

Customer Service Complaints Report

2022-23 Quarter 4

Meeting Date	9 th of May 2023
Meeting name	Casework Performance Meeting
LT Responsible person	Head of Improvement, Standards and Engagement
Document link(s)	[INTERNAL LINK]
Outcomes sought	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Noting quarterly statistics : [INTERNAL LINK] 2. Note findings, learning and improvement actions taken : [INTERNAL LINK] 3. Noting the future development and actions taken : [INTERNAL LINK]

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 – 2022-23 Q4

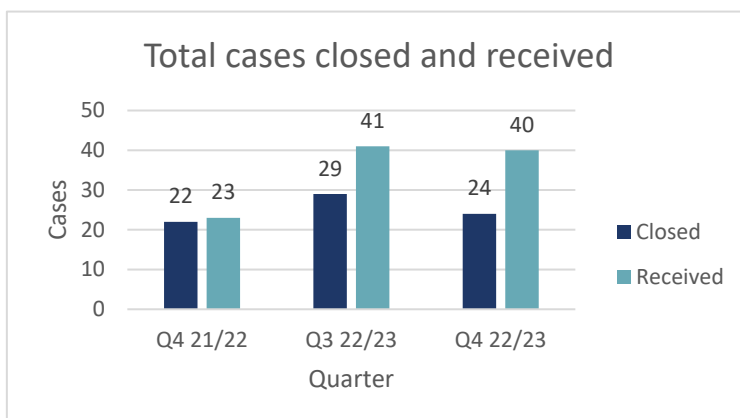
2. The table below shows the total received and closed cases in quarter 4 of 2022-2023. These are split by stage 1, stage 2 and stage 3. Stage 2 cases are further separated into cases that were escalated from stage 1 to stage 2, and cases that surpassed stage 1 and escalated directly to stage 2.

Q4 headlines:

- At stage 1; we received 19 cases and closed 12 cases.
- At stage 2; including both stage 2 escalated and direct cases, we received 14 cases and closed 6 cases.
- At stage 3; 7 cases were escalated to stage 3 and 6 cases have been closed.

Customer Service Complaints	Received	Closed
Stage 1 - Frontline resolution	19	12
Stage 2 - Direct to stage 2	5	2
Stage 2 - Escalated from S1 to S2	9	4
SPSO Total	40	24
Stage 3 - Independent Review	7	6

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



- Q4 2021/2022: closed 95.7% of cases received
- Q3 2022/2023: closed 70.7% of cases received
- Q4 2022/2023: closed 60.0% 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 to close service complaints at each stage, how many were closed on time and how many missed the target during Q4. 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 (29.8 days) to close. The oldest case of 42 working days was also a stage 3 case.

Average timescales	Average (working days)	On time	Missed	Oldest case (working days)
Stage 1	4.7	8	4	8
Stage 2	18.3	4	2	25
Stage 3 - independent review	29.8	5	1	42

6. The table below shows the time that all SPSO staff spent on the customer service complaints closed during Q4 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 February 2023. A new metric for this quarter shows the range of time in minutes spent on closing cases:

- At stage 1 the range of time indicates that some cases are closed fairly quickly, this impacts the average case time.
- At stage 2 the average time spent on a case is 261 minutes.

- At stage 3 cases have the broadest range of time spent on closing a case, where the least time it took to close a case was 90 minutes and the most time to close a case was 1,050 minutes.

Stage	Total Time (mins)	Average Time (mins)	Range of Time (mins)	Cases
Stage 1	1,290	76	0-300	15
Stage 2	3,130	261	210-540	16
Stage 3 - independent review	2,821	470	90-1,050	4

7. The table below shows the total time in minutes staff spent on the customer service complaints closed during all 4 quarters of 2022-2023 for stages 1 and 2 and that the ICSCR spent on cases at stage 3. The table also displays the average time in minutes to close a case:

- Stage 3 cases took the longest time in total and on average during Q4 (up to February 2023).
- Stage 2 cases took the longest time in total and on average during the year 2023-2023.

