



Report No:

Agenda Item:

Report to:	SERVICE DELIVERY COMMITTEE																											
Meeting Date:	4 JUNE 2026																											
Report Title:	SFRS COMPLAINTS ANNUAL REPORT 2024/25																											
Report Classification:	For Scrutiny	SFRS Board/Committee Meetings ONLY For Reports to be held in Private Specify rationale below referring to <u>Board Standing Order 9</u>																										
		<u>A</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>C</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>E</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>G</u>																				
1	Purpose																											
1.1	To provide the Service Delivery Committee with the Complaints annual statistics for 2024/25.																											
2	Background																											
2.1	The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman Act 2002 provides the legislative basis for the SPSO to publish the Model Complaints Handling Procedures (MCHP) for bodies under the SPSO's jurisdiction. The MCHP requires organisations to report on and publish complaints performance information in line with complaints performance indicators published by the SPSO.																											
2.2	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. Unfortunately, due to staffing levels and conflicting priorities, the Annual Report for 2024/25 was not published on our website. Our intention is to publish this report once Service Delivery Committee approve its contents.																											
3	Main Report/Detail																											
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>At the Local Authority Complaint Handlers Network meeting on 3 October 2025, the SPSO reported an average increase in complaints received by authorities under its jurisdiction of 30%.</p> <p>Below is Scottish Fire and Rescue's statistical data for 2024/25:</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th>Period</th> <th>Total No Complaints Received</th> <th>Change from previous year</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2024/25</td> <td>151</td> <td>-6</td> </tr> <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>N/A</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>							Period	Total No Complaints Received	Change from previous year	2024/25	151	-6	2023/24	157	+6	2022/23	151	-42	2021/22	193	+26	2020/21	167	+41	2019/20	126	N/A
Period	Total No Complaints Received	Change from previous year																										
2024/25	151	-6																										
2023/24	157	+6																										
2022/23	151	-42																										
2021/22	193	+26																										
2020/21	167	+41																										
2019/20	126	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 the same total as 2024/25.

Days to Respond				
Year	Response in 1-5 days (Stage 1)	Response in 6-20 days (Stage 2)	Response in 20+days (Extension)	Total
2024/25	101	42	8	151

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	26

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

In the Stage 1 complaints which were Resolved, courses of action to address the respective complaints were proposed and subsequently agreed by the complainants, who considered their complaints to be Resolved.

Outcome of Complaint	Number	%
Resolved – Explanation	48	31.79%
Resolved – Apology	20	13.25%
Resolved – Discipline	12	7.95%
Resolved – No case to answer	24	15.88%
Resolved – Note to file	3	1.99%
Resolved – Recommendations Given	1	0.66%
Not Upheld	25	16.56%
Partially Upheld	3	1.99%
Upheld	4	2.65%
No Response from Complainant	9	5.96%
Withdrawn	1	0.66%
Claim	1	0.66%
Awaiting Outcome	0	0%
Total	151	100%

A full breakdown of statistics is available on the attached Appendices including by:

- Quarter
- Outcome (number and percentage)
- Categories/sub categories

- Complaints made by
- Service Delivery Area
- LSO/Department
- Responded in number of days and percentage
- Format of complaint
- Category of complainants

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 Data and Information Governance Group (DIGG). Analysis of complaints data is reviewed quarterly by DIGG 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 journey. Where the SPSO makes a decision on a complaint, it cannot be investigated again by SFRS. SFRS had one case referred to the SPSO in 2024/25 which found in SFRS favour.

Complaints can be made in a variety of ways: in person, by telephone, using a paper form or more frequently, online using our bespoke complaints form or direct email. In 2024/25, 84% of complaints were made online, 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 reduced from 157 in 2023/24 to 151 in 2024/25.

Outcome	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Resolved	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	41	108
Not upheld	68	90	102	81	67	25
Partially upheld	12	14	8	15	3	3
Upheld	25	45	69	29	31	4
Internal Procedures	13	16	9	15	N/A	N/A
No response	7	0	3	8	11	9
Withdrawn	1	2	1	0	2	1
Awaiting outcome	0	0	0	0	1	0
Claim	N/A	N/A	1	3	1	1
Total	126	167	193	151	157	151

The majority of complaints opened during 2024/25 were closed in the same period, reflecting successful complaints handling.

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

Our performance at Stage 2 is on average 13 days 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, On Duty Conduct and Driving.

