

6 September 2023.  
Agenda Item No. X

## Complaints Update

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Report by: Diarmuid Cotter, Head of Customer and Online Services

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Wards Affected: All

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### Purpose

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To provide an update on complaints closed between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023 (performance and information)

### Recommendation(s)

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That CET:

- Consider the Council's performance, noting the subject matter of complaints received, and associated responsiveness.

### Resource Implications

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There are no direct resource implications arising from this report.

### Legal & Risk Implications

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There are no direct legal and risk implications arising from this report.

### Impact Assessment

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An EqIA has not been completed and is not necessary as the report does not propose a change or revision to existing policies and practices.

### Consultation

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No specific consultation has been carried out in relation to this report however there is continuous consultation with Services through weekly status updates that provide a RAG status of open cases, further responsiveness information is uploaded quarterly to Pentana through the Performance and Information Team and several areas receive bespoke and ad hoc reporting as requested.

## 1.0 Background

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- 1.1 The Council responds to over 7 million contacts from customers across Fife every year. This figure then puts into context the comparatively small number of corporately defined complaints received. When received, we aim to resolve quickly, and to employ corrective and preventative action appropriately to upheld cases.
- 1.2 Complaint reports are presented annually to Standards and Audit Committee. Services receive quarterly performance information and the majority receive weekly status updates. CET requested at the August 2019 meeting that complaints data should be considered by this team prior to submission elsewhere e.g., Standards & Audit Committee
- 1.3 There were no actions highlighted from last year's report other than to submit to the relevant Committees (Standards & Audit, then Local Area Committees) when the cycle resumed.

## 2.0 Performance and Issues Arising from Complaints

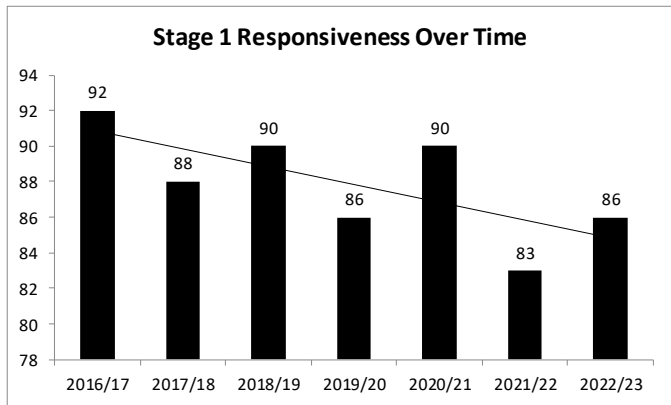
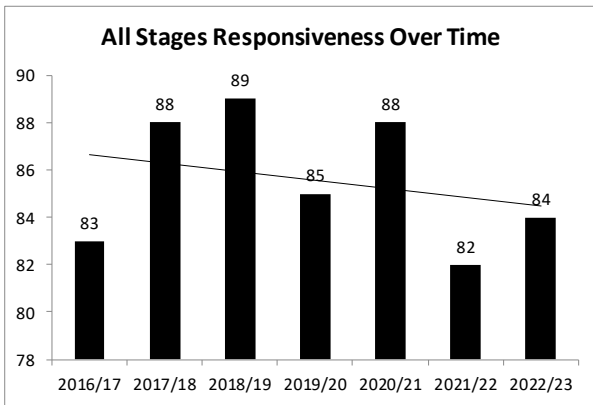
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### Volume & Responsiveness

- 2.1 From the 2,971 complaints received from 1st April 2022 to 31 March 2023, 2,970 of these were closed (the remaining complaint rolled into the next fiscal year). This is an 11% increase on the same period last year when 2,667 complaints were received. The volume of complaints had generally been reducing however this increase is greater than the 2,425 complaints received before the pandemic. There is evidence that some of this period's volume remain attributable to issues post Covid such as availability of parts.
- 2.2 To improve customer satisfaction and reduce costs, we aim to complete 80% of complaints at Stage 1, and within 5 working days and the remaining 20% at Stage 2, within 20 working days. 85% of complaints were successfully handled at stage 1 in period, 86% of which were handled in target timescale.

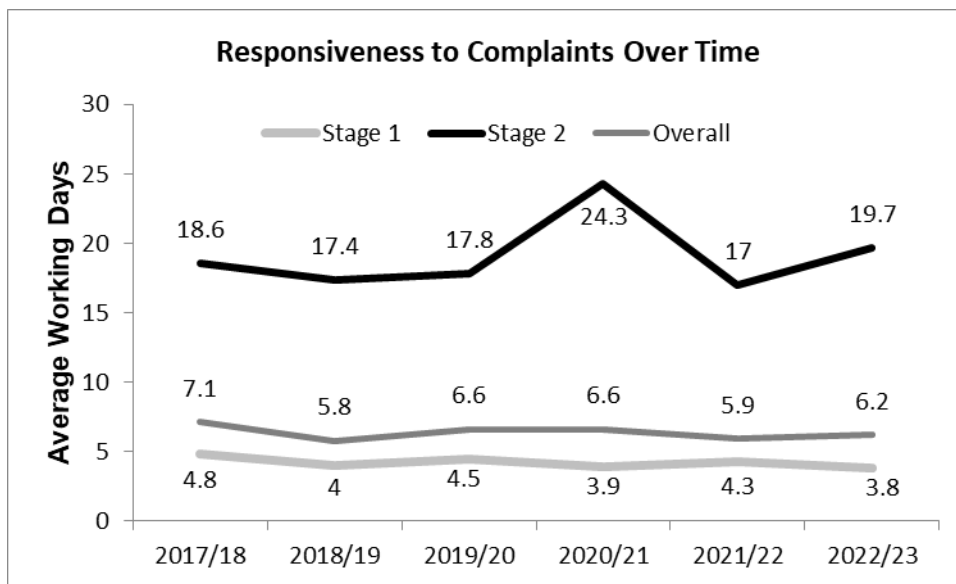
Stage	Total No. of complaints closed	No. closed in target timescales	% closed in target timescales
	2970	2497	84% (82) in 21-22
Stage 1 (5 days)	2521 (85%)	2157	86% (83 in 21-22)
Stage 2 (20 days)	449 (15%)	340	76% (76 in 21-22)

- 2.3 The graphs below show our performance over the last 7 years. The general trend would appear to be one of performance worsening over time despite the spike of 2020/21 caused by high volumes of readily addressable complaints made about service provision during the pandemic. This year sees an upturn in the responsiveness performance of stage 1 cases (5 working days) and therefore the overall performance in terms of responding to all complaints in timescale.



