



# **NHS Highland Complaints Annual Report 2023/2024**

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## Introduction

NHS Highland Feedback and Complaints Annual Report 2023-2024 is a summary of the feedback received by NHS Highland from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. This includes a description of the lessons learnt and improvements made. A summary of the approaches taken to proactively gather feedback to inform and develop local services is also included in this report.

## Encouraging and Gathering Feedback and Complaints

NHS Highland welcomes and encourages feedback from patients, carers and family members about the services we provide. Information about how to provide feedback is made available to patients, carers and family members via the NHS Highland website [Giving us Feedback \(scot.nhs.uk\)](https://www.scot.nhs.uk/giving-us-feedback/) the Feedback information leaflet for patients, relatives and carers both of which encourage individuals how to provide feedback and make a complaint. Sign posting to the Care Opinion website and complaints leaflets are advertised throughout all of NHS Highland patient areas.

NHS Highland gathers patient feedback in a number of different ways; this includes but is not limited to:

- Patients, carers and family members can provide feedback to any NHS Highland member of staff who will be happy to help them. Correspondence can be received via letter, email, telephone and in person. Alternatively they can contact the Feedback Team as follows:
  - NHS Highland Feedback Team  
PO Box 5713  
Inverness  
IV1 9AQ  
01463 705997  
[Nhshighland.feedback@nhs.scot](mailto:Nhshighland.feedback@nhs.scot)
- Patient feedback provided by other organisations
- Online feedback through Care Opinion [www.careopinion.org.uk](https://www.careopinion.org.uk)
- NHS Highland website [Giving us Feedback \(scot.nhs.uk\)](https://www.scot.nhs.uk/giving-us-feedback/)
- Feedback in the local press
- National patient experience surveys
- Letters and information from elected members of Parliament on behalf of patients and families.

Based on feedback received during 2023/2024 we know that the majority of our patients are happy most of the time with the care and treatment provided by NHS Highland. However, on occasion the care and treatment provided does fall short of the high standards we expect. When this happens it is very important that we hear about it in order that we can learn from mistakes made and improve the way we do things in future.

NHS Highland has a dedicated centrally based Feedback Team which supports patients to provide feedback and make complaints. This provides a single point of contact, offers ease of access and a level of consistency for the patient or member of public. All NHS Highland staff is also open to providing front line resolution of complaints where applicable.

To support patients to provide feedback the Patient Advice and Support Service (PASS) is delivered by the Citizens Advice Bureaus in:

- Argyll and Bute

Riverside, Oban Road  
Lochgilphead, Argyll  
PA31 8NG  
Tel: 01546 605 550  
Tel: 01546 605556 (Direct)

- Inverness, Badenoch & Strathspey  
29 Union Street  
IV11LX  
Tel: 01463 237 664
- Ross & Cromarty  
Suie House  
Market Square  
Alness  
IV17 0UD  
Tel: 01349 885937 (Direct)
- Skye and Lochalsh Citizens Advice Bureau  
The Green  
Portree  
IV51 9BT  
01478 612032
- Lochaber Citizens Advice Bureau  
Dudley Road  
Fort William  
PH33 6JB  
Main number: 01397 705 311  
Direct dial: 01397 709 098

At the Clinical Governance Committee complaint reports and SPSO reports are tabled on a quarterly basis. The SPSO report details the outcome of the SPSO investigation and what action the Board has taken.

### **Care Opinion Report 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024**

NHS Highland received 145 stories within this timeframe with over 10,317 views. Not all the stories were about NHS Highland but were made by either NHS Highland residents attending NHS Highland or other Boards as well as visitors utilising NHS Highland's services. NHS Highland now has 33 services signed up to use Care Opinion and we aim to improve on this in 2024/2025.

Care opinion continues to provide a useful tool for learning and improving our services. In 2023/2024 Care Opinion was aligned to the Feedback Team to be managed. During this period, the Care Opinion responsiveness rate has increased from 50% to 93%. The Feedback Team now facilitate the responses within Care Opinion sending reminders to the various service handlers to prompt them when there is a story showing for response.

We saw a consistent position regarding our positive stories with a score of 64% in 2023/2024. These stories are considered positive or minimally critical.

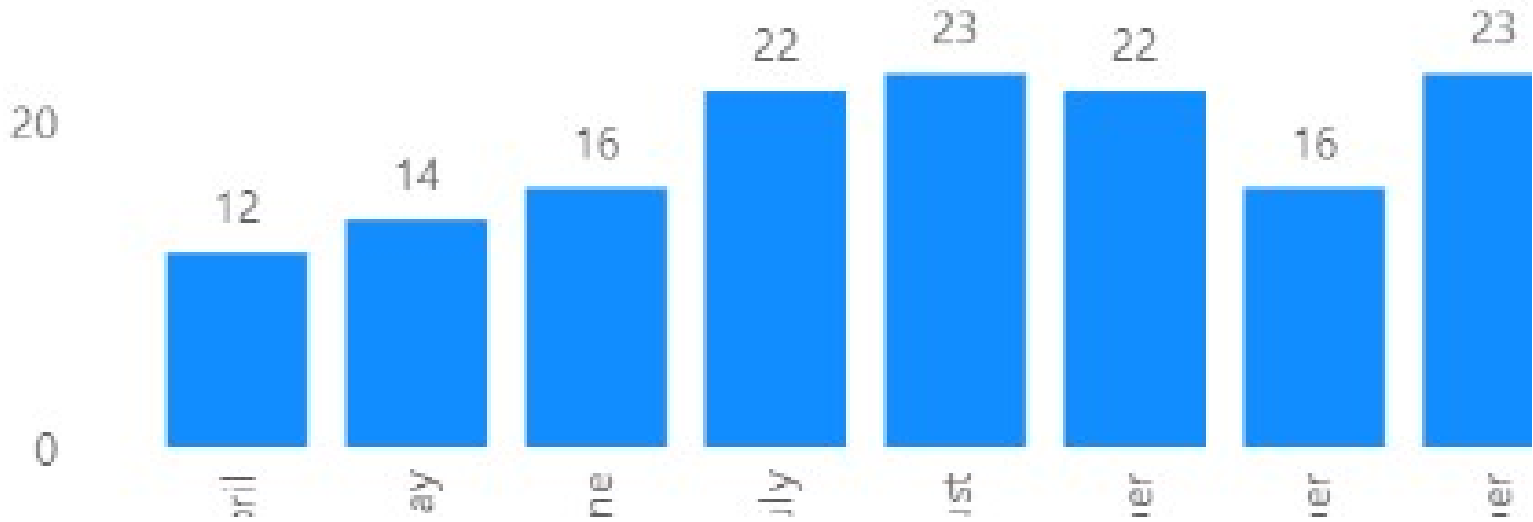
The report tells us that NHS Highland’s staff and care provision are good but that there is room for improvement with regards communication, staff attitude and treatment.



