



SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL'S
**COMPLAINTS ANNUAL
PERFORMANCE REPORT**
2018-2019



Complaint



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SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL COMPLAINTS ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2018/19

FOREWORD



This year, I am pleased to present Scottish Borders Council's sixth Annual Complaints Performance Report, which details information on our performance in handling complaints from our customers between 1 April 2018 and 31 March 2019, as required by all Local Authorities. Scottish Borders Council monitors performance closely throughout the year and information in relation to complaints handling is presented at the Council's Executive Committee on a quarterly basis.

This report provides us with an opportunity to share with you how well we perform when processing and resolving complaints. It is structured around eight key performance indicators which all Local Authorities in Scotland are required to report on and which is collated and monitored by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO), annually. It also allows us to compare our performance with that of similar Local Authorities as well as our own performance over time.

In addition, this report includes results of our complaints customer satisfaction survey which helps us to see how customers perceive our performance and highlights areas where improvements are required. Further improvements can also be seen in our case studies where we have used the experiences of customers to learn and make positive changes.

We pride ourselves in providing good quality services for the residents of the Scottish Borders and continue to strive to meet the high standards expected. We hope that when a complaint is made the process to resolution is straightforward and timely. For these reasons we will continue to monitor trends and patterns in our complaints and use this information to revise and reshape the way we do things to ensure that we are meeting the needs of you – our customers.

I hope you find this latest report of interest.

Tracey Logan
Chief Executive
Scottish Borders Council

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL COMPLAINTS ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2018/19

INTRODUCTION

Scottish Borders Council (SBC) defines a complaint as:

“Any expression of dissatisfaction about our action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by us or on our behalf.”

The Council’s Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP) sets out how SBC handles the complaints received including the timescales to resolve any complaint.

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

In addition to SBC’s performance for 2018/19, the report also shows the Council’s performance for 2015/16, 2016/17 and 2017/18, with details in Appendix 1, as well as benchmarking information comparing SBC to other similar Local Authorities and Scotland for 2018/19¹.

Appendix 2 of this report is an overview of the complaints that have been escalated by customers to the SPSO because they feel their complaint was not resolved through the Council’s CHP.

Appendix 3 of this report is an overview of the complaints received by LiveBorders in 2018/19, the integrated trust that delivers sport and cultural services on behalf of SBC.

The table below shows the “Next Steps” identified in the 2017/18 Complaints Annual Performance Report along with the progress made.

¹ SBC is in a Family Group that comprises of rural Scottish Local Authorities, these are: Aberdeenshire, Argyll & Bute, Dumfries & Galloway, Eilean Siar, Highland, Orkney Islands, Scottish Borders, and Shetland Islands. Note the figures for the Family Group and Scotland are provisional and accurate at time of publication (February 2020) and 1 Local Authority in SBC’s Family Group does not collect data for Escalated complaints.

The Next Steps from 2017/18	Progress in 2018/19
Continue to engage with the Local Authority Complaints Handling Network (LACHN) to produce more meaningful benchmarking data for the sector, including quarterly data collection, and work to improve complaints handling performance across Scotland.	SBC Co-Chair the LACHN Network meetings and co-ordinate the collation of all Local Authorities (LA's) complaints data. We continue to work with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) and other LA's to improve data quality and timeliness of data collation.
Incorporate the standardised set of complaints handling customer satisfaction survey questions, being developed by the SPSO and LACHN, into SBC's set of customer satisfaction survey questions, to enable better benchmarking of complaint handling satisfaction across Scotland.	Limited progress has been made in relation to this as the SPSO have been undertaking a review of the Model Complaints Handling Procedure (MCHP) and the indicators that LA's report on. This 'next step' has been postponed until the SPSO publish the revised MCHP.
Continue to work to improve frontline (Stage One) responses and thereby reduce the number of complaints that are escalated to Stage Two.	Efforts have been focused on the development of the new complaints handling system and the new processes that accompany it. We continue to raise awareness of the importance of early resolution to complaints.
Through the development of improved complaints training and refresher training, work to reduce the length of time taken to respond to customers at all stages.	The development of the complaints training has been postponed until the SPSO publish the revised MCHP. Training content will be considered thereafter.
As part of a new Digital Customer Access project, implement a new complaints system which will automate appropriate processes and standardise complaints handling.	Requirements for the new process are currently being scoped which will enable development of the new complaints process.
Improve further our on-line guidance to assist customers when making a complaint so they are better able to differentiate between a service request and a complaint.	It is hoped that the development of the new platform will help to address some of the issues service users face in terms of differentiating valid complaints from service requests.
Complete the development and introduction of a refreshed Customer Strategy which will maximise the benefits of more customer friendly digital channels, but will also focus on ensuring that customer care is a key part of all employees' jobs. Dealing with customers in a considerate, informative and polite way is a key way to avoid complaints, but when there is cause to complain, the Customer Strategy and associated training will ensure that all employees are aware of and know how to use our CHP.	The refreshed customer strategy has been completed and published on the internet. The corporate training team are to be engaged with a view to further progressing these training actions.
As part of the Customer Strategy, introduce Customer Service training at the beginning and end of all centrally funded courses.	The Corporate Training Team are to be engaged with a view to further progressing these training actions.

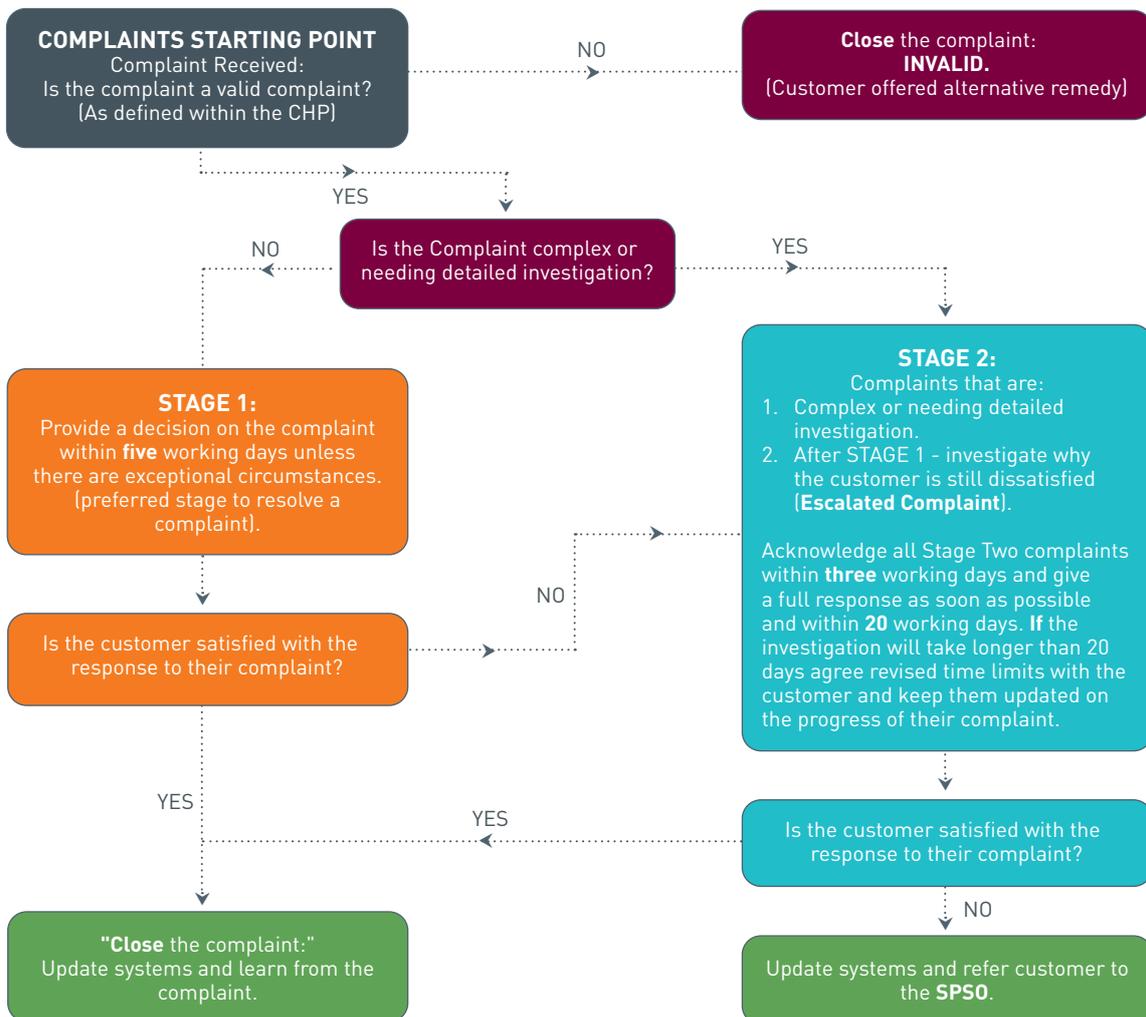


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COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCEDURE (CHP)

All complaints are valued by SBC and we strive to use them to help us improve our services. The objective of the CHP is to resolve customer dissatisfaction as close to the point of service delivery and as soon as possible at Stage One. Figure 1 is a flow chart of SBC's CHP. Complaints may be received online, in person, by telephone or letter.

FIGURE 1: COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCEDURE



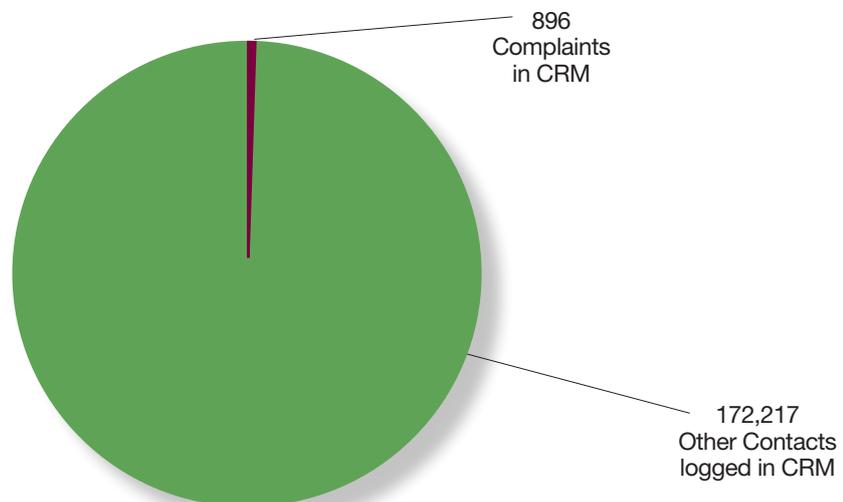
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COMPLAINTS RECEIVED IN 2018/19

The complaints received by SBC account for a very small proportion of the interactions logged in the Council's Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. In 2018/19, SBC received **896** complaints, equal to **0.5%** of the **173,113** interactions logged through the CRM.