2.4 This period sees improved performance with most Services better than the year before (see 2.8). This is likely due to Services having extra focus back on complaints following the anecdotal evidence reported in last year’s report that less priority was being given to complaints during and into recovery from the pandemic.

2.5 The following graph shows the average working days to close a complaint and that from 2018 we have generally become quicker at responding to most complaints received (overall and stage 1).



2.6 The following table provides a breakdown of the average working days at each stage by respective Services including complaint volume. The Volume Context offers some scale between the volume of complaints against an indicative number of Service activity. It is based upon indicative figures from 2018/19. It should be recognised that these volumes may no longer be quite as representative. The table is ordered by working days all, from longest to shortest. The table shows selected Services in receipt of greater than 90% of all Council complaints. Red indicates above the target timescales of 5 and 20 working days and amber reflects a count above the Council average.

Service	W days St 1	W days St 2	W days All	Total Volume	Volume Context (from 2018-19 data)
Education	5.4	25.3	15.3	236	170 schools and establishments serving >56,000 pupils
Protective Services	3	17.9	13.1	25	Food and workplace safety alone has 4500 annual jobs
Planning	4.8	25.6	12.1	63	>700 planning enforcement investigations per annum
Children & Families	5.5	25.9	10.5	94	1000 looked after children and another 2000 families on a voluntary basis per annum
Catering Cleaning & Facilities Management	5.8	81	7.5	44	Regularly clean 600 buildings and provide 22,000 meals a day
Housing	4.2	17.8	6.4	781	>30,000 households managed
Grounds Maintenance	4.2	23.5	6	121	>4500 job requests per annum (grass, street cleaning etc.)
Roads & Transportation	4.8	18.3	5.9	308	Filled >22,000 potholes, fixed >5,000 street lights, provided >110,000 passenger journeys
Sustainability	3	16.7	4.7	115	480,000 recycle centre bookings since July 2020
Benefits / C-Tax	3.2	15.5	4.1	115	>64,000 calls relating to the assessment of housing benefit per annum
Building Services	3.3	10.3	3.8	343	>170,000 repairs per annum
Contact Centre	2.5	16.3	3.1	66	Over 600,000 calls offered per annum
Domestic Waste	2.3	6.9	2.5	489	13 million bins serviced
<b>Total (includes remaining Services)</b>	<b>3.8</b>	<b>19.7</b>	<b>6.2</b>	<b>2,970</b>	

2.7 Complaints that necessarily run into extra time (procedural extensions) are counted for statistical purposes as having not met timescale (did not hit target). Customers are however generally informed when an extension becomes strictly necessary. The procedure allows for such extensions. Overall, 53% of cases detailed in this report as out of timescale were procedurally given extensions. Therefore 92% of all complaints were completed in either target, or procedurally compliant timescales. There is evidence that longer working days to complete is commensurate with the complex and serious nature of complaints arising.

2.8 The table shows complaint responsiveness by the Services / departments in receipt of approximately 95% of FC complaints. Ordered by percentage all in timescale, worst to best. Please note that 3% of all complaints were attributed to sub-contractors (83 out of the total of 2,970. Mostly supporting Housing and Building Services however also Roads & Transportation).

Service	Vol Stage 1	% Stage 1 in Timescale	Vol Stage 2	% Stage 2 in Timescale	Total Vol 22/23	Total Vol 21/22	% Complaints upheld /partially upheld	% All in timescale 2022/23	Adjusted for Extension	% All in timescale 21/22	Change from last year
Children & Families	71	63.4%	23	56.5%	94	96	31.9%	61.7%	92.6%	65.6%	-5.9%
Education	119	78.2%	117	58.1%	236	125	41.1%	68.2%	87.3%	65.6%	4.0%
Planning	41	78.0%	22	59.1%	63	82	42.9%	71.4%	88.9%	61.0%	17.0%
Grounds Maintenance	110	79.1%	11	72.7%	121	108	62.8%	78.5%	81.8%	81.5%	-3.7%
Roads & Transportation	283	78.4%	25	88.0%	308	208	38.0%	79.2%	81.8%	61.1%	29.6%
Housing	653	80.2%	128	82.8%	781	517	39.6%	80.7%	92.8%	79.5%	1.5%
Catering Cleaning & Facilit	43	83.7%	1	0.0%	44	63	65.9%	81.8%	81.8%	79.4%	3.0%
Sustainability	101	91.1%	14	78.6%	115	146	23.5%	89.6%	96.5%	81.5%	9.9%
Building Services	319	90.0%	24	95.8%	343	294	64.4%	90.4%	95.9%	86.4%	4.6%
Bereavement Services	23	91.3%	0	100.0%	23	35	78.3%	91.3%	91.3%	97.1%	-6.0%
Protective Services	8	100.0%	17	88.2%	25	37	40.0%	92.0%	96.0%	81.1%	13.4%
Benefits C/Tax	104	95.2%	11	90.9%	115	185	40.0%	94.8%	96.5%	93.5%	1.4%
Contact Centre	63	95.2%	3	100.0%	66	68	71.2%	95.5%	97.0%	95.6%	-0.1%
Domestic Waste	462	97.4%	27	96.3%	489	497	70.8%	97.3%	98.4%	95.6%	2.9%
<b>Total FC Overall (includes remaining Services)</b>	<b>2,521</b>	<b>85.6%</b>	<b>449</b>	<b>75.7%</b>	<b>2,970</b>	<b>2,610</b>	<b>49.9%</b>	<b>84.1%</b>	<b>92.0%</b>	<b>82.3%</b>	<b>2.2%</b>

NB: Grey areas highlight a reduction over the previous year and overall responsiveness worse than the Council average.