Indicator One – Learning from Complaints

2023/2024

Compliments



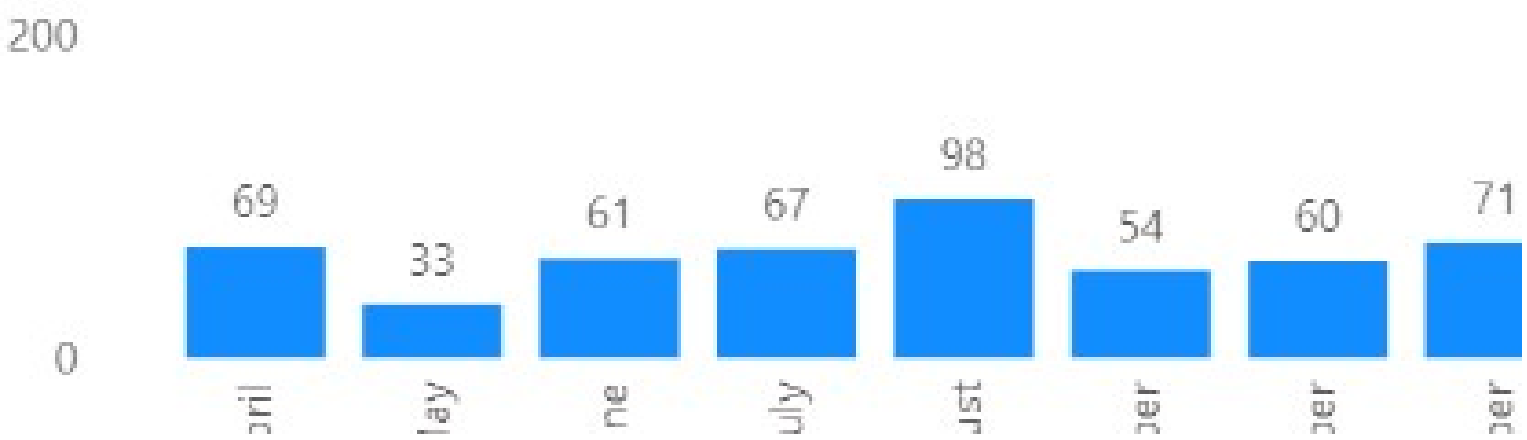
During 2023-2024, 204 compliments were logged in Datix, this is 24% increase compared to last year. These compliments were forwarded to the staff involved and the Chief Executive. Examples are used in the Chief Executive’s weekly communication with staff.

Comments

- “I was in the centre for a knee replacement on 26 January and I would like to say a big thanks to my surgeon and his staff for the exceptional care and treatment I received from the staff from the minute of my arrival till the last minute of my treatment it was first class and I thank you all again.”
- “I felt everyone took time to review our birth plan and were really supportive and advocated for us to have the birth we wanted. I managed to have a water birth which is what I had hoped for”
- “Thank you to surgical and nursing staff in Ward 3c and anaesthetist, for care, compassion and kindness.”
- “I am writing on behalf of our family to thank the social services and NHS staff who have helped to enable our 94 year old mother to stay at home in the countryside outside Maryburgh where she has lived for over 30 years”
- “I have spoken to XXXX for 5 years now since moving to the NHS Highlands. She has gone above and beyond to help me when in crisis/distress..”

In 2023-2024, 922 concerns were received. Concerns were dealt with by the service in which the concern was raised.

# Concerns



## Comments

- Enquiry regarding waiting list position, and waiting time for ENT appointment.  
*Passed to service for response*
- Concern regarding access to dental treatment on the NHS in the area.  
*Clarified location of patient and then directed to Dental Helpline*
- Patient looking for information on how to access details regarding a vaccination.  
*Directed the patient to the Vaccination Hub.*
- Wishing a letter to confirm son's name change  
*Passed to Admin for review and response*
- Enquiry regarding the management of Postural tachycardia syndrome (PoTS) within Scotland.  
*Passed to service manager to respond.*

## Stage 1 complaint Issues

Over the course of the year a total of 439 Stage 1 complaint were logged. The below table provides a view of the various issues which were logged on review and investigation of the complaint.

