

SOUTH YORKSHIRE FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY	
Meeting	AUDIT & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
Meeting Date	11 MARCH 2024
Report of	CHIEF FIRE OFFICER & CHIEF EXECUTIVE
Report Sponsor(s)	DEPUTY CHIEF FIRE OFFICER, DIRECTOR OF SERVICE DEVELOPMENT
Subject	COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS MONITORING REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Members are provided with a summary of compliments and complaints received during the 6-month period 1 August 2023 to 31 January 2024.

Receiving compliments and recognising a job well done and taking the time to acknowledge someone's efforts, is one of the ways in which the Service is working towards 'Our Story' and aspirations to be a great place to work, to put people first and strive to be the best in everything we do.

The Service recorded 48 externally received compliments, a 60% increase from the previous 6-month period (30). 27 compliments mention attendance and quality of work of staff, 13 related to visits and events attended by the Service, 6 for rescues of people or animals or assisting other services and 2 for staff conduct and appearance.

Complaints received from the public are regrettable and give the Service the opportunity to review our work and how we can improve. Over the same period, the Service received 15 complaints from members of the public, which is an 11% decrease compared with the number received in the previous 6 monthly reporting period (17). 3 complaints were upheld, 11 complaints not upheld and 1 complaint investigation is ongoing. South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority received no complaints.

5 complaints were about operational incidents, 3 personnel, 1 vehicle/driving and 6 miscellaneous/other. 6 complaints related to the Sheffield area, 5 for Doncaster, 2 for Barnsley and 1 each for Rotherham and Community Safety. Of the 14 complaints completed, we were able to provide 8 with a response within the 20 working day target with 6 taking between 22 and 62 days.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

Members are recommended to:

- a) Note the number of compliments received
- b) Note the number of complaints received and processed

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Main Report

BACKGROUND

1. The Service's 'Our Story' includes our aspirations to be a great place to work, to put people first and strive to be the best in everything we do. Recognising a job well done and taking the time to acknowledge someone's efforts is a great way of bringing this to life and making the most of daily interactions and informal thanks. The Service publishes internal compliments and thanks from teams and individuals in the weekly Bulletin staff communication and via the 'Kudos' option on the internal Intranet home page where staff can show thanks to a colleague or team for a job well done.
2. We receive many compliments and messages of thanks at the time the Service carries out its essential work supporting the communities of South Yorkshire. This could be at an emergency incident, completing a home safety check and fitting smoke alarms for our most vulnerable members of the community or circulating information on our social media platforms.
3. External compliments are received via our customer focused communication facilities: website online form, dedicated customer care email address and telephone number. These are acknowledged and passed to the individuals being thanked and wider to the Service via the Bulletin notifications. From August 2023 to January 2024, 48 external compliments were received via social media, emails, letters and feedback forms. Every compliment is assigned a category and a summary is provided below.

Category	Aug 22 – Jan 23	Feb 23 – Jul 23	Aug 23 – Jan 24
A: Conduct & Appearance of Staff	0	1	2
B: Efficiency (speed of attendance, work and manner)	61	14	27
C: Visits, Open Days and Events	7	11	13
D: Humane (rescue of people or animals or assisting other services)	3	2	6
E: Donations and Charitable Works	0	1	0
Total	71	29	48

4. The Service has also communicated 46 bulletin and 60 Kudos (Internet) internal thanks, including thanks for providing support, training, individual pieces of work and congratulations on achievements. It can be noted that staff are embracing the use of the Kudos thank you facility, which has increased from 25 to 60 over the last 2 reporting periods.
5. A selection of external compliments and extracts of the kind words provided for the diverse work and support SYFR delivers to the communities of South Yorkshire is provided below.

August 2023

Verbal message of thanks received from a member of the public for a crew after the Emergency Services day held at Lifewise Centre.

"I just wanted to pass along some feedback for the Watch. Yesterday we attended the Lifewise Emergency Services Day and I cannot praise this team enough. They were absolutely brilliant with my boy. They answered all his endless questions, were so knowledgeable and a credit to South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue. Nothing was too much trouble. They were patient, approachable, and friendly. Thank you once again. They made my son's day and cemented his love of one day actually being a firefighter".

Email thanks received from a local business owner thanking a crew for their attendance at a fire.

