

Customer Service Complaints Report

2025-26 Quarter 3

Meeting Date	11 February 2026
Meeting name	LT Governance Meeting
LT Responsible person	Head of Improvement, Standards and Engagement
Dashboard link	260101 Customer Service Complaints Dashboard Q3 2025-26 (A55255239)
Linked reports	
Outcomes sought	1. Noting quarterly statistics: Statistics – 2025-26 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
Executive summary	1. 41 cases closed during Q3 compared to 30 cases received, the highest number of closures this year with the largest number of closures of cases direct to Stage 2. 2. 1 case at Stage 1 missed its target date, lower than Q2 when unusually 5 cases missed their target date. 3. 4,105 minutes were spent on stage 2 cases. This is higher than normal and is due to the increased number of cases closed at Stage 2 in Q3. 4. Most upheld cases were at stage 1 (6 cases). Most not upheld cases were at stage 2 (19 cases). 5. Communication – timeliness and keeping the complainant informed were the key learnings for improvement this quarter.

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 – 2025-26 Q3

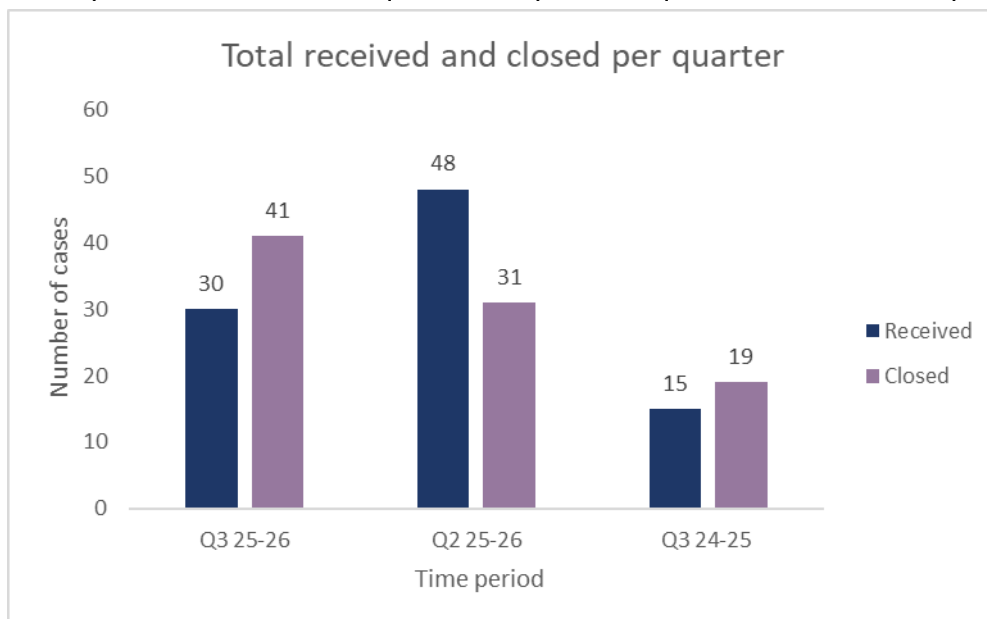
2. The table below shows the total received and closed cases in Q3 of 2025-2026. These are split by stage 1, stage 2 and stage 3. Stage 2 cases are further separated into cases that were escalated from stage 1 to stage 2, and cases that surpassed stage 1 and escalated directly to stage 2.

Q3 headlines:

- At stage 1; we received 10 cases and closed 10 cases
- At stage 2; including both stage 2 escalated and direct cases, we received 13 cases and closed 17 cases
- At stage 3; we received 7 cases and we closed 9 cases

Customer Service Complaints	Received	Closed
Stage 1 - Frontline resolution	10	10
Stage 2 - Direct to stage 2	11	17
Stage 2 - Escalated from S1 to S2	2	5
Stage 3 - Independent Review	7	9
SPSO Total	30	41

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



- Q3 2025/2026: closed 137% of cases received
- Q2 2025/2026: closed 65% of cases received
- Q3 2024/2025: closed 127% of cases received

