

**Organisation learning from Customer Service Complaints
2016/17 Quarter 1**

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When: August 2016

Purpose

To provide a summary of Customer Service Complaints (CSCs) received and responded to by the SPSO and the SPSO Independent Customer Complaints Reviewer (ICCR) in the three months from April to June (Q1 2016-17) and provide a summary of outcomes, trends and actions taken as a result of these complaints including, where appropriate, 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.

Complaints received and responded to

Received

<i>CSC Type</i>	<i>Advice</i>	<i>Early Resolution</i>	<i>Investigation</i>	<i>Total</i>
Stage 1 - Officer / Manager	2	1	3	6
Stage 2 - Senior Management	1	0	1	2
Stage 3 - ISDR	0	0	1	1
Total	3	1	5	9

We received eight customer service complaints in Q1. This is a decrease from 10 in the previous quarter (Q4 2015-16).

The breakdown of received complaints, by stage, in Q1 is as follows:

- six at Stage 1 Officer / Manager
- two at Stage 2 Senior Management

The Independent Customer Complaints Reviewer (**ICCR**) received one complaint following the completion of our internal process (a decrease from four the previous quarter).

Responded to

CSC Type	Fully Upheld	Not Upheld	Some Upheld	Total
Stage 1 - Officer / Manager	1	5	0	6
Stage 2 - Senior Management	0	2	1	3
Total	1	7	1	9
Stage 3 - ISDR	0	1	0	1
Total	1	8	1	10

SPSO responded to nine service complaints in this period (down from 11 in the previous quarter 4 15-16 and 20 in the previous quarter 3 15-16).

Six were responded to at stage 1 (Officer / Manager), the same as the previous quarter:

- Two of these were responded to at Advice Team;
- One of these were responded to at Early Resolution;
- Three of these were responded to at Corporate services.

Three were responded to at stage 2 (Senior Management):

- One related to Early Resolution;
- One related to Senior Management;
- One related to Advice Team team.

The Independent Customer Complaints Reviewer (ICCR) responded to one complaint. This was a reduction from five in the previous quarter.

Summary of complaints outcomes and service failures

Breakdown of complaints responded to by stage and outcome is shown in the table below. Each complaint contains a number of individual heads of complaint so the decision outlined represents a summary of these complaint outcomes.

Complaint Type	Not Upheld	Fully Upheld	Some Upheld	Total	Q1 % upheld	YTD 2016/17 upheld	Q4 15-16 % upheld	Q3 15-16 % upheld	2015-16 total % upheld
Stage 1 – Officer / Manager	5	1	0	6	6%	6%	14%	0%	
Stage 2 – Senior Management	2	0	1	3	33%	33%	40%	20%	
SPSO Total	7	1	1	9	22%	22%	25%	9%	15%
Independent Customer Complaints Reviewer	1	0	0	1	0%	0%	60%	40%	44%
Total	8	1	1	10	20%	20%	35%	19%	24%

Upheld complaints

Of the nine complaints responded to by SPSO in this period, two (22%) were fully upheld or some upheld. This compares with 25% the previous quarter and 15% for 2015-16 as a whole. Seven (78%) were not upheld.

The ICCR responded to one complaint (five received the previous quarter), which was not upheld. (Overall rate in previous quarter of 60%).

For comparison, SPSO internal upheld rate in 2015/16 was 15%, and the ICCR upheld rate for 2015/16 was 44%.

Service failures identified

Specific service failures identified in Quarter 1 are summarised below.

Stage 1 (Manager)

The complainant had provided details of her dyslexia and other factors which affected her ability to read documents at the start of SPSO's process when she submitted her complaint. These difficulties were the reason why the complainant, at the end of our process, had asked for her decision letter to be read, although she had not been able to tell the CR this before the phone cut out. We should have acted on this information at that time and agreed with her any reasonable adjustments we could put in place but we did not. We apologised to the complainant for the fact that this did not happen.

The complainant advised that this had affected her ability to request a review of the decision within the timescale. We agreed to discuss flexibility with the timescale, should she choose to request a review.

We fed back to our investigation teams the need to identify any needs as soon as possible in the complaint assessment.

Stage 2 (Senior Management)

Having reviewed the circumstances of an ICCR recommendation we apologised for the fact that the language used to explain our process made the complainant feel that matters had been (or would be) excluded or pre-judged and assured the complainant that that was not the case.

In addition to the apology for these service failings, we also apologised for the fact that we did not identify the issues highlighted by the ICCR in our own earlier investigation and response at stage 2 of our service complaints process and that it took the ICCR investigation to identify these issues. We also apologised for the inconvenience this caused the complainant in seeking a resolution from the ICCR.

We also apologised for delay in implementing the ICCR recommendation in relation to the complaint, specifically the recommendation to apologise to the complainant, and offered a full apology to the individual as requested by the ICCR.

Independent Customer Complaints Reviewer (ICCR)

There were no complaints upheld by the ICCR in this quarter.

Service complaint handling performance

Key points in terms of SPSO's handling of customer service complaints:

Timescales

- *Stage 1:* Five out of six complaints (**83%**) at stage 1 were responded to within the target of 5 working days (Q4 15-16 67%, Q2 71%; Q1 55%; Q4 14/15 90%). The average timescales for responding to Stage 1 complaints was **4.1 working days**, which is within the 5 working day target
- *Stage 2:* Two of the three complaints was responded to within the target of 20 working days (67%). Previous quarters were 40%, 69%, 70% and 70%. The average timescales for responding to Stage 2 complaints was **23 working days** which was outwith the target of 20 working days (previous quarter 26 working days).

Key learning points and trends

There were no significant service failures identified in the complaints responded to in this period which indicates a concerning trend or requiring attention. The most common areas of complaint in quarter 3 were:

- *Communication:* Four complaints to SPSO, compared to three in the previous quarter, complained about elements of communication such as failures to contact within agreed timescales, accuracy of communications or failure to explain elements of our process clearly.
- *Specific elements of our process:* Three complaints, same as the previous quarter, involved some element of complaint about our process, including the process for agreeing heads of complaint or transferring complaints between CRs.
- *Delay:* one complaint about delay, none the previous quarter.

Action Taken

Individual instances of service failure have been highlighted to SMT, where necessary, and to the relevant staff and managers involved. This paper will be provided to the Service Improvement Group for discussion and action where appropriate. There were no individual or collective training needs identified, although some issues of guidance were fed back to staff.
