

Customer Service Complaints Report

2022-23 Quarter 3

Meeting Date	25 th January 2023
Meeting name	Casework Performance Meeting
LT Responsible person	Head of Improvement, Standards and Engagement
Document link(s)	Customer Service Complaints Dashboard [INTERNAL LINK]
Outcomes sought	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Noting quarterly statistics : Statistics – 2022-23 Q3 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 Q3

2.

Customer Service Complaints	Received	Closed
Stage 1 - Frontline resolution	20	13
Stage 2 - Direct to Stage 2	9	9
Stage 2 - Escalated from S1 to S2	6	3
SPSO Total	35	25
Stage 3 - Independent Review	6	4

This quarter has seen an increase in total received cases of 37% compared to Q3 2021-22 (22 received), and an increase of 17% compared to the previous quarter Q2 2022-23 (29 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	3.1	13	0	5
Stage 2	17.8	11	1	47
Stage 3 - independent review	31.8	3	1	58

The table below shows the staff time spent on the customer service complaints closed during the quarter for Stages 1 and 2. The Stage 3 time relates to time spent by the Independent Customer Service Complaints Reviewer on complaints at Stage 3 up to November 2022.

Total time stage 1	Average time stage 1	Total time stage 2	Average time stage 2	Total time stage 3	Average time stage 3
1161 mins	77.4 mins	2790 mins	174.4 mins	3060 mins	765 mins
	15 cases with time logged at Stage 1		16 cases with time logged at Stage 2		4 cases with time logged at Stage 3

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.

2022-23 Q3	Resolved	Partially or Fully Upheld	Not Upheld	Total decisions	% Partially or Fully upheld
Stage 1	1	7	5	13	54%
Stage 2 - direct		4	5	9	44%
Stage 2 - escalated		1	2	3	33%
Stage 3 - independent review		1	3	4	25%

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**
8 out of 14 cases within this service standard were upheld/some upheld, split across stage 1 (3 cases), stage 2 (4 case) and stage 3 (1 case).
 - b. **Competent and responsible - handling information**
4 out of 8 cases within this service standard were upheld/some upheld, stage 1 (2 cases), stage 2 (2 cases) and stage 3 (1 cases).
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 7 instances of “communication – timeliness” 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)		
SUBJECTS	Upheld	Not upheld	Resolved	Upheld	Not upheld	Upheld	Not upheld	Upheld	Not upheld	Total*
Communication - timeliness	3	2	1	4	3	1	0	8	6	14
Communication - accessibility	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Competent and responsible - putting things right	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	2	3
Communication - respect and dignity	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	3	4
Competent and responsible - handling information	2	1	0	1	3	1	0	4	4	8
Open and fair - impartiality and independence	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Communication - keeping you informed	3	0	0	1	0	0	1	4	1	5
Communication - clarity	1	0	0	0	2	1	1	2	3	5
Communication - understanding	0	0	0	1	3	0	1	1	4	5
Open and fair – transparency	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	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

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	Subject	Substance of complaint	Decision	Learning and improvement
CSC- [CASE REF]	Stage 1	Competent and responsible - handling information	C complained that CR forwarded notification and enquiry letter to wrong organisation breaching DPA, also complained this delayed progress of case.	Some Upheld - Apology given and other action	Apology was given, learnings identified and reported, style guides and letters reviewed.
CSC-- [CASE REF]	Stage 1	Competent and responsible - handling information	C was unhappy with delay and accused CR of data breach with regards a password for a document.	Some Upheld - Apology given and staff feedback	Apology was given for delays in investigating case, failure to keep C updated. Feedback to staff on sharing passwords via email.
CSC-- [CASE REF]	Stage 1	Communication - keeping you informed	Delay in contacting C and dealing with complaint.	Fully Upheld - Apology given and staff feedback	Apology was given for delays and staff feedback to keep C informed.
CSC-- [CASE REF]	Stage 1	Communication - timeliness, Communication - keeping you informed	Complained about the delay in contacting C about case, no contact since January 2022	Fully Upheld - Apology given and other action	Apology was given and support to staff on managing workload.
CSC-- [CASE REF]	Stage 1	Communication - clarity	Complained about additional information request from DCR when original complaint form had already been completed with a lot of information. Also, email from SPSO had not been personalised and had been signed off by a team when 'I' was used in the narrative.	Fully Upheld - Apology given and other action	Apology was given, staff feedback and shared learning on checking emails and reposition complaint in allocation pool due to admin error.
CSC-- [CASE REF]	Stage 2	Communication - keeping you informed, Communication - timeliness, Competent and responsible -	CR didn't respond in a timely manner to C's contacts by email on 2 occasions or provide Review Request information. CR	Some Upheld - Apology given and staff feedback	Apology was given and staff feedback and agreed plan of action.

Case Ref:	Workflow Stage	Subject	Substance of complaint	Decision	Learning and improvement
		handling information	sent decision to BUJ before expiry of the 4 week period in which C had been invited to make contact.		
CSC-- [CASE REF]	Stage 2	Open and fair - transparency	Issue with original response to CSC - feels that Mgr was an inappropriate choice of investigator given that he was bcc'd into emails previously linked to the case.	Some Upheld - Apology given and staff feedback	Apology given and staff feedback on email blind copying.
CSC-- [CASE REF]	Stage 3	Communication - clarity, Communication - timeliness, Competent and responsible - handling information, Competent and responsible - putting things right	Complaint of 6 January - biased behaviour and fraud by SPSO employees Complaint of 24 February - rejection of application of social housing - no progress on this complaint Complaint - SPSO issued 2 different and contradictory decisions in relation to your complaints about Rural Stirling Housing Association - SPSO committed fraud, corruption, has lied and demonstrated cronyism, basis of action racial discrimination	Some Upheld - Apology given and other action	Apology given and recommendation made on clearer reference to what correspondence is being referenced in post decision review letters.

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, some cases closed this quarter had notable learning points.

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 will be included in the scheduled upgrade expected February 2023.
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](#)