

Customer Service Complaints Report

2023-24 Quarter 2

Meeting Date	8 th of November 2023
Meeting name	Casework Performance Meeting
LT Responsible person	Head of Improvement, Standards and Engagement
Dashboard link	[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 – 2023-24 Q2

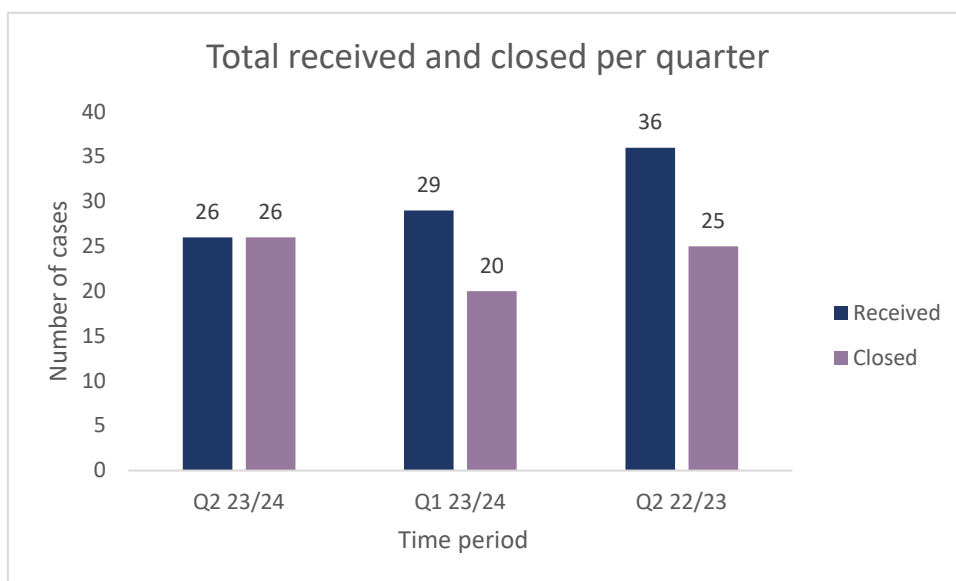
2. The table below shows the total received and closed cases in quarter 2 of 2023-2024. These are split by stage 1, stage 2 and stage 3. Stage 2 cases are further separated into cases that were escalated from stage 1 to stage 2, and cases that surpassed stage 1 and escalated directly to stage 2.

Q2 headlines:

- At stage 1; we received 11 cases and closed 10 cases.
- At stage 2; including both stage 2 escalated and direct cases, we received 13 cases and closed 13 cases.
- At stage 3; 2 cases were received at stage 3 and 3 cases were closed.

Customer Service Complaints	Received	Closed
Stage 1 - Frontline resolution	11	10
Stage 2 - Direct to stage 2	10	11
Stage 2 - Escalated from S1 to S2	3	2
Stage 3 - Independent Review	2	3
SPSO Total	26	26

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



- Q2 2023/2024: closed 100% of cases received
- Q1 2023/2024: closed 69% of cases received
- Q2 2022/2023: closed 69% 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 in working days to close service complaints at each stage, how many were closed on time and how many missed the target during Q2. 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 (25 working days) to close. The oldest current case of 31 working days is a stage 3 case and still falls under the limit of 40 working days.

