



Report No:

Agenda Item:

Report to:	<b>CORPORATE BOARD</b>																											
Meeting Date:	<b>28 OCTOBER 2024</b>																											
Report Title:	<b>SFRS COMPLAINTS ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24</b>																											
Report Classification:	For Approval	<b>Board/Committee Meetings ONLY</b> <b>For Reports to be held in Private</b> <b>Specify rationale below referring to</b> <b><u>Board Standing Order 9</u></b>																										
		<u>A</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>C</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>E</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>G</u>																				
<b>1</b>	<b>Purpose</b>																											
1.1	To provide the Corporate Board with the complaints annual statistics for 2023/24 and seek approval for publishing this report on the SFRS website in line with Scottish Public Services Ombudsman Act 2002.																											
<b>2</b>	<b>Background</b>																											
2.1	<p>The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman Act 2002 provides the legislative basis for SPSO to publish the Model Complaints Handling Procedures (MCHP) for bodies under the SPSO's jurisdiction.</p> <p>The MCHP requires organisations to report on and publish complaints performance information in line with complaints performance indicators published by the SPSO.</p> <p>Deadlines for publishing annual complaints performance reports for Local Authorities, Registered Social Landlords, Scottish Government, Scottish Parliament and Associated Public Bodies, is the end of October each year.</p> <p>This report provides a summary of the annual report for 2023/24.</p>																											
<b>3</b>	<b>Main Report/Detail</b>																											
3.1	<p>There are four mandatory quantitative KPIs and it is a minimum requirement for all organisations to report against these mandatory KPIs in their annual complaints performance report.</p> <p>Below is some of the key statistical data for 2023/24:</p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: 40px;"> <thead> <tr> <th>Period</th> <th>Total No Complaints Received</th> <th>Change from previous year</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2023/24</td> <td>157</td> <td>+6</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2022/23</td> <td>151</td> <td>-42</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2021/22</td> <td>193</td> <td>+26</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2020/21</td> <td>167</td> <td>+41</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2019/20</td> <td>126</td> <td>+26</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2018/19</td> <td>109</td> <td>N/A</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>							Period	Total No Complaints Received	Change from previous year	2023/24	157	+6	2022/23	151	-42	2021/22	193	+26	2020/21	167	+41	2019/20	126	+26	2018/19	109	N/A
Period	Total No Complaints Received	Change from previous year																										
2023/24	157	+6																										
2022/23	151	-42																										
2021/22	193	+26																										
2020/21	167	+41																										
2019/20	126	+26																										
2018/19	109	N/A																										

Complaints can be dealt with either at the frontline resolution stage (Stage 1), for issues that are straightforward and simple, requiring little or no investigation, or the investigation stage (Stage 2), where the customer is dissatisfied with the Stage 1 response or refuses to engage with attempts to handle the complaint at Stage 1 or it is clear that the complaint requires investigation from the outset.

The majority of SFRS complaints (67%) are dealt with at Stage 1. This is an increase of 10% from last year.

Days to Respond				
Year	Response in 1-5 days (Stage 1)	Response in 6-20 days (Stage 2)	Response in 20+days (Extension)	Total
2023/24	105	46	6	157

Complaints by average number of days to respond	SFRS (days)
Response in 1-5 days (Stage 1)	3
Response in 6-20 days (Stage 2)	13
Response in 20+days	28

There are a number of different outcomes to formal complaints: resolved; upheld; partially upheld; not upheld; withdrawn or Resolved by Explanation or Apology. The majority of complaints received by SFRS continue to be not upheld, either at Stage 1 or 2 or resolved by explanation/apology.

Outcome of Complaint	Number	%
Resolved – Explanation	10	6.4%
Resolved – Apology	5	3.2%
Resolved – Discipline	1	0.6%
Resolved – No case to answer	14	8.9%
Resolved – Note to file	2	1.3%
Resolved – Recommendations Given	9	5.7%
Not Upheld	67	42.7%
Partially Upheld	3	1.9%
Upheld	31	19.8%
No Response from Complainant	11	7.0%
Withdrawn	2	1.3%
Claim	1	0.6%
Awaiting Outcome	1	0.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>100%</b>

Where a complaint is upheld in whole or part, a suitable apology can be made to the customer and actions taken, wherever possible, to address their concerns and/or improve service provision.