Timescales

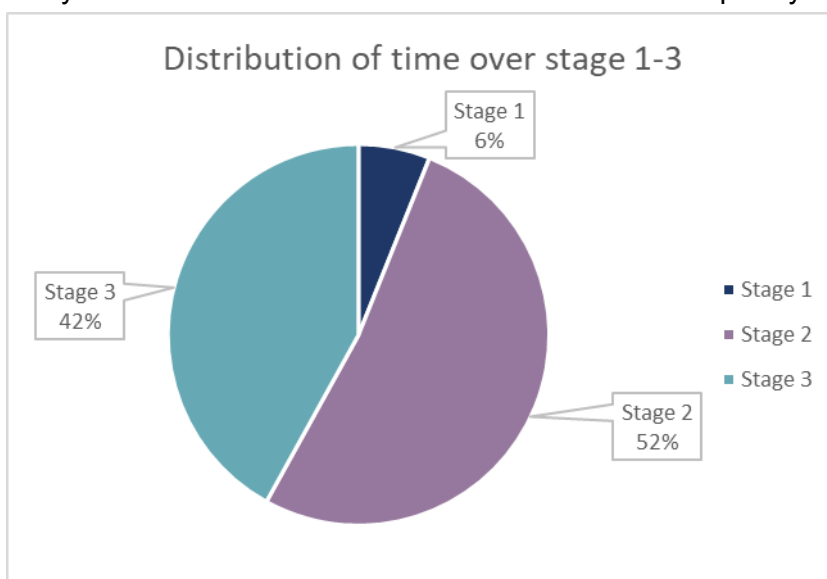
4. The timescales by which we measure our performance against the requirements of the complaints procedure are:
- 5 working days at stage 1
 - 20 working days at stage 2
 - 40 working days for independent review
5. The table below summarises the average timescales in working days to close service complaints at each stage, how many were closed on time and how many missed the target during Q3. Some targets were missed due to case complexity.

Average timescales	Average	On Time	Missed	Oldest Case
Stage 1	4	9	1	6
Stage 2	15	22	0	20
Stage 3 - Independent Review	30	9	0	39

6. The table below shows the time that all SPSO staff spent on the customer service complaints closed during Q3 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 to the end of December 2025.

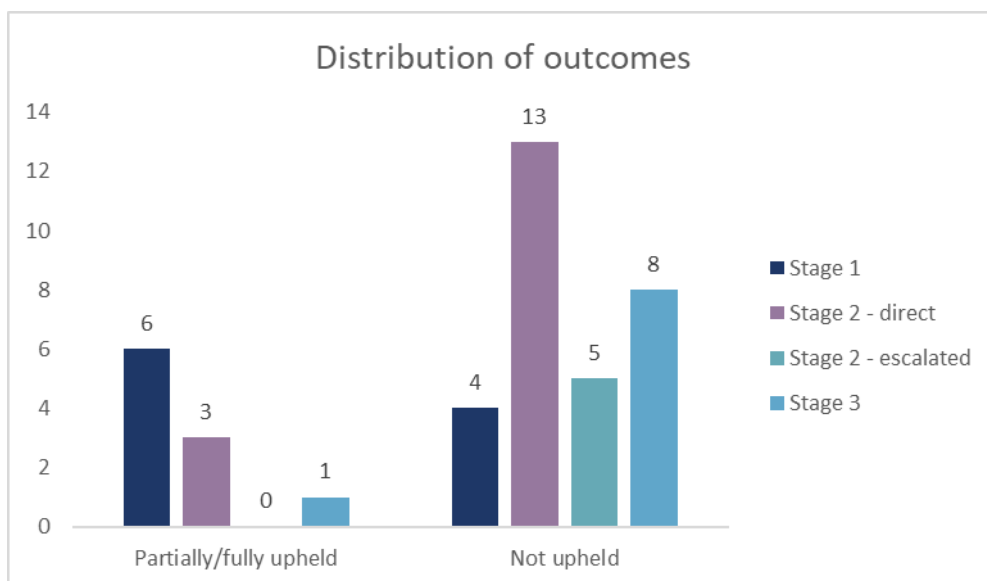
Stage	Total Time	Average Time	Range of Time
Stage 1	480	48	10-240
Stage 2	4,105	187	60-420
Stage 3 - Independent Review	3,315	368	210-735
Total	7,900		

- The total time spent on stage 1 cases reduced compared to Q2 (total time 705 minutes) and remains lower than 2024-25 quarters which ranged from 915-2,475.
- The total time spent on stage 3 is lower than Q2 but remains higher than compared to last year due to the increase in case numbers and complexity at Stage 3.



