

NHS 24
BOARD MEETING
18 DECEMBER 2025
ITEM NO 9.5
FOR APPROVAL

PATIENT & SERVICE USER FEEDBACK ANNUAL REPORT 2024/25

Executive Sponsor:

Patrick Rafferty, Executive Director of Nursing & Care

Lead Officer/Author:

Karen Donald, Patient Experience Manager

Action Required:

The Board is asked to:

- Approve the content of the Patient & Service User Feedback Report 2024/25, for publication and submission to Scottish Government.

Key Points for the Board to consider:

- The Reports shows a marked 38.7% increase in feedback this year, however the 17% decreased reported last year means the overall volume has now risen above earlier levels.

Governance Process:

Report presented to the below Committees

- National Clinical Governance Group on 21 July 2025
- Clinical Governance Committee on 07 August 2025

Areas for improvement and inconsistencies were identified by Board on 28 August 2025, and it was agreed that the Report would be updated as per the feedback received, presented to the Clinical Governance Committee in November, and presented to the NHS 24 Board in December for final approval for submission to the Scottish Government by January 2026.

Report presented to the below Committees

- National Clinical Governance Group on 23 October 2025 for Virtual Endorsement
- Clinical Governance Committee on 06 November 2025 for Endorsement

Strategic alignment and link to overarching NHS Scotland priorities and strategies:

Supports delivery of NHS 24 strategic objectives of demonstrating the NHS Scotland Quality Ambitions in continuous improvement of care that is Safe, Effective and Person-Centred.

The revised format of the report links to the following NHS 24 documents:

- The NHS 24 Strategy refers to using our data effectively and making better use of data and intelligence.

- The NHS 24 Quality Framework. The framework has an objective regarding use of intelligence to provide assurance; this includes developing and implementing standards for the interpretation and presentation of data.
- Adherence to NHS Scotland Model Complaints Handling Procedure

Strategic alignment and link to Corporate Delivery Plan activity:

- Corporate Deliverable 2: Continuous improvement of core service performance in line with NHS 24's Key Performance Framework, and delivery of programmes to support the wider health and care system and delivery of Right Care, Right Place.
- Corporate Deliverable 7: Ensuring compliance and that the Board continues to meet all responsibilities and statutory duties across key areas.

Key Risks:

There are no key risks associated with this paper.

Financial Implications:

There are no financial implications.

Equality and Diversity:

The report supports the Equality & Diversity Agenda. A range of methods by which people can make contact with the Patient Experience Team is provided to ensure that feedback is obtained from a diverse group of patients. The Patient Experience Team ensure that any feedback that is related to equality and diversity/access issues are picked up and flagged to the appropriate team or lead.

1. RECOMMENDATION

1.1 The Board is asked to approve the content of the Patient & Service User Feedback Report 2024/25, for publication and submission to Scottish Government.

2. TIMING

2.1 This report covers the reporting period from 1st April 2024 – 31st March 2025.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 All Health Boards have a duty to provide a Patient & Service User Feedback Annual Report which details, figures, trends, learning and evidence compliance with the nine Key Performance Indicators as set out in the Model Complaints Handling Procedure.

4. ENGAGEMENT

4.1 This Report has been shared with the NHS 24 Executive Management Team, NHS 24 National Clinical Governance Group and Clinical Governance Committee.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no financial implications.

6. MEASURABLE BENEFITS

6.1 This report provides assurance of NHS 24's adherence to NHS Scotland Model Complaints Handling Procedure.

7. NEXT STEPS

7.1 Submission to Scottish Government and publication on NHS 24 website.

Patient and Service User Feedback Annual Report

2024 – 2025



If you need this information in a different language or format, please contact Patient Experience Team:

patient.experience@nhs24.scot.nhs.uk

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Foreword

As Executive Director of Nursing and Care, I am pleased to introduce this year's Patient and Service User Feedback Annual Report. At NHS 24, we are privileged to provide a wide range of services that support people across Scotland, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. From Urgent Care advice, Mental Health services and specialist support, our teams are here to help patients and families whenever they need us.

Central to our work is our commitment to listening and learning. Every piece of feedback, whether it comes through compliments, concerns, complaints or suggestions, provides us with valuable insight into the care and support we deliver. Patient experiences highlight what we are doing well and, just as importantly, where we can improve.