This represents a **3.3%** decrease in complaints received compared to 2017/18 (**927**).

FIGURE 2: CUSTOMER INTERACTIONS WITH SBC IN 2018/19



Figures 3 and 4 show the complaints SBC received by channel. Figure 3 shows the proportion of complaints received by channel for 2018/19 and Figure 4 shows the change in numbers of complaints received by channel for 2015/16, 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2018/19.

For the third year running online has remained the most common channel used to log a complaint and now accounts for almost half of all complaints made (**48%**); this was again followed by complaints made by telephone which accounted for **28%**. Overall, the channels used to log complaints in 2018/19 were broadly in line with channels used in the previous three years.

FIGURE 3: CHANNEL USED FOR COMPLAINTS, 2018/19

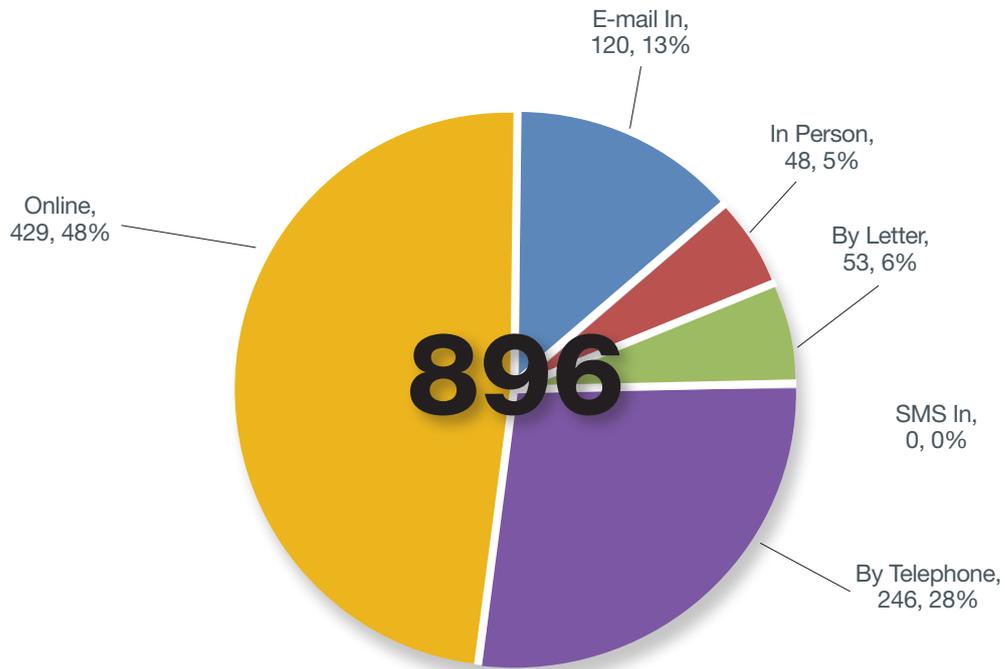
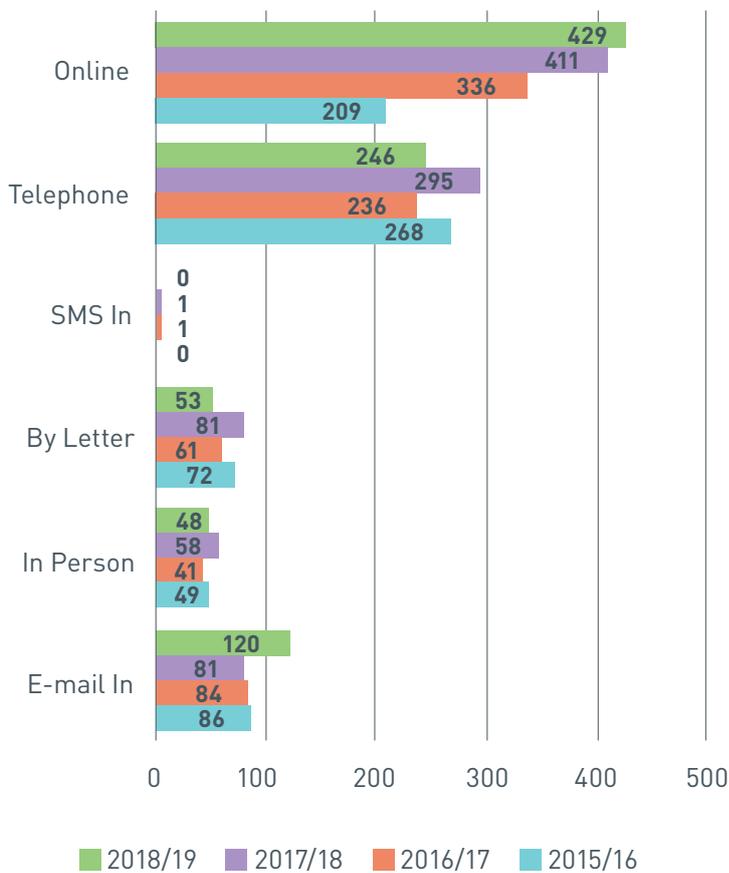
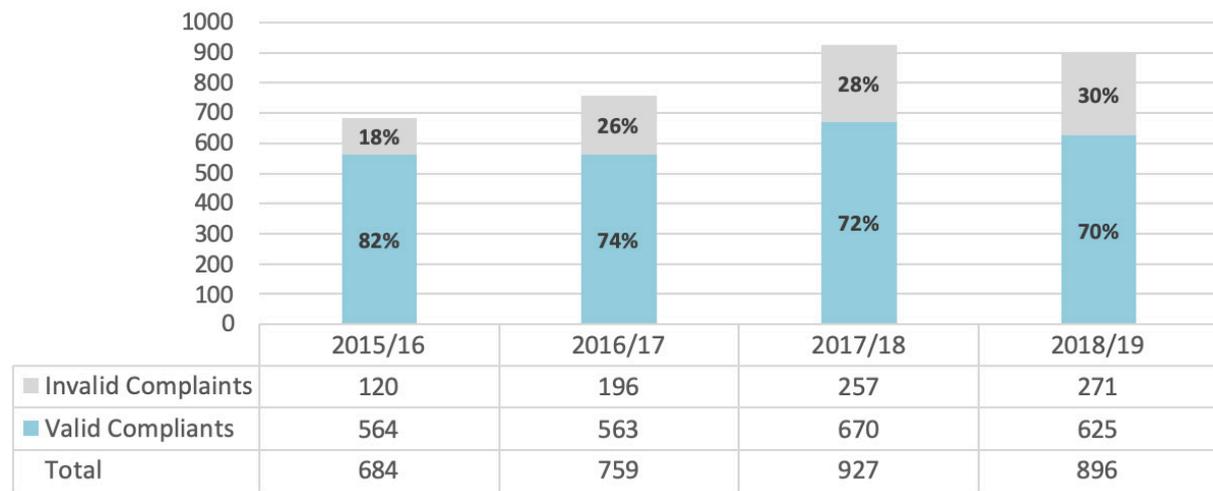


FIGURE 4: COMPLAINTS RECEIVED BY CHANNEL



The total number of complaints have decreased slightly in 2018/19 from 2017/18 (896 down from 927). In addition, the number of complaints that were classified as 'Valid' has also reduced slightly (down to 70% from 72%). Figure 5 shows the total number of complaints received for 2015/16, 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2018/19 and the proportion that were classified as 'Valid' or 'Invalid' complaints. The increase in complaints made online and via email has perhaps played a part in the increased number of 'Invalid' complaints. The online guidance provided for customers when they are making a complaint will continue to be monitored and amended in order to reduce the number of 'Invalid' complaints.

FIGURE 5: COMPLAINTS RECEIVED BY YEAR AND % VALID



When complaints are classified as 'Invalid', customers are offered an alternative remedy, appropriate to their request.

The types of complaints closed as being 'invalid' include:

- routine first time requests for a service
- service is not provided by SBC
- requests for compensation
- requests for information or an explanation of policy or practice
- insurance claims

The performance indicators in this report relate to 'Valid' complaints that were either opened or closed within the financial year. These indicators are based on the eight key performance indicators developed by the SPSO in conjunction with all 32 Scottish Local Authorities:

1. Complaints received per 1,000 of population
2. Closed complaints
3. Complaints upheld/not upheld
4. Average time spent responding to complaints
5. Complaint closed against timescales
6. Complaints that were granted authorised extensions
7. Customer Satisfaction
8. What we have learned, changed or improved

Appendix 1 contains a stage by stage analysis for indicators 2 to 6 for 2018/19 compared to 2017/18, 2016/17 and 2015/16.



INDICATOR 1

COMPLAINTS RECEIVED PER 1,000 OF 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 2018/19 SBC received **896** complaints of which **271** were closed as 'Invalid'. The remaining **625** were handled as 'Valid' complaints.

TOTAL POPULATION

The population of the Scottish Borders is estimated at **115,020**
(NRS, Mid-Year Population Estimate 2017)

OUTCOME OF COMPLAINTS HANDLED

SBC handled **625** 'Valid' complaints from customers, meaning that an average of **5.4** 'Valid' complaints were received per 1,000 of the population.