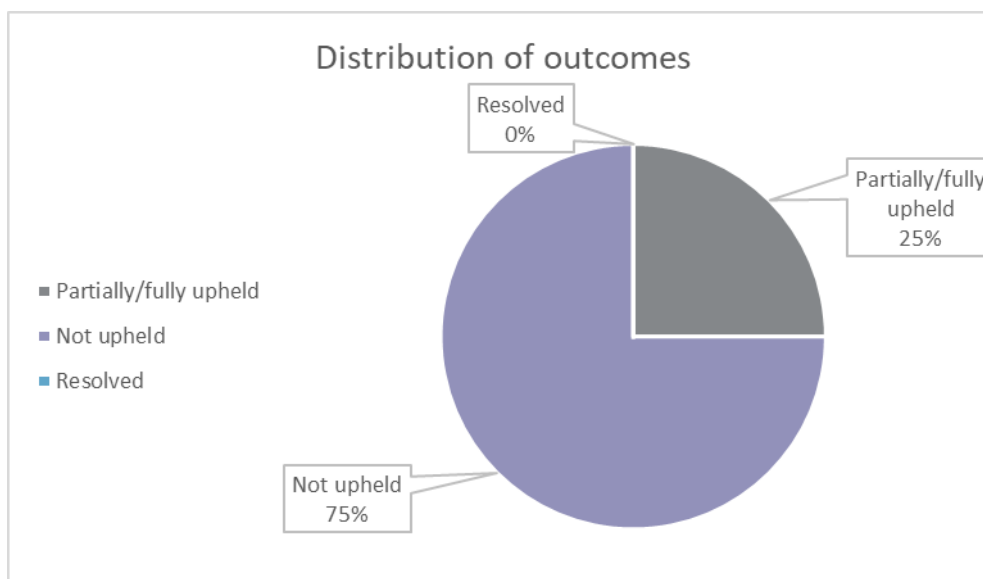
Outcomes and subject analysis

7. 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.
8. 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.