Where complaints identify issues of persistent service failure, these should be addressed by the Information Governance Group (IGG). Analysis of complaints data is reviewed quarterly by IGG and embedded in change and improvement processes.

At the conclusion of Stage 2, customers are referred to the SPSO, should they remain unhappy. The SPSO may decide to investigate the complaint and this is considered the

third, and final, stage of the complaint’s journey. Where the SPSO make a decision on a complaint, it cannot be investigated again by SFRS.

SFRS had one case referred to the SPSO in 2023/24 which found in SFRS favour with recommendations advised regarding response content.

Complaints can be made in a variety of ways: in person, by telephone, using a paper form or increasingly, online using a bespoke complaints form. More than 87% of complaints were made online in 2023/24, via our website or by email. While complaints made via social media channels are noted by the Communications Team, customers are always signposted to the online complaints procedure, should they wish their complaint to be progressed formally. This process is embedded in the revised Complaints Handling Policy.

The overall number of complaints received has risen from 151 in 2022/23 to 157 in 2023/24.

Outcome	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Resolved	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	41
Not upheld	48	68	90	102	81	67
Partially upheld	10	12	14	8	15	3
Upheld	22	25	45	69	29	31
Internal Procedures	19	13	16	9	15	N/A
No response	10	7	0	3	8	11
Withdrawn	0	1	2	1	0	2
Awaiting outcome	0	0	0	0	0	1
Claim	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	3	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>157</b>

The category “resolved” was introduced by the SPSO, where a complaint is resolved when both SFRS and the customer agree what action (if any) will be taken to provide full and final resolution for the customer, without making a decision about whether the complaint is upheld or not upheld. Information Governance intend to break this category down into further detail for next years report eg how was the complaint resolved.

In total SFRS had 41 of these cases during 2023/24 and these were added to our report dashboards which were being redeveloped.

In 2022/23 we re-categorized the complaints which were previously recorded as under internal investigation, and they are now included in the final outcome of any investigation. This has involved working closely with investigating officers and HRA Business Partners to ascertain the outcome on conclusion of any investigation.

Most complaints opened during 2023/24 were closed in the same period, reflecting successful complaints handling.

Performance at Stage 1 is 3 days on average for complaints to be closed. This is below the national performance target of 5 days.

Performance at Stage 2 is 13 days on average for complaints to be closed. This is below the national performance target of 20 days.

**Key themes of Complaints**

The majority of complaints received were recorded against Service Delivery, Off Duty Conduct, Driving and On Duty Conduct.

In previous years we did not have the ability to establish a final outcome of a complaint which was progressed via our Internal Procedures but for 2023/24 this is now available in the dashboard.

**Internal Procedure complaints by Outcome**

Outcome	Number
Resolved No Case to Answer	13
Resolved Recommendations Given	9
Resolved Note to File	2
Awaiting Outcome	1
Resolved - No Case to Answer	1
Resolved Discipline	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>

Service Delivery

The total number of Service Delivery complaints during 2023/24 was 66, a slight decrease from 70 last year. Specifically, 37 were not upheld, 14 resolved, 2 with no response from the complainant and 13 upheld.

This compares to 70 received in 2022/23 with 43 not upheld, 7 partially upheld, 3 with no response from complainant and 14 upheld and 3 passed to Claims (no outcome yet).

The trend over the last three years shows overall numbers decreasing. Specific areas are detailed below:

Complaints by SDA

LSO Area/Dept	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	Total
SFRS	13	7	11	2	33
Glasgow City	12	4	5	3	24
Stirling, Clackmannanshire and Fife	4	8	9	2	23
City of Edinburgh	9	2	7	3	21
Dundee, Angus, Perth and Kinross	5	10	4	2	21
Highlands	6	7	4	2	19
Lanarkshire	8	5	4	1	18
Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Moray	5	2	6	2	15
East Ayrshire, North Ayrshire and South Ayrshire	4	5	5	1	15
Midlothian, East Lothian and the Scottish Borders	1	7	3		11
East Renfrewshire, Renfrewshire and Inverclyde	2	4	3	1	10
Argyll and Bute, East Dunbartonshire and West Dunbartonshire	2	3	1	2	8
Falkirk and West Lothian	3	3	1		7
P&P	4	1			5
Control	1	1	2		4
Dumfries and Galloway	3	1			4
POD	1		1		2
<b>Total</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>240</b>

Off Duty Conduct

Off duty conduct (attitude/behaviour) had a total of 34 complaints which is an increase on last year's figure of 21. However, sub totals for 2023/24 show that the majority were either not upheld or resolved. Specifically, not upheld 13, resolved 15, withdrawn 1, no response from complainant 2, 1 still awaiting outcome of internal procedures and only 2 upheld.