RATIO

This indicates that, on average **1** in every **184** Scottish Borders residents have registered a 'Valid' complaint about our services

COMPLAINTS RECEIVED PER 1000 OF POPULATION

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	1 Year Variance: 2018/19 less 2017/18
Population total	114,030	114,030	114,530	115,020	490
Total number of Valid complaints	564	563	670	625	-45
Complaints per 1000 population	4.9	4.9	5.8	5.4	-0.4

The population of the Scottish Borders is estimated to have increased by approximately **500** citizens (**0.43%**). The number of 'Valid' complaints received in 2018/19 (**625**) has fallen by **6.7%** when compared with 2017/18 (**670**). In addition, the number of complaints per **1,000** population has also reduced by **0.4** from **5.8** in 2017/18 to **5.4** in 2018/19.

	Benchmarking 2017/18			Benchmarking 2018/19		
	SBC	Family Group	Scotland	SBC	Family Group	Scotland
Complaints per 1000 population	5.8	5.9	11.0	5.4	5.5	10.36

In 2018/19 SBC received **5.4** complaints per **1,000** people, which was less than the Family Group average of **5.5** and Scottish average of **10.36**. It is possible that the difference between Scotland and SBC's Family Group may relate to the rural nature of the Family Group.

INDICATOR 2 CLOSED COMPLAINTS

Closed complaints are those complaints that have been closed within the financial year (April to March) regardless of when they were raised. The complexity of the complaint determines if the complaint goes through the Stage One process or the Stage Two process; the majority of complaints go through Stage One.

The number of closed complaints will differ from the number of complaints received because:

- some of the closed complaints for 2018/19 will have been received (i.e. "opened") in 2017/18;
- there may be complaints received in 2018/19 that are still going through the CHP after 31 March 2019.

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.

Escalated complaints are those complaints which have been resolved at Stage One (frontline). However, the customer was not satisfied with the response they received and they have requested the same issue be considered again at Stage Two "Investigation" Stage.

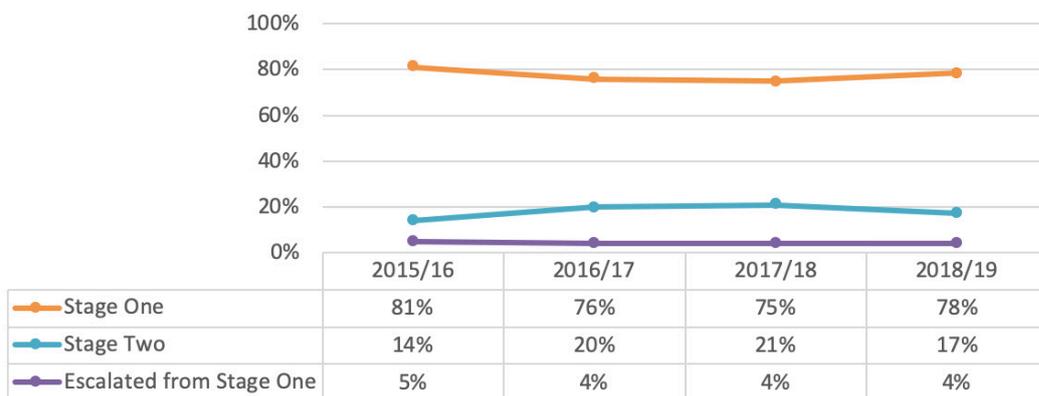
STAGE ONE COMPLAINTS
 506 complaints were closed at Stage One, representing 78.4% of all closed complaints.

STAGE TWO COMPLAINTS
 111 complaints were closed at Stage Two, representing 17.2% of all closed complaints.

ESCALATED COMPLAINTS
 28 complaints were closed after escalation from Stage One, representing 4.3% of all closed complaints.

FIGURE 6: CLOSED COMPLAINTS BY STAGE

(Note: %'s for 2015/16 and 2016/17 revised from previously published figures)



The proportion of complaints closed at Stage One has increased slightly by **3%** since 2017/18, showing improvement, however, we have not yet managed to reach the levels achieved in 2015/16 (**81%**) so work must continue to be undertaken to increase the numbers of complaints closed at Stage One. Improving on this will also save money as it costs more to handle complaints that are Escalated to Stage Two compared to handling at Stage One. The proportion of complaints closed at Stage Two has decreased by **4%** when compared with 2017/18 and is consistent with the reduced number of 'complex' complaints logged with the Council (**111** in 2018/19 compared with **144** in 2017/18). In addition, the proportion of complaints closed after Escalation has remained reasonably consistent (at around **4%**), perhaps indicating that the number of people dissatisfied with Stage One responses remains reasonably stable.



	2017/18			2018/19		
	SBC	Family Group	Scotland	SBC	Family Group	Scotland
Stage One	75.4%	78.6%	88.9%	78.4%	75.3%	87.1%
Stage Two	20.8%	18.7%	8.4%	17.2%	21.3%	9.7%
Escalated from Stage One	3.8%	2.7%	2.6%	4.3%	3.4%	3.1%

In 2018/19 SBC has closed slightly more complaints at Stage One (**78.4%**) compared to the Family Group (**75.3%**) but closed **8.7%** fewer than the average for Scotland (**87.1%**). However, the Council has closed **4.1%** fewer Stage Two complaints than the average for the Family Group, but closed **7.5%** more than the Scottish average. When looking at the proportion of complaints closed after Escalation for 2018/19 SBC has closed **0.9%** more than the Family Group and **1.2%** more than Scottish average which perhaps indicates that a slightly higher proportion of customers were dissatisfied with the response they received at Stage One compared with these two groups.

INDICATOR 3 COMPLAINTS UPHELD/ NOT UPHELD

There is a requirement for a formal outcome to be recorded for each complaint. SBC made the decision not to use a 'Partially Upheld' outcome when the CHP guidance was introduced by the SPSO. Therefore, for the purposes of this reporting, complaints are either recorded as 'Upheld' or 'Not Upheld'.

STAGE ONE COMPLAINTS

186 complaints were 'Upheld' at Stage One, representing 36.8% of complaints closed at Stage One.
 320 complaints were 'Not Upheld' at Stage One, representing 63.2% of complaints closed at Stage One.

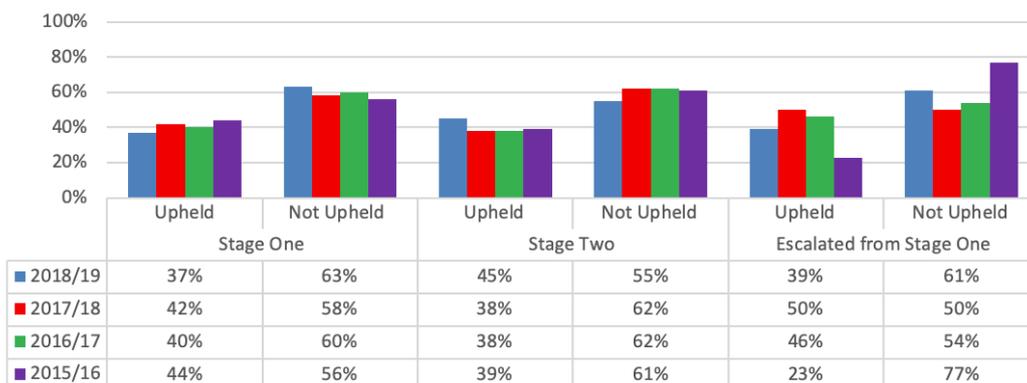
STAGE TWO COMPLAINTS

50 complaints were 'Upheld' at Stage Two, representing 45% of complaints closed at Stage Two.
 61 complaints were 'Not Upheld' at Stage Two, representing 55% of complaints closed at Stage Two.

ESCALATED COMPLAINTS

11 complaints were 'Upheld' after escalation, representing 39.3% of complaints closed after escalation.
 17 complaints were 'Not Upheld' after Escalation, representing 60.7% of complaints closed after Escalation.

FIGURE 7: COMPLAINTS UPHELD / NOT UPHELD BY STAGE AND YEAR



In 2018/19 the proportion of 'Upheld' complaints for Stage One decreased by 5% resulting in a four year low of 37% while the proportion of 'Upheld' complaints at Stage Two increased by 7% resulting in a four year high of 45%. The proportion of 'Upheld' complaints Escalated from Stage One decreased by 11% when compared with last year, meaning that 39% of complaints were 'Upheld' at this stage while 61% were not.



	2017/18			2018/19		
	SBC	Family Group	Scotland	SBC	Family Group	Scotland
Stage One - Upheld	42.0%	44.7%	65.8%	36.8%	47.9%	64.5%
Stage One - Not Upheld	58.0%	55.3%	33.5%	63.2%	52.1%	34.6%
Stage Two - Upheld	38.2%	36.9%	53.5%	45.0%	36.8%	55.9%
Stage Two - Not Upheld	61.8%	63.2%	46.2%	55.0%	63.1%	44.1%
Escalated from Stage One - Upheld	50.0%	39.6%	54.0%	39.3%	48.2%	52.3%
Escalated from Stage One - Not Upheld	50.0%	60.4%	46.5%	60.7%	51.8%	47.4%

In 2018/19 SBC's 'Upheld' rate for Stage One was below both the Family Group and the Scottish average by **11.1%** and **27.7%**, respectively. With reference to Stage Two, SBC 'Upheld' **8.2%** more complaints than the Family Group but 'Upheld' **10.9%** fewer than the average for Scotland. In addition, SBC upheld fewer Escalated Complaints than the Family Group (**8.9%**) and average for Scotland (**13%**). It should be noted that SBC does not use a 'Partially Upheld' Outcome while the Family Group and Scottish averages do and as such, for the purposes of the above table, 'Upheld' and 'Partially Upheld' outcomes for both of these groups have been added together so as not to distort the figures.

When comparing with last year's performance it can be seen that the number of complaints 'Upheld' at Stage One has decreased by **5.2%**, from **42%** to **36.8%**, while the number of complaints 'Upheld' after Escalation has decreased by **10.7%**, from **50%** to **39.3%**. In contrast, the number of complaints 'Upheld' at Stage Two has increased by **6.8%**, from **38.2%** to **45%**. It is worth noting that any fluctuations in the figures for the Escalated complaints could be due to the small numbers of complaints (11 'Upheld' & 17 'Not Upheld' for SBC) which has a bigger impact on changing the percentages. Large fluctuations can clearly be seen for both SBC and the Family Group in relation to the proportion of complaints 'Upheld' after Escalation while in contrast the Scottish average for 'Upheld' Escalated complaints has only seen a small change.

