

# Customer Service Complaints Report

## 2023-24 Quarter 1

<b>Meeting Date</b>	27 <sup>th</sup> of July 2023
<b>Meeting name</b>	Casework Performance Meeting
<b>LT Responsible person</b>	Head of Improvement, Standards and Engagement
<b>Dashboard link</b>	[INTERNAL LINK]
<b>Outcomes sought</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Noting quarterly statistics: [INTERNAL LINK]</li> <li>2. Note findings, learning and improvement actions taken: [INTERNAL LINK]</li> <li>3. Noting the future development and actions taken: [INTERNAL LINK]</li> </ol>

1. This Customer Service Complaints (CSCs) performance report provides a summary of CSCs received and responded to by the SPSO in the previous quarter, including a summary of outcomes, trends, actions and key learning for SPSO, to promote continuous improvement of our service.

## Statistics – 2023-24 Q1

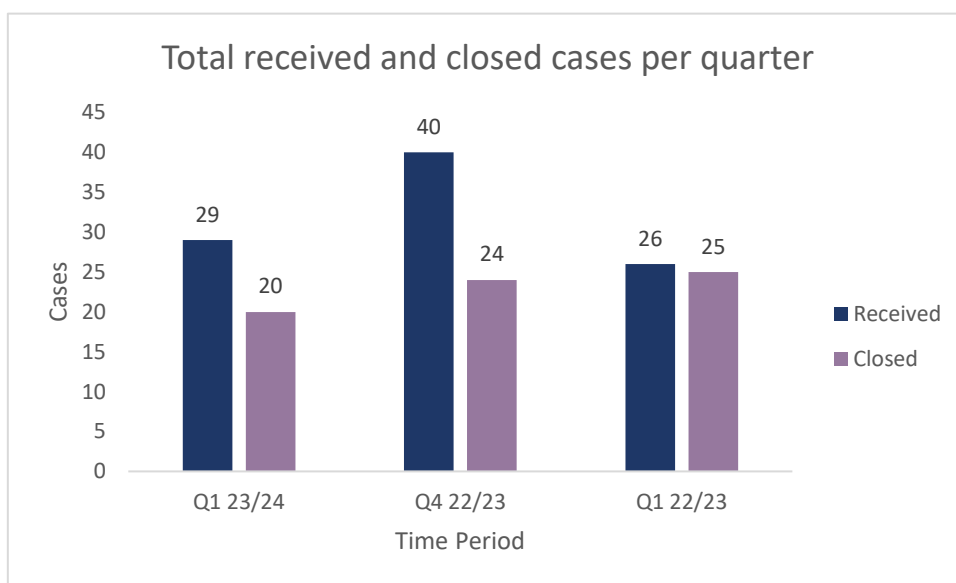
2. The table below shows the total received and closed cases in quarter 1 of 2023-2024. These are split by stage 1, stage 2 and stage 3. Stage 2 cases are further separated into cases that were escalated from stage 1 to stage 2, and cases that surpassed stage 1 and escalated directly to stage 2.

### Q1 headlines:

- At stage 1; we received 16 cases and closed 13 cases.
- At stage 2; including both stage 2 escalated and direct cases, we received 7 cases and closed 3 cases.
- At stage 3; 6 cases were escalated to stage 3 and 4 cases were closed.

Customer Service Complaints	Received	Closed
Stage 1 - Frontline resolution	16	13
Stage 2 - Direct to stage 2	3	1
Stage 2 - Escalated from S1 to S2	4	2
Stage 3 - Independent Review	6	4
<b>SPSO Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>20</b>

3. A comparison of the current quarter, the previous quarter and the same quarter last year:



- Q1 2023/2024: closed 69.0% of cases received
- Q4 2022/2023: closed 60.0% of cases received
- Q1 2022/2023: closed 96.2% of cases received

## Timescales

4. The timescales by which we measure our performance against the requirements of the complaints procedure are:

- 5 working days at stage 1
- 20 working days at stage 2
- 40 working days for independent review

5. The table below summaries the average timescales in working days to close service complaints at each stage, how many were closed on time and how many missed the target during Q1. Additionally, the oldest case at each stage is noted to address any cause for delay that is within our gift. Stage 3 cases take the longest time on average (25 working days) to close. The oldest current case of 31 working days is a stage 3 case and still falls under the limit of 40 working days.