Service Delivery

The total number of Service Delivery complaints during 2024/25 was 57, a slight decrease from 66 last year. Notably,

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

Complaints by outcome for Service Delivery Category

Outcome	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Resolved - Apology		1	5
Resolved - Explanation given		9	25
Resolved - No Case to Answer			2
Resolved - Note to File		1	
Resolved Recommendations Given		3	
Claim	3		1
Upheld	14	13	1
Partially Upheld	7		2
Not Upheld	43	37	16
Withdrawn			1
No response from complainant	3	2	4
Total	70	66	57

The table below details the total number of complaints for Service Delivery.

Complaints by SDA

LSO Area/Dept	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	Total
P&P	1			1
Dumfries and Galloway	1		2	3
POD		1	3	4
Control	1	2	2	5
Falkirk and West Lothian	3	1	2	6
Argyll and Bute, East Dunbartonshire and West Dunbartonshire	3	1	3	7
East Renfrewshire, Renfrewshire and Inverclyde	4	3	3	10
Lanarkshire	5	4	1	10
Midlothian, East Lothian and the Scottish Borders	7	3	1	11
Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Moray	2	6	5	13
East Ayrshire, North Ayrshire and South Ayrshire	5	5	3	13
Glasgow City	4	5	5	14
City of Edinburgh	2	7	7	16
Highlands	7	4	6	17
Dundee, Angus, Perth and Kinross	10	4	4	18
Stirling, Clackmannanshire and Fife	8	9	5	22
SFRS	7	11	5	23
Total	70	66	57	193

A breakdown of Service Delivery Sub Categories is available in Appendix 2.

Off Duty Conduct

Off duty conduct (attitude/behaviour) had a total of 23 complaints which is a significant decrease on last year's figure of 34. Sub totals for 2024/25 show that all were either not upheld, resolved or withdrawn. Specifically, not upheld 3, resolved 19, no response from complainant 1, and none were upheld.

This compares to a total of 34 complaints received in 2023/24, of which 13 were not upheld, 16 were resolved, 2 had no response from the complainant, 1 withdrawn, 2 were upheld.

The table below details the total number of complaints for Off Duty Conduct.

Complaints by SDA				
LSO Area/Dept	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	Total
SFRS		1		1
Training			1	1
Western Isles, Orkney and Shetland Islands	1	1		2
Argyll and Bute, East Dunbartonshire and West Dunbartonshire		3		3
Falkirk and West Lothian	1		2	3
Midlothian, East Lothian and the Scottish Borders	2	1		3
Stirling, Clackmannanshire and Fife		2	1	3
Dumfries and Galloway		2	2	4
Dundee, Angus, Perth and Kinross	3	1		4
City of Edinburgh	2	1	2	5
East Ayrshire, North Ayrshire and South Ayrshire	1	3	1	5
Glasgow City		3	2	5
East Renfrewshire, Renfrewshire and Inverclyde	2	2	2	6
Highlands	2	2	4	8
Lanarkshire	4	5		9
Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Moray	3	7	6	16
Total	21	34	23	78

On Duty Conduct

On duty conduct (attitude/behaviour) had a total of 17 complaints which is a slight increase on last year's figure of 16. Sub totals for 2024/25 are: Not Upheld 2, 13 Resolved, 1 had no response from complainant, 1 was upheld.

This compares to a total of 16 complaints received in 2023/24 of which 3 were not upheld, 8 were resolved, 1 had no response from complainant, 3 were upheld and 1 partially upheld.

The table below details the total number of complaints for On Duty Conduct.

Complaints by SDA				
LSO Area/Dept	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	Total
Highlands	4	4	2	10
Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Moray	3	1	1	5
East Ayrshire, North Ayrshire and South Ayrshire	2	1	2	5
Argyll and Bute, East Dunbartonshire and West Dunbartonshire	1	1	2	4
Dundee, Angus, Perth and Kinross	2		2	4
Falkirk and West Lothian	1	1	1	3
Glasgow City	2		1	3
Lanarkshire		2	1	3
Midlothian, East Lothian and the Scottish Borders	1	1	1	3
SFRS	2	1		3
Stirling, Clackmannanshire and Fife		1	2	3
POD	1		1	2
City of Edinburgh	1			1
East Renfrewshire, Renfrewshire and Inverclyde		1		1
Training		1		1
Western Isles, Orkney and Shetland Islands			1	1
Workshops/Fleet		1		1
Total	20	16	17	53

Driving

Driving had a total of 23 complaints during 2024/25 which is a slight decrease from 25 the previous year. Sub totals show that the majority were either not upheld or resolved, specifically 3 not upheld, 15 resolved, 2 no response from complainant, 1 partially upheld and 2 upheld.