*\*\* The table below is representative of the number of times that an issue has been associated to a complaint, it is not a representation on the volume of overall Stage 1 complaints logged. \*\**

Category	Subcategory
Waiting Times / Delays	Outpatient
Other	Other
Communication	Blank
Other	Blank
Treatment	Problems with medication or pr
Waiting Times / Delays	Blank
Staff	Attitude & Behaviour
Waiting Times / Delays	Inpatient
Communication	Patient/carers not given full inf
Treatment	Poor Care
Waiting Times / Delays	Referrals Delays within admissi
Blank	Blank
Staff	Blank
Physical Environment	Premises
Treatment	Blank
Treatment	Delays in Diagnosis/Treatments
Complaint Handling	Other
Procedural Issues	
Staff	Shortage/Availability
Treatment	Consent to Treatment
Treatment	Treatment/Investigations carri
Adult Social Care	Blank
Communication	Poor communication between
Discharge Arrangements	Delays with discharge arrangen
Physical Environment	Hygiene & Infection Control
Treatment	Poor Co-ordination/Aftercare
Waiting Times / Delays	Day Case
Waiting Times / Delays	Waiting time in clinic/departme

\*Other – this relates to covid related complaints.

#### The issues for Stage 1 Complaints

- Delays in receiving vaccinations.  
*Complaint passed to the Vaccination Service for response where eligibility was explained.*
- Patient not happy with outcome of telephone appointment and contents of follow up letter. Notes not correct from letter, wishes for follow up to this to rectify.  
*Nurse Manager called patient and relative to provide update and give reassurance about any future appointments or letters. Staff member agreed they could have provided initial information at appointment more clearly. Nothing further to raise.*
- Child has been referred for Physio in Sept 23. No acknowledgement received and has been told will need to wait until Sept 24. Wishes to see if earlier app can be made.  
*Called the complainant and resolved issue by phone. Complainant happy with outcome.*
- Requesting an x-ray for his injured foot



*Radiology contacted and advised that they had not received the original referral form. Another form was submitted and the complainer has an appointment for an x-ray.*

## Stage 2 complaint Issues

Over the course of the year a total of 798 Stage 2 complaint were logged. The below table provides a view of the various issues which were logged on review and investigation of the complaint

*\*\* The table below is representtive of the number of times that an issue has been associated to a complaint, it is not a representation on the volume of overall Stage 2 complaints logged. \*\**

Category	Subcategory
Treatment	Poor Care
Complaint Handling	Length of time taken to resolve
Communication	Patient/carers not given full infor
Staff	Attitude & Behaviour
Treatment	Delays in Diagnosis/Treatments
Waiting Times / Delays	Outpatient
Communication	Patient/carers not fully involved i
Waiting Times / Delays	Referrals Delays within admission
Communication	Poor communication between pr
Adult Social Care	Lack of care provision
Treatment	Poor Nursing Care
Treatment	Treatment/Investigations carried
Staff	Shortage/Availability
Waiting Times / Delays	Inpatient
Procedural Issues	Policy & Commercial Decisions o
Other	Other
Treatment	Consent to Treatment
Treatment	Problems with medication or pre
Treatment	Poor Co-ordination/Aftercare
Treatment	Wrong Diagnosis/Treatment
Adult Social Care	Delays with care assessments
Communication	Insensitive Information
Adult Social Care	Poor care planning
Discharge Arrangements	Delays with discharge arrange
Treatment	Clinical Records
Communication	Breach of Patient Confidentiality
Treatment	Problems with Test Results
Discharge Arrangements	Problems with transport
Patient Privacy / Dignity / Respect	Patient Privacy & Dignity

## The issues for Stage 2 Complaints

- Seeking Home Vaccination for disabled patient (mobility issues). Seeking clarification regarding criteria for Shingles Vaccine.  
*Apology and explanation regarding the reasons why the shingles vaccination couldn't be given at that time - appt made*
- Parents seeking an appointment with Ophthalmology Services for their 6 year old disabled son (have been denied an appointment previously). Seeking reassurance that waiting area is suitable for children with enhanced needs.  
*Apology given - significant delays due to equipping and health and safety issues which has meant that the sensory room has not been available until more recently. Specific clinics have been scheduled to support and at a time during quieter periods.*
- The lack of psychiatric care in Caithness  
*Explained the process for psychiatric cover in Caithness and plans*
- Care and treatment from GP Practice  
*Apology that patient was not satisfied with care. Explanation of timeline and confirmation that on review management was appropriate.*
- Request a review of Mental Health care and treatment Care worker - costs reimbursed for travel  
*Apology for the delay due to extensive case review – care and treatment deemed appropriate, and carer's expenses have been paid.*

## **All actions taken and improvements made as a result of complaints are recorded on Datix. Example of actions taken/improvements made are:**

- Chaplaincy support given to staff. New post being developed through Maternity for a Bereavement Midwife
- Weekly update of waiting lists and monthly update on data specific to Caithness gathered and shared with North Highland Woman's Hub
- Communications to Staff – To be reminded if the role of ED and the correct methods to direct patients to the most appropriate service
- A working group is being set up to plan care pathways for long covid patients
- A working party has met to increase MDT input on Ruthven Ward
- Staff reminded of importance on the timeliness of logging incidents as they arise.
- New patient questionnaire has been developed, this will be available and presented to patients on discharge.

## **Indicator Two - Complaint Process Experience**

The complaint handling experience survey was re-established, however, the volumes of returned surveys over the year are a small volume of 25 returned surveys.

Themes of response are centred on:

- Questions not being answered in responses
- How the complainants do not feel the response has satisfied their complaint
- Appreciation of contact made by Feedback Team

On reflection we believe that the current process for sending the surveys is not adding value, therefore, we aim to utilise the new InPhase system, which is being introduced in December 2024, to find better ways of capturing feedback on the complaint handling experience.

## **Indicator Three – Staff Awareness and Training**

Complaints training have been organised regularly throughout 2023-2024 with focus on the Complaint Handling Procedure and the role and responsibilities of the Feedback Team and Operational Units. Support resources have been arranged and communicated to support a quality response.