INDICATOR 4

AVERAGE TIME SPENT RESPONDING TO COMPLAINTS

This section details the average time spent in working days for a full response to complaints at each stage.

STAGE ONE COMPLAINTS

We aim to respond to and close Stage One complaints within 5 working days.
 The average time to respond to a complaint at Stage One was 4.6 working days.

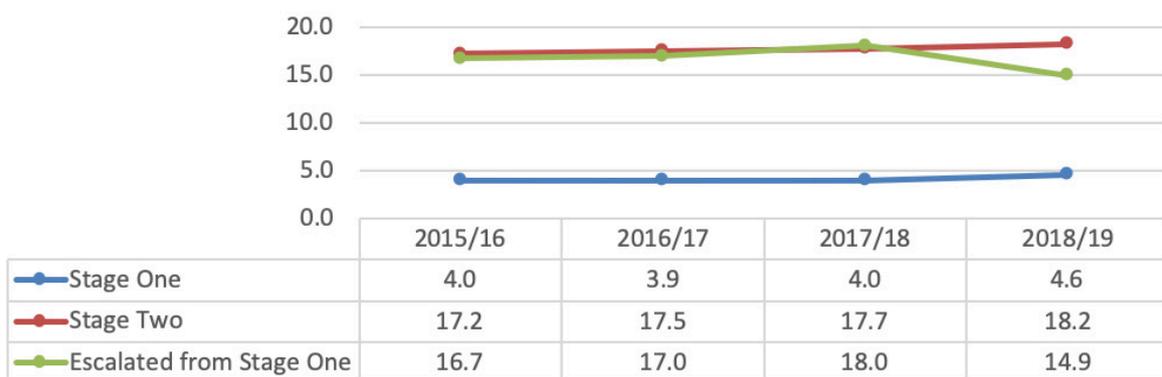
STAGE TWO COMPLAINTS

We aim to respond to and close Stage Two complaints within 20 working days.
 The average time to respond to a complaint at Stage Two was 18.2 working days.

ESCALATED COMPLAINTS

We aim to respond to Escalated complaints within 20 working days.
 The average time to respond to Escalated complaints was 14.9 working days.

FIGURE 8: AVERAGE TIME (DAYS) RESPONDING TO COMPLAINTS BY STAGE



	2017/18			2018/19		
	SBC	Family Group	Scotland	SBC	Family Group	Scotland
Stage One	4.0	8.6	8.1	4.6	7.9	7.1
Stage Two	17.7	18.2	23.8	18.2	18.5	29.9
Escalated from Stage One	18.0	18.9	15.5	14.9	20.3	23.0

For 2018/19 the average time spent for SBC, in working days, for a full response to complaints at each stage was within the respective targets of 5 and 20 days and SBC has consistently remained within these targets for the past four years. In addition, SBC's response times in 2018/19 for Stage One, Stage Two and for Escalated Complaints were all quicker than both the Family Group and Scotland averages. However, in relation to Stage One and Two the response times have increased slightly since last year from **4.0** to **4.6** days and **17.7** to **18.2** days, respectively. As such this will continue to be an area in which we will strive to improve and provide customers with responses as quickly as is practicable.

With reference to Escalated complaints the response times have seen a positive reduction from **18.0** to **14.9** days which is lower than the previous three years and quicker than Stage Two responses. As the number of Escalated complaints closed in 2018/19 (**28**) is similar to the number closed in 2017/18 (**26**) this may indicate a general improvement in the handling and resolution of complaints at this stage rather than timescales being influenced by a significant reduction in this type of complaint.

INDICATOR 5 COMPLAINTS CLOSED AGAINST TIMESCALES

This indicator reports the number and percentage of complaints at each stage which were closed in full within the set timescales of 5 and 20 working days. These include cases where an extension to the timescales has been authorised.

STAGE ONE COMPLAINTS

410 complaints were closed at Stage One within 5 working days, representing 81.0% of all Stage One complaints.

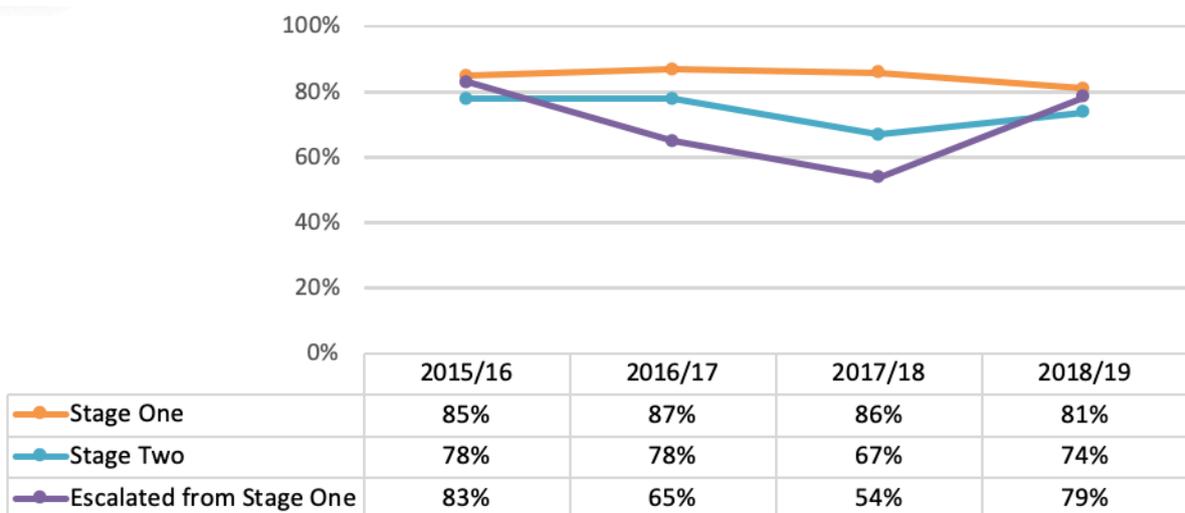
STAGE TWO COMPLAINTS

82 complaints were closed at Stage Two within 20 working days, representing 73.9% of all Stage Two complaints.

ESCALATED COMPLAINTS

22 Escalated complaints were closed within 20 working days, representing 78.6% of all complaints that were Escalated from Stage One to Stage Two.

FIGURE 9: % OF COMPLAINTS CLOSED AGAINST TIMESCALES BY STAGE AND YEAR



The proportion of SBC's complaints closed against timescales for Stage One has fallen by **5%** from **86%** in 2017/18 to **81%** in 2018/19; and as the figure for 2016/17 was **87%** SBC is experiencing a downward trend in relation to complaints closed against timescales at Stage One. In contrast, the proportion of SBC's complaints closed against timescales at Stage Two and Escalated from Stage One have increased since 2017/18 by **7%** and **25%** respectively but are still to reach the high levels experienced in 2015/16.

	2017/18			2018/19		
	SBC	Family Group	Scotland	SBC	Family Group	Scotland
Stage One	86.4%	64.5%	62.9%	81.0%	61.3%	65.0%
Stage Two	67.4%	79.4%	76.6%	73.9%	71.0%	58.2%
Escalated from Stage One	53.8%	65.3%	61.5%	78.6%	61.2%	67.4%

In 2018/19 SBC's proportion of Stage One complaints closed within timescales was higher when compared with the Family Group and Scotland by over **15%**. In addition, the proportion of Stage Two complaints closed within timescales was higher than the Family Group and Scotland by **2.9%** and **15.7%**, respectively; and for Escalated complaints SBC closed **17.4%** and **11.2%** more than the Family Group and Scottish averages, respectively.

Complaints handled at the Investigation Stage of the CHP are typically complex or require a more detailed examination before the Council can state its position. An investigation aims to establish all the facts relevant to the points made in the complaint and to give the customer a full, objective and proportionate response that represents the Council's final position. While this can mean that complaints are not always closed within the timescales, SBC appears to have improved upon this for both Stage Two and Escalated complaints when comparing with 2017/18.

INDICATOR 6 COMPLAINTS THAT WERE GRANTED AUTHORISED EXTENSIONS

This indicator reports the number and percentages of complaints at each stage where an extension to the 5 or 20 working day timeline was authorised.

It does not however include the numbers of complaints where responses were late and an extension was either not recorded or not requested.

STAGE ONE COMPLAINTS

14 complaints closed at Stage One were granted an extension, representing 2.8% of Stage One complaints.

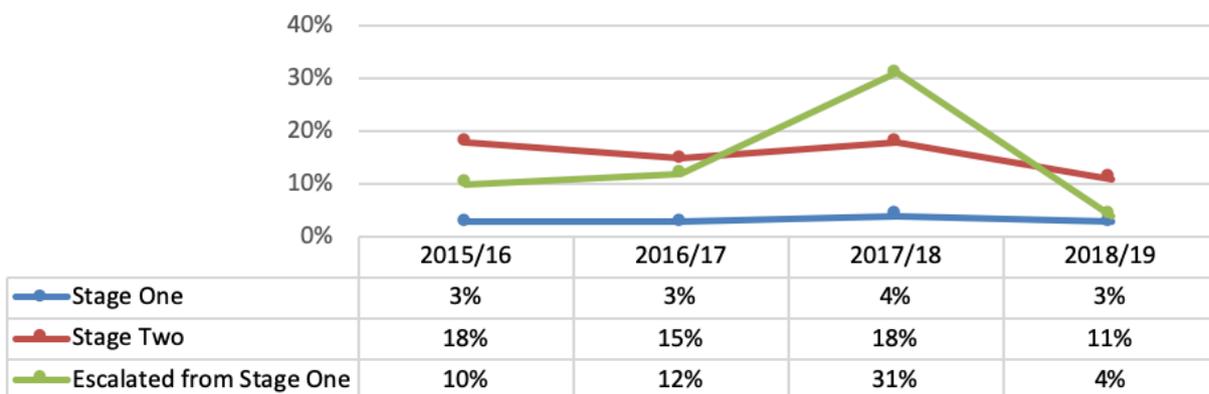
STAGE TWO COMPLAINTS

12 complaints closed at Stage Two were granted an extension, representing 10.8% of Stage Two complaints.