2.9 From the greyed figures in the “% All in timescale 2022/23” column against paragraph 2.8 the comparative performance allowing for agreed extensions is as follows:

<b>Service</b>	<b>% Cases out of target timescale with procedural extension</b>	<b>% in timescale where extensions are included into responsiveness calculations</b>
Children & Families	86%	93%
Education	64%	87%
Planning	67%	89%
Grounds Maintenance	15%	82%
Roads & Transportation	14%	82%
Housing	66%	93%
Catering Cleaning &	25%	82%

2.10 The type of service provided by Children & Families, Education, Planning and Housing often generates more complex cases to be investigated and therefore require using the procedural extensions to respond fully and cover the necessary complexities. Other Services may benefit from the extension when they become a necessity however there is evidence that some Services simply need to improve in their ability to respond within the target timescales of 5 and 20 working days (stage dependent).

2.11 Escalation & Resolution continued to support Services including providing information, procedural support, qualitative review, and information around performance. They are also engaged daily in reminding Services of due dates in advance of their deadlines, weekly RAG status on cases, and supporting the administration of extensions and maintaining compliance with process and procedure.

2.12 Further in-depth complaint performance information remains in development using Power BI (see 5.3) and consequently quarterly information on performance available to Services has generally lacked fuller detail this period, limited to timescale information uploaded to Pentana unless Services proactively sought fuller details. The ambition is to maintain a Power BI dashboard from which Services can apply relevant filters (e.g., geographic areas, team, or departments) to gather insight.

### **3.0 Learning from Complaints**

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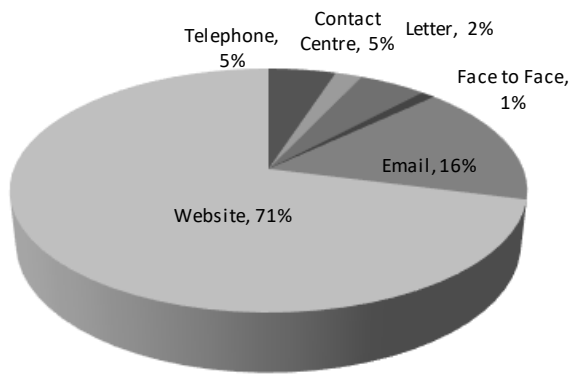
3.1 One key element of handling complaints is using customer feedback to rectify or improve upon the service provided. Every upheld or partially upheld complaint presents an opportunity for the Council to address the failings identified and this is also a requirement of the procedure.

- 3.2 Corrective action statements required by the procedure remain challenging where there remain instances where recorded statements refer simply to the outcome of the complaint rather than specific actions that would potentially prevent future reoccurrence. Ideally upheld complaints should contain details of effective counter measures or plans that would attempt to eradicate failures within the limits of resources available. This topic could be adequately addressed with internal benchmarking as a future improvement (see 5.2)
- 3.4 There are examples when the Council gets listens to customer feedback and makes improvements to future service provision. Where complaints were about the actions of employees (behaviour, poor driving, wrong information provided, process / procedure not followed etc.) the complaint has been addressed directly with employees, so they are aware of the impact on their customers. Examples of introduced changes are evident in Appendix 1 e.g., process changes such as making diary appointments (embrace technology), extra enhanced scrutiny of sub-contractors, adding a resource to better maintain a public convenience and simpler solutions such as adding updated signage.
- 3.5 One of the reasons for creating the new Communities Directorate was to increase customer responsiveness and this included setting up the Escalation and Resolution team.
- 3.6 Over 2022-23 the team have focussed upon:
- Impacting current responsiveness rates, such as targeting poorer performing Services (more effective queue management and professional administrative support).
  - Improving compliance to the procedure and supporting Services
  - Supporting the Council’s Unacceptable Actions Policy and providing advice on how to use the policy and how to approach customers whose behaviours fall foul.
- 3.7 The approach to consider the quality of complaint handling includes surveying complaints that the organisation did not uphold. This presents a challenge as it is accepted that it may be difficult for complainants to separate out any redeeming features in how this was handled when the Council did not uphold their substantive matter. See section 4 Complaint Satisfaction.

3.8 The following tables provide the details of complaint decisions.

<b>FC Overall</b>	<b>Not Upheld</b>	<b>Partially Upheld</b>	<b>Resolved</b>	<b>Upheld</b>
Overall	40%	16%	10%	34%
Stage 1	39%	14%	11%	36%
Stage 2	47%	28%	2%	22%

3.9 The majority of complaints remain being entered from the online form on our website, the table displays the shift over time towards electronic, best value channels. Social media policy dictates that we do not accept complaints made over this medium however when posts escalate towards a complaint users are signposted to the way they can make a complaint.



**% Complaints Received by Channel**

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
<b>Website</b>	55%	78%	73%	71%
<b>Contact Centre</b>	11%	3%	3%	5%
<b>Letter / Form</b>	2%	1%	3%	2%
<b>Telephone</b>	3%	3%	6%	5%
<b>Email</b>	21%	14%	14%	16%
<b>Face to Face</b>	7%	1%	1%	1%
<b>Social Media</b>	1%	0%	0%	0%

## 4.0 Complaint Satisfaction

- 4.1 In historic reports to CET before 2021-22 the data used to provide satisfaction with complaint handling was obtained from a more generic transactional survey of four questions emailed out on a four-weekly basis. Following changes to both the Council's website and the customer management system this transactional survey became obsolete with a replacement pending development.
- 4.2 The complaints procedure requires that complainants are surveyed so the previous generic survey was replaced in January 2022 with a bespoke version that covers standard questions as agreed by the SPSO and the Local Authority Complaint Handlers Network. These questions will ultimately allow benchmarking amongst network members.
- 4.3 The replacement complaint satisfaction survey methodology remains from last year and has us ask customers how much they agree or disagree with the following statements generally 4-6 weeks after their complaint has closed.
- Information about the complaint procedure was easily accessible.
  - I found it easy to make my complaint.
  - I was happy that the person considering the matter fully understood my complaint.
  - I was given the opportunity to fully explain my complaint.
  - The points of my complaint were identified and responded to.
  - The response to my complaint was easy to understand.
  - Overall, I was satisfied with the handling of my complaint.
  - I was told if the response was going to take longer than the set timescales (five working days at stage 1 and 20 working days at stage 2).
  - I was clearly told what the next stage of the complaints process was for me.
- 4.4 This replacement survey now requires a manual issue of these questions by email however has the added benefit over the previous generic transaction survey as the text from a complainant's actual complaint is given in the invitational email as a reminder to make the survey more focussed.
- 4.5 There were 587 responses, and a breakdown of some general comments included the following. It is worth noting that around 10% of comments in some manner referenced the council's failure to respond or matters remaining unaddressed.