In addition, specific training sessions have been given to Senior Charge nurses, FY1 and FY2 staff, along with a bespoke session for Mental Health Services on how to draft a quality response, and this continues into the latter part of 2024.

Future training sessions are planned for Acute Medical, focusing on quality of investigations and responses.

### **Indicators**

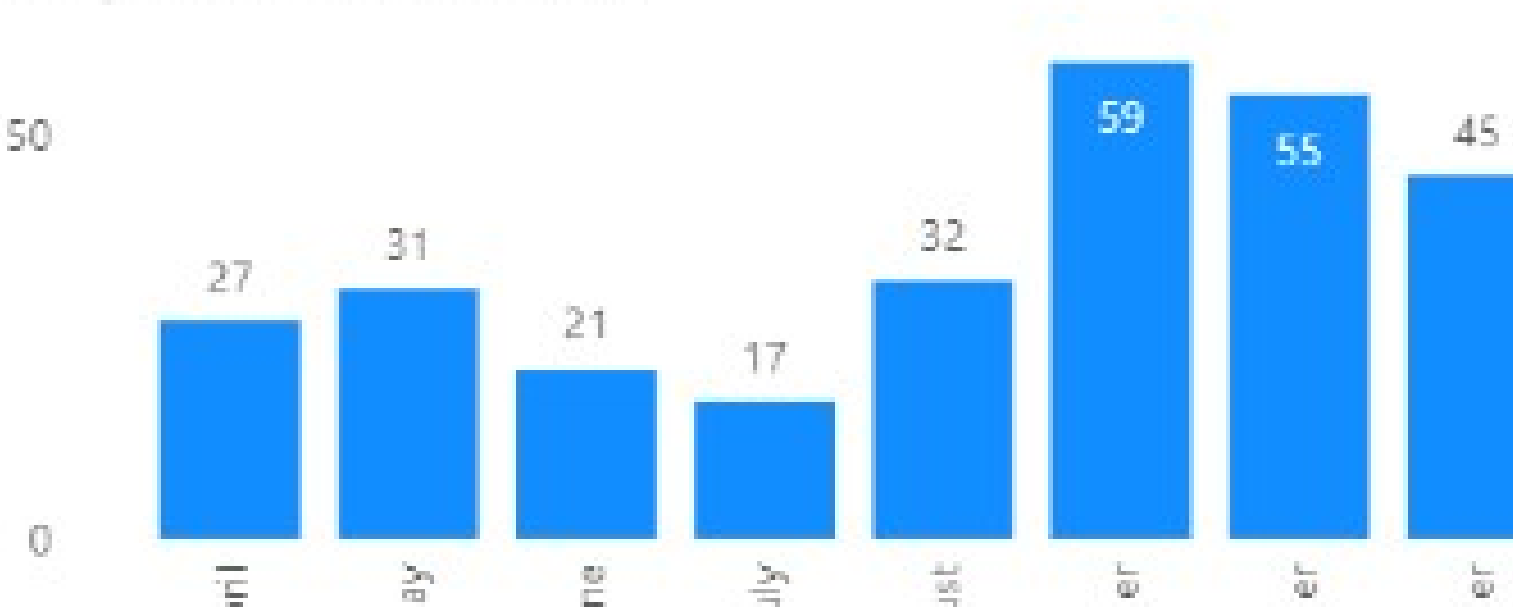
- Indicator four
  - The total number of complaints received
- Indicator five
  - Complaints closed at each stage
- Indicator six
  - Complaints upheld, partially upheld and not upheld
- Indicator seven
  - Working days to respond
- Indicator eight
  - Complaints closed in full within the timescales
- Indicator nine
  - Number of cases where an extension is authorised