ESCALATED COMPLAINTS

1 complaints closed after being Escalated from Stage One to Stage Two were granted an extension, representing 3.6% of Escalated complaints.

FIGURE 10: % OF COMPLAINTS GRANTED AUTHORISED EXTENSION BY STAGE



The proportion of SBC's complaints that were granted an authorised extension (i.e. agreed by the customer) has decreased at all stages. Further work is required to determine whether this is because improvements need to be made to communicate with customers if more time is needed to processes/ investigate their complaints or whether customers have been contacted to request an extension but this has not been recorded.

The proportion of Stage One complaints granted an authorised extension has decreased slightly from **4%** to **3%** between 2017/18 and 2018/19 but is in line with 2015/16 and 2016/17. The proportion of Stage Two complaints granted an authorised extension has decreased from **18%** in 2017/18 to **11%** in 2018/19, constituting a four year low. In addition, the quantity of complaints Escalated from Stage One to Stage Two granted an authorised extension decreased from **31%** in 2017/18 to **4%** in 2018/19, also comprising a four year low.

	2017/18			2018/19		
	SBC	Family Group	Scotland	SBC	Family Group	Scotland
Stage One	3.8%	5.6%	4.4%	2.8%	5.5%	3.8%
Stage Two	18.1%	11.1%	10.5%	10.8%	8.8%	10.1%
Escalated from Stage One	30.8%	10.4%	11.1%	3.6%	11.2%	10.5%

The proportion of closed complaints at Stage One, granted an authorised extension in 2018/19, was below that of the Family Group and Scottish averages by **2.7%** and **1%**, respectively. In contrast this figure was slightly higher for Stage Two complaints (**2%** when compared with the Family Group and **0.7%** when compared with the Scottish average) but in relation to Escalated complaints this figure was noticeably below that of the Family Group and Scottish averages by **7.6%** and **6.9%**, respectively. This perhaps reinforces the need to undertake further analysis to determine whether this is a recording omission or if it is because extensions are not being requested. It is worth noting that the proportion of complaints granted an authorised extension has reduced across all stages for both the Family Group and Scottish average, with the exception of complaints Escalated from Stage One for the Family Group which has increased marginally by **0.8%**.

INDICATOR 7

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

COMPLAINTS HANDLING CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY 2018/19

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.

The survey asks the customer to state how satisfied or dissatisfied they were with:

- Being able to deal with someone who could help you with your complaint?
- That someone took responsibility for your complaint?
- Being given information that was easy to understand?
- Being given all the information you needed?
- Being treated fairly?
- Being kept up to date on the progress of your complaint?
- How well the staff did their job?
- The time taken to deal with your complaint from start to finish?
- The final outcome?

Not all customers who made a complaint were invited to take part in the survey. There are a number of reasons for this including: the sensitive nature of some complaints; some customers may have received an invitation for a previous closed complaint; the customer has indicated they do not want a survey; or the complaint has been made anonymously. Over the year **645** complaints were closed, and **131** survey invitations were sent, representing **20%** of the closed complaints.

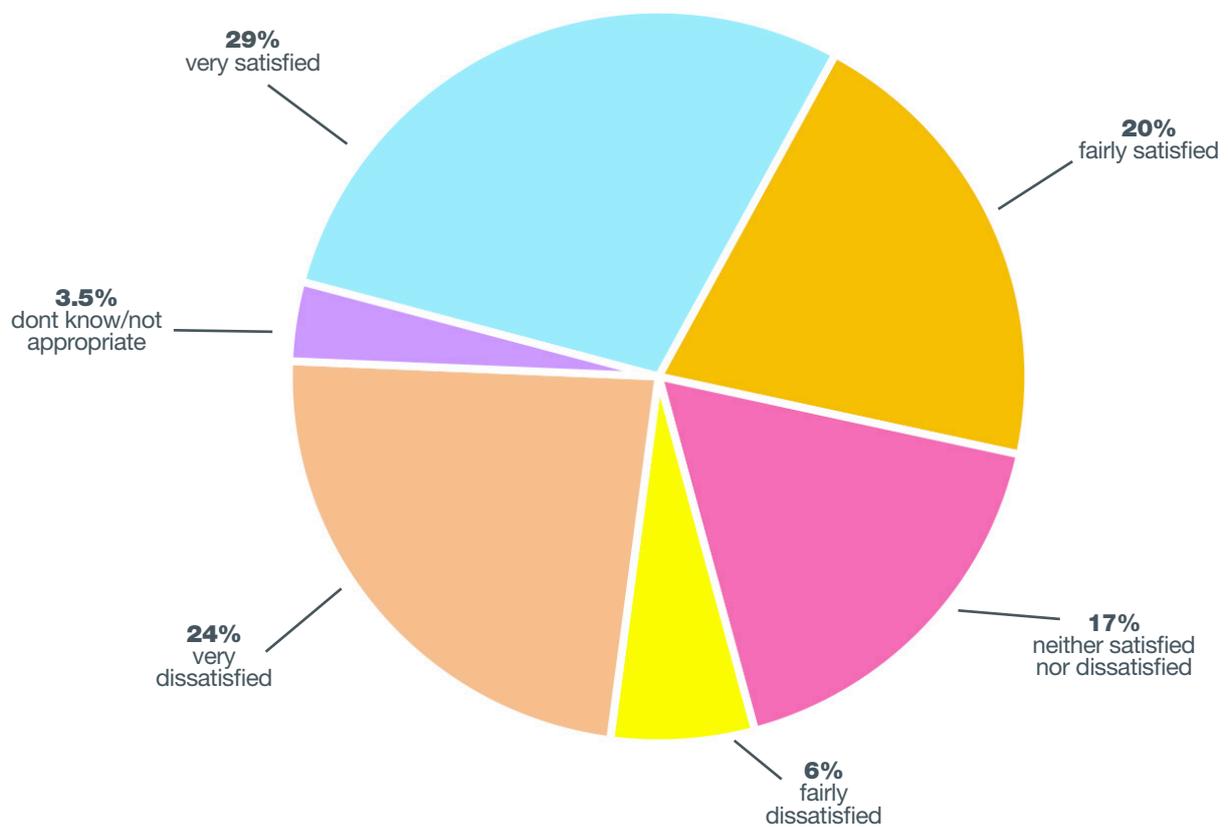
Of the **131** invitations that were issued, only **33** were returned giving a return rate of only **25%**. As the number of people that have completed the survey is very low, it is difficult to get a full picture of how satisfied our customers are with how their complaint was handled. Of those that responded, the aggregate responses to questions show that **49%** of responses were either very or fairly satisfied compared to **30%** very or fairly dissatisfied. The question reflecting the highest level of satisfaction was around information being easy to understand (**59%** were very or fairly satisfied), however this has fallen from **76%** when compared with 2017/18. The question reflecting the highest level of dissatisfaction was around the final outcome (**47%** were very or fairly dissatisfied) and it is worth noting that this figure has increased slightly from **44%** when compared with 2017/18.

Survey Invitations Sent:	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
No. survey Invitations Sent	146	225	131
No. closed complaints	593*	691	645
% of customers invited to respond to the survey	25%	33%	20%
Return Rate:			
No. Returned	26	25	33
% Return Rate	18%	11%	25%
Responses:			
- Either Fairly or Very Satisfied	57%	60%	49%
- Either Fairly or Very Dissatisfied	20%	20%	30%

*please note: 2016/17 No. of closed complaints is revised figure



FIGURE 11: OVERALL COMPLAINTS HANDLING CUSTOMER SATISFACTION 2018/19



COMPLIMENTS DURING 2018/19

During 2018/19, SBC recorded over **104** unsolicited compliments for the services provided, compared to **140** in 2017/18 and **125** in 2016/17.

Compliments covered a range of topics such as: kerb-side waste and recycling, road and drainage, community recycling centres, library services, health and social care and customer services.

EXAMPLES INCLUDE:

Customer called to say that they have recently used the civic amenity site in Duns on 3 occasions and on various days and times. On each occasion the site has been very clean and tidy and the staff have been very helpful and polite. They noticed that this helpful approach was also extended to other site users.

Customer called in as he requested a new food waste bin for his house, he was told this could take up to 10 working days, however, his bin was delivered out the next day and he wanted to pass on his thanks to the team for their quick response. He is extremely happy with the time it took for the bin to be delivered.

Just to say thank you all!! You have always been so helpful and patient each time we have visited the library, and very welcoming with your lovely smiles and cheery disposition.

I just wanted to thank the Council for fixing the pot holes and resurfacing our road. I had phoned to ask if this could be done a couple of weeks ago and am delighted with the speedy response.....

Customer called in after dealing with her request and she wanted to comment that every person she has spoken with within the SBC in regards to her and her family have been extremely helpful and really friendly and considerate. She had moved from another local authority area and just emphasized how nice it was to have friendly people who listen at the other end of the phone.

Customer called in after several trips to the refuse centre at Langshaw Road, to dispose of garden waste, and just wanted to say that the staff there are excellent. "They are always helpful and supportive, giving a hand when needed. Everybody needs to hear just how good they are."

Customer wishes to thank staff member in Customer Services and in Pest Control for such a speedy service. She phoned about a wasp nest and someone was on site within half an hour. She has just moved into the Borders and she is very appreciative of excellent SBC service received.

"I used the online reporting tool to report potholes on two separate roads. The repairs to one were completed extremely quickly and the other road is currently closed for three days for resurfacing works. I would just like to say thank you for the prompt response to the reports and the repairs which have / are taking place."

Customer emailed to say that they forgot to put out their bin on Boxing Day morning, but that the crew found and emptied it. "Please pass on our thanks to the crew concerned for their thoughtfulness".

Customer visited Hawick contact centre with a query and wanted to add at the end how happy he is with the service he receives every time he goes into the office. He feels that staff are a "breath of fresh air" compared to the Council where he used to live; that they are always so friendly and helpful and it's nice seeing staff without glass partitions.