The size and breadth of NHS 24 means that we touch the lives of thousands of people every day. With that comes a responsibility to ensure every interaction reflects compassion, safety and professionalism. We are committed to creating a culture where learning from feedback is embedded in all we do, ensuring that patients and carers remain at the heart of our decision making.

I would like to thank everyone who has taken the time to share their experiences with us. Your feedback is invaluable in helping us understand the impact of our services and guiding us in making meaningful improvements.



Patrick Rafferty

Executive Director of Nursing and Care
NHS 24

2024 – 2025 At a glance

TELEPHONY SERVICES



Calls to all services:
1,839,573



Urgent Care calls:
1,366,099

Includes 102,168 calls to Scottish Emergency Dental Service

Mental Health Hub calls: **146,921**



Cancer Treatment Helpline
calls: **23,983**



Living Life calls: **5,290**

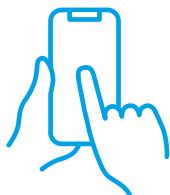
146,921

NHS inform, Quit Your Way | Care Information | Health & Social Care | Forensic Medical Examination Referral

95% of all patients had care delivered at their first point of contact

Less than **0.02%** of calls resulted in a complaint

DIGITAL SERVICES



NHS Inform page views:
76.7 million



App Downloads
39,346

CARE OPINION

216 Care Opinion stories told

60% of authors shared a positive experience

41,405 how many times they were read

Complaints

314
complaints received

293
were closed following Stage 1

21
were closed following Stage 2

Scottish Public Services Ombudsman

There were no cases referred to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman

How we get feedback

NHS 24 is committed to welcoming all forms of feedback and using it to improve services, to address complaints in a person-centred way and to respect the rights of everyone involved.

The Patient Experience Team handles all feedback. As part of NHS 24's Nursing and Care Directorate, the staff are trained to interpret patient insights and address feedback in a person-centred way, aligning with broader equality and inclusion goals. This approach to feedback fosters a culture of empathy, responsiveness, and continuous learning across NHS 24.

We welcome feedback in many ways. The most common way we get feedback is verbally or in writing to any NHS 24 service or directly to the Patient Experience Team. There is a dedicated feedback page on NHS24.scot (Feedback | NHS 24) which can be used to document feedback. This option is used regularly.

We also receive feedback via Care Opinion, the UK's leading independent, non-profit feedback website. Through this website patients and carers can share their stories and suggest how their experiences could have been better. This service is anonymous.

Feedback can also be made with the support of third parties, such as the Patient Advice and Support Service (PASS).

Some NHS 24 feedback is also received and managed through other channels. Feedback and comments may be shared on NHS 24's social media platforms such as Facebook and X. NHS 24's Engagement and User Research Teams gather insights through community engagement activities. NHS 24's Clinical Governance team facilitate and report on the SMS Patient Satisfaction Survey, which is issued monthly via a text message with the Quality Improvement & Evaluation team taking forward emerging themes from the qualitative data with service leads.

During this year, we received a total of 1,534 pieces of feedback. Each item of feedback was handled by the Patient Experience team, acknowledged and responded to in line with the NHS Scotland Complaints Handling Procedure.

This feedback included:

293 Stage 1 Complaints: *Straightforward and resolved quickly, ideally at the point of service, within 5 working days.*

21 Stage 2 Complaints: *More complex or unresolved issues that required a full investigation and written response within 20 working days.*

18 Shared Complaints: *Complaints involving more than one NHS Board or agency, typically where care or services span across different parts of NHS Scotland (e.g. NHS 24 and another NHS Health Board)*

468 Compliments: *Positive feedback, highlighting areas of good practice, high quality care, or appreciation of staff and services.*

379 Non-NHS 24 Feedback: *Feedback unrelated to NHS 24 services.*

The remaining feedback did not meet the criteria for a complaint or a compliment. However, every piece of feedback was still categorised, recorded and managed appropriately through the same feedback process.

