

Customer Service Complaints Report

2022-23 Quarter 1

Meeting Date	27 th July 2022
Meeting name	Casework Performance Meeting
LT Responsible person	Head of Improvement, Standards and Engagement
Document link(s)	Customer Service Complaints Dashboard 220721 Customer Service Complaints Dashboard Q1'22-23 (A39320819)
Outcomes sought	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Noting quarterly statistics : Statistics – 2022-23 Q1 2. Note findings, learning and improvement actions taken : Findings, learning and actions 3. Noting the future development and actions taken : Future development and actions

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.

Statistics – 2022-23 Q1

2.

Customer Service Complaints	Received	Closed
Stage 1 - Frontline resolution	17	14
Stage 2 - Direct to Stage 2	6	7
Stage 2 - Escalated from S1 to S2	3	3
SPSO Total	26	24
Stage 3 - Independent Review	0	0

This quarter has seen a reduction in total received cases of 4% compared to Q1 2021-22 (27 received), and an increase of 13% compared to the previous quarter Q4 2021-22 (23 received).

Timescales

3. 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
4. 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	2.9	13	1	8
Stage 2	17.5	8	2	34
Stage 3 - independent review	0	0	0	0

The table below shows the staff time spent on the customer service complaints for the quarter. Note that for stage 3 complaints the admin time is related to providing the Independent Customer Service Complaints Reviewer with the information relating to the case.

Total time stage 1	Average time stage 1	Total time stage 2	Average time stage 2	Total time stage 3	Average time stage 3
925 mins	115.6 mins	2220 mins	222 mins	0	0
	8 logged cases		10 logged cases		0 logged cases

Outcomes and subject analysis

5. 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.
6. 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.

2021-22 Q4	Resolved	Partially or Fully Upheld	Not Upheld	Total decisions	% Partially or Fully upheld
Stage 1		11	3	14	79%
Stage 2 - direct		3	4	7	43%
Stage 2 - escalated		1	2	3	33%
Stage 3 - independent review		0	0	0	0%

7. 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.
8. There is some merit in considering the areas which appear most frequently in the subjects of complaints:
 - a. **Communication - Timeliness**
11 cases within this service standard were upheld/some upheld, split across stage 1 (9 cases) and stage 2 (2 cases).
 - b. **Communication – Keeping you informed**
4 out of 5 cases within this service standard were upheld/some upheld, split across stage 1 (2 cases) and stage 2 (2 cases).
 - c. **Competent and responsible - handling information**
3 of 4 cases within this service standard were upheld/some upheld, all stage 1.
9. 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 4 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 (total includes resolved)		
	Upheld	Not upheld	Resolved	Upheld	Not upheld	Upheld	Not upheld	Upheld	Not upheld	Total*
Communication - timeliness	9	0	0	2	0	0	0	11	0	11
Communication - accessibility	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1
Competent and responsible - putting things right	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	2
Communication - respect and dignity	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1
Competent and responsible - handling information	3	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	1	4
Open and fair - impartiality and independence	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	2	1	3
Communication - keeping you informed	2	0	0	2	1	0	0	4	1	5
Communication - clarity	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	2
Communication - understanding	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1
Open and fair – transparency	0	1	0	2	1	0	0	2	2	4

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

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

Case Ref:	Workflow Stage	S1 Subject	Substance of complaint	S1 Decision	Learning and improvement
CSC-202202283	Stage 1	Competent and responsible - handling information	C complained that identity was shared without consent and standard and timescales of investigation.	Fully Upheld - Apology given and process change	Apology was given for sharing personal information. Internal changes to templates, checklists and guidance re: checking who knows complainants ID when beginning investigations.
CSC-202200403	Stage 1	Communication - keeping you informed, Communication - timeliness, Competent and responsible - handling information	C complained their case was closed as they did not reply within set timescale, they requested case to be reopened but this was missed. Advised they are struggling with the process and this added to their stress.	Fully Upheld - Apology given and staff feedback	Apology was given for delay in response to request to reopen case. Acknowledged correspondence could be better phrased and more sympathetic.
CSC-202202384	Stage 1	Communication - timeliness	C complained about the time taken to investigate case.	Fully Upheld - Apology given and other action	Apology was given for delay in allocating case. Case was escalated to priority due to health concerns.
CSC-202201817	Stage 1	Competent and responsible - handling information	C complained about SPSO failure to locate case during telephone conversation.	Some Upheld - Apology given and staff feedback	Apology given for failure to include case reference number on Workpro – data entry omission by SPSO.
CSC-202111455	Stage 2	Communication - keeping you informed, Communication - timeliness, Open and fair - impartiality and independence, Open and fair - transparency	C complained about delay in response and conflicting advice from independent advisers.	Some Upheld - Apology given and staff feedback	Apology was given for delay in response and improved communication from SPSO.

Case Ref:	Workflow Stage	S1 Subject	Substance of complaint	S1 Decision	Learning and improvement
CSC-202200534	Stage 2	Communication - keeping you informed	C complained about the lack of response to voicemail and email messages.	Fully Upheld - Apology given and staff feedback	Apology was given for failure to respond to voice messages and email.
CSC-202112191	Stage 2	Competent and responsible - putting things right , Communication - understanding, Open and fair - impartiality and independence, Open and fair - transparency	C complained about the process of dealing with their complaint.	Fully Upheld - Apology given and process change	Apology was given and process change to set up reminders and alerts in case recording and tracking system.

11. 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.

For noting: It is worth noting that several cases related to issues around responding. These included response times and / or time to respond. Clearer statements at the outset / communication through email or written responses would ensure that complainants are aware of the timescales and the expected communication they will receive throughout the case.

Future development and actions

12. 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.
13. 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.

Appendix: Standards and guidance

14. 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](#)
15. 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](#)
16. 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.
17. 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](#)