Mr M came in to the office today to thank staff for getting his new bus pass sent out so quickly, it only took two days. He is very pleased with the service as he uses his bus pass quite a lot.

"To All at Coldstream Library - such a lovely place to visit. You all make it so easy to ask questions, seek special books, discuss and relax. Thank you so much!"

Customer phoned in to say that the Gardens at Galashiels Bank Street are looking beautiful this year and she wanted to thank the team for their effort as it has certainly brightened up the town. "A HUGE WELL DONE TO THE TEAM".

Customer called to thank a staff member for how they had dealt with her as she and her husband had been very nervous about calling and what people would say about her asking for support and how it looked admitting that they may need help. Customer said that staff member had been very supportive, confident, knowledgeable and informative when discussing what was available and that she had felt so much happier about making the call. The customer and her husband are now confident that there is support available and that they are not alone.

"I write to show my appreciation of the considerate refuse bin lorry drivers I encountered today whilst riding my young horse. I was riding my youngster along a single track (unclassified) in Gordon, when I met an SBC bin collection lorry approaching. The driver and his colleague were very considerate. They moved their lorry over to the verge, switched the engine and flashing lights off and waited until we were safely passed. I really appreciated this gesture."

INDICATOR 8

WHAT WE HAVE LEARNT, CHANGED OR IMPROVED

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.

Annual Complaints Performance Reports

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 have been made to services as a result of complaints and some examples of case studies are detailed in this section.

CASE STUDY 1

Road Markings

Customer called in to report that road markings on the A698 on the Jedburgh to Kelso road had not been replaced after the road surface was repaired during the summer. The customer was specifically referring to red hatched markings which split the carriageway from a nearby junction. These markings are used to help separate traffic and to make it safer for motorists, when for example, they turn into junctions. The customer also wanted to point out that he had tried to contact the Council on several occasions but had received no reply.

Following a full implementation of the Roads Review the Council has taken the decision to include the lining and application of surface texture products (such as red hatched markings) to the surfacing and surface dressing contracts. This means that going forward it will be the full responsibility of the Principal Contractor to order, programme, coordinate and install surface texture products – thereby reducing the likelihood of potential delays in completing the scheme works.

In addition, the customer was offered an apology for the delay in responding to his complaint as well as an update on the progress of the work being undertaken to replace the road markings. The customer was satisfied with this response and was appreciative of the phone call.

CASE STUDY 2

School Transport

Customer contacted SBC in September 2018 to report that a change in the timings of school transport for her child who has complex needs resulted in them being picked up late, arriving at school late and also being returned home later than normal. The transport provider, on one occasion, was also not able to inform the child's mother what time they would be dropped home.

After investigation it was acknowledged that these changes failed to take into account the importance of the child's routine which, due to their needs, cannot be altered 'at the last minute'; and failed to take into account the needs of the other children who also use the service.

The Council decided that, going forward, any major changes in the transport for these children should be subject to consultation with parents or respective guardians. In addition, the Council's Passenger Transport Unit has adopted responsibility for ensuring that this has been undertaken by the Education Department before modifying existing contracts or arranging new ones with transport providers.

CASE STUDY 3

Missed Trade Waste Collections

Customer contacted SBC in August 2018 to report that their trade waste had not been collected in Innerleithen for two consecutive Fridays. SBC had recently undertaken a review of the trade waste collection routes and implemented changes. As a result of these changes customers had been reminded to ensure that they present their waste by 7am on collection day (as has always been the case). Customer perception of the 'normal' timing of the route would be altered as operatives were starting the route from a different base. For operational reasons SBC Waste Services do not state collection times, only the collection day.

The original route which operated out of Peebles resulted in the trade waste being picked up at roughly similar times each Friday and businesses in the high street were familiar with this. This route also typically allowed the customer time to present the collection in the morning when their premises were opened. However, the new route which was operating out of Galashiels meant that the collections were picked up slightly earlier than that which the business was familiar (even though operatives were still adhering to their standard operating procedures and collecting waste on the date that was specified and communicated) and would require them to present their waste on Thursday nights. While this in itself was not an issue, the fact that the trade waste would be left outside overnight resulted in health and safety/obstruction concerns as well as the risk that the bags would be attacked by wildlife or would be opened by people scavenging.

After investigation it was found that the complaint regarding missed waste collections was unjustified because the changes to the route were communicated with customers and it is a standard request that waste is presented by 7am. However, after discussion between the business owner concerned and SBC's Waste Department it was decided that the route would be altered so that general trade waste would be collected on Friday afternoon's as the trade waste operatives were travelling back to Galashiels from Peebles. This would ensure that there would be no requirement to present trade waste on a Thursday evening thus negating the potential risks that came with doing so.

While this complaint was, in essence, unjustified, SBC still learned lessons and implemented positive changes as a result.

CONCLUSIONS

During 2018/19, SBC received fewer complaints than the previous year, in line with a reduction in complaints received for the Family Group. When analysed it can be seen that (where recorded) a significant proportion of complaints received (but not necessarily upheld) relate to:

- Council Tax
- Grounds Maintenance
- Missed Bin Collections*
- Potholes
- Staff Attitude

The number of received complaints has decreased slightly this year and continues to form only a very small portion of the interactions with customers recorded by the Council and logged in the CRM system. **896** complaints were received compared to **173,113** total interactions logged on the CRM system. This equates to **0.5%** of interactions logged with SBC in 2018/19. In addition, the number of complaints per 1,000 of the population of the Scottish Borders is **5.4** which is lower than both that of the Family Group and Scottish averages and has reduced from **5.8** in 2017/18. The Family Group average has also decreased at the same rate indicating fewer complaints across the board for this group of LA's.

For the fourth year running, complaints submitted online have continued to increase and online is the most frequently used channel to submit a complaint, followed by telephone, although this figure has fallen from last year.

Analysis has shown that this year, **271** out of the **896** complaints received were 'Invalid' which equates to **30%** of all complaints. In the previous year (2017/18) **257** of the **927** complaints raised were 'Invalid', which equated to **28%** of all complaints received. The 2017/18 report identified the appearance of a clear link between the increase of complaints submitted online and the increasing number of 'Invalid' complaints. This appears to be supported by the this year's findings and therefore it is essential for the Council to ensure that the website provides good, clear guidance to customers to help them differentiate between service requests and genuine complaints. This is an area that will continue to be monitored in the coming year.

In 2018/19, the majority of complaints closed were handled at Stage One and this figure has increased since 2017/18 from **75%** to **78%**. The Model Complaints Handling Procedure seeks to ensure that complaints are handled at the earliest opportunity and as close to the point of service delivery as possible. In 2018/19 SBC has closed **3.1%** more Stage One complaints than the Family Group but has closed **8.7%** less than the Scottish average. Closing complaints at Stage One results in fewer complaints being closed at Stage Two – **111 (17%)** in 2018/19 compared with **144 (21%)** in 2017/18. This should mean that it takes less time to respond to complaints, and while this is true for Escalated Complaints which took on average **14.9** days in 2018/19 compared with **18** days in 2017/18, it took slightly longer to respond to complaints at Stage Two (**18.2** days in 2018/19 compared with **17.7** days in 2017/18). The time it takes to respond to complaints at Stage Two has steadily increased over the past four years and means that it is taking longer to handle complaints and customers are waiting longer for a response.

The number of complaints that SBC 'Upheld' in 2018/19 has increased for Stage Two with **7%** more complaints 'Upheld' than in 2017/18. The proportion of complaints 'Upheld' at Stage One and for Escalated complaints has decreased since 2017/18 by **5%** and **11%**, respectively. When comparing with the Family Group and average for Scotland SBC has 'Upheld' fewer complaints for both Stage One and Escalated complaints but 'Upheld' more complaints than the Family Group when looking at Stage Two.

*missed bin collections are only recorded as a complaint if it has been reported previously but remains an issue."



The average time taken to respond to complaints at Stage One has increased and it currently takes longer to process complaints at this stage than for the previous three years (**4.6** days compared with an average of **4**). As stated before the average time taken to respond to complaints at Stage Two has continued to increase from **17.2** days in 2015/16 to **18.2** days in 2018/19, however, the time taken to process Escalated complaints has fallen and is the lowest in four years. Furthermore, **81%** of Stage One complaints were closed within the 5 day target which is below the **86%** that were closed in 2017/18, although it is higher than that of both the Family Group and Scottish averages. **74%** of Stage Two and **79%** of Escalated complaints were closed within the 20 day target indicating improved performance since 2017/18 and both figures are above that of the Family Group and Scottish averages.

The proportion of authorised extensions has decreased at all Stages when compared with 2017/18, most notably in relation to Escalated complaints which has reduced from **31%** to **4%**. This figure is also below that of the Family Group and Scottish averages. These reductions are somewhat in line with the averages for the Family Group and Scotland as all but one indicator has reduced marginally since 2017/18. As stated above further work is needed to determine whether this is a recording omission or if more could be done to communicate with customers. Irrespective of the cause, the need to update customers on the progress of their complaint will be included in the training package that will be launched in line with the new Customer Relationship Management system.

Despite a low return rate of **25%**, SBC's Complaints Handling Satisfaction Survey showed **49%** were either fairly or very satisfied, however this has fallen from **60%** in 2017/18. The area with the most favourable overall responses relates to information being easy to understand with **59%** of respondents stating that they were fairly or very satisfied, however, in line with the overall satisfaction rate this has fallen from **76%** when compared with 2017/18. The survey continues to provide the Council with additional insight to drive improvement.

Over **104** compliments were received in the year (compared with **140** in 2017/18), covering a wide range of services. A number of compliments recognised the Waste and Community Recycling Services for quick responses to waste related issues and their attitude when interacting with the public; the Roads Team for their quick responses to issues such as pot holes and general maintenance of the roads; the neighbourhood's team for their maintenance of public spaces; and the general helpful attitude of staff across various contact centres and libraries and for providing helpful support and knowledge for those trying to access services such as social care. Going forward it is hoped that a greater focus on customer service training at the beginning and end of all centrally funded training courses will build on this good practice and further disseminate this helpfulness and positivity. Where possible, compliments are shared with individuals and teams to highlight the good work being undertaken.