Celebrating Success - Complimentary Feedback

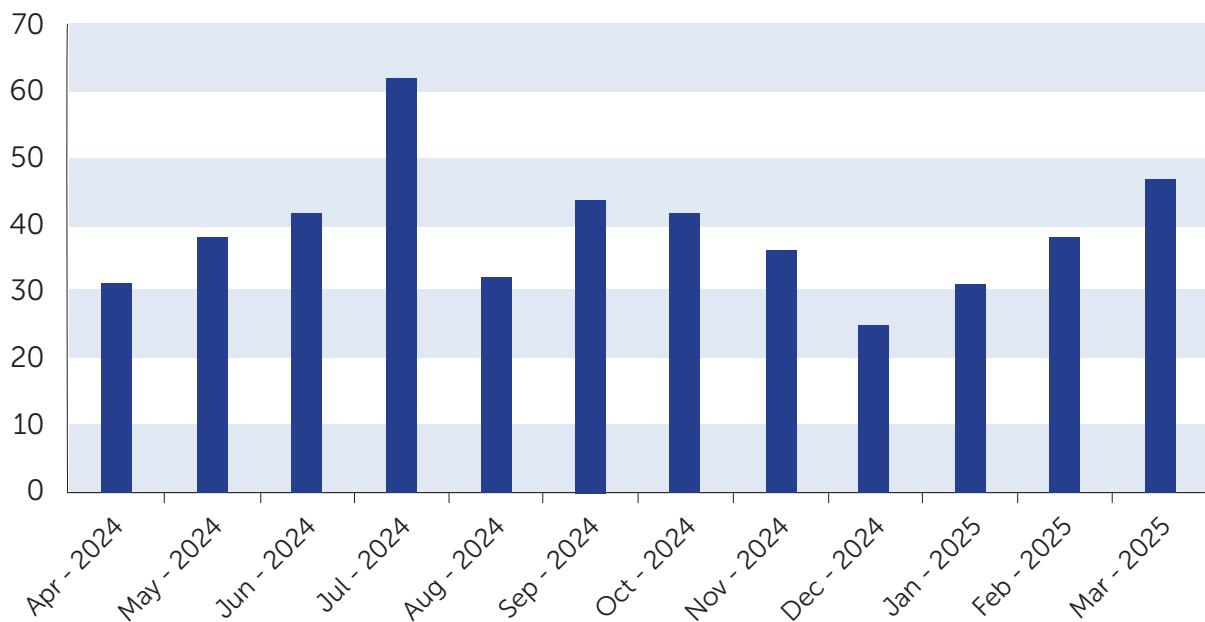
During the year April 2024 - March 2025 we received 468 compliments. This is a 23.8% increase (from 378 in 2023/24). All complimentary feedback is shared directly with the staff members and their management groups.

We work with colleagues on the Communications Team at NHS 24 to share positive feedback and raise the visibility and profile of good news stories to all staff. Working at NHS 24 is very rewarding, however can be challenging at times, and staff work hard to deliver excellent services that deliver care with compassion to all our patients. When patients take the time to tell us what has gone well, it can be a positive boost to hard working staff.

All service users who provide complimentary feedback, where possible, will receive an acknowledgement of this from the Patient Experience Team with assurance that this will be shared directly with staff.

The graph below shows the number of compliments received over the year.

Compliments by Month



Below are some examples of the feedback received over the course of the year. Several individuals expressed gratitude and positive experiences regarding healthcare and support services, highlighting professionalism, kindness, and effective care.

- **Compassionate care for neurodivergent patient:** A mother praised a Nurse Practitioner, and a Call Handler for their quick, thorough, and empathetic assessment of her son, who is neurodivergent, resulting in timely treatment and improvement.

“ *I Just wanted to thank you for the amazing service for my son on Saturday morning. I spoke with a wonderful Nurse Practitioner, and Call Handler who were brilliant in a very quick but robust assessment. What stuck out for me was how the nurse spoke with my son, who is neurodivergent and was scared, she was just so kind and encouraging of him to speak so she could hear his breathing, she was so patient whilst he really wasn't keeping up his end of the conversation and giving her little to go on, I just thought it was such a lovely example of a great triage and ensured he felt comfortable and cared for. Thank you so much for your care, it's so appreciated”*

- **Excellent mental health support:** A caller commended the Breathing Space line for providing a well-trained and experienced listener who helped them open up.