6. One case was excluded from the columns 'Average' and 'Oldest Case' due to the case being held as a review case. Although the case has CSC elements, including the case would skew the results so significantly they would no longer provide an accurate picture of our timescales.

Average timescales	Average	On Time	Missed	Oldest Case
Stage 1	2.3	11	2	7
Stage 2	18.3	2	1	24
Stage 3 - Independent Review	25	4	0	31

7. The table below shows the time that all SPSO staff spent on the customer service complaints closed during Q1 for stages 1 and 2. The stage 3 time relates only to time spent by the Independent Customer Service Complaints Reviewer (ICSCR) on complaints at stage 3 up to July 2023. The new metric introduced last quarter shows the range of time in minutes spent on closing cases:

- There is an increase of 270.0% in average time spent on closing a case between stage 1 and stage 2
- The average time to close a case at stage 3 is 36.8% higher than at stage 2
- Almost a third (32.1%) of the total time spent on all stages was dedicated to just 4 stage 3 cases, none of which were upheld

Stage	Total Time	Average Time	Range of Time
Stage 1	1,235	72.6	0-180
Stage 2	1,880	268.6	150-420
Stage 3 - Independent Review	1,470	367.5	225-465
<b>Total</b>	4584		

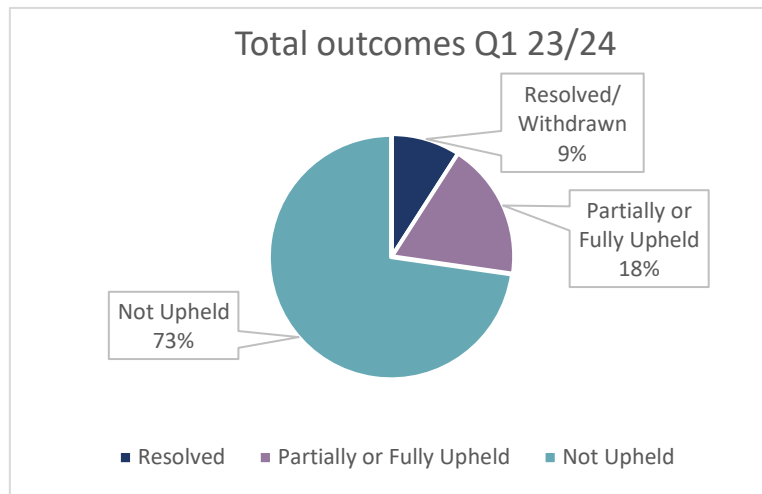
## Outcomes and subject analysis

8. The number of service complaints remains very low in relation to the overall volumes of customer transactions delivered by SPSO each year. Nevertheless, upheld service complaints (and in some cases, not upheld service complaints) demonstrate that we take these complaints seriously and acknowledge when something goes wrong. The outcomes of these complaints help us to learn when things go wrong, so that we may improve our service provision in the future.
9. The table below covers complaints where a decision has been reached, or a resolution agreed. This does not include cases which were withdrawn. Note: resolved complaints are not included in the upheld calculation rate.

2023-24 Q1	Resolved/ Withdrawn	Partially or Fully Upheld	Not Upheld	Total Decisions	% Partially or Fully Upheld
Stage 1	2	3	8	13	23%
Stage 2 – direct	0	0	1	1	0%
Stage 2 - escalated	0	1	1	2	50%
Stage 3 – independent review	0	0	4	4	0%

10. Highlights Q1 23/24:

- 18% of the outcomes across all three stages were partially or fully upheld
- 73% of the outcomes across all stages were not upheld
- 18% of the outcomes across all stages were resolved or withdrawn



11. The table below has been produced to illustrate the subjects which appear most frequently in Customer Service Complaints, and at which stage and their outcome.