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL COMPLAINTS ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT 2018/19

NEXT STEPS

Theme	Description
Benchmarking and Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Continue to engage with the Local Authority Complaints Handling Network (LACHN) to learn from other councils and identify opportunities to further improve SBC's complaints handling. » Review and enhance reporting to ensure continued focus and transparency on complaints handling performance.
Staff Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Building on the Customer Strategy and existing customer service training ensure staff are aware of the complaints handling procedure and trained regarding the importance and benefits gained from good complaints handling.
Digital Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Complete development of complaints handling system which will aid in automating and standardising complaints handling, ensuring appropriate training for relevant staff and adequate guidance for customers/end-users.
New Model Complaints Handling Procedure (MCHP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Ensure that the requirements of the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman's (SPSO) revised Model Complaints Handling Procedure (MCHP) are implemented and reported upon within the required timeframe.

APPENDIX 1

STAGE ANALYSIS FOR INDICATORS 2 - 6

STAGE ONE

STAGE 1 COMPLAINTS

	2015/16		2016/17		2017/18		2018/19		4 Year Variance		1 Year Variance	
	2018/19 less 2015/16		2018/19 less 2017/18									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Indicator 2: Closed Complaints (% of all closed)	480	81.4% #	450	75.9% #	521	75.4%	506	78.4%	26	-3.0%	-15	3.0%
Indicator 3: Complaints Upheld (% of Stage 1)	213	44.4%	180	40.0%	219	42.0%	186	36.8%	-27	-7.6%	-33	-5.2%
Indicator 3: Complaints NOT Upheld (% of Stage 1)	267	55.6%	270	60.0%	302	58.0%	320	63.2%	53	7.6%	18	5.2%
Indicator 4: Average Time Spent Responding to Complaints (Days)	4.0	-	3.9	-	4.0	-	4.6	-	0.6	-	0.6	-
Indicator 5: Complaints Closed Against Timescales (% of Stage 1)	409	85.2%	390	86.7%	450	86.4%	410	81.0%	1	-4.2%	-40	-5.4%
Indicator 6: Complaints That Were Granted Authorised Extensions (% of Stage 1)	16	3.3%	14	3.1%	20	3.8%	14	2.8%	-2	-0.5%	-6	-1.0%

Notes: # %'s revised from figures previously published

Between 2015/16 and 2018/19 the proportion of complaints closed at Stage One has decreased by **3%** from **81.4%** to **78.4%**, however, in relation to 2017/18 this figure has increased by **3%** from **75.4%** to **78.4%**. This general decrease is counter to the SPSO goal of closing complaints at the first point of contact (more quickly), although improvements are being seen.

Over the four years the proportion of Stage One complaints that were 'Upheld' has decreased from **44.4%** to **36.8%** which means that in 2018/19 we 'Upheld' **7.6%** fewer complaints than in 2015/16.

Indicator 4 shows that the average time spent responding to complaints at Stage One has increased slightly (**0.6**) and it now takes on average $\frac{1}{2}$ a day longer to respond to complaints than it did in 2015/16.

Indicator 5 shows that the proportion of complaints at Stage One closed against timescales (within 5 days) has decreased over the four years from **85.2%** to **81.0%**, meaning that **4.2%** fewer Stage One complaints are being closed, within timescale, than in 2015/16.

The percentage of Stage One complaints granted an authorised extension has fallen from **3.3%** to **2.8%** over the four years, although this figure did increase to **3.8%** in 2017/18 before falling again.

STAGE TWO

STAGE 2 COMPLAINTS

	2015/16		2016/17		2017/18		2018/19		4 Year Variance		1 Year Variance	
	2018/19 less 2015/16		2018/19 less 2017/18									
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Indicator 2: Closed Complaints (% of all closed)	80	13.6% #	117	19.7% #	144	20.8%	111	17.2%	31	3.6%	-33	-3.6%
Indicator 3: Complaints Upheld (% of Stage 2)	31	38.8%	44	37.6%	55	38.2%	50	45.0%	19	6.2%	-5	6.8%
Indicator 3: Complaints NOT Upheld (% of Stage 2)	49	61.2%	73	62.4%	89	61.8%	61	55.0%	12	-6.2%	-28	-6.8%
Indicator 4: Average Time Spent Responding to Complaints (Days)	17.2	-	17.5	-	17.7	-	18.2	-	1.0	-	0.5	-
Indicator 5: Complaints Closed Against Timescales (% of Stage 2)	62	77.5%	91	77.8%	97	67.4%	82	73.9%	20	-3.6%	-15	6.5%
Indicator 6: Complaints That Were Granted Authorised Extensions (% of Stage 2)	14	17.5%	17	14.5%	26	18.1%	12	10.8%	-2	-6.7%	-14	-7.3%

Notes: # %'s revised from figures previously published

Between 2015/16 and 2018/19 the proportion of complaints closed at Stage Two has increased from **13.6%** to **17.2%**. However, it should be noted that when comparing this figure with that seen in 2017/18 there has actually been a slight decrease of **3.6%**.

Over the four years the proportion of Stage Two complaints that were 'Upheld' has increased from **38.8%** to **45.0%**, resulting in a four year high.

Indicator 4 shows that the average time to respond to complaints at Stage Two has increased slightly over the four years from **17.2** days to **18.2** days. While this is still within the 20 working days timescale set out in the CHP the time taken to respond to complaints has been increasing year on year since 2015/16 and it now takes, on average, 1 day longer to respond to complaints at Stage Two.

Indicator 5 shows that the proportion of complaints at Stage Two closed against timescales (within 20 days) has reduced over the four years from **77.5%** to **73.9%**, however it should be noted that when directly comparing with 2017/18 this figure has actually increased from **67.4%** which was the lowest from across the four years.

The percentage of Stage Two complaints granted an authorised extension has fallen from **18.1%** in 2017/18 to **10.8%** which constitutes a decrease of **7.3%** and while this percentage has fluctuated over the past four years **10.8%** represents a four year low.

ESCALATED FROM STAGE ONE

COMPLAINTS ESCALATED FROM STAGE ONE												
	2015/16		2016/17		2017/18		2018/19		4 Year Variance		1 Year Variance	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	2018/19 less 2015/16	%	2018/19 less 2017/18	%
Indicator 2: Closed Complaints (% of all closed)	30	5.1% #	26	4.4% #	26	3.8%	28	4.3%	-2	-0.8%	2	0.5%
Indicator 3: Complaints Upheld (% of Escalated)	7	23.3%	12	46.2%	13	50.0%	11	39.3%	4	16.0%	-2	-10.7%
Indicator 3: Complaints NOT Upheld (% of Escalated)	23	76.7%	14	53.8%	13	50.0%	17	60.7%	-6	-16.0%	4	10.7%
Indicator 4: Average Time Spent Responding to Complaints (Days)	16.7	-	17.0	-	18.0	-	14.9	-	-1.8	-	-3.1	-
Indicator 5: Complaints Closed Against Timescales (% of Escalated)	25	83.3%	17	65.4%	14	53.8%	22	78.6%	-3	-4.7%	8	24.8%
Indicator 6: Complaints That Were Granted Authorised Extensions (% of Escalated)	3	10.0%	3	11.5%	8	30.8%	1	3.6%	-2	-6.4%	-7	-27.2%

Notes: # %'s revised from figures previously published

Between 2015/16 and 2018/19 the proportion of closed complaints that have Escalated from Stage One has reduced from **5.1%** to **4.3%** but in direct relation to 2017/18 this figure has actually increased from **3.8%** to **4.3%**, perhaps indicating that more customers were unhappy with the Stage One response they received from SBC in 2018/19 but more happy with Stage One responses than in 2015/16.

Indicator 3 shows that since 2015/16 the proportion of Escalated complaints that were 'Upheld' has increased from **23.3%** to **39.3%**. However, this is actually a decrease on the figures for 2016/17 and 2017/18 which were **46.2%** and **50.0%** respectively.

Indicator 4 shows that over the four years the average time spent responding to complaints Escalated from Stage One has decreased from **16.7** days to **14.9** days and this has further decreased when comparing directly with 2017/18 which stood at **18.0** days. 2017/18 saw the longest response time for the four years and when comparing with this year we responded to Escalated complaints approximately 3 days quicker.

Indicator 5 shows that the proportion of complaints Escalated from Stage One closed against timescales (within 20 days) has reduced over the four years from **83.3%** to **78.6%**, however, when directly comparing with 2017/18 this figures has risen from **53.8%** and signals the end of a three year negative downward trend. The percentage of complaints Escalated from Stage One that were granted authorised extensions has fallen from **10.0%** to **3.6%** over the four years and while this figure has fluctuated over the four years **3.6%** in 2018/19 is significantly lower than the previous three years.

Due to the small numbers of Escalated complaints, it should be noted that any changes to the figures has a bigger impact on changing the percentages.

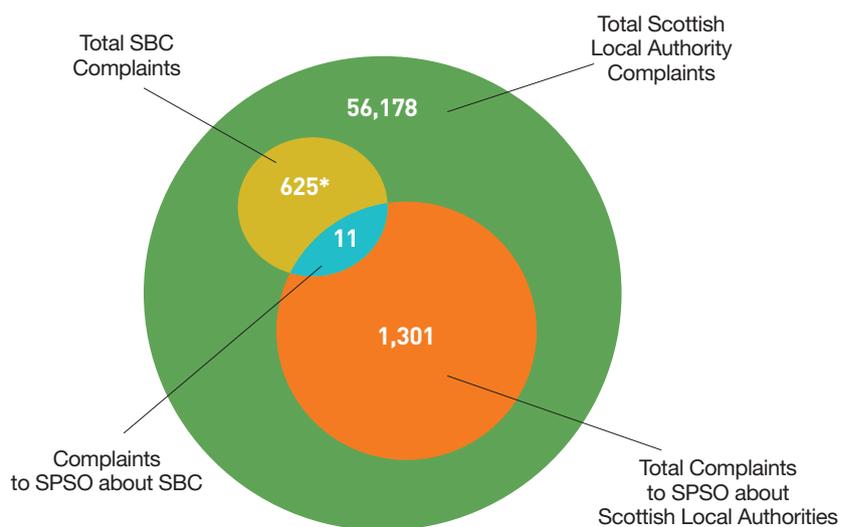
APPENDIX 2

SPSO LEARNING AND IMPROVEMENT

If, after we have fully investigated a complaint, the customer is still dissatisfied with our decision or the way in which we have dealt with their complaint, the customer can ask the SPSO to look at the complaint.

