

# Customer Service Complaints Report

## 2023-24 Quarter 4

<b>Meeting Date</b>	25 <sup>th</sup> of April 2024
<b>Meeting name</b>	Casework Performance Meeting
<b>LT Responsible person</b>	Head of Improvement, Standards and Engagement
<b>Dashboard link</b>	[LINK]
<b>Outcomes sought</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Noting quarterly statistics: <a href="#">Statistics – 2023-24 Q4</a></li> <li>2. Note findings, learning and improvement actions taken: <a href="#">Findings, learning and actions</a></li> <li>3. Noting the future development and actions taken: <a href="#">Future development and actions</a></li> </ol>

1. This Customer Service Complaints (CSCs) performance report provides a summary of CSCs received and responded to by the SPSO in the previous quarter, including a summary of outcomes, trends, actions and key learning for SPSO, to promote continuous improvement of our service.

## Statistics – 2023-24 Q4

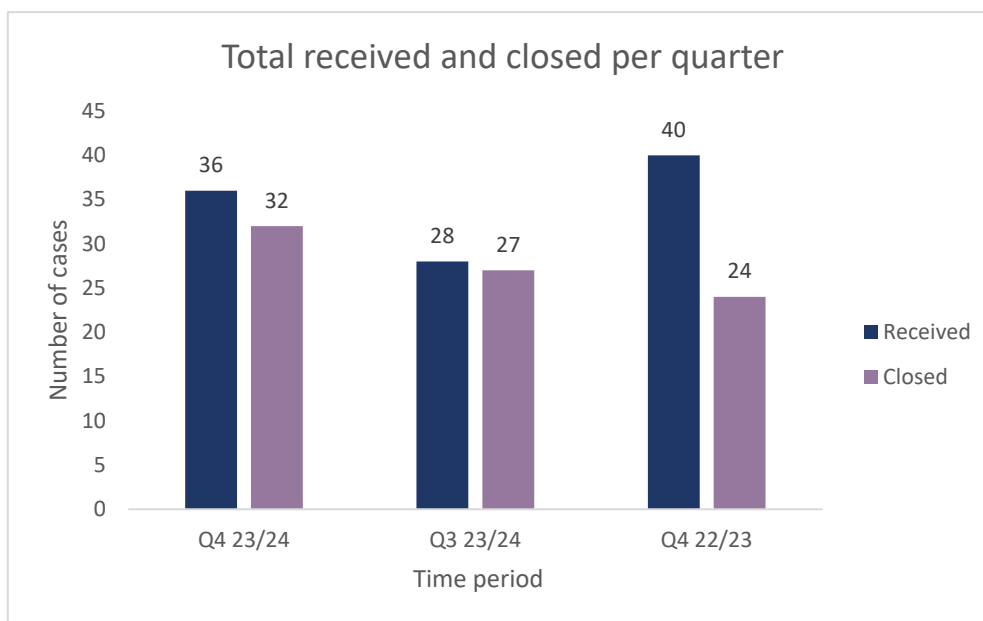
2. The table below shows the total received and closed cases in Q4 of 2023-2024. These are split by stage 1, stage 2 and stage 3. Stage 2 cases are further separated into cases that were escalated from stage 1 to stage 2, and cases that surpassed stage 1 and escalated directly to stage 2.

### Q4 headlines:

- At stage 1; we received 21 cases and closed 21 cases
- At stage 2; including both stage 2 escalated and direct cases, we received 12 cases and closed 10 cases
- At stage 3; at stage 3 we received 3 cases and we closed 1 case

Customer Service Complaints	Received	Closed
Stage 1 - Frontline resolution	21	21
Stage 2 - Direct to stage 2	3	2
Stage 2 - Escalated from S1 to S2	9	8
Stage 3 - Independent Review	3	1
<b>SPSO Total</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>32</b>

3. A comparison of the current quarter, the previous quarter and the same quarter last year:



- Q4 2023/2024: closed 86% of cases received
- Q4 2023/2024: closed 96% of cases received
- Q4 2022/2023: closed 60% of cases received

## Timescales

4. 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
- 40 working days for independent review

5. The table below summarises the average timescales in working days to close service complaints at each stage, how many were closed on time and how many missed the target during Q4. Additionally, the oldest case at each stage is noted to address any cause for delay that is within our gift. Stage 3 cases take the longest time on average (31 working days) to close. The oldest case was a stage 2 case 8 days over the target of 20 days. An apology was issued for the delay.