### **Indicators**

#### **Indicator four – Number of complaints received**

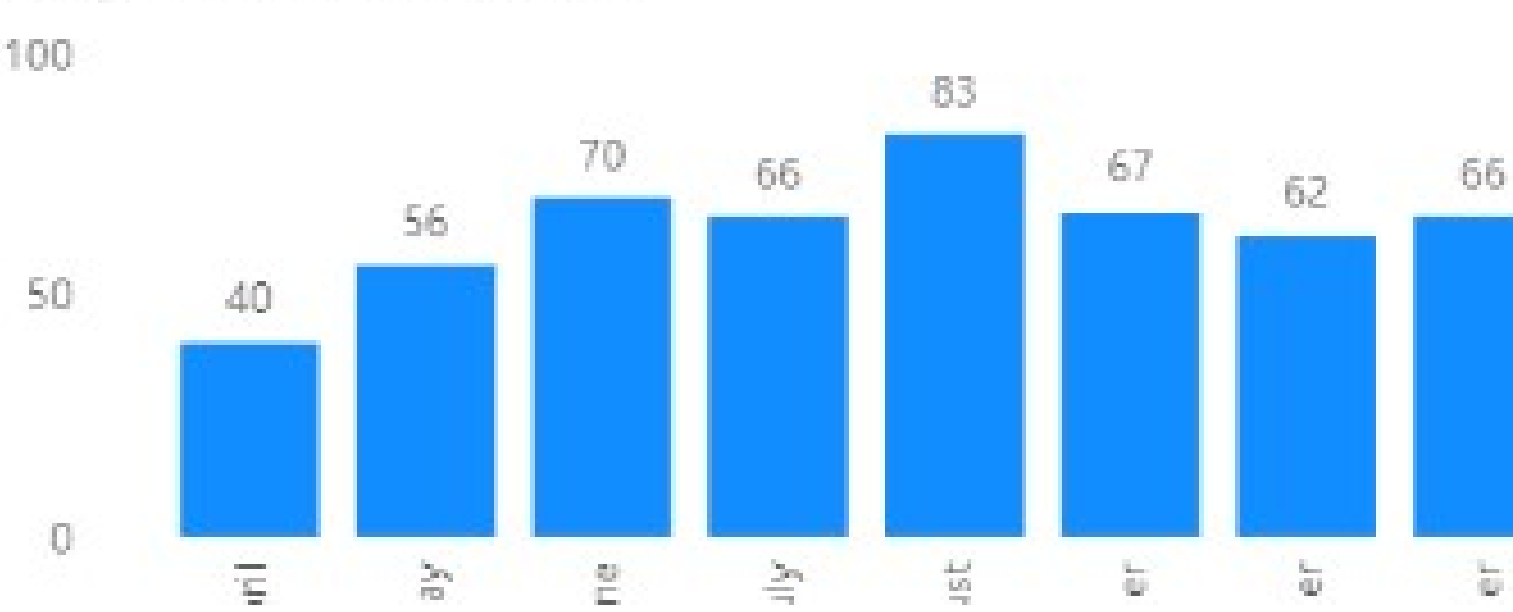
Stage 1 only

## Stage 1 Cases Received



Stage 2 only

## Stage 2 Cases Received

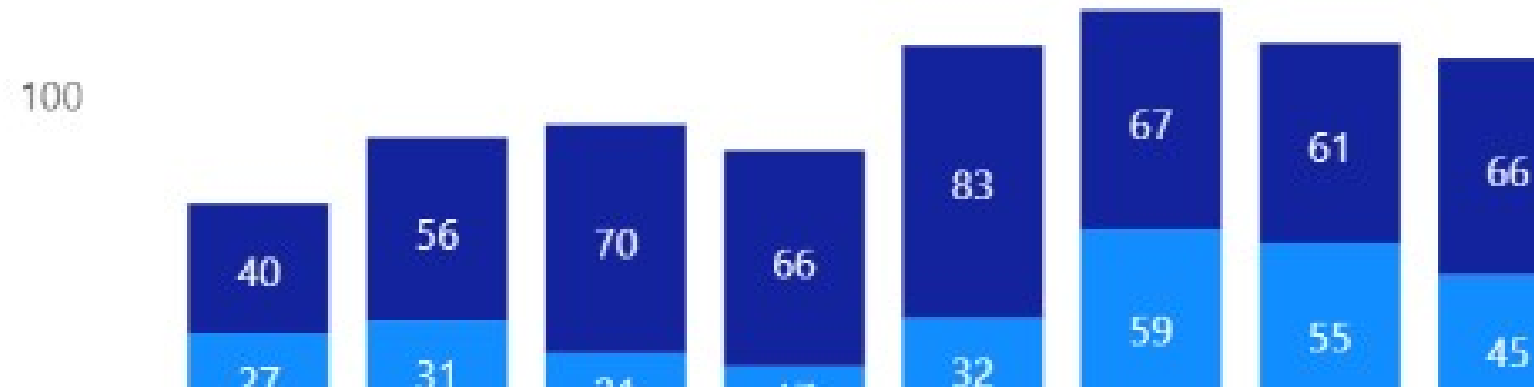


The number of stage 2 complaints received reduced significantly at the beginning of the pandemic and started to increase before reducing again. Stage 2 complaints started to rise again towards the end of the financial year.

Number of Stage 1 and Stage 2 Complaints Combined

## Stage 1/Stage 2 Cases Received

● Stage 1 ● Stage 2

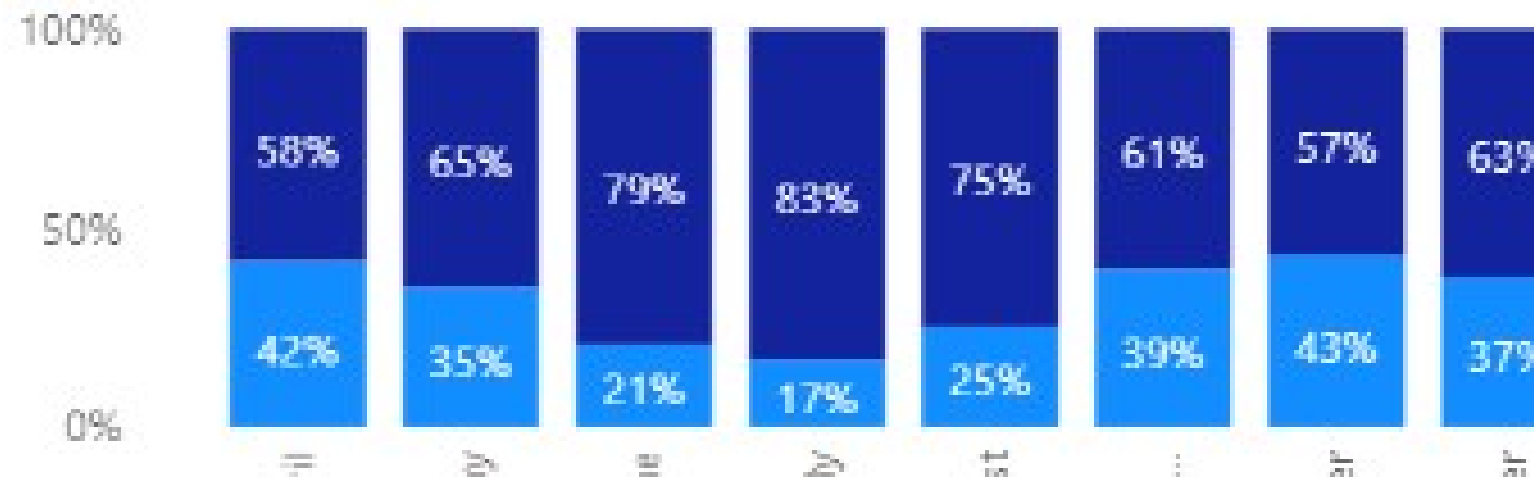


### Indicator five – Complaints closed

The number of complaints closed at stage one and stage two as % of all complaints (closed)