This compares to 2023/24, of which 7 were not upheld, 4 Resolved, 8 were upheld, 1 partially upheld, 4 had no response from the complainant, 1 passed to Claims.

The table below details the total number of complaints for Driving.

Complaints by SDA

LSO Area/Dept	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	Total
Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Moray	2	5	4	11
Argyll and Bute, East Dunbartonshire and West Dunbartonshire	5		5	10
Stirling, Clackmannanshire and Fife	3	4	2	9
Highlands	3		2	5
SFRS	1	1	3	5
Dundee, Angus, Perth and Kinross		3	1	4
Glasgow City	2	2		4
Lanarkshire	2	2		4
Midlothian, East Lothian and the Scottish Borders	1	1	2	4
City of Edinburgh		3		3
Dumfries and Galloway	2		1	3
East Ayrshire, North Ayrshire and South Ayrshire		2	1	3
Falkirk and West Lothian	2	1		3
Workshops/Fleet	1	1	1	3
ICT	1			1
Training			1	1
Total	25	25	23	73

Access to driver complaint data helps ensure training is focused, relevant, and evidence based. It allows us to identify recurring issues, target specific behavioural gaps, reinforce safe driving standards using real examples, and intervene early to improve performance and reduce future incidents

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."

Training

To ensure that complaints handling is embedded across the business, we intend to develop a programme of training in handling Stage 1 complaints for staff who engage with customers directly, enabling them to handle Stage 1 complaints in accordance with the CHP. Similarly, new training for managers will be developed to provide them with guidance on conducting investigations and supporting staff.

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 however have had little response as they have no requirement to publish annually on their website as we do under SPSO guidelines.

This year we have included the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) and the Scottish Ambulance Service (SAS) after this was requested last year at the Service Delivery meeting.

Organisation	Year	Number	Increase/Decrease
London Fire Brigade	2024/25	155	+40
	2023/24	115	+8
	2022/23	107	+9
	2021/22	98	
Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA)	2024/25	38	+5
	2023/24	33	+1
	2022/23	32	
Scottish Ambulance Service (SAS)	2024/25	1128	+150
	2023/24	978	-705
	2022/23	1683	+810
	2021/22	873	
Glasgow City Council	2024/25	9,475	+1728
	2023/24	7,747	+1840
	2022/23	5,854	-899
	2021/22	6,753	

Recording

We have continued to work with the Business Intelligence Team to improve the Sharepoint system we use to collate complaints. This information is then uploaded to Power BI to interrogate the data and provide a more detailed analysis in dashboards as provided in this report.

It is our aim to have an anonymised version of the complaints made available to LSO's and Heads of Service this year, to allow them to 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 and will provide the service a better mechanism to record service improvement.

These changes are to support more direct information within areas and the ability to evaluate performance, driving improvement and sharing good practice this ensuring we provide excellent service to our customers through effective complaints handling procedures.

As detailed earlier in this report, the annual report publication deadline for the SPSO is the end of October each year. Unfortunately, due to staffing levels and conflicting priorities, the Annual Report for 2024/25 was not published online. Our intention is to publish this report online once Service Delivery Committee approves its contents.

4	Recommendation
4.1	The Service Delivery Committee are asked to note the contents of this report and the methods of collating/analysing data and making improvements, based on the Model Complaints Handling Policy. Also, to approve the report for publication to the SFRS Website.