"We could have lost everything. No one was hurt, it was dealt with swiftly and there really was minimal damage. I think I can safely say on behalf of everyone in the flats we are so grateful that they put it out and saved our precious possessions and made sure everyone was safe. Yesterday was exceptionally hot and they soldiered on and denied us trying to buy them ice creams. Just a wonderful caring crew who did a great job."

Voicemail message of thanks from a member of the public for a crew after attending a fire.

"Thank you for the way the incident was handled, it was a pleasure to meet the crew and the way they looked after [individuals] was fantastic".

September 2023

Email thanks from a member of the public following a community event held in Sheffield City Centre.

"I just want to give my compliments to your firefighters who attended Sheffield Pinknic on Saturday. I came to your stall and spoke to a few of them and everyone was so nice and helpful".

Message of thanks from a volunteer who took part in an exercise held at the Doncaster Royal Infirmary Hospital.

"Thank you so much for letting me attend this exercise it was absolutely fantastic. I can certainly say I will be a volunteer for a very long time. I most definitely want to do this again".

October 2023

Email thanks from a member of a public to crews following a large animal rescue.

"Just wanted to say a big thank you to the team who rescued a foal from a riverbank. They were very patient and did a fab job of getting the foal back up on to the banking".

Message of thanks from a Head Teacher for a Station Manager following an educational visit.

"Sincere thanks to Officer in attendance for his involvement in our Year 9 Inspiration Day. Feedback has been extremely positive from both staff and students. Effort, delivery and input given to over 200 students who attended during your presentation is greatly appreciated. Our students gained a very valuable insight into how you got where you are and also all the various career roles available within SYFR".

November 2023

Email thanks from a Paramedic for a crew's assistance during a patient incident.

"I attended a patient with your firefighters on Friday evening and wanted to feedback how amazing they were".

Message of thanks received from South Yorkshire Police for our participation in a local exercise.

"Barnsley District Command Team would like to thank all those involved for their contributions, their hard work and really engaging in the exercise, making it a success even with less favourable weather conditions on the day. We would also like give a special mention and thank you to the Watch Manager for his time and effort in setting up and delivering the exercise".

2 letter of thanks received by CFO Chris Kirby following the Ceremonial Squad attendance at the Remembrance Sunday Parade in City of Durham.

"As Lord Lieutenant of the County of Durham, it was both my honour and my pleasure to take salute at this year's Durham City parade, and I would take this opportunity to thank you so very much for the involvement of your fire and rescue in making a resounding success of this great occasion. I feel that the strong Colour party representing so many Fire and Rescue Services not only enhanced this very poignant occasion but highlighted the service, loss and commitment of generations of firefighters".

"I write to thank you for the outstanding contribution made by your representativesBoth firefighters were a great credit to you, South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue and indeed their own profession".

December 2023

A message of thanks from a member of a public for a crew attendance during a storm.

"Firstly I'd like to say thank you to the incident assessor who came out to look at scaffolding that had blown over in the storm and had gone through my car windscreen and was hanging precariously over my car between my cottage and the farmhouse next door. I didn't get the names of the other crew but a few of them came into the cottage and put up new smoke alarms afterwards which was great of them after the work they've just done".

Verbal message of thanks following a ring removal at a fire station:

I took my mother in law to the station around 5.30 this evening. Her finger was swollen and her wedding ring needed removing. It's been on her finger 58 years so she felt quite emotional. The shift manager was very professional and the two team who got it off her finger were lovely. They didn't make her feel an inconvenience and were really patient with the situation. Despite it being a stubborn ring. We just want to say thank you to them for their professionalism and customer care".

Social media thanks for providing assistance from a Yorkshire Ambulance Service paramedic.

"Assist ambulanceto safely bring the casualty out to the ambulance. Thank them for helping us when we needed it.....we couldn't have done it without them. Once again, thank you from all three ambulance crews that were on scene".

January 2024

Email thanks received from a local school post flooding incident.

"A huge well done to the watch who helped clean up our school after the sprinkler system activated and flooded the sports hall. Their actions and great team effort and management helped prevent the water from getting into the school corridors and causing more damage".

Message of thanks received via customer feedback form after a fire incident in their home:

"I got home after a call from a neighbour. The fire was already out and all the service people were fantastic. Heroes all of them. Cannot thank them enough".

