



**REPORT TO: EDUCATION, COMMUNITIES AND ORGANISATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE ON 26 MAY 2021**

SUBJECT: COMPLAINTS ANNUAL REPORT 2019-20

**BY: DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (EDUCATION, COMMUNITIES AND
ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT)**

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 The Committee is asked to consider the Complaints Annual Report 2019-20.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to the Education, Communities and Organisational Development Committee following a decision of Moray Council on 17 June 2020 to agree a simplified committee structure as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the case of this committee the combining of the delegated responsibilities of Children and Young People's Services, Governance, Strategy and Performance (para 9 of the minute refers).

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- i) consider the contents of the Complaints Annual Report;**
- ii) welcome performance as indicated in the report; and**
- iii) approve the report for submission to the Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman (SPSO).**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 All councils are required to publish their performance against the national performance indicators set by the SPSO. The attached report presents our performance against these performance indicators for the 2019-20 reporting period. **(Appendix 1)**

- 3.2 Complaints handling is part of the council's performance management framework. Members receive updates on complaints performance through routine reports to service committees.
- 3.3 Compared to the 2018-19 figures, there has been an increase of 20.8% in the number of complaints received, 725 versus 611, and a slight increase of around 0.3% in the population size. Consequently, the number of complaints per 1,000 population has increased by 20.4% compared to 2018-19. The increase in complaints recording reflects public confidence in reporting matters. Another factor may be staff reductions impacting on our ability to deliver our services.
- 3.4 During 2019-20 four-fifths of complaints were dealt with at frontline resolution stage compared to one-fifth dealt with at the investigation stage. This maintains the improvement in performance since 2014-15 when fewer than half of all complaints were resolved at this stage (45.7%).
- 3.5 Over half (52%) of frontline (stage one) complaints were 'upheld', or 'partially upheld' (Figures 5 & 6) in 2019-20, a 13% increase on 2018-19. In 2016-17 the proportion was 47.8%, and in 2015-16 it was 46%, compared to just one-quarter in 2014-15. This proportion demonstrates that mistakes are being acknowledged, apologies given with learning and improvement outcomes sought and implemented.

For stage two complaints 'upheld' or 'partially upheld' at the investigation stage, the proportion in 2019-20 of 48%, was similar to previous years. Indeed, over the past 5 years the proportion of stage two complaints (including after escalation) has been consistently been between 40% and 50%.

- 3.6 The late submission of this report was out with the control of the council arising from the commencement of the pandemic in March 2020. Staff did not have access to IT systems required to prepare this report until the end of February 2021. The preparation of the 2020-21 Complaints Annual Report will commence at the end of June 2021 and should be reported to Committee by end of October 2021.

4. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan - Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP)

This report supports the Scottish Government's national outcomes, in particular the commitment to be accountable to the community as stated: "Our public services are high quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive to local people's needs."

Effective complaints reporting is used to ensure the efficient and sustainable delivery of services to meet the Council's priorities in

'Moray 2023: A Plan for the Future.' Within the Moray Council Corporate Plan.

(b) Policy and Legal

The SPSO have made it a statutory requirement to have all local authorities publish a Complaints Annual Report.

(c) Financial implications

It is not anticipated that there will be any financial implications.

(d) Risk Implications

Failure to adhere to the statutory SPSO requirement may result in SPSO making a declaration of non-compliance against the Council. Non-compliance with the statutory duty relating to national standards being adopted would present risk in terms of reputational damage and a loss of public confidence in reporting complaints.

(e) Staffing Implications

There are no staffing implications related to this report.

(f) Property

There are no property implications related to this report.

(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact

The Equal Opportunities Officer has been consulted in the preparation of this report and the equalities impact has been identified as uncertain.

The Equal Opportunities Officer has recommended that where services are experiencing high volumes of complaints, the management of respective services should arrange to identify common complaint issues and any learning arising. This will help to ensure that complaints are not arising from situations where customer diversity needs have not been considered or addressed, e.g. disability or cultural issues.

(h) Consultations

The Corporate Management Team and Tracey Sutherland, Committee Services Officer have been consulted on the contents of the Complaints Annual Report 2019-20.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 Publishing the Complaints Annual Report 2019-20 complies with the SPSO statutory requirement.

Author of Report:	John Black, Complaints Officer
Background Papers:	Held by Author
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