5	Key Strategic Implications
5.1 5.1.1	Risk Appetite and Alignment to Risk Registers Complaints are a key source of organisational intelligence, providing early indicators of service failure, emerging operational risks, and cultural or behavioural issues. The analysis and escalation of complaint themes through established governance routes, including DIGG and performance reporting, supports alignment with the Service's risk appetite and enables timely identification, mitigation and, where required, escalation to corporate or directorate risk registers.
5.2 5.2.1	Financial There are no direct financial implications. However, the identification and resolution of service delivery issues through complaints contributes to more efficient and effective use of operational resources, supporting wider sustainability objectives.
5.3 5.3.1	Environmental & Sustainability There are no direct environmental implications. However, the identification and resolution of service delivery issues through complaints contributes to more efficient and effective use of operational resources, supporting wider sustainability objectives.
5.4 5.4.1	Workforce Complaint themes related to conduct, service delivery, and behaviour provide valuable insight into workforce performance, culture, and leadership effectiveness. The proposed training for frontline staff and managers will strengthen capability in complaints handling, improve customer engagement, and support a culture of accountability and continuous improvement.
5.5 5.5.1	Health & Safety Complaints relating to service delivery and operational activity may highlight underlying health and safety risks, particularly in areas such as driving and operational conduct. Systematic analysis of complaints data supports early identification of such risks and informs preventative action.
5.6 5.6.1	Health & Wellbeing Complaints relating to service delivery and operational activity may highlight underlying health and safety risks, particularly in areas such as driving and operational conduct. Systematic analysis of complaints data supports early identification of such risks and informs preventative action.
5.7 5.7.1	Training The report identifies a clear requirement to enhance organisational capability in complaints handling. The development of targeted training for both frontline staff (Stage 1 resolution) and managers (investigations) will strengthen compliance with the Model Complaints Handling Procedure and improve the consistency and quality of responses.
5.8 5.8.1	Timing There is a compliance implication associated with the delay in publication of the annual report against SPSO expectations. Progressing approval through governance and ensuring timely publication is important to maintain transparency and adherence to national reporting requirements.
5.9 5.9.1	Performance Complaints data provides a critical component of the Service's overall performance framework. The report demonstrates strong performance against national response times and an increasing focus on early resolution. Enhanced use of Power BI and local access to data will further strengthen performance management, enabling more timely identification of trends and supporting evidence-based improvement.

5.10 5.10.1	Communications & Engagement Effective complaints handling and transparent reporting are central to public confidence and stakeholder trust. Increased accessibility of complaints data and improved feedback mechanisms to local areas will strengthen engagement, accountability and organisational learning.	
5.11 5.11.1	Legal Robust complaints handling arrangements ensure compliance with the SPSO Model Complaints Handling Procedure and minimise the risk of escalation to external investigation. The low level of SPSO referrals and outcomes supports the effectiveness of current arrangements.	
5.12 5.12.1	Information Governance The report confirms that appropriate information governance arrangements are in place, including DPIA and privacy controls. The further development of data access and dashboards must continue to ensure compliance with data protection requirements while supporting operational insight.	
5.13 5.13.1	Equalities Complaints data provides an important mechanism for identifying any potential inequalities in service delivery or customer experience. Ongoing monitoring and analysis should support compliance with Public Sector Equality Duties and inform continuous improvement.	
5.14 5.14.1	Service Delivery Complaints provide direct insight into customer experience and service performance. The analysis within the report highlights key areas of focus, including service delivery, conduct, and driving. Embedding learning from complaints into operational practice is critical to improving outcomes and maintaining service standards.	
5.15 5.15.1	Prevention While there are no direct prevention implications, the identification of recurring issues through complaints supports early intervention and system-wide improvement, reducing the likelihood of repeat issues.	
6	Core Brief	
6.1	Not applicable	
7	Assurance (SFRS Board/Committee Meetings ONLY)	
7.1	Director:	Mark McAteer, Director of Governance, Strategy and Change
7.2	Level of Assurance: (Mark as appropriate)	Substantial/Reasonable/Limited/Insufficient
7.3	Rationale:	Complaints managed in accordance with national guidance determined by SPSO. Low number of complaints received compared to other organisations. Improvements in local resolution.
8	Appendices/Further Reading	
8.1	Appendix 1 – Complaints 2024/25 Overview Appendix 2 – Complaints 2024/25 Sub Categories	
Prepared by:		Carol Wade, Information Governance Manager/Data Protection Officer
Sponsored by:		Richard Whetton, Head of Governance, Strategy and Compliance
Presented by:		Carol Wade, Information Governance Manager/Data Protection Officer
Links to Strategy and Corporate Values		

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The Complaints process supports our outcome Improving Performance – Our organisational performance, productivity and resilience continually improves.			
Governance Route for Report	Meeting Date	Report Classification	Meeting Approvals/Outcomes
Senior Management Board (SMB)	26/05/26		<i>Approved</i>
Service Delivery Committee	4/06/26		<i>Approved</i>