Given the methodology used to gather this information (see 4.8) it is impossible to decide on the accuracy of such statements however their presence remains concerning.

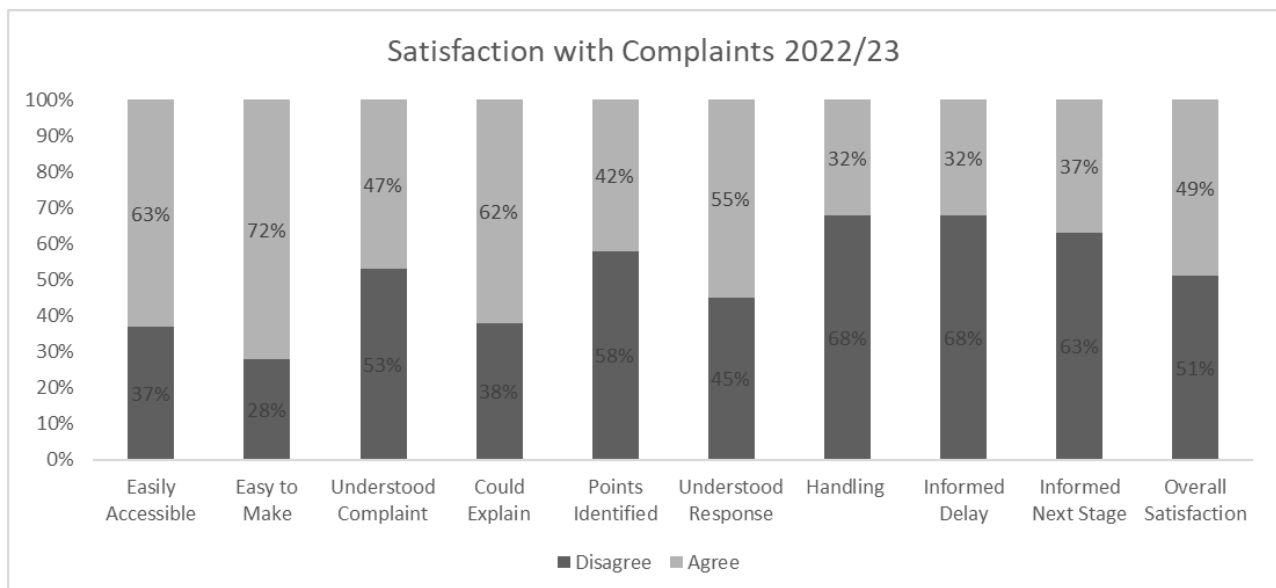
### Positive

- I was very pleased with the outcome, thank you.
- I received excellent help by email relating to follow-up of my complaint.
- I was very pleased by the Council's response on this matter.
- Settled to my satisfaction.
- My complaint triggered an immediate fix for the problem I complained about.

### Negative

- Complaint not listened to, understood, or acted upon.
- Fife council should have a better understanding to disabled people and help them more despite what is signed.
- Long winded, idiotic, and still no report or response from Fife Council. Utter waste of time.
- They didn't care.
- I found the whole process tiring. I wasn't listened to (as usual) and complaint was not dealt with correctly.

4.6 Overall satisfaction was 49% and is slightly below last year's figure of 50% noting that the response volumes are much higher than the previous year where only 127 surveys were returned. Satisfaction with each question is as shown on the following graph.



4.7 It would appear from the graph that improvement is required in carefully identifying the full complaint made from a complainant and thereafter adequately addressing those. We would also benefit from being more effective with extensions (when necessarily required), expressing potential delays as soon as possible and stage 1 email responses detailing what the next steps for a complainant would be should they remain dissatisfied following a stage 1 response. Based upon the comments received Services should take particular care that responses are provided and delivered accurately and carefully cover the substantive matter raised in the complaint.

4.8 The methodology used for the survey does not align a complaint reference number back to any responses received. This is due to GDPR, and the storage method

used for satisfaction as the data is captured using Microsoft Forms against a single officer's account. It would not be considered secure or an appropriate place to store a customer's personal data. The survey is therefore fit for wider organisational learning in contrast to the previous version where Services could see satisfaction with their own complaint handling.

## 5.0 Progress and Future Improvements

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5.1 In the October 2022 Complaint Update paper to CET there were 4 areas of continual improvement detailed:

1. Service sharing (internal benchmarking) of their approach to using complaint information for improvement.
2. Power BI development – complaint dashboard
3. Engagement with Services to support improvement, e.g., procedure, performance, and process.
4. Transfer of H&SC complaint administration from Business Support to the Escalation & Resolution Team

5.2 The Service sharing was suspended given the pandemic and Service's other priorities. There will be an opportunity to look at the planning of an approach to internal benchmarking from 2024 as this could align with another workstream including the introduction of the SPSO's child friendly complaint procedure currently being developed and trialled over a small number of other local authorities.

5.3 Power BI development has stalled as this passed from BTS to the data owner to develop a working dashboard. BTS remain with an open call from H&SC for a complaint dashboard for this area and it is anticipated that this final product could be suitably modified to suit the wider Council. It is anticipated that the deeper insights available from this tool will support Service improvements such as area-based information and differences in complaints by Service in different areas of Fife. This then allows a self-serve approach for Services seeking to make local changes in service delivery.

5.4 Direct Service support has been successful particularly with Education. Over 2022-23 they have been proactively building relationships with Escalation & Resolution and outcomes include:

- Improved understanding of the complaints process within the Service
- Improved data analysis, leading to trend identification.
- Improvement planning and actions associated with data analysis.
- Targeted work as a direct result of complaint outcomes

The portfolio approach to team members providing administration for their areas has allowed for individual advice on issues arising. Several Services receive bespoke weekly reports of pending and due cases supporting better responsiveness.