This compares to a total of 21 complaints received in 2022/23, of which 11 were not upheld, 9 dealt with under internal investigation and 1 had no response from the complainant.

Complaints by SDA

LSO Area/Dept	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	Total
SFRS	13	7	11	2	33
Glasgow City	12	4	5	3	24
Stirling, Clackmannanshire and Fife	4	8	9	2	23
City of Edinburgh	9	2	7	3	21
Dundee, Angus, Perth and Kinross	5	10	4	2	21
Highlands	6	7	4	2	19
Lanarkshire	8	5	4	1	18
Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Moray	5	2	6	2	15
East Ayrshire, North Ayrshire and South Ayrshire	4	5	5	1	15
Midlothian, East Lothian and the Scottish Borders	1	7	3		11
East Renfrewshire, Renfrewshire and Inverclyde	2	4	3	1	10
Argyll and Bute, East Dunbartonshire and West Dunbartonshire	2	3	1	2	8
Falkirk and West Lothian	3	3	1		7
P&P	4	1			5
Control	1	1	2		4
Dumfries and Galloway	3	1			4
POD	1		1		2
<b>Total</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>240</b>

Driving

Driving had a total of 25 complaints during 2023/24 which is the same number as the previous year. Sub totals show that the majority were either not upheld or resolved, specifically 7 not upheld, 4 resolved, 4 no response, 1 partially upheld and 8 upheld and 1 claim.

This compares to 2022/23, of which 13 were not upheld, 7 were upheld, 2 partially upheld, 1 passed to internal investigation and 2 had no response from the complainant.

Complaints by SDA

LSO Area/Dept	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	Total
SFRS	13	7	11	2	33
Glasgow City	12	4	5	3	24
Stirling, Clackmannanshire and Fife	4	8	9	2	23
City of Edinburgh	9	2	7	3	21
Dundee, Angus, Perth and Kinross	5	10	4	2	21
Highlands	6	7	4	2	19
Lanarkshire	8	5	4	1	18
Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Moray	5	2	6	2	15
East Ayrshire, North Ayrshire and South Ayrshire	4	5	5	1	15
Midlothian, East Lothian and the Scottish Borders	1	7	3		11
East Renfrewshire, Renfrewshire and Inverclyde	2	4	3	1	10
Argyll and Bute, East Dunbartonshire and West Dunbartonshire	2	3	1	2	8
Falkirk and West Lothian	3	3	1		7
P&P	4	1			5
Control	1	1	2		4
Dumfries and Galloway	3	1			4
POD	1		1		2
<b>Total</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>240</b>

As part of all driving courses, the evaluation of driver attitudes and behaviours is integrated into the overall assessment process to ensure candidates meet the required standards. Training, Safety, and Assurance (TSA) have emphasized that instructors should focus particularly on the training provided to candidates before any practical driving begins. It is crucial that the pre-course study packs, which include the highway code and cover road traffic signs and issues related to parking complaints, are thoroughly completed. These elements will be evaluated through Q&A sessions before practical training commences.

Additionally, LSO-based Training Station Commanders have been alerted to concerns regarding On Call staff responding to pagers. It is essential that local management teams at RDS stations reinforce the importance of adhering to road traffic regulations when pagers are activated.

All complaints are taken with the utmost importance and are investigated thoroughly, with full transparency to ensure any issues are noted and rectified without hesitation. This commitment to addressing complaints ensures continuous improvement in driver training and safety standards.

Quarterly statistics are submitted to TSA to facilitate the monitoring of driving issues and support ongoing efforts to reduce the number of complaints. Emphasizing the importance of education in addressing driver training complaints is vital to this process."

On Duty Conduct

On duty conduct (attitude/behaviour) had a total of 16 complaints which is a decrease on last year's figure of 20. Sub totals for 2023/24 are: not upheld 3, 8 resolved, 1 had no response from complainant, 3 upheld and 1 partially upheld.

