

Report to	North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority
Date	21st October 2024
Lead Officer	Helen MacArthur, Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Contact Officer	Elisabeth Nairn, Business Support Unit Manager
Subject	Complaints and Appreciations



PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 To provide members with an update on external complaints and expressions of appreciation received by the Service between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2 During 2023/24 the Service received 35 external complaints. The detailed report provides further context and analysis. All complaints are subject to review and investigation with opportunities for learning and improvement. A number of complaints are received anonymously and these are all addressed although it is not possible to respond to the complainant. Where the matter relates to the conduct of a member of staff these are dealt with in accordance with the appropriate Human Resource Policy.
- 3 During 2023/24 a total of 33 expressions of appreciation were received via the formal reporting channels. It is now common place for general external appreciations to be posted on Social Media platforms and these are not included in this report.

RECOMMENDATION

- 4 That Members note the contents of this report.

OBSERVATIONS FROM EXECUTIVE PANEL/AUDIT COMMITTEE

- 5 This report has not previously been considered by Members.

BACKGROUND

- 6 Complaints received by the Service from external organisations, groups or members of the public are subject to formal management and monitoring procedures. This promotes consistency in complaints handling and supports learning and continuous improvement.

- 7 All complaints received by the Service are investigated including those from an anonymous source. Due to the diverse nature of individual complaints it is not possible to provide a detailed analysis of trends although all matters are considered and learning actions are taken as appropriate.
- 8 The nature of complaints reported to the Service include the standard of the service delivered, the standard of driving, the conduct of staff or anyone else acting on the Service's behalf.
- 9 Expressions of appreciation received by the Service are similarly subject to a standardised management procedure as these can indicate good practice and ensure that particular achievements or actions by members of staff do not go unrecognised.

INFORMATION

- 10 The tables below detail the number of complaints for the period 1st April 2020 – 31st March 2024. The three-year average is 38 complaints per year and these are further analysed within the table. All complaints are subject to internal review within the Service and, where possible, opportunities for learning and improvement identified.
- 11 Where the complaint relates to the personal or professional conduct of a member of staff the matter is referred to the Service's Human Resources Department. This ensures that all matters are dealt with appropriately and in a consistent manner. Where appropriate, such matters are progressed through the normal grievance and discipline policies.
- 12 All driving related matters are referred to the Service's Driving Instructor for review and consideration. Where necessary individuals will be provided with further support for improvement.

Nature of complaint	20/21	21/22	22/23	3-year avg.	23/24	Variance to average
Conduct	20	18	13	17	15	-2
Driving	11	6	2	6	10	+4
Business/Community Fire Safety	4	2	4	3	5	+2
Operational activities	6	8	10	8	4	-4
Policy and procedure	3	6	0	3	1	-2
Total	44	40	29	38	35	-3

- 13 The table below confirms the number of expressions of appreciation received between 1st April 2020 and 31st March 2024. It is clear that the

number of formal expressions of appreciation have declined in recent years. However, it is also noted that appreciation is now expressed through social media platforms and these figures are not included.

Appreciation Categories	20/21	21/22	22/23	3-year average	23/24	Variance to average
Operational	23	32	30	28	18	-10
Charitable Support	0	4	7	4	3	-1
Community Safety	8	9	6	8	4	-4
Conduct	11	23	13	16	6	-10
Partnership	3	6	2	4	2	-2
Total	45	74	58	60	33	-27

IMPLICATIONS

Well-being Objectives	This report links to NWFRAs long-term well-being objective which is "To facilitate high quality, responsive and better integrated fire and rescue services so that prevention activity and emergency response can continue to be available when and where required, affordably, equitably and on the basis of risk."
Budget	Complaints can potentially result in actions that have budgetary implications. Conversely, improvement action can help reduce financial risk.
Legal	All relevant legislation is considered when dealing with complaints.
Staffing	Not considered relevant. No specific implications from noting this report.
Equalities/Human Rights/ Welsh Language	All protected characteristics considered and the appreciation/complaint will be dealt with bilingually or as requested by the individual.
Risks	Effective management of complaints can assist in reducing legal and financial risk to the Authority.