5.5 Escalation & Resolution have successfully transferred the administration of H&SC complaints over from Business Support staff and remain refining this process. Some areas within H&SC are starting to benefit from complaint reporting and holistically H&SC benefits from a weekly RAG status of cases supporting responsiveness.

- 5.6 Plans into 2024 include a project to introduce the SPSO's Child Friendly Complaint Procedure following an enhanced draft guidance document produced by this organisation in June 2023. Essentially new guidance for the organisation will be required so we provide a complaint service that meets children's rights and needs. It is anticipated that this work will be complex and reach many areas of the Council as it covers more than complaints made by children and extends into complaints that concern children. Further reading available from <https://www.spsso.org.uk/news-and-media/child-friendly-complaints>

## 6.0 Conclusions

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- 6.1 Responsiveness (complaints in target timescales) has broadly improved over last year and when figures are compiled to include extensions valid under the procedure the Council responds to 92% of complaints within target or extension agreed timescale.
- 6.2 From Appendix 1 the issues customers complained about are generally the same as other years with Housing, Domestic Waste, and Building Services in receipt of the bulk (>50%) of the complaints raised with the Council.
- 6.3 Opportunities remain pending for future improvements, these stemming from internal benchmarking, introducing the Child Friendly Complaint procedure and finalisation of Power BI.

### List of Appendices

1. Appendix 1 Details of complaints and compliments received.
2. Summary of SPSO cases and decisions made in reporting period.

### Background Papers

SPSO revised model complaint handling procedure – [Link](#)

### Report Contacts

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## Appendix 1: Complaints and compliments (from Services / departments collectively in receipt of >90% of Fife Council complaints)

Service type	Summary data	Complaint & compliment examples, including details of any learning (all from upheld complaints)
<b>Benefits &amp; Council Tax</b>	<p><b>Received:</b> 4% of FC complaints</p> <p><b>Main categories:</b> Procedures/Policy (27%)</p>	<p><b>Complaint example:</b> I have paid the bill up to the end point so there is no actual debt. I also do not understand why you won't allow me to set up a direct debit and move to electronic communication, this would avoid any issues in future. I really don't understand why the council would behave like this, we are in the middle of a cost-of-living crisis, and you are trying to increase the amount we have to pay and are effectively demanding that I pay everything immediately. So overall I am not satisfied and would like to escalate the issue to the next step. In terms of the specifics, a). I do not follow your logic; it seems that your position is that the bills you say were sent out were not returned therefore they must have been delivered. I have no idea why we have this problem again, however in terms of delivery there are many possibilities you haven't considered. b) My position on your debt collectors is unchanged, I didn't receive the bill, therefore it's not appropriate to pass the bill to them. c). I am unsure of the point you are making on last year's bill, and I am not sure why it's relevant.</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> Complaint partially upheld, and apology offered for the small issue with respect to the Council Tax account. Corrective actions falling from the complaint is that officers will diary appointments with customers to ensure this issue does not reoccur.</p> <p><b>Compliment:</b> I would just like to pass on some feedback about one of your employees in the benefits team who I spoke to on the phone about my mums Council tax reduction. He was polite and cheerful and very helpful. Very often you come across people in the other end of the phone who sound like they 'can't be bothered' but he was a credit to your organisation. I hope this can be passed onto him.</p>
<b>Building Services</b>	<p><b>Received:</b> 12% of FC complaints</p> <p><b>Main categories:</b> Poor communications - poor regarding work being/to be undertaken (17%)</p>	<p><b>Complaint example:</b> Hi wasn't sure if this was the correct way to contact you but I couldn't find an appropriate selection. I had a new kitchen fitted and remain with issues, 1 socket still to be fitted cable taped up, 2 Plastering not done which in my knowledge should have been done before units were installed' 3 Plastic clips holding shelves are all breaking, 4 Small leak under sink which was reported and 5 Decorator over a week ago called to arrange a date to decorate. Which could not be done as plastering was not done, he said he would contact someone to get it done. Still no contact. I hope you appreciate we feel that we have been forgotten about. We cannot get our flooring done etc which is not ideal. I know you have a contractor for the work but as you can see the cut-off date may pass. I'm sorry to have to write this but as a full rent payer of over 30 years I do feel a bit let down.</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> Complaint upheld, and apology offered for works not complete. Remaining works scheduled with contractor and site visited with contractor supervisor and Building Services. Additional scrutiny of contractor introduced, and customer given a direct contact with Building Services in the event of further delays or issues.</p> <p><b>Compliment:</b> I am very happy with Martyn, Mobile working electrician who visited my property to deal with a small electrical repair. Martyn was very professional and had an excellent attitude. Martyn is a credit to Fife Council.</p>
<b>Catering &amp; Facilities</b>	<p><b>Received:</b> 1.5% of FC complaints</p> <p><b>Main categories:</b> Standard / condition of council</p>	<p><b>Complaint example:</b> I visited Burntisland on Friday with my family. We used x2 of the public toilets near the fair ground. I am disgusted. The fact that toilet tissue and paper towels tells me the toilets are attended to which makes the issue even more disgusting. These toilets were utterly filthy! The floors were totally unclean. The actual lavatory seats had not been cleaned in God knows how long. The second block of toilets we used were a health hazard. There was an overflowing bin with used nappies and excess waste gathering in the corner. It was clear that was not a day's collection of waste. Again the toilets were disgusting as were the floors and the sinks.</p>