A letter of thanks was received by a member of a public for a pony rescue:

"You recently assisted us in helping a pony who had become stuck on its side in a muddy field. You gave your all and I'm grateful for everyone's help and strength. If he could, I know he would want to say a big thank you to everyone. He very much enjoyed all the rubs he got from you all and all the motivational talks".

SERVICE COMPLAINTS

6. The Service Complaints Policy provides a structured way for the public to express a comment, concern or a complaint and for these to be processed consistently. Similar to compliments, complaints can be received at the point of service delivery, via the customer care email address and telephone number, the SYFR website online form or via social media.
7. A complaint is defined as any expression of dissatisfaction about any service provided by SYFR that requires a full investigation followed by a form of response.
8. There are 4 stages of resolution under the Complaints:
 - Stage 1 – Complaint resolved at the point of service delivery
 - Stage 2 – Complaint resolved by the Customer Care Team or Investigating Officer
 - Stage 3 – Complaint resolved by the Chief Fire Officer
 - Stage 4 – Complaint resolved by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

9. Where someone expresses a concern, a worry or wishes to express a comment which does not initially appear to fall within the definition of a complaint, the Service will contact the person to clarify whether or not they are seeking to make a complaint, what their expectations are, how we can put things right or if no further action is required. If these are resolved at first point of contact/delivery, they are recorded under Stage 1 of the Complaints Policy. If not, the Information and Governance Team (Customer Care) work with Investigating Officers to look into the concern with an aim to provide positive and acceptable responses.
10. The Service received 15 complaints from members of the public and the Authority received no complaints within this reporting period. A summary of the various channels through which complaints have reached the Service during the 6 month period 1 August 2023 to 31 January 2024 is provided below. Earlier 6 month reporting periods are provided for comparison.

How Received	Aug 22 – Jan 23	Feb 23 – Jul 23	Aug 23 – Jan 24
Customer Care Line	2	2	2
Other telephone	6	4	1
Customer Care e-mail	2	6	7
Other e-mail	1	1	1
Website online form	3	3	2
In Person	0	1	2
Total	14	17	15

11. Every complaint is assigned to a category

Category	Aug 22 – Jan 23	Feb 23 – Jul 23	Aug 23 – Jan 24
Personnel	2	3	2
Vehicle/Traffic	4	2	1
Operational	5	8	5
Admin	1	1	0
Community Safety	0	1	1
Business Safety	0	1	0
Miscellaneous	1	1	6
Not SYFR	1	0	0
Total	14	17	15

12. Below is a summary of complaints received by District.

District	Aug 22 – Jan 23	Feb 23 – Jul 23	Aug 23 – Jan 24
Barnsley	1	2	2
Doncaster	2	2	5
Rotherham	1	2	1
Sheffield	8	9	7
Various (more than 1 area)	0	1	0
Not known	1	1	0
Not SYFR	1	0	0
Total	14	17	15

SUMMARY OF COMPLAINTS RECEIVED

13. When a complaint is received the Information and Governance team may ask the complainant how they wish to progress their complaint, informally (Stage 1) or formally (Stage 2). 5 complaints were processed at Stage 1 and 10 at Stage 2.
14. Sometimes complainants explain they do not wish to receive a response to their concerns, nevertheless they are reassured that SYFR will review their concerns. For all others, a response is provided to the person explaining the outcome of our findings.
15. We endeavour to provide an acknowledgement to include the named Investigating Officer within 3 working days and a full response within 20 working days. Of the 14 complaints, 10 received an acknowledgement within 3 working days, followed by 5 taking between 4 and 14 days. The longest delay was due to awaiting confirmation of an Investigating Officer over the Christmas and New Year period.
16. 8 of the 13 complaints completed met the 20 working day response, with 6 complaints taking 22, 23, 25, 26 and 62 working days to complete. The longest delay was due to awaiting the availability and information from an individual to enable the complaint investigation to be completed.
17. 3 complaints were upheld, 11 complaints not upheld and 1 complaint investigation is ongoing. A summary of completed complaints is provided below.