## Closed Stage 1/Stage 2 Cases

● Stage 1 Closed ● Stage 2 Closed



The number of complaints closed at stage two after escalation as % of all complaints (closed)


Month Year	Stage 2 cases closed after escalation (% of all closed cases)
April 2023	6%
May 2023	6%
June 2023	6%
July 2023	8%
August 2023	4%
September 2023	3%
October 2023	1%
November 2023	1%
December 2023	7%
January 2024	3%
February 2024	2%
March 2024	3%

Some stage 1 complaints are escalated and they are not resolved. This table shows the percentage of stage 1 complaints escalated as a % of all complaints, which is, therefore small.

### Indicator six – Complaints outcome

The number of stage 1 complaints not upheld, partially upheld and fully upheld. An assessment is made of the complaint outcome.

#### Stage 1 Cases Closed | Outcome

Year	Fully Upheld	Not Upheld	P
 <b>2023</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>82</b>	
April	14	4	
May	12	11	
June	6	8	
July	4	5	
August	11	12	
September	22	10	
October	21	13	
November	11	11	

Stage 1 complaints not upheld, partially upheld and fully upheld as a % of all closed stage 1 complaints

Year	Fully Upheld	Not Upheld	Part
<div><div></div>2023</div>	40.60%	30.83%	
April	51.85%	14.81%	
May	40.00%	36.67%	
June	33.33%	44.44%	
July	30.77%	38.46%	
August	40.74%	44.44%	
September	51.16%	23.26%	
October	45.65%	28.26%	
November	29.73%	29.73%	
December	28.00%	32.00%	

The number of stage 2 complaints (excluding escalated) not upheld, partially upheld and fully upheld

Stage 2 Cases Closed | Outcome

Year	Fully Upheld	Not Upheld	F
<div><div></div>2023</div>	207	103	
April	14	8	
May	22	12	
June	25	16	
July	23	15	
August	39	13	
September	29	13	
October	21	10	
November	25	6	

Stage 2 complaints (excluding escalated) not upheld, partially upheld and fully upheld as a % of all closed stage 2 complaints (excluding escalated)

Year	Fully Upheld	Not Upheld	Partially Upheld
☐ 2023	40.99%	20.40%	
April	41.18%	23.53%	
May	43.14%	23.53%	
June	39.06%	25.00%	
July	38.98%	25.42%	
August	51.32%	17.11%	
September	46.03%	20.63%	
October	35.00%	16.67%	
November	40.98%	9.84%	
December	24.32%	27.03%	



The number of escalated complaints not upheld, partially upheld and fully upheld. This represents the number of stage 1 complaints that have been escalated.

Year	Fully Upheld	Not Upheld	P
2023	14	8	
April	2	1	
May	2	1	
June	2	2	
July	2	2	
August	3		
September	2	1	
October	1		
November			
December		1	

Escalated complaints not upheld, partially upheld and fully upheld as a % of all closed escalated complaints

Year	Fully Upheld	Not Upheld	Par
2023	41.18%	23.53%	
April	50.00%	25.00%	
May	40.00%	20.00%	
June	40.00%	40.00%	
July	33.33%	33.33%	
August	75.00%		
September	66.67%	33.33%	
October	100.00%		
November			
December		20.00%	

**Indicator seven - Average time in working days to respond (closed only)**

Below tables do not include re-calculation of cases that were re-opened. The first open to close working day calculation is taken for these re-opened cases

Average time in working days to respond to complaints at stage 1. Stage 1 complaints should be responded to within 5 working days (extended to 10 working days)

Year	Month	Average o
2023	April	
2023	May	
2023	June	
2023	July	
2023	August	
2023	September	
2023	October	
2023	November	

Average time in working days to respond to complaints at stage 2 (excluding escalated). Stage 2 complaints should be responded to within 20 working days.

Year	Month	Average c
2023	April	
2023	May	
2023	June	
2023	July	
2023	August	
2023	September	
2023	October	
2023	November	

Average time in working days to respond to escalated complaints

Year	Month	Average c
2023	April	
2023	May	
2023	June	
2023	July	
2023	August	
2023	September	
2023	October	
2023	November	

**Indicator eight - Complaints closed in full within the timescales**

The number of stage 1 complaints closed within 5 working days. The number of complaints closed in desired timescale decreased after August 2020.

**Stage 1 Cases Closed Within 5 Working Days**



The number of stage 2 complaints closed within 20 working days. The number of complaints closed in desired timescale decreased after October 2020, this was a result of the pandemic across divisions.

