

2017-18 Q1 Organisation Learning from Customer Service Complaints

From: **John Stevenson, Head of Complaints Standards Authority**

When: **July 2017**

Purpose

To provide a summary of Customer Service Complaints (CSCs) received and responded to by the SPSO 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.

Q1 statistics for customer service complaints

Received & closed

Table 1 provides a breakdown of complaints received and closed

Summary	<i>Received</i>	<i>Closed</i>
Stage 1 - Frontline resolution	11	9
Stage 2 - Investigation	4	7
Escalated Complaints (escalated from stage 1 to stage 2)	6	4
Total	21	20

Upheld/Not upheld

Table 2 provides a breakdown of complaints upheld and not upheld

Summary	<i>Upheld</i>	<i>Not Upheld</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>% upheld</i>
Stage 1 - Frontline resolution	1	8	9	11%
Stage 2 - Investigation	0	7	7	0%
Escalated Complaints	1	3	4	25%
Total	1	18	20	5%

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.

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

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	7	2	35	3.9
Stage 2 - Investigation	7	0	113	16.1
Escalated Complaints	4	0	56	14.0
Total			N/A	N/A

Summary of complaints outcomes and service failures

Stage 1 upheld complaints

201602118: The customer complained that we had failed to contact him for 7 months; this was correct – we had last told Mr C we would be seeking planning advice at the beginning of October 2016, and that we would update him within a month. Mr C complained at the beginning of May 2017 that he had heard nothing further, despite asking for an update. We accepted that this was a significant communicative failing and apologised. The case was discussed with the CR on their return from leave; the CR then wrote their own apology letter and advised Mr C that their manager had discussed the case and the service failure with them. An update on the progress of the case was also given.

No other complaints at Stage 1 were upheld during this quarter.

Escalated complaint

201508527: In this particular case, we upheld the complaint that a Stage 1 CSC had been responded to without allowing the customer the opportunity to explain what the complaint was about, therefore it could not be responded to properly. This was a finely balanced decision because the language used was ambiguous and could suggest the complaint had been made, or that a further, more detailed complaint was to come. Given the ambiguity we upheld the complaint, on the basis that further information should have been sought from the customer, particularly given the Stage 1 response said it did not know what the specific allegations were and, therefore, could not find fault.

Learning: Where there is a lack of clarity with regards to the specific nature of a customer service complaint, the customer should be contacted first to establish this, in line with our process.

No other complaints at Stage 2 were upheld during this quarter.

Independent Customer Complaints Reviewer (ICCR)

During Q1 the ICCR closed 1 CSC case on the basis that they would not be able to address the customer's main concerns or achieve the outcome sought. The customer was given time to respond to this initial view but did not reply, therefore the ICCR rejected the complaint.

Next steps

This report has been prepared to update the Service Improvement Group (SIG) and Audit and Advisory Committee of the SPSO's performance in relation to Customer Service Complaints.