In 2018/19 the SPSO received **11** complaints about SBC. This is equal to **0.8%** 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 by figure 12.

FIGURE 12: ILLUSTRATION OF ALL SPSO COMPLAINTS FOR 2018/19”



*** Total Number of Valid Complaints**

The **11** complaints to the SPSO equate to a **59.3%** decrease on the **27** received for 2017/18.

SPSO Received Complaints /Year	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
SPSO Received Complaints about SBC	33	20	27	11
SBC Complaints as % all for Scottish Local Authority sector	1.9%	1.3%	1.8%	0.8%
% Change to previous year	0.0%	-39.4%	35.0%	-59.3%

In 2018/19 the SPSO closed **24** complaints relating to SBC, of which **1 (4%)** were considered to be 'Fit for SPSO' compared to **30%** for 2017/18, **68%** for 2016/17 and **27%** for 2015/16. In 2018/19, only **1** complaint about SBC to the SPSO was 'Upheld/Partially Upheld' compared with **5** in 2017/18, **2** in 2016/17 and **3** in 2015/16. The table below shows the results of the closed SPSO complaints related to SBC and how SBC compares to Scotland for the Local Authority Sector.

SPSO Closed Complaints for SBC / Year	2015/16			2016/17			2017/18			2018/19		
	SBC Count	SBC %	Sector %	SBC Count	SBC %	Sector %	SBC Count	SBC %	Sector %	SBC Count	SBC %	Sector %
Closed	33	1.9%	2.9%	19	1.3%	2.1%	30	1.9%	2.7%	24	1.9%	2.3%
Stage SPSO Complaint Closed												
Advice	7	2.1%	19.0%	3	0.4%	49.0%	12	1.9%	42.0%	2	0.7%	22.0%
Early Resolution 1	12	2.1%	32.0%	0	0%	0%	0	0%	0%	0	0%	0%
Early Resolution 2	1	1.2%	5.0%	11	2.0%	37.0%	14	1.9%	47.0%	20	3.2%	49.0%
Investigation 1	4	3.7%	6.0%	0	0%	0%	0	0%	0%	0	0%	0%
Investigation 2	0	0%	0%	2	1.3%	10.0%	4	2.4%	11.0%	1	1.0%	8.0%
Premature	9	1.4%	38.0%	3	0.6%	6.0%	7	1.6%	28.0%	1	0.3%	24.0%
SPSO Decision												
Fit for SPSO	9	5.3%	11.0%	13	8.3%	10.0%	9	4.6%	11.0%	1	1.0%	8.0%
Upheld / Partially Upheld	3	3.1%	6.0%	2	2.1%	6.0%	5	4.7%	6.0%	1	1.8%	4.0%

Notes: # %'s revised from figures previously published

Please see below for a case study providing details of the single 'Upheld/Partially Upheld' complaint made to SPSO about the Council. This information includes an overview of the complaint and the resulting recommendations made by SPSO.

CASE STUDY 1

Mr X complained that his late mother (Miss Y), who stayed in a council owned care home, was not provided with appropriate care in relation to monitoring her prior to and after a fall in which she broke her arm. He also complained that the council failed to appropriately communicate with him regarding Miss Y's condition.

In response to Mr X's complaints, the Council identified that there had been some failings in recording. They provided SPSO with an action plan for improvements to be made, and a new policy in relation to falls. On reviewing the Council's policies and guidance alongside Miss Y's notes, the SPSO found that when she fell and complained of pain in her arm, there was a failure to immediately seek urgent medical opinion as per the Council's policy. The SPSO also found that the falls risk assessment had not been reviewed as often as was specified by guidance. The SPSO 'Upheld' this aspect of Mr X's complaint, however, considered that the council's new falls guidance would, if followed, prevent a recurrence of these events.

In relation to communication with Mr X about Miss Y's condition, SPSO found that Mr X was not Miss Y's recorded next of kin and that there was no policy that required Mr X to be contacted by the Council. The SPSO did not uphold this aspect of Mr X's complaint.

The Council was asked to apologise to Mr X for failing to follow their policies on care after a fall and falls risk assessment and was asked to ensure that this apology met the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines. In addition, the Council was asked to ensure that it follows the policies it has in relation to care after a fall and that it ensures implementation of the associated risk assessments.

APPENDIX 3 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 2018/19 are presented below (as well as overall figures for 2017/18 and 2016/17 for comparison).

COMPLAINTS 18/19

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2018/19	2017/18	2016/17
Price	2	4	0	2	8	14	16
Booking/access/info	17	12	24	34	87	55	78
Quality	11	11	11	14	47	47	27
Staff attitude	3	5	6	5	19	11	4
Other	7	7	3	4	21	47	8
Total	40	39	44	59	182	174	133
Comments	15	19	25	13	72	87	64
Compliments	5	0	5	2	12	21	8

The number of complaints recorded in 2018/19 has increased since last year by **4%** while the number of comments and compliments have decreased by **17%** and **43%** respectively.

There has been a notable reduction in the number of complaints in relation to price (**43%** fewer) when compared with last year. This is likely due to the fact that the communication of price increases was well planned along with the continued annual pricing review which compares Live Borders' prices with that of other Local Authorities and Service Providers. In addition, Live Borders have undertaken a major project at Teviotdale Leisure Centre and refurbishment at Selkirk Leisure Centre while investing in gym equipment at other facilities, and this has likely contributed to members and customers perceiving good value. Lastly, the annual price review took the strategic view to increase participation, particularly on pitches, with a revised price structure.

There has been an increase in the number of complaints in relation to booking/access/information (**37%**) for the year which has partly been accounted for by boiler breakdowns at two pools and for which communications were reactive. In addition, a number of complaints were received from customers who had experienced difficulty with making bookings on the website but it is hoped that the new website will result in customers finding this process easier to navigate.



2018/19 QUARTER BY QUARTER ANALYSIS

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Total received	40	39	44	59
Received online	28	25	27	39
% received online	70%	64%	61%	66%
Closed complaints	41	38	45	58
Closed at stage 1	39	36	43	55
Closed at stage 2	2	1	1	3
Escalated from Stage 1 and closed	0	1	1	0
Total Upheld	13	13	18	27
Closed within authorised timescale	33	36	39	53
% closed within time scale	80%	95%	87%	91%

Throughout 2018/19 almost all complaints were closed at Stage One indicating that a majority of customers were satisfied with the response they received at this stage. There was a slight increase in the number of complaints processed at Stage Two for Q4 but this is broadly in line with the overall increase of complaints when compared with the previous quarters. The number of complaints closed within timescales has fluctuated throughout the year but has remained above **80%**.

LIVE BORDERS LEARNING FROM COMPLAINTS

Building on complaints relating to a data breach in 2017/18 a new module of the library management system was introduced in 2018/19 which provides a newsletter facility, therefore removing the need for staff to e-mail customers. Live Borders continue to regularly release 'think data protection' briefing notes to maintain awareness and keep staff informed. This proactive work is having a positive impact with more sections now consulting the Data Protection Officer (DPO) to ensure compliance with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018.

A number of staff training events have also been held where complaints have highlighted a gap in staff awareness, an example would be the new Library Management Rules.

The requirement for improved customer service training was identified and the nationally recognised World Host programme was selected. To gain World Host accreditation at least **50%** of staff need to be trained. By the end of 2018/19 **31%** of frontline staff received this accredited training. The programme has continued into 2019/20 and a progress update will be provided in the 2019/20 annual report.

Following a complaint where an investigation highlighted an improvement to our operating procedures, this was implemented across our sites. A programme of staff awareness and learning followed, specifically at site level.

The new website went live in May 2019, with some great feedback on the functionality and improved usage. This, along with developments in our leisure management system has enabled us to improve our online booking functionality for class activity. We continue to develop back office systems to improve booking for events and other activities across our estate and this will go live in quarter 3 2019/20.

LIVE BORDERS COMPLIMENTS

Live Borders received **12** unsolicited compliments during 2018/19 in comparison with **21** in 2017/18 and below is a selection of extracts:

Selkirk Leisure Centre: “Just to say you have terrific mother and baby swim classes, the facilities are well thought out and the staff knowledgeable and encouraging to both baby and mother. The key to exercise and sport is that it is enjoyable and you want more of it, this aim has been achieved in Selkirk. Thank you.”

Teviotdale Leisure Centre: “I just wanted to write a wee email to say how much the sessions have benefitted our pupils.
I’ll just list them....

- » Physical Activity - both walking to/from and within the soft play - something lots of our young learners don’t access as much as they should
- » Communication skills - our pupils communicate with each other much more in a more relaxed setting. For one pupil in particular we have seen them communicate and interact with other pupils for the first time in 2 years!
- » Confidence - increased confidence within a louder (controlled) environment around other service users who are less familiar to our pupils
- » Forms a significant part of an alternative curriculum - our learners can’t always access. Activities due to sensory overload, this session offers the opportunity to be part of an event in the community they otherwise could not access.
- » Social skills- there are ample chances to socialise within the session both with other learners, service users and staff. These are social skills which will benefit our learners in later life when they are not in such a sheltered environment such as school.
- » Enjoyment - probably the most important aspect. It can be difficult for our young people to express how they are feeling and sometimes they struggle to enjoy experiences - our young people actually comment on how much they love coming to soft play- they don’t say this often so this is a real testament to how brilliant the session is.

I also want to thank you for giving us the opportunity to attend as I know funding is tight as it is everywhere. - Hawick High School”

Learn2: “[My son] absolutely loves it and my little girl goes too, the centre is a real credit to the town. All the staff are great. Thank you” (Customer had complained that they could not access the Learn2 portal. The issue was resolved on site to the customer’s satisfaction).

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