

SPSO Received Complaints /Year	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
SPSO Received Complaints about SBC	27	11	41	15	25	21	35
SBC Complaints as % all for Scottish Local Authority sector	1.8%	0.8%	3.3%	1.6%	2.1%	2.0%	2.5%

Table 10 below shows how SBC compares to the Scottish Local Authority Sector in relation to complaints closed by the SPSO.

**Table 10: SPSO Closed Complaints for SBC / Year**

SPSO Closed Complaints for SBC / Year	2021/22			2022/23			2023/24		
	SBC Count	SBC %	Sector %	SBC Count	SBC %	Sector %	SBC Count	SBC %	Sector %
<b>Closed</b>	21	1.9%	2.0%	22	1.9%	2.0%	35	2.5%	2.8%
<b>Stage SPSO Complaint Closed</b>									
Advice	10	2.3%	39.1%	5	1.2%	36.8%	12	2.1%	41.4%
Early Resolution	9	1.4%	57.5%	15	2.1%	61.0%	23	3.0%	55.8%
Investigation	2	5.3%	3.4%	2	8.0%	2.2%	0	0.0%	2.8%
Premature	8	2.7%	26.3%	0	0.0%	0.3%	0	0.0%	0.4%
<b>SPSO Decision</b>									
Fit for SPSO	2	5.3%	3.4%	2	8.0%	2.2%	0	0.0%	2.8%
<b>Upheld / Partially Upheld</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4.0%</b>	<b>2.2%</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5.3%</b>	<b>1.7%</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.0%</b>	<b>1.6%</b>

In 2023/24, the SPSO did not undertake any full investigations into complaints about SBC. There are therefore no recommendations or published Case Studies to report.

## 4. 2023/24 Complaint Summary

In 2023/24, the council received 867 valid complaints and this represents an increase of 1 from the 2022/23 figure of 866.

87.9% of all complaints closed by the council were resolved at Stage One (Frontline Resolution), 6.73% of complaints resolved at Stage Two (Investigation) with the remaining 5.4% of complaints being resolved at Stage Two – Escalated.

The average times taken by the council to resolve Stage One, Stage Two and Stage Two – Escalated complaints were 8.1 days, 38.0 days and 41.9 days respectively. The council's overall performance relating to the timeliness of processing complaints has decreased for all stages. Processing timeliness for Stage Two complaints has decreased by approximately 4%. Of the 59 Stage Two complaints, only 20 were answered on time. That said, the council's performance in closing complaints on time at Stage One is better than the Family Group and Scottish Averages and accounts for 87.9% of all the complaints submitted. SBC's performance at Stage Two and Stage Two - Escalated complaints is worse than the Family Group and Scottish Averages.

73.4% of Stage One complaints were closed within 5 days and 33.9% of Stage Two complaints were closed within 20 days, which is a drop of 5.6% when compared to 2022/23. The percentages in 2021/22 & 2022/23 were 49.6% and 39.5% respectively. 36.2% of Stage Two - Escalated complaints were closed within 20 working days compared to 26.8% in 2022/23, an improvement of approximately 10%. The Scottish National Average for 2023-24 is 66% and 61.3% for Stage One and Stage Two resolution respectively. SBC's performance at Stage One in relation to the Scottish and Family Group averages is positive. The Scottish National Average for 2023-24 for Stage Two - Escalated complaints is 62.2%.

In 2021 the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman introduced a fifth outcome for complaints. This is called Resolved. In 2022/23 SBC was able to measure the numbers of Resolved and partially upheld complaints for the first time from October 2022 when the new system was introduced. There were some teething issues with the use of the resolved outcome category because the outcome was not being used as it should be. In many cases it was being confused with closing a complaint. Unfortunately, this resulted in artificially inflated Resolved figures.

In 2023/24 a review was undertaken of all Resolved complaints. Those where the outcome was used incorrectly were amended, giving some confidence that the Resolved figures for 2023/24 are now accurate. The Stage One, Stage Two and Stage Two - Escalated complaints that were Resolved in 2023/24 were 5.6%, 3.4% and 0% respectively. In 2023/24 SBC has recorded fewer Resolved complaints than the Family Group and the Scottish Average.

The percentage of Stage One, Stage Two and Stage Two - Escalated complaints that were upheld in 2023/24 were 32.5%, 50.8% and 44.7% respectively. SBC's upheld rates for Stage One and Stage Two were lower than the Scottish National Averages for 2023/24 that were 35.9% and 52.2%. They were higher for Stage Two – Escalated which was 42.8%.

SBC's upheld rates dropped significantly in 2022/23 because from October 2022 we have been recording partially upheld as an outcome. Previously complaints in this category would have been part of the upheld figures. By now recording partially upheld outcomes, this allows us to better benchmark with the Family Group and Scottish Average.

