

Customer Service Complaints Report

2025-26 Quarter 4

Meeting Date	14 May 2026
Meeting name	LT Quarterly Performance & Governance Meeting
LT Responsible person	Head of Improvement, Standards and Engagement
Dashboard link	260401 Customer Service Complaints Dashboard Q4 2025-26 (A56273017)
Linked reports	
Outcomes sought	1. Note the quarterly statistics: Statistics – 2025-26 Q4 2. Note the findings, learning and improvement actions taken: Findings, learning and actions 3. Note the future development and actions taken: Future development and actions
Executive summary	1. 33 cases closed during Q4 compared to 38 cases received, the second highest number of closures this year with the largest number of closures of cases at Stage 1. 2. 2 cases at Stage 1 missed their target date and 2 cases at Stage 2. 3. 1,120 minutes were spent on stage 1 cases. This is higher than normal and is due to the increased number of cases received and closed at Stage 1. 4. Most upheld cases were at stage 1 (8 cases). Most not upheld cases were at stage 2 (9 cases). 5. “Communicating with you clearly and provide an accessible service” was the key learning 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 Q4

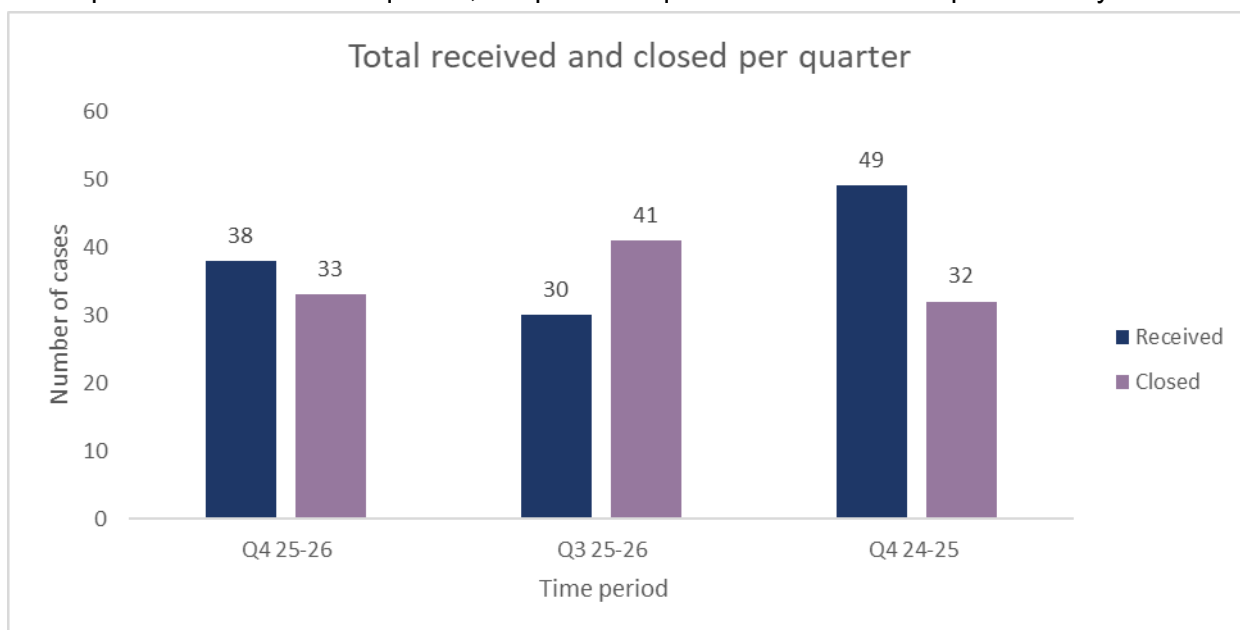
2. The table below shows the total received and closed cases in Q4 of 2025-2026. These are split by stage 1, stage 2 and stage 3. Stage 2 cases are further separated into cases that were escalated from stage 1 to stage 2, and cases that surpassed stage 1 and escalated directly to stage 2.