Service type	Summary data	Complaint & compliment examples, including details of any learning (all from upheld complaints)
	buildings including toilets (23%)	<p>My extended family and I spent the day in your gorgeous town. You have completely let yourself down to tourists with the toilet facilities. If you are opening your town to tourists, please don't treat us so disgustingly! Would your council members be happy to use these toilets? Everything else about our day was perfect. I look forward to your response and not just an apology. I would like an explanation as to how your public toilets are so abysmal.</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> Complaint upheld, and apology offered. As corrective action the Service is looking at more visits and top up cleans particularly on busy weekends and events.</p> <p><b>Compliment:</b> Customer wanted to let the Meals on Wheels Service know that she really enjoys the driver's company, she appreciates that no matter the weather or what might be going on at the time, they're always cheerful and pleasant to talk to. She's very grateful for what they do and appreciates the Service.</p>
<b>Children &amp; Families</b>	<p><b>Received: 3.2%</b> of FC complaints</p> <p><b>Main categories:</b></p> <p>Inappropriate staff attitude / behaviour (29%)</p>	<p><b>Complaint example:</b> I am writing in regards to the way I was spoken to by a social worker called **** * who I believe works for children &amp; young people in New city house, Dunfermline, she appeared at my door unannounced and proceeded to let herself in and claimed that I appeared scared whilst I was trying to talk to her she then claimed that this was non-engagement with social services even though she does not deal with our case. I am not happy with the way I was spoken to and how she presented herself to me I would like for her not to be involved in my children's cases as I feel she isn't supportive or beneficial and I feel she is quite patronising when she talks to myself and approaches me.</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> Complaint upheld, and apology offered. Social Work acknowledged some aspects of the customers complaint, talking it through also alerted the customer to realising why this worker may have acted the way she did in context to the concerns.</p> <p><b>Compliment:</b> On behalf of my family, I would like to acknowledge the amazing support we have received over the past few days everyone has been forward thinking and proactive, helping to make things much less stressful for us at a difficult time. We all too often hear the negative experiences, but the team have provided my family with support, compassion and understanding for which we are so grateful.</p>
<b>Contact Centre</b>	<p><b>Received: 2.2%</b> of FC complaints</p> <p><b>Main categories:</b></p> <p>Inappropriate staff attitude / behaviour (20%)</p>	<p><b>Complaint example:</b> Called Adult Protection line at time to log an urgent ASP concern. Thirteen minutes on hold then the worker refused to pass me onto anyone to make an ASP report - I asked various questions about who should field ASP information to be told that Fife has no ASP officer or staff for such an event. I was given the allocated SW extension and then, after not giving me her supervisor's details the lady told me she was called "name" and hung up after 19 minutes and 46 seconds. I was unable to pass on urgent details. I was shouted at and chastised by a worker. The lady wouldn't answer various queries nor pass me onto a relevant worker. She said I was "holding up the line" when I asked her why she wasn't answering my queries. I said I was glad the call was being recorded and she agreed then hung up. She refused to give me her supervisor's name but gave her name (which I hadn't asked for) as "name". If somebody can call me back my number is number but I would prefer to pass on the ASP details first, this complaint is less important but the circumstances are just ludicrous.</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> Complaint upheld, and apology offered. Behaviour issues discussed and addressed with CSA and knowledge gap identified. A skill gap was identified for the team and addressed in training.</p>

Service type	Summary data	Complaint & compliment examples, including details of any learning (all from upheld complaints)
		<p><b>Compliment:</b> Customer was looking to pass on his thanks after calling in previously and speaking with an advisor whom he advised was extremely helpful, very good at her job and went above and beyond for him.</p>
<p><b>Domestic Waste</b></p>	<p><b>Received: 17%</b> of FC complaints</p> <p><b>Main categories:</b></p> <p>Dissatisfaction with policy / collection arrangements e.g., number of bins; frequency of collection etc (35%)</p>	<p><b>Complaint example:</b> Our brown bins were missed. Checked online and no mention of any disruption to our service so reported the missed collection. A neighbour has now spoken to someone online who informed us that waste operations had not informed them of any missed collections so there was nothing they could do. That isn't really good enough. We reported it and we know a few others reported it yet we are now being told there is no information on our collection being missed. It isn't really good enough.</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> Complaint upheld, and apology offered. High number of absences at the time and vehicle issues (shortage of spares for repair). Crews on weekend overtime to attempt to clear the backlog and complainants bin was ultimately serviced.</p> <p><b>Compliment:</b> Well done on great service for extremely speedy replacement to damaged blue bin lid. Thank you.</p>
<p><b>Education</b></p>	<p><b>Received: 8%</b> of FC complaints</p> <p><b>Main categories:</b></p> <p>Dissatisfaction with policy / current arrangements (25%)</p>	<p><b>Complaint:</b> My understanding is that this is a fire alarm that is being tested once a week before the nursery opens. Why can this not be done during the day at lunch time or at end of day as this would be more considerate of the local residents to the nursery or do what the local supermarkets do which is state that a fire alarm is going off during the day while the nursery is open thus giving the staff and children present a functioning knowledge of fire alarms noise. When I initially made a complaint about this I was told to contact the nursery/ school but as I have no dealings with this facility and there is nobody in the building apart from janitorial staff usually at time then I refer back to the owners of the facility which is Fife Council. This is a residential area and not everyone has young children that go to an educational establishment. As for the excuse "During school holidays, this does not have to be carried out quite so early in the day. This did not to my knowledge happen every week during the school holidays as I have been at home during this time due to health issues but did note that the nursery roof was being climbed on by older children. All I ask for is a bit of consideration for residents who live close to the nursery/ school of when they activate alarm systems. In short please can you move the test time to end of nursery day when the building is empty and less lightly to disturb residents. Also, the fact that the email referenced the parking (which is being access by the people at the bungalow) and the external lighting (which now goes off at time) at the nursery which is not why I complained today. I have emailed this to school and Escalation Resolutions to keep them in the loop on this matter. Your swift response in resolving this matter would be greatly appreciated.</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> Complaint upheld, and apology offered. Service have changed the external sounder to a strobe, therefore removing the external noise element and the lights are being changed over to lights with a sensor function.</p> <p><b>Compliment:</b> I would like to submit a compliment to my son's primary school and the PSA, my son has been struggling for quite some time now and as being in P7 he is missing out so much e.g., leavers assembly's, trips, gala floats etc as he just cannot cope and will not attend. After speaking with the PSA this morning, she actually suggested to get paper sent home to me so my son could design his own poster and it will then be included on the gala float, I am so touched with this idea and am overwhelmed that this lady took it upon herself to ensure my son is still included in some way! Much appreciation from all our family, I have been feeling a little sad lately at the thought of all the wee things he's missing out on, and this has just put a big smile on my face! Thank you with all my heart, you have made an anxious mum very happy</p>