12. There is some merit in considering the areas which appear most frequently in the subjects of complaints:

**a. Communication - clarity**

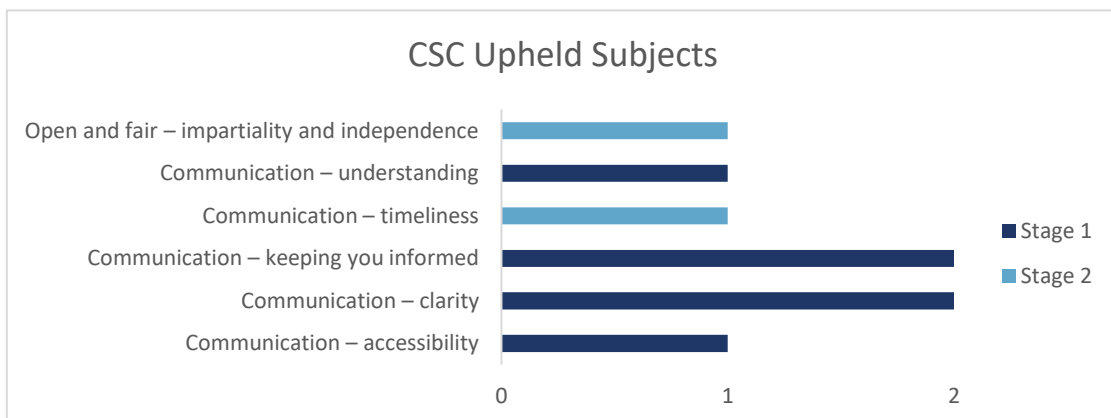
2 out of 5 cases within this service standard were upheld/some upheld, these cases were both at stage 1.

**b. Communication - timeliness**

1 out of 5 cases within this service standard were upheld/some upheld, this case was at stage 1.

13. The subjects that were upheld twice and therefore the subjects most often upheld were:

- Communication – keeping you informed
- Communication – clarity



14. Following the case type upgrade, it is now possible to identify which elements of complaint were upheld or not in cases which returned a 'some upheld' outcome. Therefore, it is now possible to definitively say there were two instances of 'communications – clarity' upheld complaints.

TABLE OF SUBJECTS, arranged by total frequency, and then by most upheld complaints	STAGE 1			STAGE 2		STAGE 3		TOTAL (total includes resolved)		
SUBJECTS	Upheld	Not upheld	Resolved/ Withdrawn	Upheld	Not upheld	Upheld	Not upheld	Upheld	Not upheld	Total*
Communication – accessibility	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	3
Communication – clarity	2	1	0	0	1	0	1	2	3	5
Communication – keeping you informed	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	3
Communication – respect and dignity	0	1	0	0	1	0	2	0	4	4
Communication – timeliness	0	2	2	1	0	0	2	1	4	5
Communication – understanding	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2
Competent and responsible – handling information	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1
Competent and responsible – putting things right	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	2
Open and fair – impartiality and independence	0	1	0	1	0	0	2	1	3	4
Open and fair – transparency	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	2

**Most cases have multiple subjects recorded; this will therefore not add up to the total of CSC cases for this reporting period**