6. The oldest stage 2 case could not be closed within the usual timeframe due to the complexity of the case.

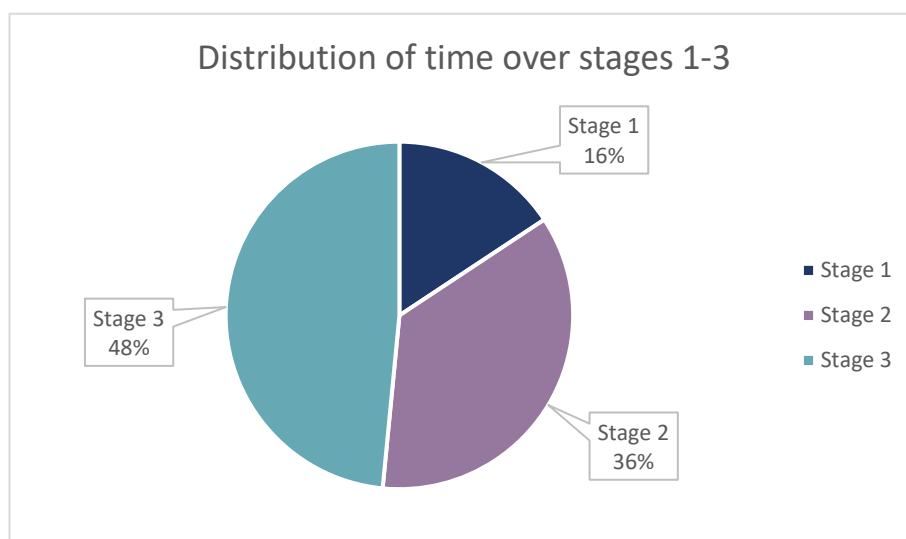
Average timescales	Average	On Time	Missed	Oldest Case
Stage 1	3.3	10	0	5
Stage 2	16.0	13	0	155
Stage 3 - Independent Review	27.4	2	1	42

7. The table below shows the time that all SPSO staff spent on the customer service complaints closed during Q2 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 July 2023. The new metric introduced last quarter shows the range of time in minutes spent on closing cases:

Stage	Total Time	Average Time	Range of Time
Stage 1	1,108	110.8	0-200
Stage 2	2,530	168.6	75-188
Stage 3 - Independent Review	3,420	684.0	150-1350
Total	7,058		

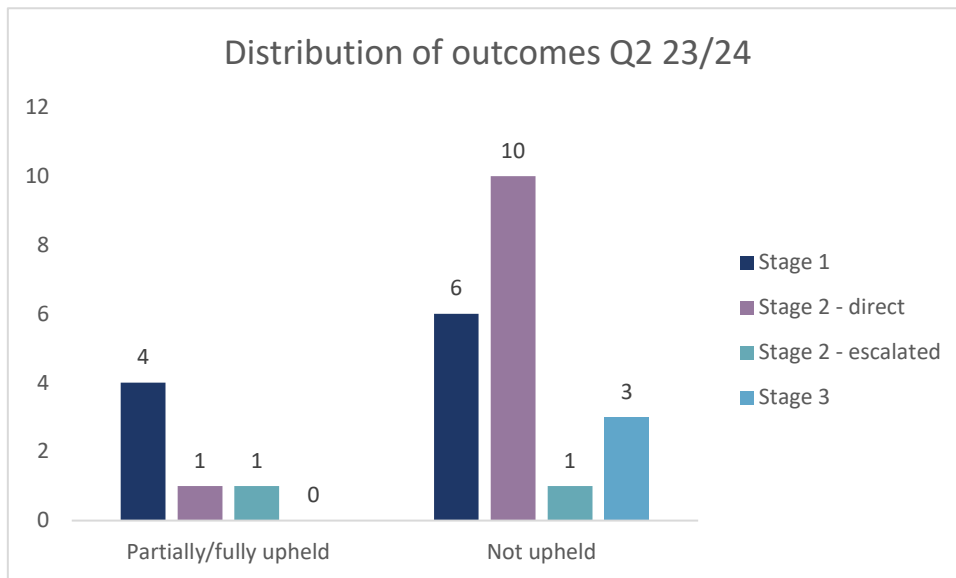
- There is an increase of 52% in average time spent on closing a case between stage 1 and stage 2
- Although stage 3 cases receive double the number of working days to close the case, the difference in average time to close a case at stage 3 is 306% higher than at stage 2
- Time spent on stage 3 admin is not included in this table but accounts for 140 minutes



- Almost half (48%) of the total time spent on all stages was dedicated to stage 3 cases