“ *I used the Breathing Space line yesterday. I've used other services like this before, both call and text. This was the best experience I've ever had. The person I spoke to really knew how to talk to me and help me open up. She seemed well trained and experienced. I also had a reasonable wait for my call to be answered. Thank you.”*

Care Opinion

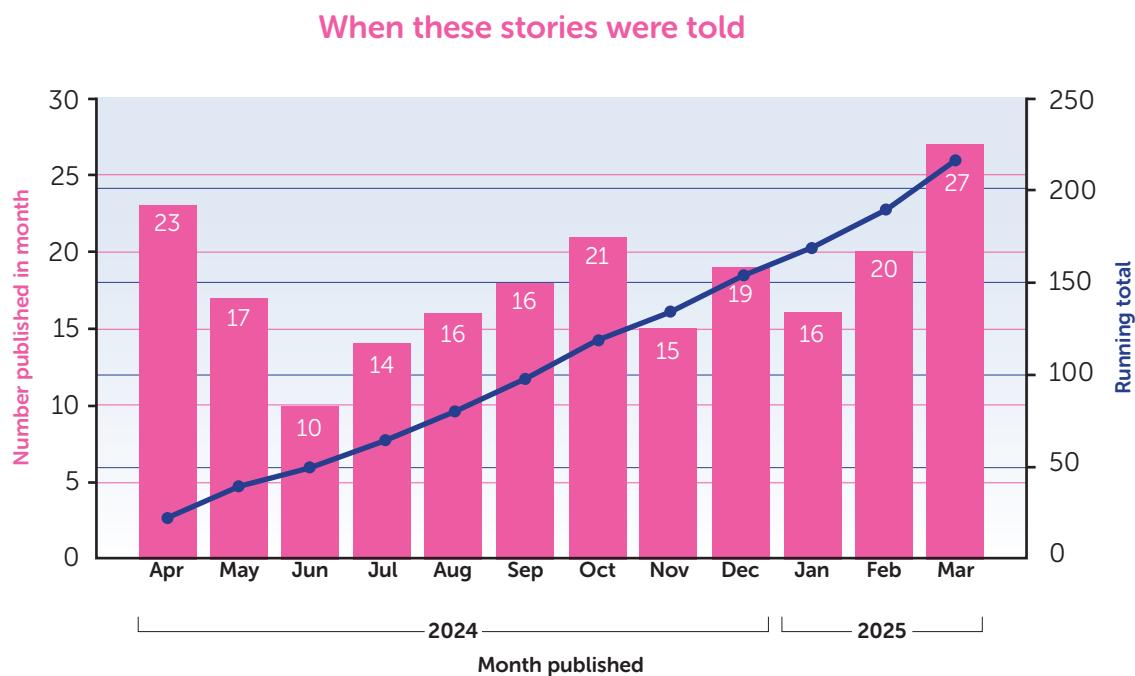
NHS 24 received 216 stories on Care Opinion in 2024/25; this was a 15.5% increase from the previous year. All stories were responded to within seven days, and 60% of the authors shared positive experiences. Additional staff have been trained to ensure we continue to respond to these stories in a timely fashion, with plans for further training.

When we receive positive stories, we share these with the staff and services involved to recognise the quality and impact of their work. Where we receive critical stories, our Patient Experience Team contact the individuals via Care Opinion and seek to resolve any concerns.

The NHS 24 Patient Experience Team was involved in writing an article which was included in Care Opinion's Annual Report, reflecting on how NHS 24 uses feedback to improve services.

