

# Customer Service Complaints Report

2021-22 Quarter 3

|                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| <b>Meeting Date</b>          |   |
| <b>Meeting name</b>          | Leadership Team Governance Meeting  |
| <b>LT Responsible person</b> | Head of Improvement, Standards and Engagement   |
| <b>Document link(s)</b>      |   |
| <b>Outcomes sought</b>       | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Noting quarterly outcomes</li> <li>2. Noting the recommendations made</li> <li>3. Identifying organisation learnings</li> </ol> |

## Reporting customer service complaints

1. This CSC performance report provides a summary of Customer Service Complaints (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. 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](#)
2. 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](#)
3. 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.
4. 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 Complaints Reviewer (ICCR) to consider it. The ICCR provides an annual report on these complaints and it is published on our website here: [Service standards performance | SPSO](#)

## Statistics – 2021-22 Q3

5.

| Customer Service Complaints 2021-22 Q3 | Received  | Closed    |
|--|-----------|-----------|
| Stage 1 - Frontline resolution         | 10        | 8         |
| Stage 2 - Direct to Stage 2            | 9         | 6         |
| Stage 2 - Escalated from S1 to S2      | 3         | 5         |
| <b>SPSO Total</b>                      | <b>22</b> | <b>19</b> |
| Stage 3 - Independent Review           | 3         | 2         |

This quarter has seen a reduction of nearly 22% compared to Q3 of 2020-21 (28 received), and an increase of 23% compared to the previous quarter of this year (Q2 2021-22, where we received 17).

## Timescales

6. 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
7. The table below summaries the average timescales to close service complaints at each stage and how many missed the target. Additionally, the oldest case at each stage is noted to address any cause for delay that is within our gift.

| Average timescales           | Average | On time | Missed | Oldest case |
|------------------------------|---------|---------|--------|-------------|
| Stage 1                      | 5.8     | 6       | 2      | 27          |
| Stage 2                      | 19.2    | 8       | 3      | 69          |
| Stage 3 - independent review | 16      | 2       | 0      | 16          |

The table below shows the individual cases and the time taken by staff members to work on a case at each stage. Where “NA” is stated, the information was not logged on the system.

| Case ID  | Stage | Time (mins) |
|----------|-------|-------------|
| REDACTED | 1     | 90          |
| REDACTED | 1     | 60          |
| REDACTED | 1     | NA          |
| REDACTED | 1     | NA          |
| REDACTED | 1     | NA          |
| REDACTED | 1     | NA          |
| REDACTED | 1     | NA          |
| REDACTED | 1     | NA          |
| REDACTED | 1     | NA          |

|          |   |     |
|----------|---|-----|
| REDACTED | 2 | NA  |
| REDACTED | 1 | 60  |
| REDACTED | 2 | 120 |
| REDACTED | 1 | NA  |
| REDACTED | 2 | NA  |
| REDACTED | 1 | 60  |
| REDACTED | 2 | 90  |
| REDACTED | 1 | NA  |
| REDACTED | 2 | NA  |
| REDACTED | 1 | 90  |
| REDACTED | 2 | 300 |
| REDACTED | 2 | 240 |
| REDACTED | 2 | NA  |
| REDACTED | 2 | NA  |
| REDACTED | 2 | NA  |
| REDACTED | 3 | NA  |
| REDACTED | 2 | NA  |
| REDACTED | 3 | NA  |

|                           |                             |                           |                             |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Total time stage 1</b> | <b>Average time stage 1</b> | <b>Total time stage 2</b> | <b>Average time stage 2</b> |
| <b>360 mins</b>           | <b>72 mins</b>              | <b>750 mins</b>           | <b>187.5 mins</b>           |
|                           | <b>5 logged cases</b>       |                           | <b>4 logged cases</b>       |

## 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.

|                              | <i>Resolved</i> | <i>Partially or Fully Upheld</i> | <i>Not Upheld</i> | <i>Total decisions</i> | <i>% Partially or Fully upheld</i> |
|------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------------|-------------------|------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <b>2021-22 Q3</b>            |                 |                                  |                   |                        |                                    |
| Stage 1                      |                 | 5                                | 3                 | 8                      | 62.5%                              |
| Stage 2 - direct             |                 | 4                                | 7                 | 11                     | 36%                                |
| Stage 2 - escalated          |                 | 2                                | 3                 | 5                      | 40%                                |
| Stage 3 - independent review |                 | 0                                | 2                 | 2                      | 0%                                 |

10. 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.
11. There is some merit in considering the areas which appear most frequently in the subjects of complaints:

a. *Communication - timeliness*

5 cases within this subject were split across upheld/some upheld (3 cases) and not upheld (2 cases), split across stages 1 and 2.

b. *Communication - accessibility*

3 out of 5 cases where this service standard was referenced were upheld/some upheld, split across stages 1-3.

c. *Competent and responsible - handling information*

2 of 3 cases where this service standard was referenced were not upheld, split across stages 1 and 2.