Nature of complaint received from members of the public and outcome
<i>Complainant unhappy with comments posted on a social medial account (non official SYFR)</i>
Resolved at Stage 1. It was found the information was posted by a member of the public and this was a personal matter, the complainant was recommended to report this to the social media platform. The complaint was not upheld.
<i>Complaint unhappy with the outcome of part of On-Call recruitment process.</i>
Resolved at Stage 2. The Investigating Officer was unable to find evidence to support the complaint. A response to all issues and questions raised was provided. The complaint was not upheld.
<i>Complainant reported inappropriate actions of a member of staff.</i>
Resolved at Stage 2. Evidence was provided to the Investigating Officer by the complainant to support the complaint. An apology was provided and the complaint was upheld.
<i>Complainant was unhappy with the location on the road a fire appliance was parked, not adhering to road markings.</i>
Resolved at Stage 2. The Investigating Officer found that the crew and fire appliance were not attending an emergency at the time and were reminded of expected standards. An apology was provided and the complaint was upheld.
<i>Complainant reported a fire appliance with sirens and blue lights driving down a main road and turning into a fire station.</i>
Resolved at Stage 2. The Investigating Officer found the appliance seen returning to the fire station was part of 6 fire engines mobilised to the emergency incident. Fire Control had requested a turntable ladder which was stationed at the fire station. As the appliances are dual staffed, 2 firefighters were dropped off from the fire and then both appliances proceeded to leave station with blue lights and sirens to attend the incident. An explanation was provided to the complainant and the complaint was not upheld.

Complainant reported comments made by staff whilst driving past a fire appliance on a narrow part of a road. No contact details for the complainant were available. .

Resolved at Stage 2. The Investigating Officer viewed CCTV footage from the fire appliance. It was found to show the appliance was positioned correctly on the road and driven at an appropriate speed to enable oncoming vehicles to pass. A driver of an oncoming vehicle was seen to make hand gestures when approaching the appliance. No evidence can be seen to support inappropriate gestures from any member of staff. As footage does not include sound, no evidence could be found to support the alleged comments. The complaint was not upheld.

Complainant unhappy following a `forced entry` break into their property.

Resolved at Stage 2. It was found that the forced entry was undertaken in response to a request received from South Yorkshire Police and SYFR had replaced the broken lock. The complainant was provided with contact details for South Yorkshire Police for further information. The complaint was not upheld.

Complainant unhappy with an employment process.

Resolved at Stage 2. The complainant was provided with an explanation of the parameters of the SYFR Complaints Policy. Information provided by the complainant was passed to the People and Culture team. The complaint was not upheld.

Complainant unhappy with advice provided relating to a vape battery (electronic cigarette).

Resolved at Stage 1. The department manager and a Hazardous Materials Specialist Officer reviewed the advice provided and found it was correct and appropriate for the type of incident. An explanation was provided to the complainant and the complaint was not upheld.

Complainant unhappy that a garden bonfire at their property was extinguished by SYFR and the excessive amount of water used so it could not be relit.

Resolved at Stage 1. The complainant was provided with an explanation that the crew had followed procedures correctly in extinguishing the fire to prevent re-ignition and possible further fire spread to a property after the Fire Service have left the scene. Additionally smoke from the fire was impacting on traffic and reducing the visibility when passing the property. The complaint was not upheld.

Complainant unhappy with information about an emergency incident posted on public social media site (non SYFR).

Resolved at Stage 1. Evidence was provided by the complainant. Expected standards of behaviour were discussed with the member of staff and the complaint was upheld.

Complainant unhappy with information about an emergency incident released on social media (SYFR).

Resolved at Stage 1. It was found that the content of the social media post was deemed to be necessary in order to raise awareness of the risk to the general public in keeping with our legal duties under the Civil Contingencies Act (2004). An explanation was provided that SYFR, as an Emergency Service and a Category 1 responder, has a legal duty under the Civil Contingencies Act (2004) to warn the public and keep them informed in the event of an emergency and to provide advice and guidance. Care is always taken to comply with the General Data Protection Regulations (2018) (GDPR). The complaint was not upheld.

Complainant unhappy with the part of the outcome of an On-Call recruitment process.

Resolved at Stage 2. The Investigating Officer was unable to identify any evidence to support the complaint and the complaint was not upheld.

Complainant unhappy with comments made by a member of staff and reported a data protection data breach of information.

Resolved at Stage 2. The investigating officer found the communication with a member of SYFR staff was appropriate to the circumstances and part of normal procedures. This

concluded there was no evidence to support a data breach had taken place and the complaint was not upheld.