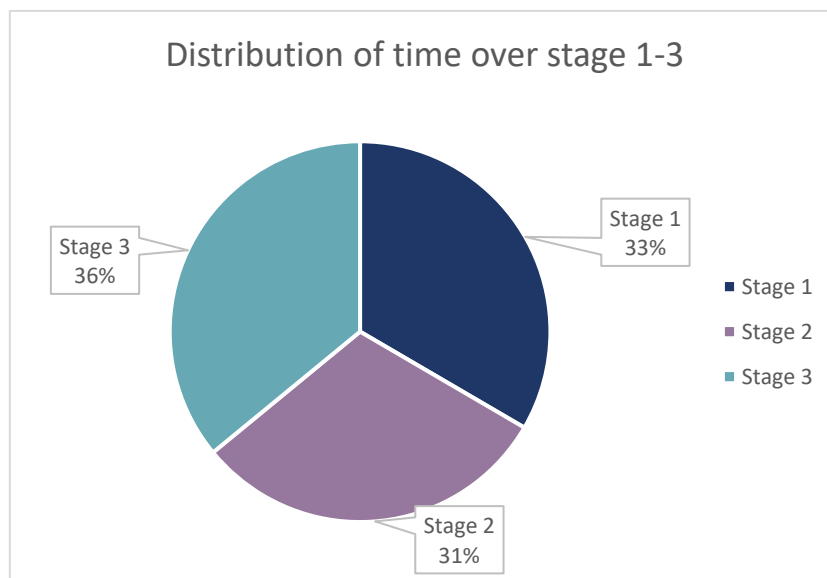
Average timescales	Average	On Time	Missed	Oldest Case
Stage 1	2.8	21	0	5
Stage 2	12.7	9	1	28
Stage 3 - Independent Review	19.3	1	0	30

6. The table below shows the time that all SPSO staff spent on the customer service complaints closed during Q4 for stages 1 and 2. The stage 3 time relates only to time spent by the

Independent Customer Service Complaints Reviewer (ICSCR) on complaints at stage 3 up to March 2024.

Stage	Total Time	Average Time	Range of Time
Stage 1	1,701	81	5-420
Stage 2	1,560	173	60-360
Stage 3 - Independent Review	1,830	610	45-1,230
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,091</b>		

- 1,230 minutes alone were spent on closing a single stage 3 case
- The average time to close a stage 3 case is 3.5 times the average time spent to close a stage 2 case
- Time spent on stage 3 admin is not included in this table but accounts for 70 minutes

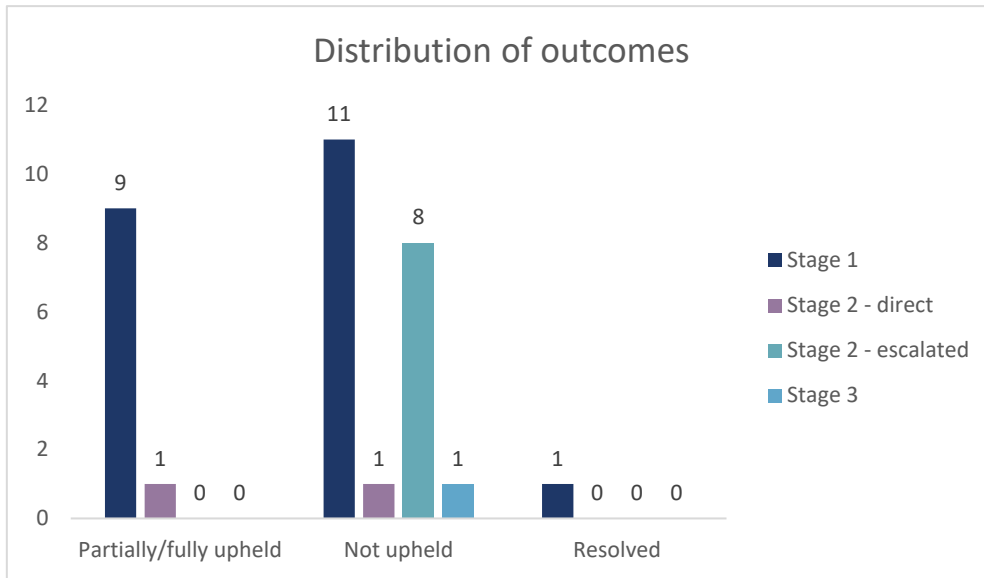


- Stage 3 cases are received at a much lower rate, yet they take up majority of the total time spent on cases