Service type	Summary data	Complaint & compliment examples, including details of any learning (all from upheld complaints)
<b>Housing</b>	<p><b>Received:</b> 26% of FC complaints</p> <p><b>Main categories:</b> Failure to respond to previous complaint / request for service / enquiry / reported fault (11%)</p>	<p><b>Complaint example:</b> I have an ongoing and lengthy noise complaint against one of your tenants who resides below me at address. I have attempted to make contact with Fife Council with regard to sound insulation and no one has replied. My neighbour is under investigation by <i>name</i> who has been fantastic, and the noise monitoring equipment report shows the noise is at a nuisance level and that sound proofing may be a contributing factor. Despite numerous warnings from <i>name</i> your tenant continues to breach her tenancy agreement with anti-social behaviour, constantly arguing with her partner, singing and screaming at unsocial hours. <i>name</i> has emailed the housing and I have also had <i>name</i> from your mutual owner team email housing and yet I have had no direct contact.</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> Complaint upheld, and apology offered. Staff reminded of cover for vacant patches, and who covers this street, and where to find this information as this is available.</p> <p><b>Compliment:</b> My wife and I would like to express our thanks to Andrea of the Ukraine Refugee support team. She has been an absolute star and a great support. She made us feel like we had a helping hand all the way and a person who was readily available to offer advice and having great knowledge on the subject. We cannot praise her enough and were grateful that we were able to have been dealt with by her during the whole of our Ukraine Super Sponsor dealings.</p>
<b>Grounds Maintenance</b>	<p><b>Received:</b> 4.1% of FC complaints</p> <p><b>Main categories:</b> Grass Cutting (28%)</p>	<p><b>Complaint example:</b> I phoned to report an area of my garden missed by the gardeners. This was rectified but left in a mess. As I pay for this Service it is unsatisfactory to have cut it badly and grass left lying. I am elderly and rely on this Service.</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> Complaint upheld, and apology offered. Staff member made aware of standards and grass area maintained again to that expected standard.</p> <p><b>Compliment:</b> Today a young man was weeding and tidying. Unfortunately, I don't know his name or anything. I would just like to say that despite the heat he did an amazing job, and the lane looks brilliant! Did a great job tidying up at the end too. Please pass on my thanks to him, he worked really hard.</p>
<b>Planning</b>	<p><b>Received:</b> 2.1% of FC complaints</p> <p><b>Main categories:</b> Dissatisfaction with policy / delivery arrangements (33%)</p>	<p><b>Complaint example:</b> I have been advised to submit a complaint regarding this matter after emailing the service. Neighbour notification does not appear to have been carried out for this planning application. Of 31 neighbours listed on the NN sheet, not one of those people made any comment. I know of at least 7 neighbours did not receive a letter. Additionally, no planning advice was posted at the site either on area 1 or area 2. As NN is a statutory requirement in the planning process and appears to have been missed, I suggest the approval given on <i>date</i> is invalid until proper NN takes place. It is especially disappointing seeing that this application has been approved and no site visit has taken place considering the number of objections that were lodged with previous plans on this site.</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> Complaint partially upheld and relevant section apologised for. No evidence that notifications had been processed by mail system. Corrective action is that evidence from mail system to be uploaded on to each case file where neighbour notification has been issued and officers reminded to include brief reference to evidence submitted in their reports of handling.</p> <p><b>Compliment:</b> My wife &amp; I have recently been told that a planning application has been submitted for a new build house virtually touching our home. As we have no experience with anything like this in our lives we made contact with Brian Forsyth, the Fife</p>

Service type	Summary data	Complaint & compliment examples, including details of any learning (all from upheld complaints)
		<p>Council planner in charge of the case to help us get through the process as to what we could &amp; couldn't do. From the outset Mr Forsyth has been courteous, responded in excellent time to our questions &amp; has been an absolute pleasure to deal with, he is an absolute credit to Fife Council.</p>
<p><b>Recycling Centres</b></p>	<p><b>Received: 3.9%</b> of FC complaints</p> <p><b>Main categories:</b></p> <p>Dissatisfaction with policy / current organisational arrangements including opening times (32%)</p>	<p><b>Complaint example:</b> Recycle centre Cowdenbeath, can you inform the public when the recycling centre is not open. It is closed Sundays as well. There must be someone who can open the gates for the busy day of the week. There must have been eight to ten cars waiting.</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> Complaint upheld, and apology offered. The centre had no signage and a sign will now provide closure day information.</p> <p><b>Compliment:</b> Recycling centre staff were very helpful on my last visit and whilst they appeared extremely busy so I'd like to extend my thanks.</p>
<p><b>Roads &amp; Transportation</b></p>	<p><b>Received: 10.4%</b> of FC complaints</p> <p><b>Main categories:</b></p> <p>Potholes / poor condition of road surface (15%)</p>	<p><b>Complaint:</b> I have emailed the Transportation Services Department three times about the above reference asking the outcome of the intended inspection they told me would be carried out. I received a reply saying an inspection was due to be carried out but I still have not received a reply despite asking three times. I find this totally unacceptable and ignorant when I have taken the time to report the road defect and followed it up with three emails. An *** ***** who I asked to either call/email me still has not responded and again totally unacceptable and ignorant. I called last week and was told to make a complaint on the way this is being handled with the sheer lack of customer service from Fife Council. So I would like to know what is happening with this defect and why I have no response.</p> <p><b>Outcome:</b> Complaint upheld, and apology offered. Unable to give the customer an exact date as the programme is continually being altered due to different factors, however, confirmed that this scheme will go ahead within the financial year.</p> <p><b>Compliment:</b> After only approximately 25 minutes after reporting this online the team arrived to unblock the drain. My wife and I were astounded that they were there so quickly. So much so that I went out and thanked the guys for such a quick response. On previous occasions the response has been quick but this was the quickest.</p> <p>The three guys were there for approximately 20 minutes and seemed to give the drain a really thorough clean.</p> <p>We would like to say a big thank you to everyone involved after receiving the fault report, from office through to the drain cleaning team.</p>



## Appendix 2 – Summary of SPSO Decisions

A2.1 The final stage for complainants is the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) and the following tables present the cases considered by this office in 2022-23