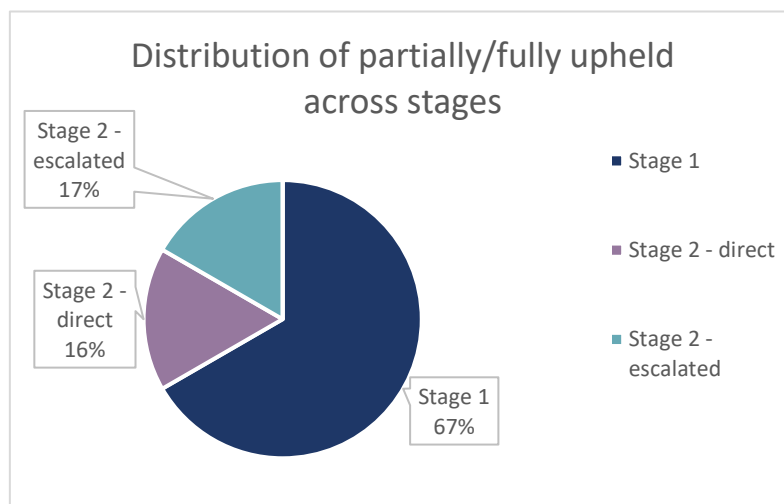
Outcomes and subject analysis

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.



- 40% of stage 1 complaints were partially or fully upheld
- Only 9% of direct stage 2 complaints were partially or fully upheld
- One out of a total of two of the escalated stage 2 complaints were partially or fully upheld
- None of the stage 3 complaints were partially or fully upheld

10. Highlights Q2 23/24:



- 77% of the outcomes across all stages were not upheld
- 23% of the outcomes across all three stages were partially or fully upheld
- Out of the 23% of complaints that were partially or fully upheld, 67% of the upheld complaints were at stage 1

11. 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.

12. There is some merit in considering the areas which appear most frequently in the subjects of complaints:

a. Communication – respect & dignity

2 out of 10 cases within this service standard were upheld/some upheld, these cases were both at stage 1.

b. Communication - clarity

1 out of 9 cases within this service standard were upheld/some upheld, this case was at stage 1.