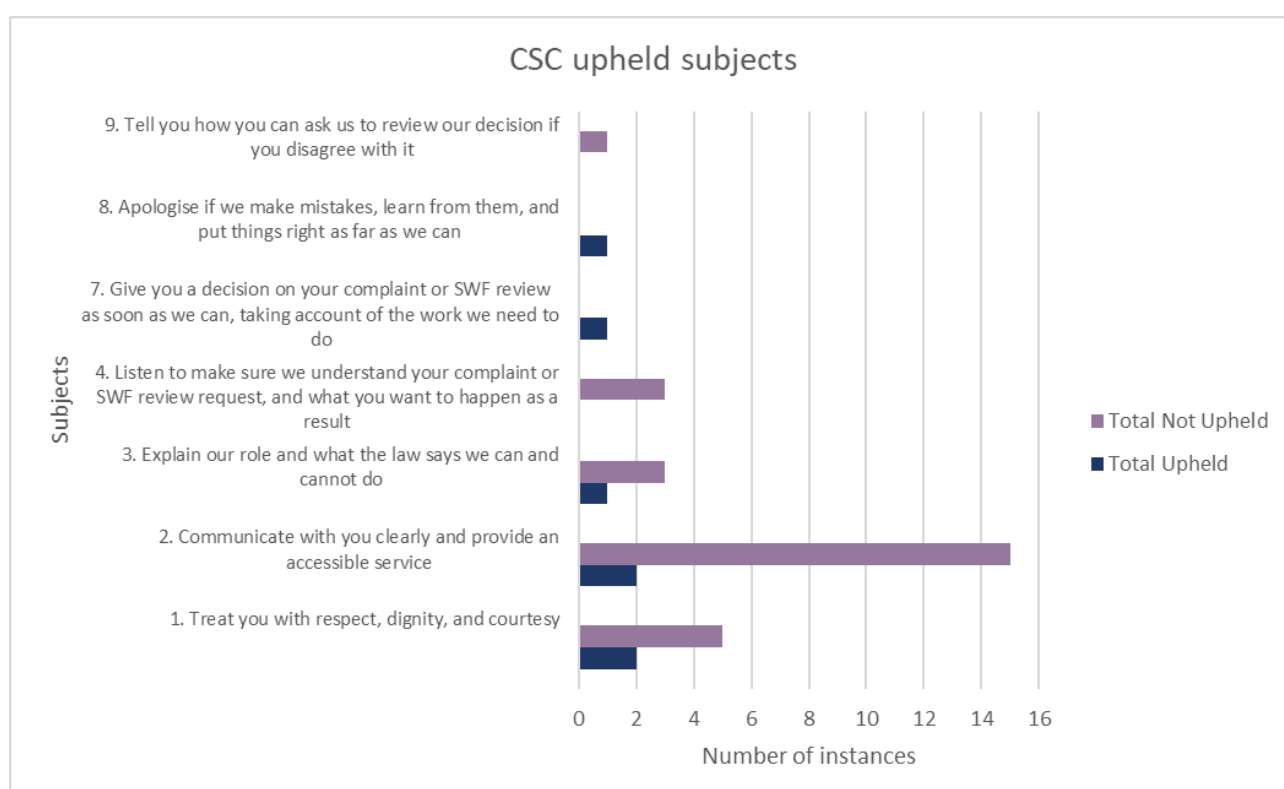
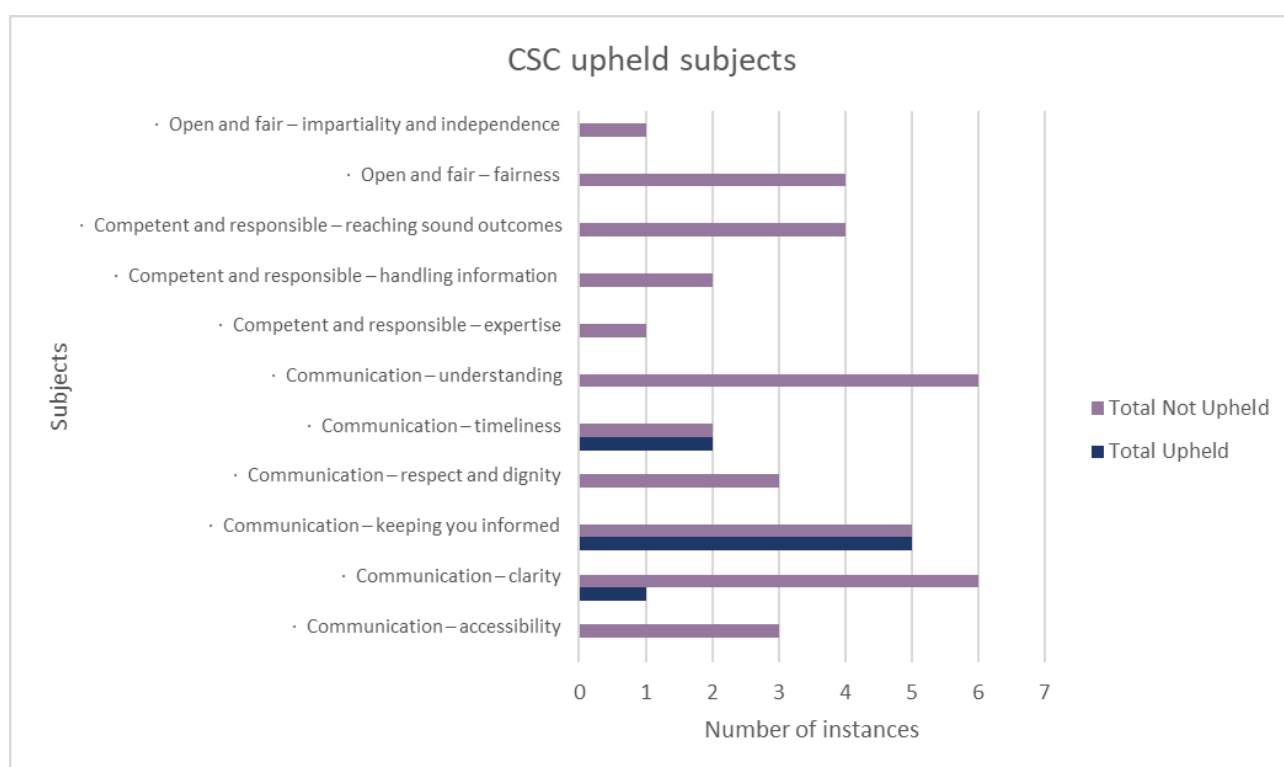
- The majority of partially or fully upheld complaints were at stage 1 and the majority of these cases were for the subject “Communication – keeping you informed”
- Only 1 stage 3 complaint was upheld for the subject “Communication – timeliness”, compared to 8 not upheld