Q4 headlines:

- At stage 1; we received 21 cases and closed 16 cases
- At stage 2; including both stage 2 escalated and direct cases, we received 14 cases and closed 12 cases
- At stage 3; we received 3 cases and closed 5 cases

Customer Service Complaints	Received	Closed
Stage 1 - Frontline resolution	21	16
Stage 2 - Direct to stage 2	7	6
Stage 2 - Escalated from S1 to S2	7	6
Stage 3 - Independent Review	3	5
SPSO Total	38	33

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



- Q4 2025/2026: closed 87% of cases received
- Q3 2025/2026: closed 137% of cases received
- Q4 2024/2025: closed 65% of cases received

Timescales

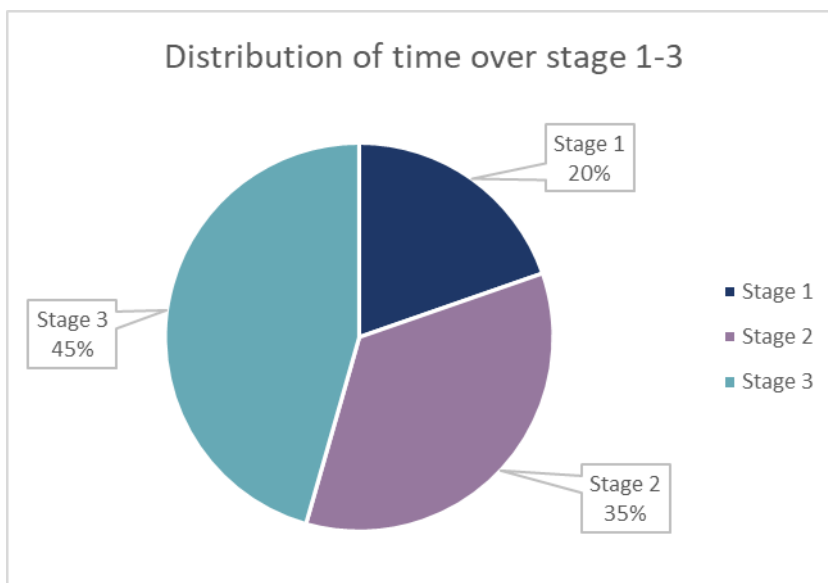
4. The timescales by which we measure our performance against the requirements of the complaints procedure are:
- 5 working days at stage 1
 - 20 working days at stage 2
 - 40 working days for independent review
5. The table below summarises the average timescales in working days to close service complaints at each stage, how many were closed on time and how many missed the target during Q4. Some targets were missed due to case complexity.

Average timescales	Average	On Time	Missed	Oldest Case
Stage 1	3	14	2	8
Stage 2	16	10	2	24
Stage 3 - Independent Review	30	5	0	33

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 to the end of March 2025.

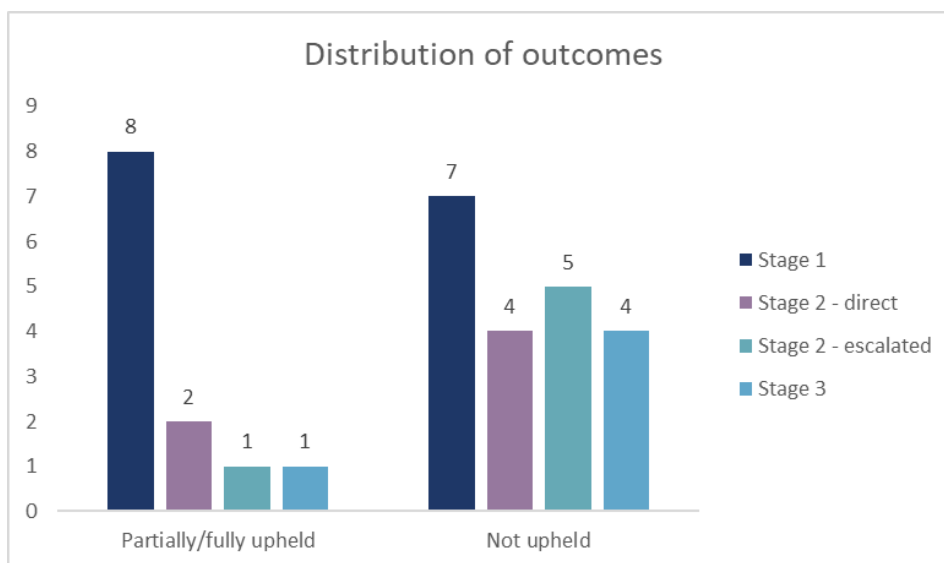
Stage	Total Time	Average Time	Range of Time
Stage 1	1,120	70	15-150
Stage 2	1,980	165	60-420
Stage 3 - Independent Review	2,595	519	270-765
Total	5,695		