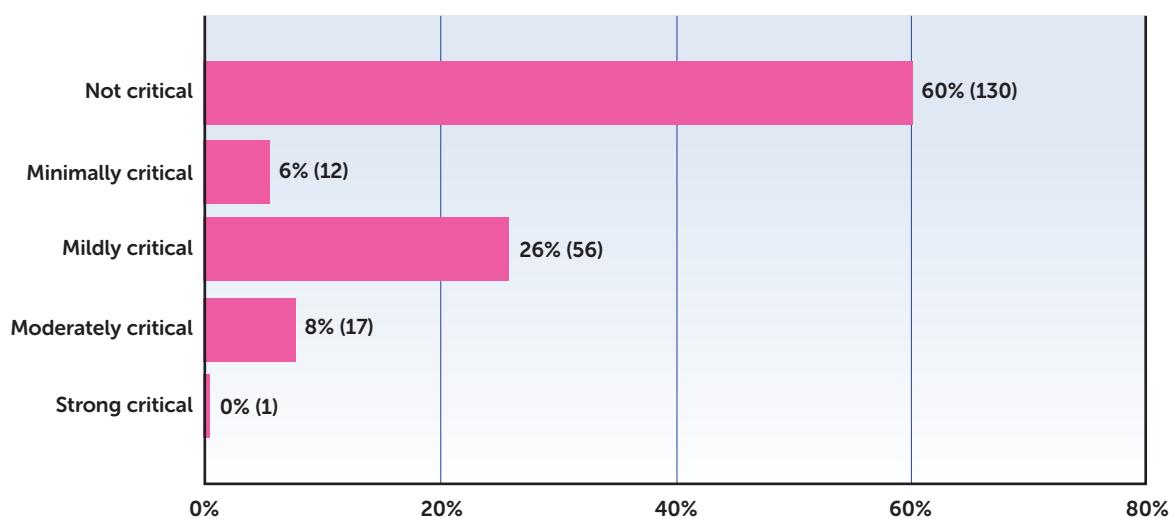


The graph below shows amount of feedback received over the year.



All feedback received by Care Opinion is moderated based on the criticality of the stories published. The graph below shows that 60% of all stories received were not viewed as being of a critical nature.

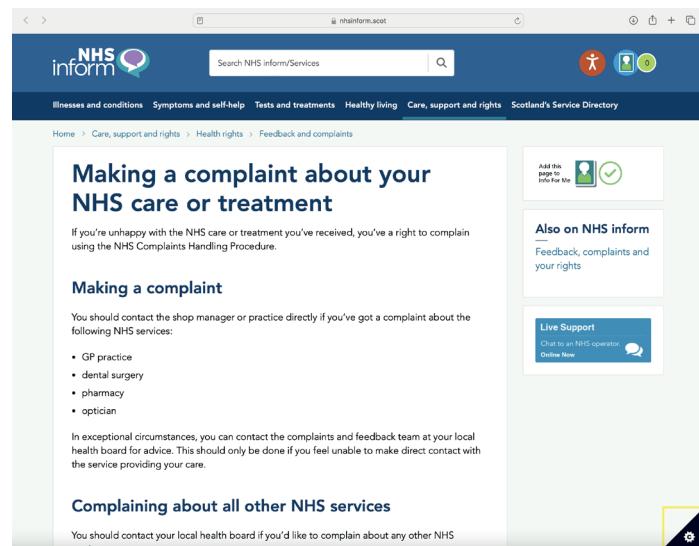
How moderators have rated the criticality of these stories



Complaints Handling Procedure

NHS 24 appreciates the valuable contribution patient feedback makes to the overall improvement of service. Complaints offer us a key insight into the quality of our care and help identify learning opportunities for our services.

All complaints are handled in line with the Complaints Handling Procedure (CHP) as outlined in the Patient Rights (Scotland) Act 2011. Complaints can be submitted in various ways including in writing, by telephone, by email or via our website.



Under the NHS Scotland Complaints Handling Procedure, complaints are managed in two stages.

Stage 1: Early Resolution aims to resolve straight forward issues quickly, normally within 5 working days. This stage is intended for cases that can be settled through prompt action, explanation, or an apology, often at first point of contact.

If a complaint is more complex or cannot be resolved at Stage 1, it is managed at Stage 2: Investigation. At this stage, the complaint is examined in more detail, with a full investigation and a formal written response, usually within 20 working days.

If the complainant remains dissatisfied after Stage 2, they may escalate their complaint to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO), who will review the complaint and may recommend further action.

Complaints Handling - Key Performance Indicators

There is a requirement to report on 9 Key Performance Indicators within the reporting period. A summary of outcomes for each indicator is provided below.

Key Performance Indicator 1 – Learning from complaints

Reports on service improvements resulting from complaints. Includes trends, actions taken, communication with patients and qualitative data shared quarterly and annually.

Learning and Service Improvement from feedback:

NHS 24 view every complaint as an opportunity to learn. Each complaint raised helps us to reflect on our services, identify where we can do better and put changes in practice. By reviewing complaints collectively, we are also able to recognise themes and trends, which ensures learning is not limited to individual cases but also applied more widely across our service.