9. Highlights Q3 25/26:



- 75% of the outcomes across all stages were not upheld, which is slightly higher than Q2
- 25% of the outcomes across all three stages were partially or fully upheld compared to 34% in Q2
- One complaint was withdrawn at Stage 2 and no grounds to pursue

10. The tables below illustrate the subjects which appear most frequently in Customer Service Complaints and their outcome. Table 1 details subject headings used before October 2025 and Table 2 details subject headings used from October 2025.



11. There is some merit in considering the areas which appear most frequently in the subjects of complaints:
- a. *Communicate with you clearly and provide an accessible service***
2 out of 17 cases within this service standard were upheld/some upheld.
 - b. *Communication – keeping you informed***
4 out of 9 cases within this service standard were upheld/some upheld.
 - c. *Treat you with respect dignity and courtesy***
2 out of 7 cases within this service standard were upheld/some upheld.
 - d. *Communication – clarity***
1 out of 7 cases within this service standard were upheld/some upheld.
12. The subjects upheld most often were communication – timeliness (3 upheld instances) and communication – keeping you informed (4 upheld instances).

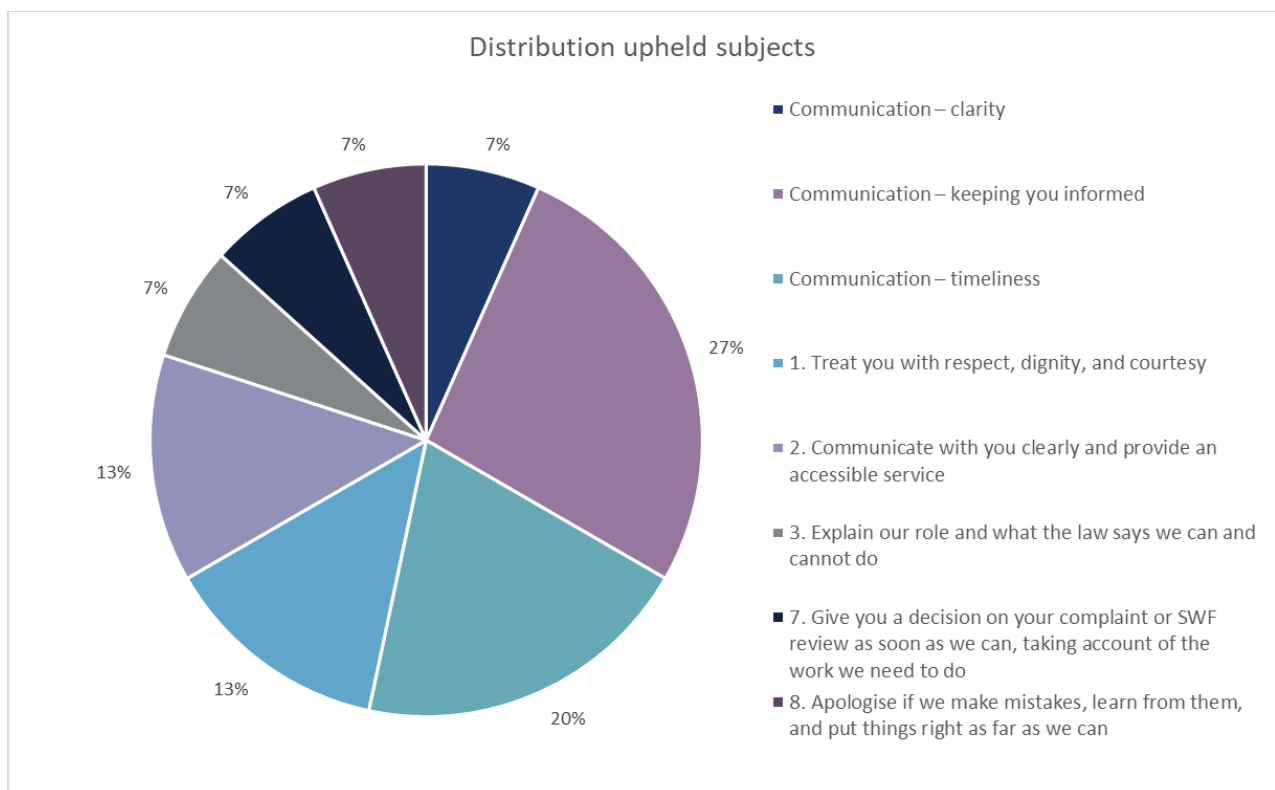


TABLE OF SUBJECTS, arranged by total frequency, and then by most upheld complaints	Stage 1 Upheld	Stage 1 Not Upheld	Stage 2 Upheld	Stage 2 Not Upheld	Stage 3 Upheld	Stage 3 Not Upheld	Total Upheld	Total Not Upheld	Total*
Communication – accessibility	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	3	3
Communication – clarity	0	1	1	3	0	2	1	6	7
Communication – keeping you informed	4	1	0	3	1	1	5	5	10
Communication – respect and dignity	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	3	3
Communication – timeliness	1	0	1	2	0	0	2	2	4
Communication – understanding	0	1	0	4	0	1	0	6	6
Competent and responsible – ensuring impact	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Competent and responsible – expertise	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1
Competent and responsible – explaining our scope	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Competent and responsible – handling information	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	2
Competent and responsible – putting things right	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Competent and responsible – reaching sound outcomes	0	0	0	2	0	2	0	4	4
Open and fair – fairness	0	1	0	2	0	1	0	4	4
Open and fair – impartiality and independence	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1
Open and fair – transparency	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

TABLE OF SUBJECTS, arranged by total frequency, and then by most upheld complaints	Stage 1 Upheld	Stage 1 Not Upheld	Stage 2 Upheld	Stage 2 Not Upheld	Stage 3 Upheld	Stage 3 Not Upheld	Total Upheld	Total Not Upheld	Total*
1. Treat you with respect, dignity, and courtesy	2	0	0	3	0	2	2	5	7
2. Communicate with you clearly and provide an accessible service	1	0	1	7	0	8	2	15	17
3. Explain our role and what the law says we can and cannot do	1	0	0	2	0	1	1	3	4
4. Listen to make sure we understand your complaint or SWF review request, and what you want to happen as a result	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	3	3
5. Where possible, signpost you to a different organisation if we are unable to help	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
6. Give you the best estimate for how long things will take, and keep you updated	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
7. Give you a decision on your complaint or SWF review as soon as we can, taking account of the work we need to do	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
8. Apologise if we make mistakes, learn from them, and put things right as far as we can	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1
9. Tell you how you can ask us to review our decision if you disagree with it	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1
10. Check public bodies have done what we asked them to do as a result of your complaint or SWF	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**