**Stage 2 Cases Closed Within 20 Working Days**



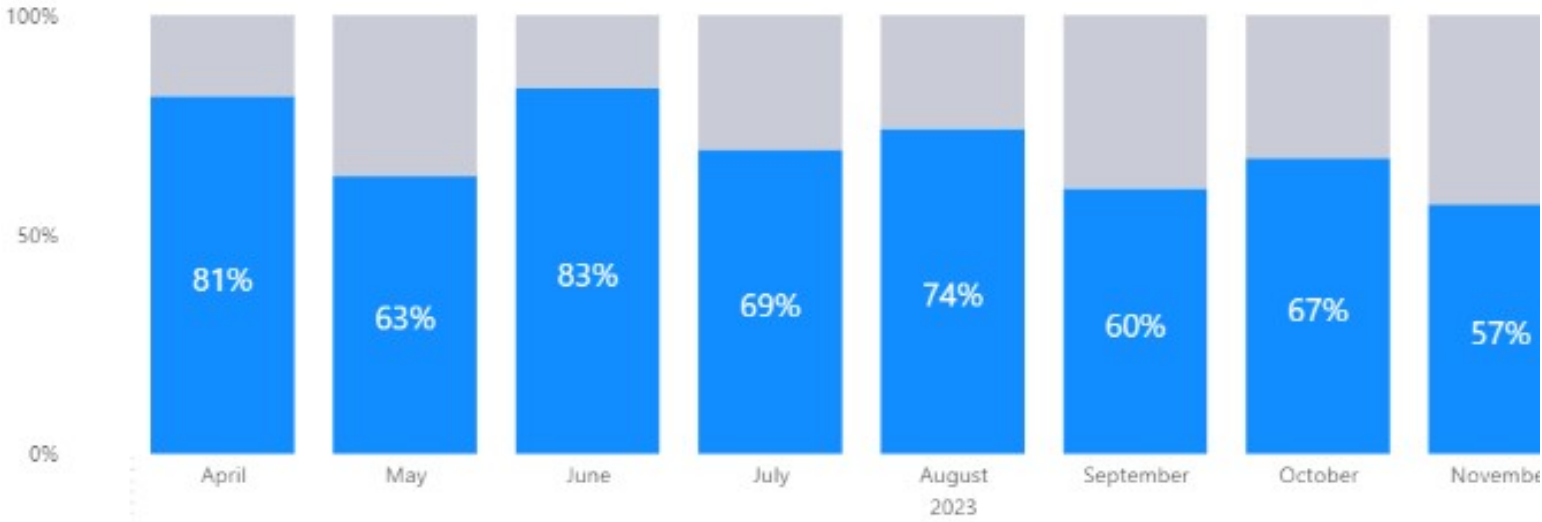
The number of escalated complaints closed within 20 working days

## Escalated Cases Closed Within 20 Working Days



% of complaints closed within working days target (stage 1 and stage 2)

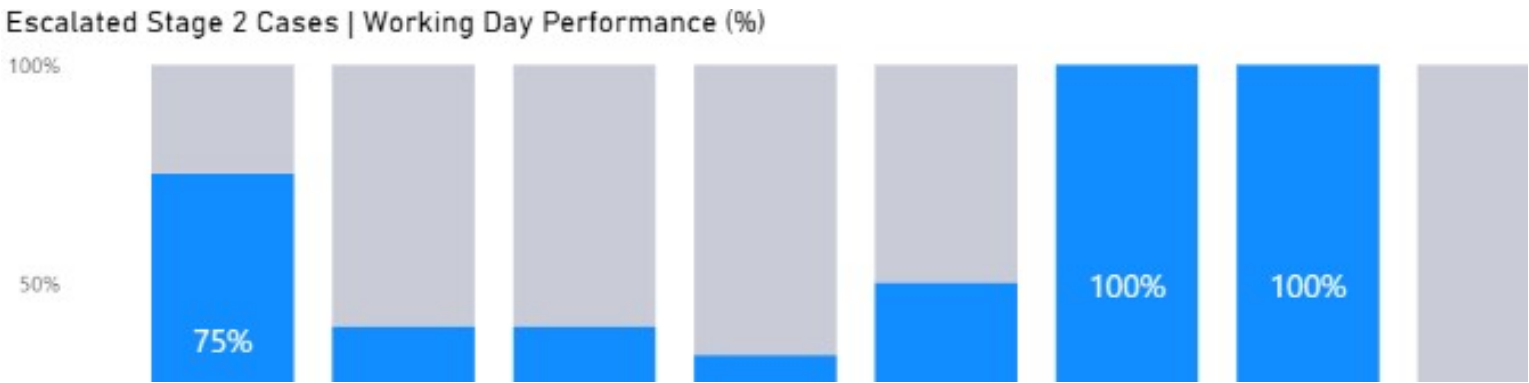
### Stage 1 Cases | Working Day Performance (%)



### Stage 2 Cases | Working Day Performance (%)



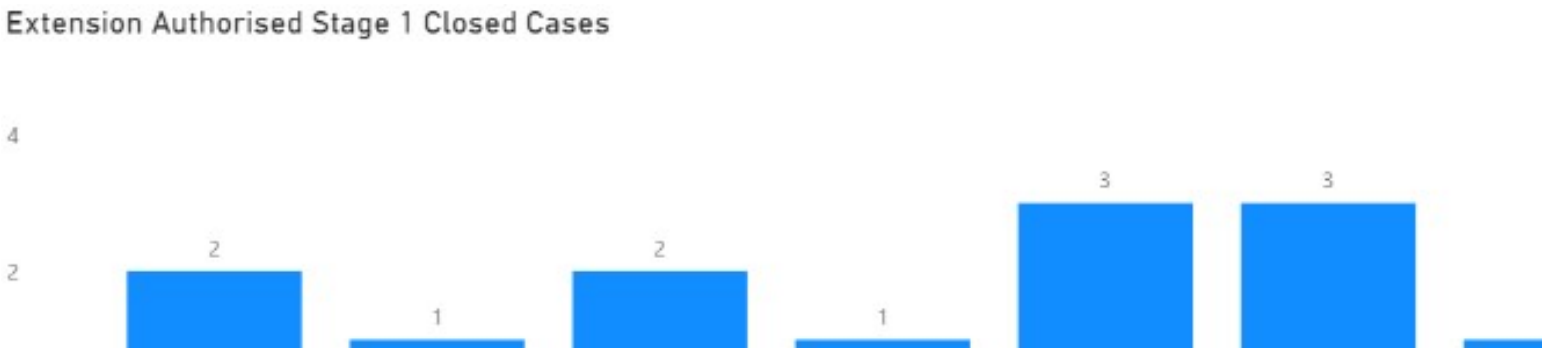
% of escalated complaints closed within working days target