13. The subjects that were upheld twice and therefore the subjects most often upheld were:

- Communication – accessibility
- Communication – respect & dignity

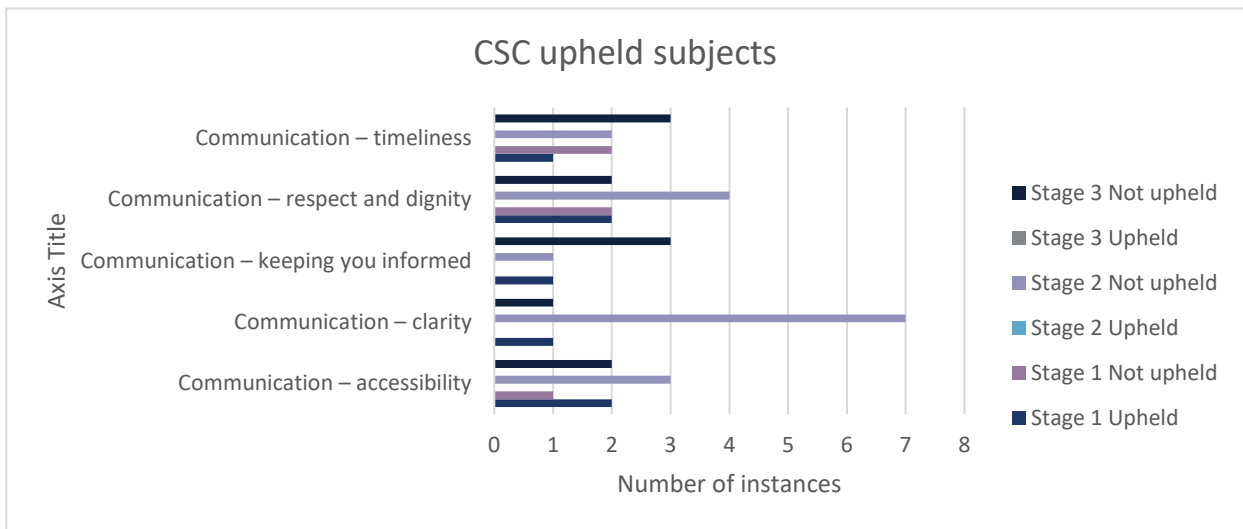


TABLE OF SUBJECTS, arranged by total frequency, and then by most upheld complaints	STAGE 1			STAGE 2		STAGE 3		TOTAL (total includes resolved)		
	Upheld	Not upheld	Resolved/ Withdrawn	Upheld	Not upheld	Upheld	Not upheld	Upheld	Not upheld	Total*
Communication – accessibility	2	1	0	0	3	0	2	2	6	8
Communication – clarity	1	0	0	0	7	0	1	1	8	9
Communication – keeping you informed	1	0	0	0	1	0	3	1	4	5
Communication – respect and dignity	2	2	0	0	4	0	2	2	8	10
Communication – timeliness	1	2	0	0	2	0	3	1	7	8
Communication – understanding	0	3	0	0	0	0	1	0	4	4
Competent and responsible - expertise	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	2
Competent and responsible – handling information	0	1	0	0	1	0	2	0	4	4
Competent and responsible – putting things right	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	2	2
Open and fair – impartiality and independence	0	3	0	0	2	0	0	0	5	5
Open and fair – transparency	0	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