2022/23 was the first time that SBC reported on the reasons for invalid complaints. This was following a request from Elected Members for more information relating to invalid complaints. It should be noted that in 2023/24, 28.5% of invalid complaints were first-time requests for a service and 36.4% were complaints about a service SBC is not responsible for, both of which fall outwith the scope of the complaints procedure.

In addition, approximately 63% of these invalid complaints are raised by customers themselves using an online form.

The average time taken to respond to complaints at Stage One has increased to 8.1 days in 2023/24 from 5.7 days in 2022/23. Similarly, the average time taken to respond to complaints at Stage Two has increased to 38 days in 2023/24 from 27.7 days in 2022/23. The average time taken to respond to Stage Two - Escalated complaints has also increased to 41.9 days in 2023/24 compared to 31.6 days in 2022/23. SBC's performance is worse than that of the Family Group and the Scottish Averages at Stage Two and Stage Two – Escalated, but better than both at Stage One.

The proportion of SBC's complaints closed against timescales for Stage One has decreased to 73.4% (from 77.3% in 2022/23), Stage Two has decreased to 33.9% (from 39.5% in 2022/23) and Stage Two - Escalated has increased to 36.2% (from 26.8% in 2022/23). SBC's average working days to close a Frontline complaint is better than the Family Group and Scottish Average, but worse than both for Stage Two and Stage Two – Escalated.

In 2023/24 we had a concern arise relating to the reuse of customers email addresses to issue surveys. To alleviate the concern we now ask customers raising their complaints face to face, via telephone or online to opt into receiving a survey. Complaints from customers received via any other channel are all opted out of receiving a survey.

While the discussions around this issue took place and the solution was built, the survey functionality was taken offline for all surveys SBC issued through Customer Services. Unfortunately, when the solution was implemented, complaint handling surveys were missed. This error was not corrected until May 2024. We therefore have very little survey data for 2023/24. Due to the possibility that the limited data presented a skewed picture, it has not been included in the report for 2023/24.

In 2023/24, the Council also received approximately 216 unsolicited comments and compliments for the services provided. This was an increase from 110 in 2022/23. Of these 151 were compliments. These compliments related to areas such as curbside waste and recycling, roads, community recycling centers, parks and environment, cemeteries, environmental health, education, planning and regulatory services, adult social care, social work and customer services.

Overall, there has been a decrease in the total number of complaints received and the number of valid complaints received has remained static. The number of valid closed complaints has increased slightly. The extrapolated trends for these three statistics are showing an increase over the years. The council's performance relating to the processing of complaints performs well against the Family Group and Scottish National averages in some indicators, specifically those relating to Stage One, but performance is poorer in relation to indicators that measure timeliness of responses specifically at Stage Two and Stage Two - Escalated. Work continues to be done on pursuing overdue complaints more vigorously, which will hopefully have a positive impact on the indicators in 2024/25.

## 5. Live Borders Complaints

Live Borders has a Complaints Handling Procedure that aligns with SBC's and the SPSO's Model Complaints Handling Procedure (MCHP). The Volume of all complaints, comments and compliments for 2023/24 are presented below as well as overall figures for 2017/18 through to 2022/23 for comparison. Figures for 2020/21 are missing due to service closures for much of the year as a result of Covid.

### Complaints Received by Reason

Complaints 2023/24	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22	2019/20	2018/19	2017/18
Price	0	2	0	0	2	2	7	4	8	14
Booking/access/info	6	10	14	9	39	42	32	61	87	55
Quality	22	9	6	14	51	27	17	45	47	47
Staff attitude	2	6	1	2	11	7	5	9	19	11
Other	5	5	5	3	18	17	24	37	21	47
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>181</b>	<b>174</b>
Comments	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	31	72	87
Compliments	6	9	5	7	27	21	14	25	12	21

The number of complaints recorded has increased from 95 in 2022/23 to 121 in 2023/24. However, this is still a decrease from 2021/22 when there were 156 complaints. In 2023/24 there were no recorded comments and the number of compliments has increased by 6.

#### Channel:

In 2023/24 21% of complaints were received online through the website, with 69% received via email, 8% via telephone and 2% received via letter.

#### Price:

The number of complaints concerning price (2%) continues to indicate that our price point is right for the Borders.

#### Booking / access/ information:

In 2022/23 booking / access & Information were the main cause for complaint at 44%. However, the introduction of a new app which greatly simplifies the booking process appears to have had an impact in reducing the number of complaints in this area. In 2023/24 32% of complaints were in relation to booking / access /information.

#### Quality:

This is now the area in which the most complaints are received (42%). They concerned temperatures, water both too hot and too cold and chlorine levels. We have rolled out staff training on pool plant as a result. Cleanliness accounted for 7% of all complaints received.

#### Staff Attitude:

In 2023/24 the number of complaints about staff attitude has increased slightly from 7% in 2022/23 to 9%.

#### Other:

In 2023/24 15% of complaints were recorded under the Other category.