The empty months represent no stage 1 complaints were escalated for the month that had escalated complaints

Indicator nine – Authorised extensions

Number of complaints closed at stage 1 where extension was authorised



Complaints response timescale can be extended to 10 working days with approval

Closed stage 1 complaints where extension was authorised as a % of all complaints at stage 1

Month Year	Extension authorised stage 1 closed cases (% of all closed stage 1 cases)
April 2023	0%
May 2023	7%
June 2023	6%
July 2023	15%
August 2023	4%
September 2023	7%
October 2023	7%
November 2023	3%
December 2023	0%
January 2024	9%
February 2024	12%
March 2024	10%

## **Complaint Improvement Activity**

As continuation of the Board Improvement Plan, the following actions have progressed in 2023/2024:

1. Focus meetings with the Feedback Team and Operational Units to drive performance
2. A training programme to include training for complaints investigators, feedback team, executive team and operational unit management team
3. A weekly report to identify open complaints in a RAG status format, along with a breakdown in themes and awareness of complaint's raised as High Level
4. Updated Website and Intranet pages
5. Increased collaborative working to resolve complex cases

NHS Highland is in the stages of implementing a new Complaint reporting system called InPhase, which will go-live from the 1 December 2024. The ongoing phases of the InPhase project will advance the Boards plans to streamline the management of complaints and bring about further improvement opportunities.

**NHS Highland**

**Annual Report on Feedback and Complaints**

**Performance Indicator Data collection**

**2023/2024**

**Performance Indicator Four:**

**Summary of total number of complaints received in the reporting year (Stage 1 and Stage 2)**

**\*Does not include complaints with a withdrawn, SPSO or further correspondence status/stage**

Number of complaints received by the NHS Territorial Board or NHS Special Board Complaints and Feedback Team	<b>1207</b>
Number of complaints received by NHS Contractors ( <i>Territorial Boards only</i> )	<b>n/a</b>
<b>Total number of complaints received in NHS Board area</b>	

**NHS Board - sub-groups of complaints received**

<b>Prisons</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>NHS Board Managed Primary Care services:</b>	
GP	<b>58</b>
Dental	<b>27</b>
Ophthalmic	<b>21 (from acute setting)</b>
Pharmacy	<b>4</b>

**No complaints relating to primary care managed opticians**



## NHS Contractors – complaints received

GP	n/a
Dental	n/a
Ophthalmic	n/a
Pharmacy	n/a
<b>Total</b>	<b>n/a</b>

## Performance Indicator Five

**The total number of complaints closed by NHS Boards in the reporting year** (do not include contractor data, withdrawn cases or cases where consent not received).

Number of complaints closed by the NHS Board	Number	As a % of all NHS Board complaints closed (not contractors)
Stage one	384	34%
Stage two	696	62%
Stage two - Number of escalated complaints	42	4%
<b>Total complaints closed by NHS Board</b>	<b>1122</b>	

## Performance Indicator Six

**Complaints upheld, partially upheld and not upheld**

**Stage one complaints**

	Number	As a % of all complaints closed by NHS Board at stage one
Number of complaints upheld at stage one	173	45%
Number of complaints not upheld at stage one	113	29%
Number of complaints partially upheld at stage one	98	26%
<b>Total stage one closed complaints</b>	<b>384</b>	

### Stage two complaints (excluding escalated)

	Number	As a % of all complaints closed by NHS Boards at stage two
Number of complaints upheld at stage two	260	37%
Number of complaints not upheld at stage two	151	22%
Number of complaints partially upheld at stage two	285	41%
<b>Total stage two closed complaints</b>	<b>696</b>	

### Stage two escalated complaints

	Number	As a % of all escalated complaints closed by NHS Boards at stage two
<b>Escalated stage 2 closed complaints only</b>		
Number of escalated complaints upheld at stage two	17	40%
Number of escalated complaints not upheld at stage two	10	23%
Number of escalated complaints partially upheld at stage two	15	35%
<b>Total stage two closed escalated complaints</b>	<b>42</b>	

### Performance Indicator Eight

#### Complaints closed in full within the timescales

This indicator measures complaints closed within 5 working days at stage one and 20 working days at stage two.

	Number	As a % of complaints closed by NHS Boards at each stage
Number of complaints closed at stage one within 5 working days.	252	44%
Number of complaints closed at stage two within 20 working days	298	52%
Number of escalated complaints closed at stage two within 20 working days	22	4%
<b>Total number of complaints closed within timescales</b>	<b>572</b>	

\*% scores are based upon the total number of complaints closed at that stage. These can be found in Performance Indicator Five

### Performance Indicator Nine

#### Number of cases where an extension is authorised

This indicator measures the number of complaints not closed within the CHP timescale, where an extension was authorised\*

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	Number	As a % of complaints closed by NHS Boards at each stage
Number of complaints closed at stage one where extension was authorised	25	7%
Number of complaints closed at stage two where extension was authorised	0	n/a
Total number of extensions authorised		

\*% scores are based upon the total number of complaints closed at that stage. These can be found in Performance Indicator Five

**\*Note:** The SPSO confirm that there is no prescriptive approach about who exactly should authorise an extension – only that the organisation takes a proportionate approach to determining an appropriate senior person – and this is something that NHS Boards should develop a process for internally. This indicator aims to manage the risk of cases being extended beyond the CHP timescale without any senior officer approval.

Completed by:

Name:  Leah Smith	Position:  Complaints Manager
Tel:	E-mail:
Date:  August 2024	