<b>Service</b>	<b>Vol</b>	<b>%</b>
Area Services	4	6.3%
Benefits & Council Tax	4	6.3%
Bereavement Services	2	3.2%
Building Services	2	3.2%
Children & Families	5	7.9%
Customer Service Improvement	1	1.6%
Education	6	9.5%
Grounds Maintenance	2	3.2%
Housing	14	22.2%
Planning	15	23.8%
Protective Services	1	1.6%
Risk Management	1	1.6%
Roads & Transportation	4	6.3%
Sustainability	2	3.2%

<b>SPSO Decisions Taken</b>	<b>Vol</b>	<b>%</b>
Not taken forward for investigation	48	76.2%
Not Upheld	5	7.9%
Partially upheld	1	1.6%
Pending	9	14.3%
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>63</b>	

A2.2 Not taken forward for investigation typically means that the SPSO decision was that these complaints were either, out of their jurisdiction, the complainants' outcome is unachievable or that in the opinion of the SPSO they can add nothing further to the decision already reached. The SPSO remain obliged to alert the Council of these cases under their governing Act. Pending means that the case remains under consideration by the SPSO at the time of this report.

A2.3 The overwhelming decision to not take cases forward for investigation may suggest that resolutions provided are the correct ones. The decision from the one case where the SPSO did uphold some element of the complaint investigated referred solely to the complaint handling and not the substantive matter (Planning – right of way).

A2.4 Additionally the SPSO made decisions on cases opened in previous years. These decisions were received in 2022-23. Details of these upheld decisions are in the following table, and all are available from the SPSO website.

Case Ref	Subject	Outcome
202000443	Child services and family support	Upheld (see A2.5)
201909723	Policy / administration	Not Upheld
202003119	Child services and family support	Upheld (see A2.6)

#### A2.5 Case 202000443

C complained on behalf of their client (A). Following an incident at A's home, A agreed with the council's Child Protection Team that their two children should be placed in the care of a relative. This was a voluntary placement under the Children (Scotland) Act 1995. C emailed the council's social work team to inform them that A would withdraw their consent to the placement if no progress was made in their case.

A attended their youngest child's school and attempted to take custody of their child, but was prevented from doing so by social workers and the child left in the custody of relatives. Later that day, A attended their relatives' house and A was prevented from taking custody of the child. Social workers were not present, but police attended and then refused to intervene after speaking to the social workers.

A then agreed to the voluntary placement again. C advised A that they should withdraw their youngest child from the placement and attend their school to collect them and C informed the social workers of this advice. In response, social workers obtained a Child Protection Order (CPO). C complained to the council that they had

failed to respond to A's wishes regarding the placement. The council did not identify any substantive failings.

C complained that the council's response was inadequate and inaccurate and that the council had failed to obtain a CPO timeously. We took independent advice from a children's social work adviser. We found that A had tried to end the voluntary placement twice and that A had been prevented from exercising their parental rights. We found that the council had failed to obtain a CPO timeously and that they had failed to adequately investigate or respond to C's complaint. We upheld C's complaint.

### **Recommendations**

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to A for their failure to take A's parental rights into consideration and their failure to administer the placement of A's children adequately. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at <https://www.spsso.org.uk/information-leaflets>.
- Apologise to C for their failure to investigate and respond adequately to C's complaint. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at <https://www.spsso.org.uk/information-leaflets>.

What we said should change to put things right in future:

- Council staff should be aware of and take into account relevant guidance and legislation in a situation like this including parental rights and carrying out timeous checks of voluntary placements of children under section 25 of the Act.
- Staff dealing with complaints should be familiar with the council's Complaint Handling Procedure, understanding the importance of communication and the need to demonstrate thorough investigation of the points raised.

#### **A2.6 Case 202003119**

C and B complained to the council about their child's (A) move to a residential placement under a section 25 arrangement (Children (Scotland) Act 1995). They said that the placement had been highly inappropriate and had not met A's complex needs. C and B further complained that they had felt pressurised into agreeing to the move and had been given inaccurate information by social workers about the resource.

In response the council said that the placement had been made on an emergency basis and in good faith that it would meet A's needs. They disagreed that it had been

highly inappropriate. Although at the time they had been unaware of the provider's personal search practices, they agreed as a result of the complaint to request this information from all residential providers moving forward.

We took independent advice from a social worker. We found that the council had taken reasonable steps to find the best possible resource to meet A's complex needs within the limited timeframe available. Although we agreed that the council should have been made aware of their provider's personal search practices, we concluded that the council had acted reasonably in terms of their communications with C and B regarding the suitability of the resource and the information given to them and found no evidence to support that C and B had been pressurised into agreeing to the move. As such, we did not uphold these aspects of the complaint.

C and B further complained that the council had failed to explain to them that it had been their intention to move A to secure accommodation and social workers had relied on inaccurate health reporting to inform this decision. C and B explained that they had been invited to a meeting with social workers but had been unaware it would be to discuss secure measures. As such, they had been denied the opportunity to have legal representation to challenge the council's decision and to prevent the move.

We were unable to reach a finding on what information had been given to C and B about the purpose of the meeting. While we acknowledged that having legal representation may have aided their understanding of the process, we found that this would not have had any bearing on the decision to move A to secure care. We concluded that the council had provided C and B with all the appropriate information leading to the decision, including the legal process and their rights of appeal. As such, we did not uphold this aspect of the complaint.

C and B further complained that the council had failed to respond appropriately to their concerns that A may be self-harming during their placement.

While we found that overall the incidences of A's self-harm had been taken seriously, one particular incident had not been considered as thoroughly as it should have been and there had been a failure to report A's injuries to C and B at the time. Therefore, on balance, we upheld this aspect of the complaint.

## **Recommendations**

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to C and B, and to A, for failing to give appropriate consideration to an incident where A had self-harmed. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at [www.spsso.org.uk/information-leaflets](http://www.spsso.org.uk/information-leaflets).
- In situations where a young person is at risk of self-harm, there should be clarity in the council's contract with external care providers about the reporting of such incidents to the family/carers and to the council themselves.

A2.7 For clarity all recommendations were met as suggested by the SPSO in these decisions.