



Customer and public bodies surveys report 2020-21

Executive summary

We analysed feedback from...



complainants and public bodies

Using both...



quantitative and qualitative data



Despite the challenges of an unprecedented year, satisfaction levels have improved across many measurable service standards. The following acknowledges the service standards which improved, most notably:

We identified three key areas for further improvement...



the time taken to investigate a complaint. The pandemic continued to have a significant impact on the timescales of complaints investigation. This challenge is likely to continue on an irregular basis for an indefinite amount of time



the need to work proportionally and to take a resolutions based approach where appropriate and further develop our practice in this area



how and when we communicate the likely timescales of our assessment and investigation of complaints and how and when we provide updates on progress

Accessibility

We made substantial progress in developing our accessibility, approach and understanding to respond to service user needs:



We enhanced the guidance and support we offer electronically and through our web complaint form



We arranged staff training and awareness sessions to develop our understanding, knowledge and awareness of our service users needs



We developed vulnerability guidance for staff and embedded it into all areas of our complaint handling

Explaining our Scope/ Fairness



We made changes to our communication about our complaint handling process, particularly explaining our role and the time we may take to consider a complaint



We communicated delay times clearly on our website and our web form. We continue to regularly review this and tailor our message accordingly



We continued to embed change to our complaint handling process, specifically improving fairness in our decision-making. This has resulted in a significant improvement in satisfaction in our commitment to being fair



We continue to think creatively about any efficiency gains that we can introduce to any part of our process and where appropriate adopt agile working principles to develop our customer interface and methods of processing complaints

Expertise

54%

of public bodies selected 'neither agree nor disagree' when asked about the standard of professional advice and knowledge of complaints reviewers



Clarity/ Handling of Information

Comments received from customers:



"I found the case worker was very good at communicating, letting me know what was happening and responding to my queries."



"Thank you to the SPSO for the excellent manner in which they handled my complaint, always explaining the process very clearly."



"Complaints Reviewer provided a lot of information in a letter that was too wordy and hard to follow."

Comments received from public bodies:



"It is now clearer when the SPSO is investigating and where and initial inquiry in being made."



"The findings and judgement letters are well structured, considered and clear."



"Sometimes it's not clear what is expected particularly for new complaints and whether an investigation is being carried out."

68%

of public bodies selected 'strongly disagree' when asked if they had concerns about the way in which SPSO handled and shared information. This is a 16% increase from 2019-20 which acknowledges continual improvements being made.



Impartiality and Independence

SPSO made their decision(s) based on an independent evaluation of the evidence provided to them.

Comments received from public bodies that we appreciate/can learn from:



"In our experience we agree with this statement for the majority of cases."



"We agree with this point on almost all occasions. We lodged an appeal as we believed that crucial information had been overlooked on a case. The SPSO response to this was positive and restored our trust in impartiality."

Timeliness/ Transparency/ Keeping you informed



A key area for improvement highlighted in the survey. Whilst SPSO has continued to function throughout 2020-21, the pandemic continued to have a significant impact on the time taken to investigate complaints. This challenge is likely to continue for an indefinite amount of time.



This results in an increase in the time taken to consider and investigate complaints. We decided that being open about expected delays was important. We communicated delay times clearly on our website and our web form and staff were also active in communicating delays with service users during telephone conversations. We regularly review this and tailor our message accordingly.

Understanding

We continue to be driven by our values of learning and improvement and this has shown in the general increase in satisfaction levels since the previous year 2019–20.

+6%

"Impressed by the detail level of the work that must have gone into my case. Very kind and clear communications."

Reaching sound outcomes

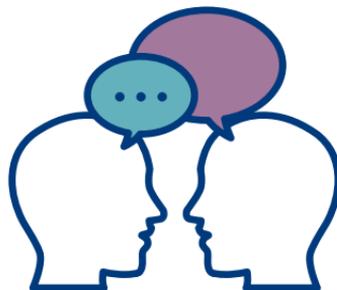
The results of our service user survey in this area has increased from 2019-20 to 2020-21 by:

11%

The results of our public body survey in this area has increased from 2019-20 to 2020-21 by:

16%

We invite both complainants and public bodies to look at our draft complaint decision and invite comments on any factual errors or new information which are important to the complaint outcome

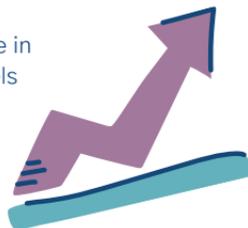


Service users and public bodies agreed that we clearly explain the reasons for our decisions and that our recommendations were appropriate to address any failings.

Respect and dignity

"I felt my complaint was handled without discrimination and I felt that I was treated with care and respect in the way the SPSO interacted with me."

General increase in satisfaction levels



We are grateful to all users of our service who have taken the time to offer their valuable feedback