Recent examples:

NHS Inform:

Recent feedback involved clarity of advice on the NHS Inform website regarding exercises for hip problems. Following a detailed review, we found that while the guidance on managing pain and progressing exercises was clear, there were areas that needed improvement. As a result, the page was updated and similar pages across the NHS Inform website reviewed to ensure consistency and clarity.

Care for Women of Childbearing Age:

This year, we identified a cluster of similar calls relating to women of childbearing age. Following feedback, we recognised a recurring theme and commissioned a Quality of Care Review, which is currently ongoing. It is anticipated that recommendations will emerge from this review, which will support the improvement in the quality and safety of care provided.

Clinical Theme Pain and Bone Injuries:

During the year, a clinical theme relating to pain (joint and muscle) and bone (injury) was also identified. This emerged through our ongoing learning process and was formally captured in our Health Care Quality Reports.

4 Top Themes of all Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints for 2024-2025:

- Clinical Outcome Decision
- Expectation of Services
- Access
- Interpersonal Reasons

Key Performance Indicator 2 – Complaints process experience

Captures feedback from complainants on how the process felt, accessibility, staff behaviour, empathy, timeliness and clarity of responses.

This indicator is currently suspended for NHS 24, as we do not routinely collect data specific to patients' experiences of the complaints process.

Consistently gathering meaningful feedback to satisfy this KPI remains a challenge. Despite various efforts, response rates have been low, and the data collected has not yielded actionable insights. NHS Boards continue to await further guidance from the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman regarding potential revisions to the current KPI framework.

However, we are reassured that in 2024-2025 no complaints were referred to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). The SPSO is an independent body that reviews complaints about public services when individuals remain dissatisfied with the outcome or handling of their concerns.

Key Performance Indicator 3 – Staff awareness and training

Monitors staff training levels. Covers internal communications, induction and training uptake and leadership accountability.

Patient Experience data, including complaint volumes, emerging trends, key themes, and outcomes are routinely shared with staff through Regional Clinical Governance Meetings to support learning and continuous improvement.

'Patient Stories' are also a standing item on the NHS 24 Board Meeting agenda. These narratives provide valuable insight into the experiences of patients and callers, highlighting both individual and organisational learning. Board Members consistently welcome these stories for the depth of understanding they offer into the impact of care.

To further strengthen complaints handling, the Patient Experience Manager is working in partnership with the Organisational Development, Learning and Leadership (ODLL) team to enhance staff training. As part of this initiative, Train the Trainer sessions have been scheduled for Clinical Governance and Service Delivery staff, with delivery planned for late 2025.

In addition, members of the Patient Experience Team have been supported to participate in SPSO training and Care Opinion webinars, helping to build their expertise in complaints management. One team member has also successfully completed Complaints Coach Training, enhancing the team's capacity to drive service improvement.

The following table provides a summary of Turas learning modules successfully completed by NHS 24 staff.

Module	Number of staff completed
Complaints Investigation Skills	62
Model Complaints Handling Procedure	137
Valuing Feedback and Complaints	286

Key Performance Indicator 4 – Total number of complaints received

Standardises complaint volume reporting using benchmarks relevant to service type (e.g., per call for NHS24).

During 2024/25, a total of 314 complaints were recorded. This equates to a complaints rate of approximately 0.02%, or fewer than two complaints for every 10,000 calls offered, indicating a consistently low level of formal dissatisfaction relative to overall service demand.

	2023/24 Calls offered 1,942,285	2024/25 Calls offered 1,615,181
Stage 1 complaints	272	293
Stage 2 complaints	39	21
Total complaints	311	314

Key Performance Indicator 5 – Complaints closed at each stage

Tracks closure rates at each complaint stage (Stage 1, Stage 2, and escalated Stage 2) as a percentage of total complaints.

NHS Boards in Scotland operate a two stage complaints procedure. Stage 1 aims to resolve concerns promptly through early intervention, while Stage 2 allows for a more detailed investigation of the issues raised. Complaints may enter directly at Stage 2 or be escalated following Stage 1 if necessary.

In 2024/25, we responded to 314 complaints, a slight increase from 311 the previous year. Of these, 21 complaints (7%) were handled directly at Stage 2, while the remaining 293 (93%) were addressed through Stage 1 resolution.