Stage	Total Time (mins)	Cases	Average Time (mins)
Stage 1	3,966	71	991.5
Stage 2	11,290	30	2,822.5
Stage 3 - independent review	8,236	22	2059

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.

2022-23 Q4	Resolved	Partially or Fully Upheld	Not Upheld	Total decisions	% Partially or Fully upheld
Stage 1	1	4	7	12	33%
Stage 2 - direct		1	1	2	50%
Stage 2 - escalated		2	2	4	50%
Stage 3 - independent review		3	3	6	50%

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 - keeping you informed

3 out of 6 cases within this service standard were upheld/some upheld, these cases were split across stage 1 (2 cases) and stage 3 (1 case).

b. Communication - clarity

3 out of 4 cases within this service standard were upheld/some upheld, these cases were split across stage 1 (1 case) and stage 3 (2 case).

12. However, caution is advised. It was not possible to identify which elements of complaints were upheld or not in some cases which returned a “some upheld” outcome. Therefore, it is not possible to definitively say that there were 8 instances of “communication – timeliness” upheld complaints, for example.

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	2	2	0	0	1	0	3	2	6	8
Communication - accessibility	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Competent and responsible - putting things right	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	2	3
Communication - respect and dignity	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	3
Competent and responsible - handling information	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	2	0	2
Open and fair - impartiality and independence	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	2	2	4
Communication - keeping you informed	2	3	0	0	0	1	0	3	3	6
Communication - clarity	0	0	1	1	0	2	0	3	1	4
Communication - understanding	0	1	0	0	2	0	1	0	4	4
Open and fair – transparency	0	0	1	0	0	2	1	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

13. 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-202208767	Stage 1	Communication - timeliness	There was an initial delay in allocating the complaint due to the backlog of unallocated cases; there was then a delay in progressing the complaint due to the number of cases we were dealing with; followed by a delay in obtaining medical advice	Fully upheld – Apology given and staff feedback	Keeping the complainant informed
CSC-202208751	Stage 1	Communication - keeping you informed	Clarification on a decision was asked and despite chasing this up numerous times, the response took too long. Additionally, the feedback on the review does not match the information logged on the review	Fully Upheld - Apology given and staff feedback	Ensure requests are responded to in a timely manner going forward
CSC-202209318	Stage 2	Communication - clarity, Competent and responsible - putting things right, Open and fair - impartiality and independence	The complainant was not explicitly invited to send in additional information	Some Upheld - Apology given and staff feedback	Be more explicit about sending additional information
CSC-202208051	Stage 2	Competent and responsible - handling information	There is no record of a discussion with senior staff about alternative approaches	Some Upheld - Apology given and staff feedback	Discussions on case progression and alternative approaches should have been noted on the case record
CSC-202205846	Stage 3	Communication - clarity, Communication - keeping you informed, Open and fair - transparency, Competent and responsible - handling information	Matters that should have been discussed in the stage 2 CSC response were not discussed	Some Upheld - Apology given and other action	Check to ensure all CSC points are responded to. Especially with long complaints.

Case Ref:	Workflow Stage	Subject	Substance of complaint	Decision	Learning and improvement
CSC-202206006	Stage 3	Communication – clarity	The CR should have accurately reported the BUJ's statement	Some Upheld - Apology given and staff feedback	Reminder of guidance on apology writing.
CSC-202207107	Stage 3	Open and fair – transparency	Another CR involved in this case should have accurately reported the BUJs statement and the primary CR should have noted the discrepancy	Some Upheld - Apology given and staff feedback	Reminder of guidance on apology writing.

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, some cases closed this quarter had notable learning points:
- We would encourage managers to remind CRs of guidance on apology writing and accuracy of capturing statements from BUJs.
 - Continue to explain clearly at the outset all timescales including follow up communication from CRs.

Future development and actions

15. Work towards developing a more accurate overview of which elements of complaints were upheld, and which elements were not, within a case with a 'some upheld' outcome was started this quarter.
16. This new casetype 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. We expect to have data on recommendations in Q1 2023-2024.

Appendix: Standards and guidance

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](#)