- The total time spent on stage 1 cases increased due to the increase in case numbers although remains lower than Q4 2024-25 quarters which was 1,660 hours.
- The total time spent on stage 2 is the lowest in 2025-26 despite case numbers at stage 2 being consistent throughout the year.
- The total time spent on stage 3 is the lowest in 2025-26 likely due to the lower case numbers received in Q4.

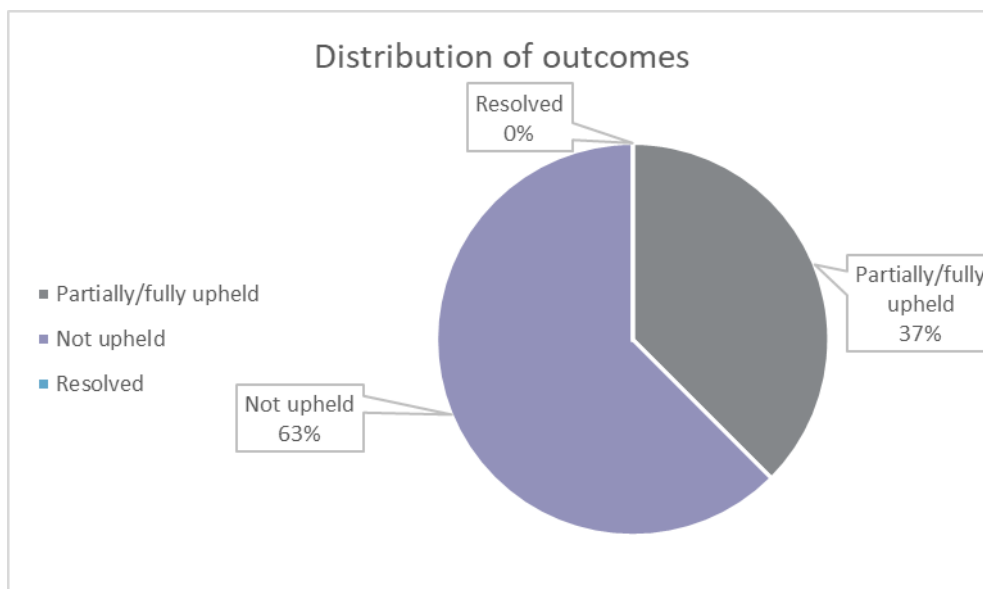


Outcomes and subject analysis

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.