Feedback Type	Total number received	As a % of all complaints
The number of complaints closed at Stage 1	293	93%
The number of complaints closed at Stage 2	21	7%
The number of complaints closed at Stage 2 after escalation	0	N/A
Total complaints	314	100%

Key Performance Indicator 6 – Complaints upheld, partially upheld, and not upheld

Breaks down complaint outcomes by stage, showing proportions of upheld, partially upheld, and not upheld cases.

We record the outcome of each complaint investigation, whether upheld, partially upheld, or not upheld, within our incident management system for reporting and governance purposes. If a written response is issued to the complainant, it will outline the findings and conclusions of the investigation.

The table below presents the total number of Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints, along with a detailed breakdown of the formal outcomes for each stage.

Feedback Type	Total	Upeld	%	Partially Upeld	%	Not Upeld	%
Stage 1 complaints	293	109	37%	49	17%	135	46%
Stage 2 complaints	21	6	29%	5	24%	10	47%
Stage 2 escalated complaints	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Key Performance Indicator 7 – Average times

Measures average working days to close complaints at each stage, including escalated cases.

This indicator measures the average number of working days taken to close complaints at both Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the process. Performance at Stage 2 remains robust, with most complaints being resolved within the national target timeframe. However, Stage 1 performance shows a need for noticeable improvement to meet expected standards.

Feedback Type	Average Days
The average time in working days to respond to complaints at Stage 1	14 days
The average time to respond to complaints at Stage 2	18 days

Key Performance Indicator 8 – Complaints closed in full within timescales

Reports compliance with required closure times, 5 working days for Stage 1 and 20 working days for Stage 2 and escalated cases.

In line with the Complaints Handling Procedure, NHS boards are expected to respond to Stage 1 (requiring little or no investigation) complaints within 5 working days and Stage 2 (requiring investigation) complaints within 20 working days. The table below illustrates our response performance over the reporting period. Stage 2 performance continues to be strong, with most complaints resolved within national target timescales. However, Stage 1 performance shows the need for improvement. It is important to highlight that, although Stage 1 is described as requiring little or no investigation, most NHS 24 Stage 1 complaints typically involved a clinical review to ensure a thorough examination of the issues raised. This potentially extended the time required for resolution. This is a focus for the coming year.

During this period NHS 24 introduced a new Incident Management System (Respond v8) and timeframes were impacted during initial implementation of the new system.

Where possible individuals were kept up to date of revised timescales and any potential delays.

Feedback Type	Total number received	Closed within timescale	% Closed within timescale
Complaints closed at Stage 1 within 5 working days	293	102	35%
Complaints closed at Stage 2 within 20 working days	21	20	95%
Escalated complaints closed within 20 working days	0	N/A	N/A

Key Performance Indicator 9 – Number of cases where an extension is authorised

Tracks how often time extensions are used at each stage, expressed as a percentage of total complaints.

When complaint timescales cannot be met, an extension can be agreed with the complainant. This indicator reflects the percentage of cases where such an extension was formally arranged. Several cases did exceed the deadline, the extension option was not utilised, however this remains a focus for ongoing improvement.

Feedback Type	Total number received	Number of extensions authorised	As a % of all complaints closed at each stage
Complaints closed at Stage 1 where an extension was authorised	293	18	6%
Complaints closed at Stage 2 where an extension was authorised	21	0	N/A

Summary

NHS 24 remains committed to listening to and learning from all forms of feedback, recognising the vital role it plays in shaping safe, effective and person-centred services.

The number of complaints remains low in comparison to the high volume of calls and patient contacts NHS 24 receive throughout the year. While this is reassuring, we recognise that every complaint is important, and each one represents an opportunity to learn and improve. It is also noteworthy that there were no cases escalated to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman, which offers reassurance that complaints are being handled and closed effectively in the first instance.

It is also encouraging to note that the number of compliments has increased over the year, reflecting the dedication and professionalism of staff across NHS 24. Care Opinion continues to be an excellent and effective feedback service, one which we will continue to promote throughout the coming year.

Looking ahead our focus for the coming year will be on strengthening the classification and timely resolution of Stage 1 complaints to ensure a consistent and robust approach. We will also continue to embed learning from all complaints and feedback into service improvements, helping us enhance the experience of those who rely on NHS 24.