12. However, caution is advised. At present, it is not possible to identify which elements of complaints were upheld or not in the cases which returned a “some upheld” outcome, so it is not possible to definitively say that there were 5 instances of “communication – keeping you informed” upheld complaints, for example. Future development work is detailed at the end of this paper which will assist us to align heads of complaint with service standards, and thus make the data about this more accurate.

| TABLE OF SUBJECTS, arranged by total frequency, and then by most upheld complaints | STAGE 1 |            |          | STAGE 2 |            | STAGE 3 |            | TOTAL<br>(total includes resolved) |            |        |
|--|---------|------------|----------|---------|------------|---------|------------|------------------------------------|------------|--------|
|  | Upheld  | Not upheld | Resolved | Upheld  | Not upheld | Upheld  | Not upheld | Upheld                             | Not upheld | Total* |
| Communication - timeliness   | 4       | 1          | 0        | 2       | 0          | 0       | 0          | 6                                  | 1          | 7      |
| Communication - accessibility  | 1       | 1          | 0        | 0       | 1          | 0       | 1          | 2                                  | 2          | 4      |
| Competent and responsible - putting things right                                   | 2       | 0          | 0        | 1       | 1          | 0       | 0          | 3                                  | 1          | 4      |
| Communication - respect and dignity  | 1       | 0          | 0        | 0       | 1          | 0       | 2          | 1                                  | 3          | 4      |
| Competent and responsible - handling information                                   | 1       | 1          | 0        | 0       | 1          | 0       | 0          | 1                                  | 2          | 3      |
| Open and fair - impartiality and independence                                      | 1       | 0          | 0        | 0       | 2          | 0       | 0          | 1                                  | 2          | 3      |
| Communication - keeping you informed   | 0       | 0          | 0        | 1       | 0          | 0       | 1          | 1                                  | 1          | 2      |
| Communication - clarity  | 1       | 0          | 0        | 0       | 1          | 0       | 0          | 1                                  | 1          | 2      |
| Communication - understanding  | 0       | 1          | 0        | 0       | 1          | 0       | 0          | 0                                  | 2          | 2      |
| Open and fair – transparency   | 0       | 0          | 0        | 0       | 0          | 0       | 0          | 0                                  | 0          | 0      |

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

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

| <i>Case Ref:</i> | <i>Workflow Stage</i> | <i>Subject</i>   | <i>Substance of complaint</i>  | <i>Decision</i>                                 | <i>Other action taken</i>  |
|------------------|-----------------------|--|--|---|--|
| REDACTED         | Stage1                | Communication - timeliness, Communication - clarity, Communication - accessibility   | Customer had the following customer service concerns:<br><br>1. They were advised the wrong time about when the file was due back from council - see file note<br><br>2. Our phone lines were shut from 2-3pm on Friday so there was a delay in them being able to submit their review request<br><br>3. There was a delay in us sending the file request to the council | Some Upheld - Apology given and process change  | extend time of Friday catch up so that lines are available to allow calls prior to 3pm cut off.  |
| REDACTED         | Stage1                | Competent and responsible - putting things right   | Member of council staff contacted us to let us know that the tracked changes were left on a decision letter and the wrong gender was used in the cover letter. linked to REDACTED  | Fully Upheld - Apology given and staff feedback | Remove track changes from letters before they are issued to complainant.   |
| REDACTED         | Stage1                | Communication - respect and dignity, Open and fair - impartiality and independence, Communication - timeliness, Competent and responsible - handling information | Applicant complained that he had no confidence in the CR and that his case would be handled independently; he complained that we sent an inappropriate and inaccurate letter; he complained about the length of time his review was taking and that the communication from his case reviewer caused him anguish.   | Some Upheld - Apology given and staff feedback  | Ensure that only up-to-date communication is issued in future.   |
| REDACTED         | Stage3                | Communication - accessibility, Communication - respect and dignity   | failure to contact by telephone when requested to do so.   | Fully Upheld - Apology given and staff feedback | The staff member is now on leave, when she returns I will ensure that we discuss your case and her responsibility to make telephone contact when requested to do so. |

14. Whilst the majority of actions taken related to individual remedies, and putting things right for the individual customers who hadn't received a satisfactory service from us, one case closed this quarter has notable learning points with potential wider impact.

**Case REDACTED** This was a case where a decision letter was sent out without removing track changes and also using the wrong gender, double checking before sending / ensuring that tracks are turned off on final save would have prevented this.

## Future development

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15. As noted in the Q1 paper, a project is pending to redesign the CSC workflow, and to introduce the use of the recommendations fields in the same way that our public sector complaints are recorded. This work requires development work with our service provider, in addition to resource from Corporate Services and ISE in redesigning the workflow. It was scheduled for Q2/3, but this has slipped due to the ongoing hiatus in development work whilst a scheduled upgrade is completed.
16. These developments will allow us to record more detailed information about the customer service complaints we receive, specific outcomes for each head of complaint, and capture more accurately the findings and recommendations that will help to improve the provision of our service.
17. To add time bar recording to the CSC report.
18. To change recording to against SPSO with a case handler rather than attributed to just the case handler.