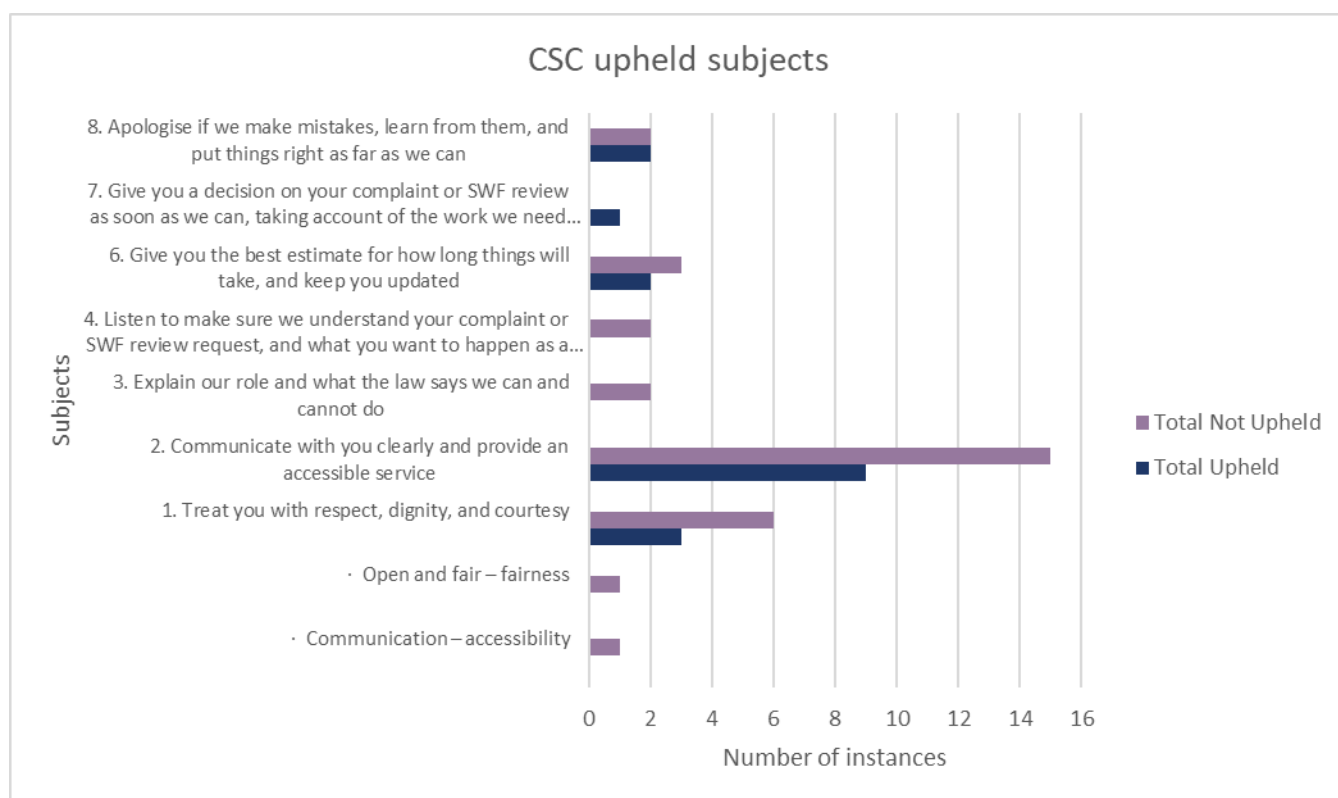


- The majority of partially or fully upheld complaints were at stage 1 (8 cases) and the majority of these cases were for the subject “2. Communicate with you clearly and provide an accessible service”
 - Only 1 stage 3 complaint was upheld for the subject “1. Treat you with respect dignity and courtesy”, compared to 4 not upheld
9. Highlights Q4 25/26:



- 63% of the outcomes across all stages were not upheld, which is slightly lower than Q3
- 37% of the outcomes across all three stages were partially or fully upheld compared to 25% in Q3
- One complaint was withdrawn at Stage 1 and no grounds to pursue

10. The table below illustrates the subjects which appear most frequently in Customer Service Complaints and their outcome.



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*

9 out of 17 instances within this service standard were upheld/some upheld.

b. *Treat you with respect, dignity, and courtesy*

3 out of 9 instances within this service standard were upheld/some upheld.

c. *Give you the best estimate for how long things will take, and keep you updated*

2 out of 5 instances within this service standard were upheld/some upheld.

12. The subjects upheld most often were communicate with you clearly and provide an accessible service (9 upheld instances) and treat you with respect, dignity, and courtesy (3 upheld instances).