## Findings, learning and actions

15. Actions taken as a result of CSCs determined in this quarter, where action other than an apology has been recorded:

<b>Case Ref:</b>	<b>Workflow Stage</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Substance of complaint</b>	<b>Decision</b>	<b>Learning and improvement recommendations</b>
<b>CSC-202300680</b>	Stage 1	(1) Communication - timeliness, (2) Communication - keeping you informed	(1) Complaint about delay in handling complaint. (2) Complaint that CR failed to contact by telephone	(1), (2) Fully upheld – Apology given and staff feedback	(1) Apology for delay at stage 1 of CSC. Apology for delay in handling case and not meeting case KPI. Apology for CR not phoning C. (2) Feedback to Review Team re screening reviews
<b>CSC-202300314</b>	Stage 1	Communication - keeping you informed	The CR should have contacted both C and the representative as they were given their contact details.	Fully Upheld - Apology given and process change	Amend the acknowledgement email that gets sent to representatives advising them that the default position is for us to contact them but to let us know if the applicant wishes to be contacted also. Ensure that this is also covered where applicants are taken over the phone
<b>CSC-202302298</b>	Stage 1	(1) Communication – clarity, (2) Communication - accessibility	(1) Applicant said this wording is confusing in the letter as appears under recon info and implies nothing would be changed so queried the point of the recon process: 'Please note, we may have to contact you again in future about our decision, but this will be for administrative purposes only. To be clear, we will not change your award.' (2) Applicant states CR's voicemail is out of date as refers to historic dates.	(1), (2) Fully Upheld - Apology given and other action	(1) Accepted viewpoint that this could be misleading - it is to cover scenarios when awards are made but this is not clear. Asked TA to amend phrasing to make clearer. (2) Spoke with CR who acknowledged voicemail has not been updated - they will update accordingly. Apologised to applicant.

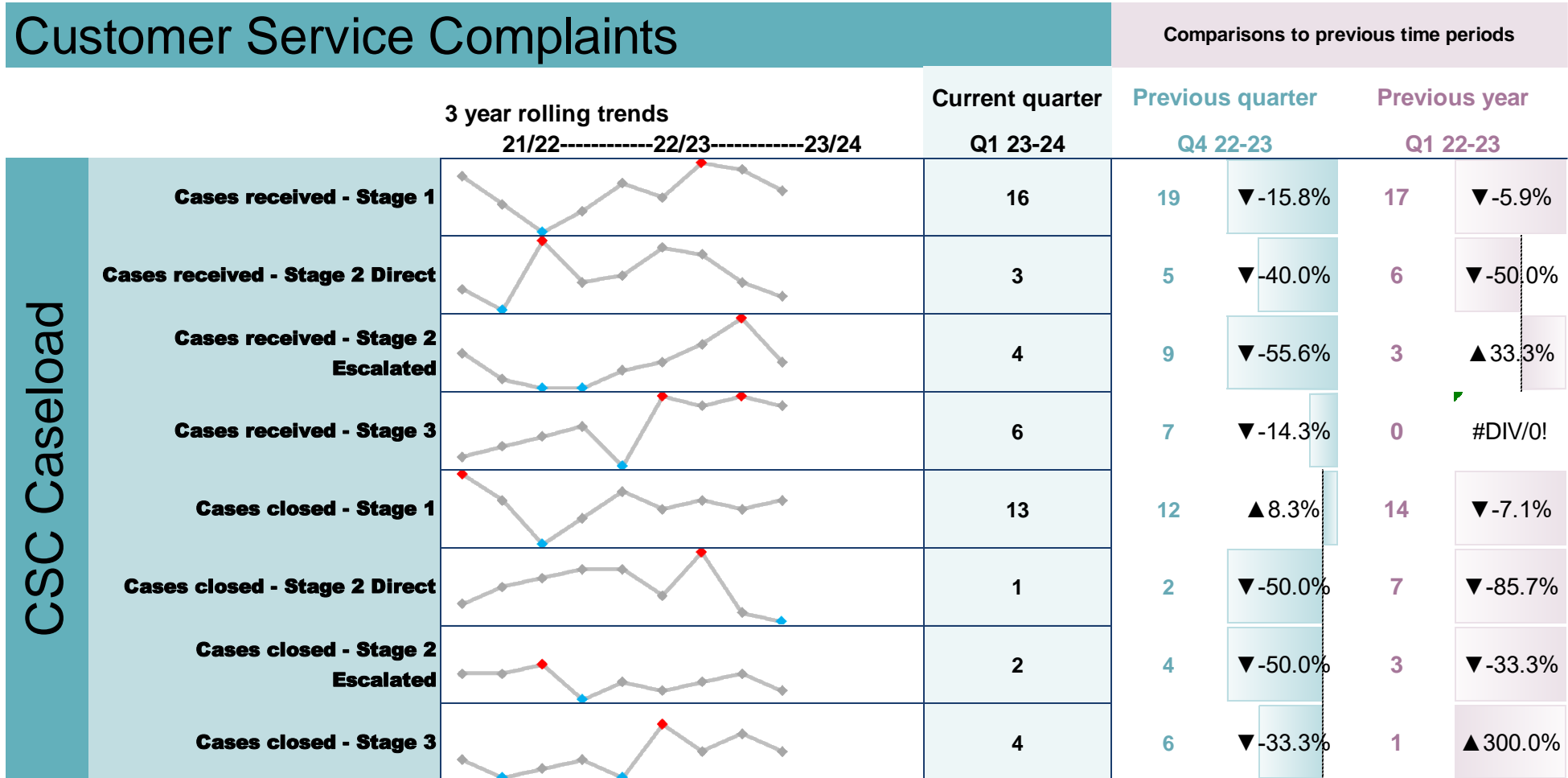
<b>Case Ref:</b>	<b>Workflow Stage</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Substance of complaint</b>	<b>Decision</b>	<b>Learning and improvement recommendations</b>
<b>CSC-202301664</b>	Stage 2	(1) Communication – Timeliness (2) Open and Fair – Impartiality and Independence	(1) CR unreasonably delayed in progressing your complaint about the BUJ despite the fact the complaint had been prioritised. (2) The complaint should not have been allocated to the CR given they had previously worked for the BUJ.	(1), (2) Fully Upheld - Apology given and staff feedback	(1) Apology given and case discussed with CR. CR's caseload will be monitored. (2) Apology given and conflict of interest policy to be reviewed.