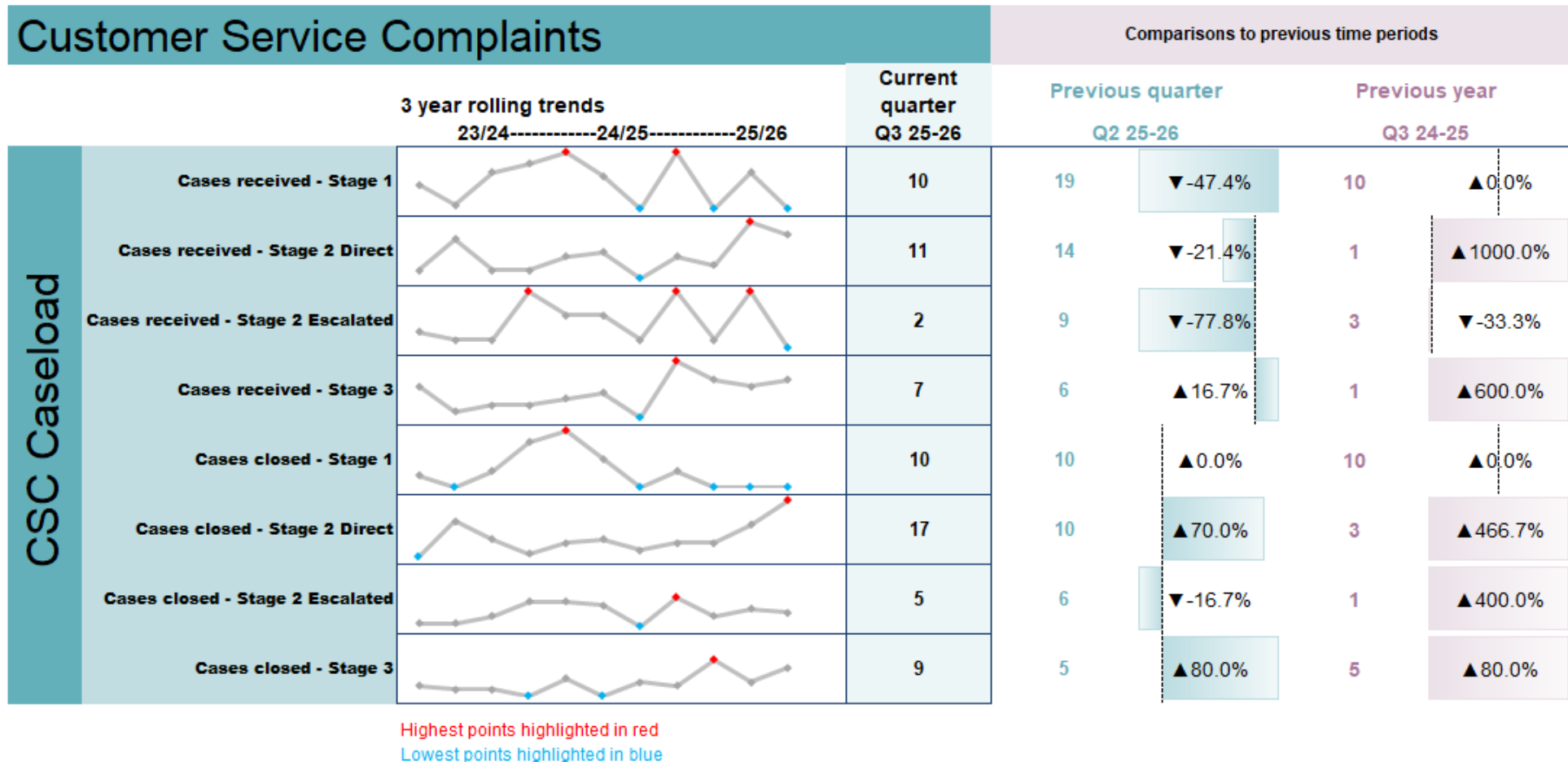
Findings, learning and actions

Case Ref:	Workflow Stage	Subject	Substance of complaint	Decision	Learning and improvement
CSC-202510399	Stage 1	(1) Treat you with respect dignity and courtesy (2) Communicate with you clearly and provide an accessible service	Timing of SPSO response was insensitive taking into account the details of the complaint and the importance of the date it was sent	Fully Upheld - Apology given and other action	Apology given and staff to reflect on circumstances to avoid repeat in the future
CSC-202510207	Stage 1	(1) Explain our role and what the law says we can and cannot do	BUJ dissatisfied with advice given as contradicted case outcome once case was received by SPSO	Fully Upheld – Apology given and process change	Staff feedback and email clarifying approach going forward, draft email wording for advice queries added to knowledge base
CSC-202505252	Stage 3	(1) Communication – keeping you informed (2) Communication – timeliness	Delay during review process and keeping complainant informed of delay and time taken to acknowledge information	Fully Upheld – Apology given and staff feedback	Learning shared with staff regarding delay and communication around delay and ensure correspondence is acknowledged
CSC-202507381	Stage 2	(1) Communication – clarity	Staff did not communicate effectively when attempting to contact complainant	Some Upheld – Apology given and process change	Learning shared on giving clearer information on voicemail about opening hours and upcoming leave

Future development and actions

13. Refreshed Customer Service Standards were launched in October 2025, full details are available here: [Our customer service standards | SPSO](#)
14. Proposed changes to CSC responses where there is no customer service standard failing identified, this would cut down on stage 2 and stage 3 CSCs. If agreed a paper with template letter will follow.

Appendix 1: CSC Caseload Dashboard



Appendix 2: Standards and guidance

15. 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](#)
16. 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](#)
17. 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.
18. 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](#)