Distribution upheld subjects

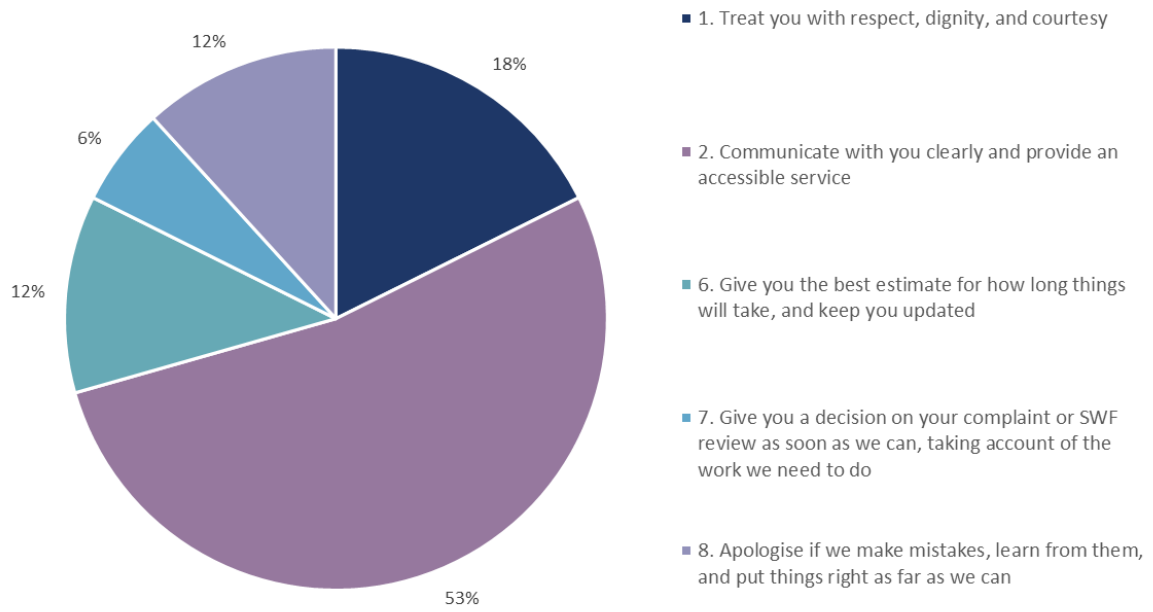


TABLE OF SUBJECTS, arranged by total frequency, and then by most upheld complaints	Stage 1 Upheld	Stage 1 Not Upheld	Stage 2 Upheld	Stage 2 Not Upheld	Stage 3 Upheld	Stage 3 Not Upheld	Total Upheld	Total Not Upheld	Total*
2. Communicate with you clearly and provide an accessible service	8	3	1	6	0	6	9	15	24
1. Treat you with respect, dignity, and courtesy	2	4	0	1	1	1	3	6	9
6. Give you the best estimate for how long things will take, and keep you updated	2	2	0	1	0	0	2	3	5
8. Apologise if we make mistakes, learn from them, and put things right as far as we can	1	1	1	0	0	1	2	2	4
3. Explain our role and what the law says we can and cannot do	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	2	2
4. Listen to make sure we understand your complaint or SWF review request, and what you want to happen as a result	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	2	2
Communication – accessibility	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Open and fair – fairness	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
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	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1

*Most cases have multiple subjects recorded; this will therefore not add up to the total of CSC cases for this reporting period