16. The following recommendations were issued this quarter:

- Improve clarity within communication regarding contact in cases with a representative and awards.
- Explain clearly at the outset the complainant should inform us if they want to be contacted in addition to their representative.
- Continue to reduce our delays of case allocation.



## Appendix 1: CSC Caseload Dashboard



Highest points highlighted in red  
Lowest points highlighted in blue

## Appendix 2: Standards and guidance

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17. We publish this report to help ensure transparency in our complaints handling and to demonstrate to our customers that complaints can, and do influence our service. We also publish, on an annual basis, more detailed information on our performance in handling complaints. Published reports can be read here: [Service standards performance | SPSO](#)
18. Customer Service Complaints are made when a complainant feels we have not met our customer service standards. The standards that are covered by this process can be read here: [Our customer service standards | SPSO](#)
19. CSCs are recorded and tracked on SPSO's case management system and we publish the outcome of complaints and the actions we have taken in response. We monitor and analyse CSCs for trend information to ensure that we identify areas where our service could be improved and take appropriate action.
20. CSCs may be closed at different stages of the procedure:
  - **Stage 1 - Frontline Resolution** refers to complaints closed at stage 1 of the procedure, with no escalation to the next stage
  - **Stage 2 - Investigation** refers to complaints handled and closed directly at stage 2 of the procedure (Frontline Resolution was not attempted)
  - **Stage 2 - Escalated Complaints** refers to complaints handled at Stage 1 and subsequently escalated to, and closed at stage 2.
  - **Stage 3 - Independent Review** is when the SPSO procedure has been completed and our final decision has been issued, but the service user remains unhappy with our response or the way we have handled the complaint. At that point, the service user can ask our Independent Customer Service Complaints Reviewer (ICSCR) to consider it. The ICSCR provides an annual report on these complaints and it is published on our website here: [Service standards performance | SPSO](#)