APPEALS TO THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER (STAGE 3) / LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL CARE OMBUDSMAN (STAGE 4)

18. No appeals were received by the Chief Fire Officer at Stage 3 of the complaints process.
19. No complaints were received from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman at Stage 4 of the complaint process.

HMICFRS

20. As part of the His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) data and information collection, data was provided for the Autumn data collection 2023/24.

CONTRIBUTION TO OUR ASPIRATIONS

- Be a great place to work**- we will create the right culture, values and behaviours to make this a brilliant place to work that is inclusive for all
- Put people first**- we will spend money carefully, use our resources wisely and collaborate with others to provide the best deal to the communities we serve
- Strive to be the best in everything we do**- we will work with others, make the most of technology and develop leaders to become the very best at what we can be

CONTRIBUTION TO SERVICE IMPROVEMENT

- [HMICFRS Inspection Framework e.g. Diagnostic area and/ or diagnostic questions](#)
- [SYFR Inspection report Areas for Improvement \(AFIs\)](#)
- [Fit for the Future Improvement Objectives](#)
- [Professional Standards for Fire & Rescue Services in England](#)
- [SYFR Service Plan 2023-24 Priorities](#)
- [SYFR Community Risk Management Plan 2021-24](#)

Complaint statistics are provided as part of the HMICFRS data and information collection. Compliance with internal complaint deadlines contribute towards efficiency and areas for service improvement may be identified.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLABORATION

- Yes
- No

If you have ticked 'Yes' please provide brief details in the box below and include the third party/parties it would involve:

CORPORATE RISK ASSESSMENT AND BUSINESS CONTINUITY IMPLICATIONS

21. To investigate complaints and identify areas of improvement is an essential part of the Authority's overall performance and corporate governance arrangements. Reviews of performance via complaints that we received and process, provides the means through which to take remedial action where required and in doing so reduces the overall risk of failing to meet objectives and targets.

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT COMPLETED

Yes

If you have ticked 'Yes' please complete the below comment boxes providing details as follows:

Summary of any Adverse Impacts Identified:	Key Mitigating Actions Proposed and Agreed:
No potential negatives identified as there are different ways for members of the public to make complaints i.e. telephone, in person, email, on line form, translation sourced if required.	

No

N/A

If you have ticked 'No' or 'N/A' please complete the comments box below providing details of why an EqIA is not required/is outstanding:

HEALTH AND SAFETY RISK ASSESSMENT COMPLETED

Yes

No

N/A

If you have ticked 'No' or 'N/A' please complete the comments box below providing details of why a Health and Safety Risk Assessment is not required/is outstanding:

A brief anonymised summary of each complaint received is forwarded to the Health and Safety Manager to assess whether further involvement is required due to the nature of the complaint; for example it may be identified within a complaint investigation that a risk assessment may be required or amendment needed.

SCHEME OF DELEGATION

22. Under the South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority [Scheme of Delegation](#) a decision *is required / *has been approved at Service level.

Delegated Power

Yes
 No

If yes, please complete the comments box indicating under which delegated power.

IMPLICATIONS

23. Consider whether this report has any of the following implications and if so, address them below:., Diversity, Financial, Asset Management, Environmental and Sustainability, Fleet, Communications, ICT, Health and Safety, Data Protection, Collaboration, Legal and Industrial Relations implications have been considered in compiling this report.

Legal Implications

24. Some complaints may relate to damage to property (vehicles/buildings/land) and therefore are actually insurance claims on the Authority's public liability insurance. The process used by the Information and Governance team when processing these, ensures they are alert to potential legal implications and claims which may lead to legal proceedings against the Authority.
25. Complaints can if dissatisfied always refer the matter to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGO) or if the LGO declines to adjudicate, on for judicial review of either the complaint process or the activity complained of. This may evaluate the validity and strength of the complaint and decide whether there is a likelihood of success or sufficient public interest in taking the matter further.

Diversity Implications

26. SYFR has a responsibility, under the Equality Act 2010, to deal fairly with complaints from service users and members of the community under the nine protected characteristics. The Information and Governance Team offer assistance and reasonable adjustments to help complainants when required.

List of background documents		
Compliment and complaint working files		
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