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<b>Complaints Received</b>	<b>Q1</b>	<b>Q2</b>	<b>Q3</b>	<b>Q4</b>	<b>Total 2023/24</b>
Stage 1	35	30	24	27	<b>116</b>
Stage 2	0	1	1	1	<b>3</b>
Stage 2 - Escalated	0	1	1	0	<b>2</b>
<b>Total received</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>121</b>
Received online	8	2	6	9	<b>25</b>
% received online	23%	6%	23%	32%	<b>21%</b>
Complaints received per 1,000 population	0.30	0.27	0.22	0.24	<b>1.04</b>

<b>Complaints Closed</b>	<b>Q1</b>	<b>Q2</b>	<b>Q3</b>	<b>Q4</b>	<b>Total 2023/24</b>
Stage 1	35	30	24	27	116
Stage 2	0	1	1	1	3
Stage Two - Escalated	0	1	1	0	2
<b>Total Complaints Closed</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>121</b>

<b>Compliant Outcomes</b>	<b>Q1</b>	<b>Q2</b>	<b>Q3</b>	<b>Q4</b>	<b>Total 2023/24</b>
<b>Stage 1</b>					
Upheld (No.s)	26	14	8	16	<b>64</b>
Upheld (% of all complaints closed at Stage 1)	74%	47%	33%	59%	<b>55%</b>
Not Upheld (No.s)	5	6	9	6	<b>26</b>
Not Upheld (% of all complaints closed at Stage 1)	14%	20%	38%	22%	<b>22%</b>
Partially Upheld (No.s)	4	10	7	5	<b>26</b>
Partially Upheld (% of all complaints closed at Stage 1)	11%	33%	26%	19%	<b>22%</b>
Resolved (No.s)	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
Resolved (% of all complaints closed at Stage 1)	0%	0%	0%	0%	<b>0%</b>
<b>Stage 2</b>					
Upheld (No.s)	0	1	0	0	<b>1</b>
Upheld (% of all complaints closed at Stage 2)	0	100%	0%	0%	<b>33%</b>
Not Upheld (No.s)	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
Not Upheld (% of all complaints closed at Stage 2)	0%	0%	0%	0%	<b>0%</b>
Partially Upheld (No.s)	0	0	1	1	<b>2</b>
Partially Upheld (% of all complaints closed at Stage 2)	0%	0%	100%	100%	<b>67%</b>
Resolved (No.s)	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
Resolved (% of all complaints closed at Stage 2)	0%	0%	0%	0%	<b>0%</b>

Compliant Outcomes	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total 2023/24
<b>Stage Two - Escalated</b>					
Upheld (No.s)	0	0	0	0	0
Upheld (% of all complaints closed at Stage 2 - Escalated)	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Not Upheld (No.s)	0	0	1	0	1
Not Upheld (% of all complaints closed at Stage 2 - Escalated)	0%	0%	100%	0%	50%
Partially Upheld (No.s)	0	1	0	0	1
Partially Upheld (% of all complaints closed at Stage 2 - Escalated)	0%	100%	0%	0%	50%
Resolved (No.s)	0	0	0	0	0
Resolved (% of all complaints closed at Stage 2 - Escalated)	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Closed within authorised timescale	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total 2023/24
Closed at stage 1 within 5 working days	35	28	23	27	113
% Closed at stage 1 within 5 working days	100%	93%	96%	100%	97%
Closed at stage 2 within 20 working days	0	1	1	1	3
% Closed at stage 2 within 20 working days	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Stage Two - Escalated and closed within 20 working days	0	1	1	0	2
% Stage Two - Escalated and closed within 20 working days	0%	100%	100%	0%	100%

Average time (working days) spent responding to complaints	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total 2023/24
Stage 1	2.6	2.3	1.9	2.2	2.3
Stage 2	0	6	3	9	4.5
Stage 2 - Escalated	0	12	14	0	6.5

## 5.1 Live Borders Learning from Complaints

### Disabled persons and carers

We have reflected on the level of staff awareness concerning people with disabilities; also, the procedures for helping those with physical difficulties into the pool. We have shared some online training with front line staff to raise awareness on how best to approach people who require interventions to enable them.

Further to this we are introducing accessibility guides for all our facilities. Museums have long had these and we are now rolling them out across leisure facilities. These guides are useful for those with mobility issues, but also for neurodiverse people who can find out about what to expect in a facility before arriving.

## 5.2 2023/24 Comments & Compliments

Compliments are shared with our staff or the facility concerned, and the upward management structure. Compliments in the main are about our staff, their friendliness, helpfulness and knowledge. We are proud of our people.

The underwater swimming photography last Christmas time elicited a wealth of positive feedback locally.

An example of our compliments:

*“As an active member of Selkirk Leisure Centre I would like to say that the recent renovation and upgrade to the gym has been excellent. The equipment is all in working order and appears to be in good condition. We have had a few years of decline but this appears to have been reversed and I thank the team for this fine work.*

*The staff at Selkirk are friendly and hard working too. We'll done to all of them”.*