

**Organisation Learning from Customer Service Complaints
2016-17 Q4**

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Purpose

To provide a summary of Customer Service Complaints (CSCs) received and responded to by the SPSO and the SPSO's Independent Customer Complaints Reviewer (ICCR) in quarter 4 of 2016/17 and where appropriate to provide a summary of outcomes, trends and actions taken as a result of these complaints including key learning points for SPSO service improvement.

Reporting customer service complaints

In line with CSA requirements, details of all CSCs are recorded on WorkPro and we publish on a quarterly basis the outcome of complaints and the actions we have taken in response. These are then analysed for trend information to ensure we identify areas where our service could improve and take appropriate action.

We publish this report on a quarterly basis to help ensure transparency in our complaints handling and to demonstrate to our customers that complaints can 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.

Q4 Complaints received & closed

Received & closed

We received 17 customer service complaints in Q4:

- 11 complaints at Stage 1
- 3 complaints at Stage 2, and
- 3 escalated complaints (escalated from stage 1 to stage 2).

In Q4 we closed 20 customer service complaints:

- 11 complaints were closed at Stage 1
- 5 complaints were closed at Stage 2, and
- 4 escalated complaints were closed (escalated from stage 1 to stage 2).

Table 1 provides a breakdown of complaints received and closed during Q4

Table 1:

Summary	<i>Received</i>	<i>Closed</i>
Stage 1 - Frontline resolution	11	11
Stage 2 - Investigation	3	5
Escalated Complaints	3	4
Total	17	20

Upheld/Not upheld

Of the 20 customer service complaints closed in Q4, we upheld 5. Four complaints were upheld at Stage 1 of the procedure, no complaints were upheld at stage 2, however, one escalated complaint was upheld. Table 2 below provides a summary of complaints upheld and not upheld at each stage of the procedure.

Table 2:

Summary	<i>Upheld</i>	<i>Not Upheld</i>	<i>Total</i>
Stage 1 - Frontline resolution	4	7	11
Stage 2 - Investigation	0	5	5
Escalated Complaints	1	3	4
Total	5	15	20

Timescales

The timescales to close complaints are:

- 5 working days at stage 1
- 20 working days at stage 2
- 20 working days for 'escalated complaints.

Of the 11 complaints closed at stage one, 9 (82%) were closed within the time limit of 5 working days. Two cases (18%) took longer than 5 working cases to close. Two (40%) of the 5 complaints closed at stage 2 were closed within the required timescale and 3 (75%) of the 4 escalated complaints were closed within 20 working days.

The average time to close complaints in Q4 was:

- 2.81 working days at stage 1
- 16.8 working days at stage 2
- 17.25 working days for escalated complaints.

Table 3 provides further information in relation to our performance in relation to timescales.

Table 3

Timescales	<i>Met timescale (cases)</i>	<i>Did not meet timescale (cases)</i>	<i>Total number of working days</i>	<i>Average time in working days to close</i>
Stage 1 - Frontline resolution	9	2	31	2.81
Stage 2 - Investigation	2	3	84	16.8
Escalated Complaints	3	1	69	17.25
Total	12	5	N/A	N/A

Summary of complaints outcomes and service failures

Stage 1 upheld complaints

201604681

The customer complained that she has tried to contact Complaints Reviewer (CR) a number of times but been unable to speak with. She had sent emails / letters but not received a response to these.

The CR contacted the customer and acknowledged that there had been a failure to respond to correspondence. He acknowledged that our handling of the customer's correspondence did not meet our service standards and apologised for these failings.

Learning

It transpired that some of the relevant correspondence sent by the customer by email had been routed to the CR's 'junk' email folder. The team manager made a point of writing to all CRs to remind them to regularly check their Junk mailbox, in case any complaint correspondence, goes in there instead of the in box.

201601586

Customer was unhappy with the time we had taken to decide that her case should be closed (180 days). The CR explained the reason that it had taken until this time to decide on the complaint, and provided an apology to the customer.

Learning

While there was a delay in reaching the decision in this case, this was in part unavoidable. Generally staff have been reminded of the need to keep customers updated throughout the SPSO process.

Escalated complaint

201508204

In this particular case, the reason for the 'uphold' was in relation to a delay in responding to the initial customer complaint in October 2016. The CR, the Team Manager and the Executive

Casework Officer had all previously apologised for the delay, which was avoidable. The complaint was upheld on this basis. As a result of this failing we reminded relevant staff of the correct process for handling customer complaints, to minimise the likelihood of this happening again.

The escalated compliant investigation considered five 'heads of complaint'. These were: the basis of the investigation; lack of updates on progress of the investigation; evidence looked at as part of the investigation; sharing information from the Practice and obtaining relevant information for the decision review.

For each of the five 'heads of complaint' the investigation established that we had acted in accordance with our guidance, our process and our customer service standards. Therefore, none of these complaints were upheld.

Learning

The learning in this case stems from the failure to properly apply the Customer Service Complaints procedure requirements when the original complaint was received in October. We plan to develop and deliver a staff awareness session on the requirements of the Customer Service Complaints process. This is planned for Q2/3 of this year.

Independent Customer Complaints Reviewer (ICCR)

During quarter 4 the ICCR closed 2 CSC cases on the basis that the issues the complainant wanted the reviewer to consider related to decisions made by SPSO rather than to a service failures.

Next steps

This report has been prepared to update the SIG of the Q4 performance in relation to Customer Service Complaints. Further work and analysis is ongoing to understand in more detail the performance across the year 2016/17. SIG will be notified of the outcome of his work when known.

J Stevenson

5/5/2017