This compares to a total of 20 complaints received in 2022/23, of which 8 were not upheld, 2 dealt with under internal investigation, 2 had no response from the complainant, 5 were upheld and 3 were partially upheld

Complaints by SDA

LSO Area/Dept	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	Total
SFRS	13	7	11	2	33
Glasgow City	12	4	5	3	24
Stirling, Clackmannanshire and Fife	4	8	9	2	23
City of Edinburgh	9	2	7	3	21
Dundee, Angus, Perth and Kinross	5	10	4	2	21
Highlands	6	7	4	2	19
Lanarkshire	8	5	4	1	18
Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Moray	5	2	6	2	15
East Ayrshire, North Ayrshire and South Ayrshire	4	5	5	1	15
Midlothian, East Lothian and the Scottish Borders	1	7	3		11
East Renfrewshire, Renfrewshire and Inverclyde	2	4	3	1	10
Argyll and Bute, East Dunbartonshire and West Dunbartonshire	2	3	1	2	8
Falkirk and West Lothian	3	3	1		7
P&P	4	1			5
Control	1	1	2		4
Dumfries and Galloway	3	1			4
POD	1		1		2
<b>Total</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>240</b>

**Benchmarking**

Being a national service of our size makes it difficult to benchmark against similar organisations as there isn't one which covers the same geographical area, same numbers in staffing, or same issues which are complained about. However, it should be noted that the overall number of complaints received as an organisation of our size are significantly low.

We have contacted some of the larger Fire and Rescue Services throughout the UK to ask for their complaints statistics. We have also contacted Fire and Emergency New Zealand (FENZ), who we have been benchmarking with in other areas of the service to try and compare statistics and processes. This work is ongoing.

Organisation	Year	Number	Increase/Decrease
London Fire Brigade	2023-24	115	+8
	2022-23	107	+9
	2021-22	98	
Police Scotland	2023-24	7,099	+478
	2022-23	6,621	-58
	2021-22	6,679	-304
	2020-21	6,983	
Glasgow City Council	2023-24	Not published	
	2022-23	5,854	-899
	2021-22	6,753	+665
	2020-21	6,097	

**Recording**

Using Sharepoint (Lists) to collate complaints allows us to use Power BI to interrogate the data and provide a more detailed analysis in dashboards which is more user friendly and meaningful moving forward.

We are continuing to work with ICT and Performance Data Services to give live access to Local Senior Officers and Heads of Service so that they can monitor their own areas and also provide more feedback on how complaints were dealt with and any improvements which have been made. They will have the ability to look at other areas across service and identify any trends as they appear rather than at the end of each quarter.

SFRS have recently update our website and have improved the Complaints area of the website in line with SPSO Guidance and Digital Scotland Service Standards which has made it more user friendly and easier for people to make a complaint if required.

These changes are to support our organisation in evaluating our own performance, driving improvement and sharing good practice through the associated complaints handlers' networks thus ensuring we provide excellent service to our customers through effective complaints handling procedures.

Information Governance have also met with Service Improvement to discuss ways of demonstrating good practice and showing continuous improvement in our work. Arrangements are being made to follow this up in more detail.

<b>4</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>
4.1	The Corporate Board are asked to note the contents of this report and to approve it being published on the SFRS website to comply with Scottish Public Services Ombudsman Act 2002.
<b>5</b>	<b>Core Brief</b>
5.1	N/A

<b>6</b>	<b>Appendices/Further Reading</b>	
6.1		
<b>7</b>	<b>Key Strategic Implications</b>	
7.1	<b>Key Strategic Implications Considered and those Identified Added Appropriately to Main Report/Detail (Section 3. Above)</b>	<b>Yes/No</b>
<b>Prepared by:</b>	Information Governance Manager/Data Protection Officer	
<b>Sponsored by:</b>	Head of Communications and Engagement	
<b>Presented by:</b>	Information Governance Manager/Data Protection Officer	
<b>Links to Strategy and Corporate Values</b>		
<p>The Complaints process supports Outcome 5 - We are a progressive organisation, use our resources responsibly and provide best value for money to the public. We will achieve this by:</p> <p>Improving the use of data and business intelligence to support decision making.</p> <p>Proactively engaging with and providing more accessible information on what we do for the public and our stakeholders.</p>		
<b>Governance Route for Report</b>	<b>Meeting Date</b>	<b>Report Classification/ Comments</b>
Information Governance Group	1/8/2024	<i>Approved</i>
Corporate Board	28/10/2024	<i>Approved</i>