

2020-21 Quarter 1 and 2 Combined Customer Service Complaints Report

From: **John Stevenson, Head of Improvement, Standards and Engagement**
To: **SPSO Leadership Team**
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Performance reporting

1. This customer service complaints performance report combines Q1 and Q2 of 2020/21.

Purpose

2. The report provides a summary of Customer Service Complaints (CSCs) received and responded to by the SPSO during Quarters 1 and 2 of the year 2020-22. Where appropriate the report seeks to provide a summary of outcomes, trends and actions taken as a result of these complaints including key learning points for SPSO in relation to service improvement.
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Reporting customer service complaints

3. Details of all CSCs are recorded on SPSO's case management system (Workpro) and we publish the outcome of complaints and the actions we have taken in response. The CSCs we received are analysed for trend information to ensure that, where possible, we identify areas where our service could be improved and take appropriate action.
4. 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. This includes statistics showing the volumes and types of complaints and key performance details, including the time taken and the stage at which complaints were resolved.
5. Complaints may be closed at different stages of the CSC procedure:
 - Closures at Stage 1 - Frontline Resolution refers to complaints closed at Stage 1 of the procedure, with no escalation to the next stage
 - Closures at Stage 2 - Investigation refers to complaints handled and closed directly at Stage 2 of the procedure (Frontline Resolution was not attempted)
 - Closures of Escalated Complaints – refers to complaints handled at Stage 1 and subsequently escalated to, and closed at Stage 2.

Statistics for customer service complaints

Received & closed

6. Table 1 provides a breakdown of complaints received and closed during Q1 and Q2.

Table 1

	<i>Received</i>	<i>Closed</i>
Q1 and Q2 combined		
Stage 1 - Frontline Resolution	28	24
Stage 2 - Investigation	10	9
Escalated Complaints (escalated from Stage 1 to Stage 2)	12	8
Total	50	41

7. Not all cases received, are closed within the reporting period. Where a difference exists in the number of cases received and the number of cases closed in the quarter this takes account of cases received in an earlier quarter being closed during the reporting period, and cases not being closed within the reporting period.
8. We previously reported that as a result of increased awareness of our customer service standards, and the move to empower staff to identify, record and make decision on customer service complaints, the volume of service complaints recorded increased.
9. In the first two quarters of this year (2020/21), however, this upward trend has not continued. Complaints received have reduced by 29% when compared with the same period last year when we received 70 (and closed 71) customer service complaints.

Upheld/Not upheld

10. Table 2 provides a breakdown of complaints upheld and not upheld during Q1 and Q2. Where any part of a service complaint has been upheld, we record the outcome as upheld for reporting purposes. This includes cases where some, but not necessarily all of the issues complained of have been upheld.

Table 2

Q1 and Q2 combined	<i>Upheld</i>	<i>Not Upheld</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>% upheld</i>
Stage 1 - Frontline resolution	13	11	24	54%
Stage 2 – Investigation	7	10	17	41%

(including escalated cases)				
Total	20	21	41	

11. As in previous quarters, the number of upheld service complaints remains generally 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 takes 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.

Cases upheld at stage 1

12. Of the 13 cases upheld at stage 1, the main area of our service standards that was not met related to communication where 11 cases did not meet this service standard

13. Four of these 11 cases were in regard to delays in the way we communicated. The remaining seven related to a style of communication which did not meet our commitment to communicate effectively with our customers.

14. The two remaining cases that were upheld at stage 1 related to process issues; one regarding treatment and one where there was a delay in the process.

Cases upheld at stage 2

15. Of the 7 cases upheld at stage 2, three related to communication issues.; two of these were delays in communicating and the other was in regard to effective communication.

16. Four cases upheld at stage 2 were in respect of the way in which we applied our process.

Timescales

17. 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
- 20 working days for escalated complaints.

18. The average timescales to close service complaints during Q1 and Q2 were:

Stage 1 - Frontline resolution = 4.6 days

Stage 2 – Investigation including escalated = 24.2 days

19. The average timescales of 4.6 days at stage 1 meets the performance measurement for complaints closed at stage 1. The average timescale of 24.2 days for stage 2 and escalated complaints, however, is longer than we would have expected. Two cases did take notably longer to conclude, and this has skewed the overall performance. This was due to staff absence, and the complainant(s) were kept updated through the process.

Themes and trends

20. The broad themes where we have not met the standards that we expect of ourselves relate to failings in communicating effectively and with delays in progressing casework through our process.

21. Work is underway to identify a break down of the specific failings identified through service complaints and where appropriate the learning and improvement action(s) that resulted.

Independent Customer Complaints Reviewer (ICCR)

22. The Independent Reviewer closed three cases in this reporting period. All three cases were not upheld as there was no evidence of service failure.

Next steps

23. This report has been prepared to update the Leadership Team. Thereafter it is shared with the Casework Performance Group and the Service Improvement Forum. Its findings are also shared internally and made available online.

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SPSO