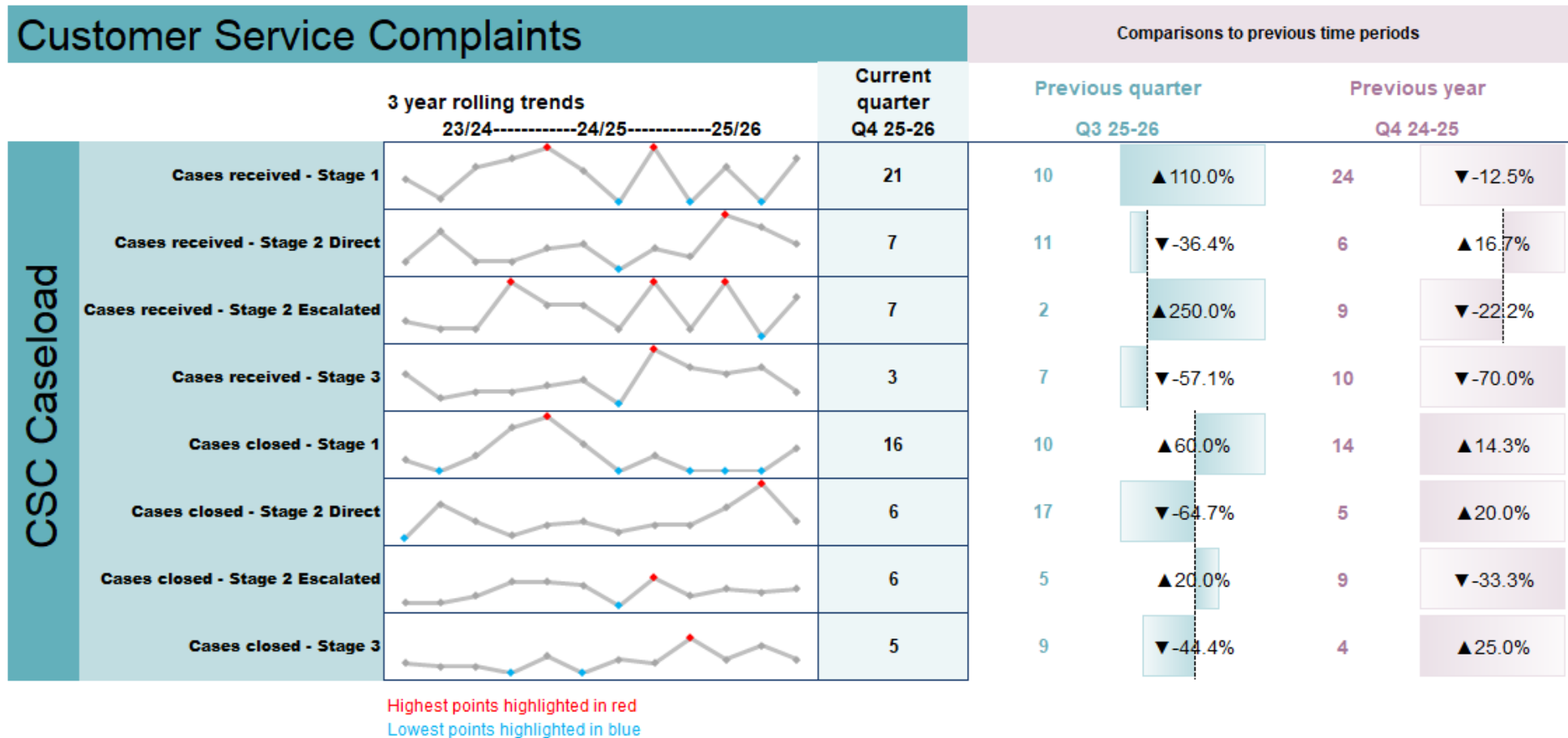
Findings, learning and actions

Case Ref:	Workflow Stage	Subject	Substance of complaint	Decision	Learning and improvement
CSC-202510972	Stage 3	(1) Treat you with respect dignity and courtesy (2) Give you a decision on your complaint or SWF review as soon as we can – taking account of the work we need to do (3) Apologise if we make mistakes learn from them and put things right as far as we can	Unacceptable delay in concluding the investigation which has prolonged distress and denied justice. Distress and emotional impact of the delay was not taken sufficiently into account	Fully Upheld - Apology given and staff feedback	Apology given and reminder to staff to acknowledge the impact of any delays to the complaints process
CSC-202510855	Stage 1	(1) Communicate with you clearly and provide an accessible service	Unhappy that emails were not responded to and no update was provided	Fully Upheld - Apology given and staff feedback	Apology given and staff to consider issues with respect to caseload management, to be discussed with manager

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. Due to be implemented in Q1 2026-27.

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](#)