14. Actions taken as a result of CSCs determined in this quarter, where action other than an apology has been recorded:

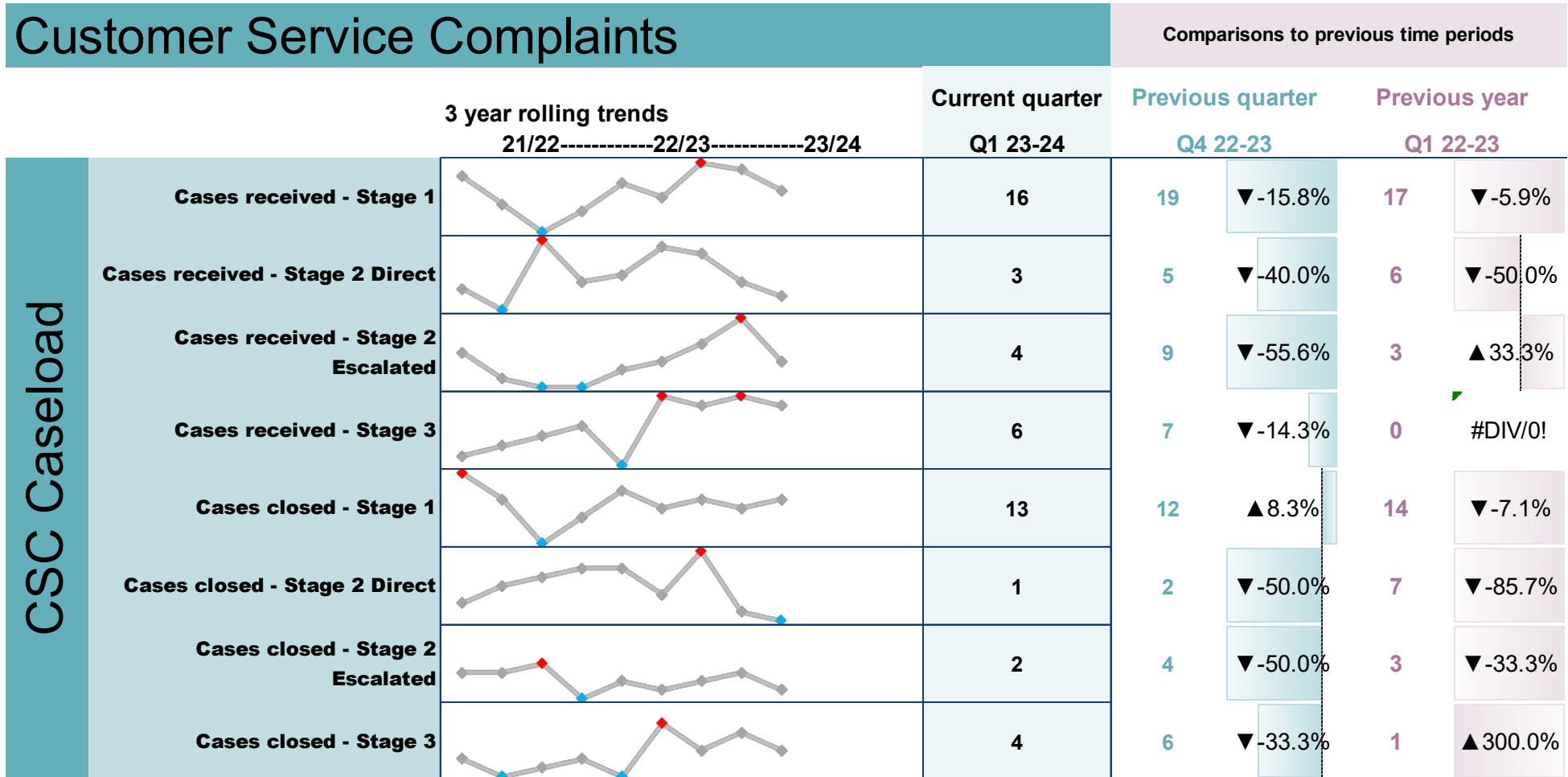
Case Ref:	Workflow Stage	Subject	Substance of complaint	Decision	Learning and improvement recommendations
CSC-202305207	Stage 1	Communication - accessibility	Failure to make reasonable adjustments, and inappropriate reference to telephone contact in correspondence	Some upheld – Apology given and staff feedback	Upheld the element relating to reference to telephone contact in the decision letter (complainant had hearing difficulties). Apology given and reminder staff to tailor individual letters to the needs of the complainant
CSC-202301870	Stage 2	Communication - accessibility	The complainant I had asked in their review for a hard copy response if the correspondence was more than one page. However, they had to email the CR to receive this, as they only sent an electronic response. The CR also did not provide an explanation why they had not complied with the request for a hard copy.	Fully upheld – Apology given and staff feedback	The review decision letter should have been posted in line with the complainant's request. An adjustment requirement added to the case file.
CSC-202303098	Stage 2	Communication – clarity	The CR failed to attach a consent form, failed to attach a form in a format that could be edited and failed to copy in a third party despite advising they would.	Fully upheld - Apology given and other action	The CR apologised, sent the appropriate form and forwarded the email to their colleague
CSC-202301870	Stage 2	Communication – accessibility	The complainant had requested for a hard copy response if the correspondence was more than one page, but they had to email the CR to receive this, as the CR only sent an electronic	Fully upheld - Apology given and staff feedback	The review decision letter should have been posted in line with the complainant's request. An apology was issued and an adjustment requirement was

Case Ref:	Workflow Stage	Subject	Substance of complaint	Decision	Learning and improvement recommendations
			response. The CR also failed to explain why they had not complied with the request for a hard copy.		added to the case file.
CSC-202210687	Stage 2	(1) Communication – keeping you informed (2) Communication – timeliness (3) Communication – keeping you informed	(1) The complainant was not updated for months (2) The SPSO delayed in progressing the case (3) A copy of the provisional decision letter was not sent to the complainant's mother	(1) Fully upheld - Apology given and staff feedback (2) Fully upheld - Apology given and staff feedback (3) Fully upheld - Apology given and staff feedback	(1) (2) (3) An apology was issued and feedback was provided to the CR regarding the failings.

15. The following recommendations were issued this quarter:

- Ensure preferences for means to contact are listened to.
- Add adjustment requirements to the case where necessary.
- Continue to reduce our delays of case allocation.

Appendix 1: CSC Caseload Dashboard



Highest points highlighted in red
Lowest points highlighted in blue

Appendix 2: Standards and guidance

16. 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](#)
17. 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](#)
18. 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.
19. 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](#)