

2020-21 Quarter 3 Customer Service Complaints Report

From: **John Stevenson, Head of Improvement, Standards and Engagement**
To: **SPSO Leadership Team**
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Performance reporting

1. This customer service complaints performance report reflects performance in Q3 of 2020/21.

Purpose

2. The report provides a summary of Customer Service Complaints (CSCs) received and responded to by the SPSO during Quarters 3 of the year 2020-22. Where appropriate the report seeks to provide a summary of outcomes, trends and actions taken as a result of these complaints including key learning points for SPSO in relation to service improvement.
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Reporting customer service complaints

3. Details of all CSCs are recorded on SPSO's case management system (Workpro) and we publish the outcome of complaints and the actions we have taken in response. The CSCs we received are analysed for trend information to ensure that, where possible, we identify areas where our service could be improved and take appropriate action.
4. 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. 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.
5. Complaints may be closed at different stages of the CSC procedure:
 - Closures at Stage 1 - Frontline Resolution refers to complaints closed at Stage 1 of the procedure, with no escalation to the next stage
 - Closures at Stage 2 - Investigation refers to complaints handled and closed directly at Stage 2 of the procedure (Frontline Resolution was not attempted)

- Closures of Escalated Complaints – refers to complaints handled at Stage 1 and subsequently escalated to, and closed at Stage 2.

Statistics for customer service complaints

Received & closed

6. Table 1 provides a breakdown of complaints received and closed during Q3.

Table 1

Q3	<i>Received</i>	<i>Closed</i>
Stage 1 - Frontline Resolution	17	14
Stage 2 - Investigation	3	2
Escalated Complaints (escalated from Stage 1 to Stage 2)	8	3
Total	28	19

7. Not all cases received, are closed within the reporting period. Where a difference exists in the number of cases received and the number of cases closed in the quarter this takes account of cases received in an earlier quarter being closed during the reporting period, and cases not being closed within the reporting period.
8. In the year to date, we have received 78 service complaints and closed 60. We have seen a downward trend in the volume of service complaints received (down 29% in the first 6 months) and it is expected the year end volumes will be significantly lower than the 121 received and 122 closed in 2019/20.

Upheld/Not upheld

9. Table 2 provides a breakdown of complaints upheld and not upheld during Q1 and Q2. Where any part of a service complaint has been upheld, we record the outcome as upheld for reporting purposes. This includes cases where some, but not necessarily all of the issues complained of have been upheld.

Table 2

Q3	<i>Upheld</i>	<i>Not Upheld</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>% upheld</i>
Stage 1 - Frontline resolution	7	7	14	50%
Stage 2 – Investigation	2	3	5	40%

(including escalated cases)				
Total	9	10	19	

10. As in previous quarters, the number of upheld service complaints remains generally 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 takes 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.

Cases upheld at stage 1

11. Of the 7 cases upheld at stage 1, the main area of our service standards that was not met related to communication. Specifically these service failings included:

- significant delay and lack of communication
- closing the case without communicating the reason by phone
- incorrectly referring to a sheriff rather than Sherriff's clerk
- failing to call back within stated timescale
- a delay in contacting the customer
- we failed to honour a commitment in responding to a DPA/FOISA request
- failed to call customer to communicate our decision

Cases upheld at stage 2

12. The 2 cases upheld at stage 2, to communication issues. This included an incorrect reference and a failure to communicate effectively or timeously through the investigation.

Timescales

13. 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
- 20 working days for escalated complaints.

14. The average timescales to close service complaints during Q1 and Q2 were:

Stage 1 - Frontline resolution = 2.4 days

Stage 2 – Investigation including escalated = 28

15. The average timescales of 2.4 days at stage 1 meets the performance measurement for complaints closed at stage 1. The average timescale of 28 days for stage 2 and escalated complaints, however, is longer than we would have expected. One case did take longer to conclude, and this has skewed the overall performance.

Themes and trends

16. The broad themes where we have not met the standards that we expect of ourselves relate to failings in communicating effectively and with delays in progressing casework through our process.

17. Work is underway to identify a breakdown of the specific failings identified through service complaints and where appropriate the learning and improvement action(s) that resulted.

Independent Customer Complaints Reviewer (ICCR)

18. The Independent Reviewer closed five cases in this reporting period. All five cases were not upheld, as there was no evidence of service failure.

Next steps

19. This report has been prepared to update the Leadership Team. Thereafter it is shared with the Casework Performance Group and the Service Improvement Forum. Its findings are also shared internally and made available online.

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SPSO