## Outcomes and subject analysis

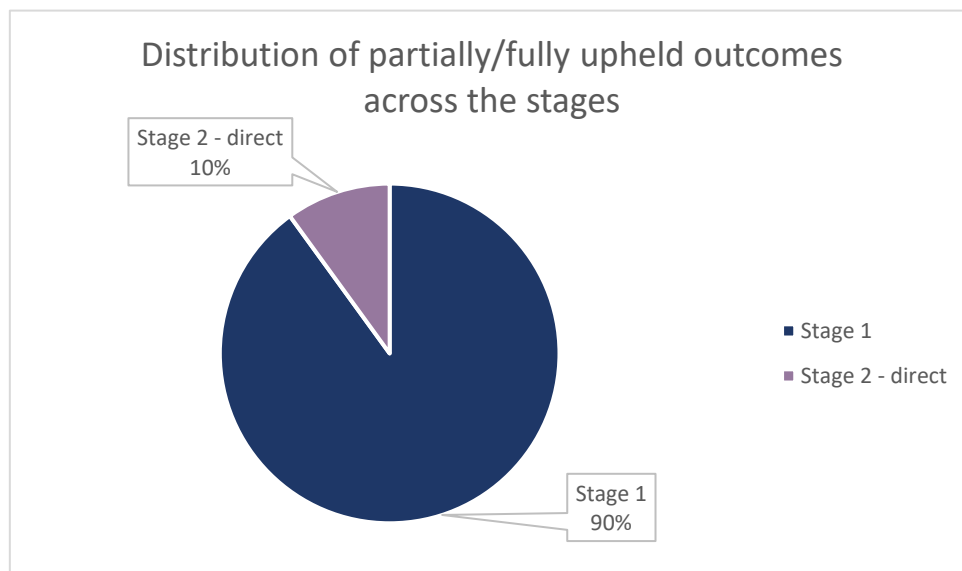
7. The number of service complaints remains very low in relation to the overall volumes of customer transactions delivered by SPSO each year. Nevertheless, upheld service complaints (and in some cases, not upheld service complaints) demonstrate that we take these complaints seriously and acknowledge 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.

8. The table below covers complaints where a decision has been reached, or a resolution agreed. This does not include cases which were withdrawn. Note: resolved complaints are not included in the upheld calculation rate.



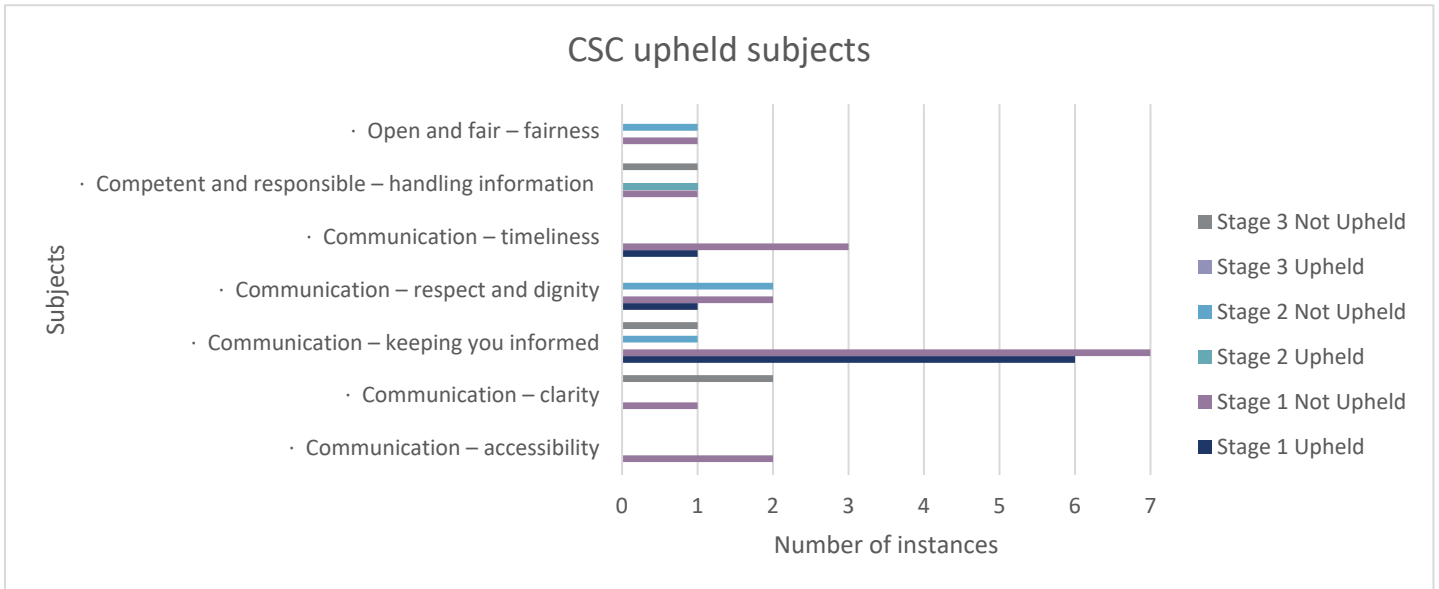
- 28% of stage 1 complaints were partially or fully upheld
- 3% of direct stage 2 complaints were partially or fully upheld
- None of the escalated stage 2 complaints were partially or fully upheld
- None of the stage 3 complaints were partially or fully upheld
- 1 case was resolved as the complainant was satisfied with the outcome

9. Highlights Q4 23/24:



- 68% of the outcomes across all stages were not upheld
- 31% of the outcomes across all three stages were partially or fully upheld
- Out of the 31% of complaints that were partially or fully upheld, 90% of the upheld complaints were at stage 1

10. The table below has been produced to illustrate the subjects which appear most frequently in Customer Service Complaints, and at which stage and their outcome.
11. There is some merit in considering the areas which appear most frequently in the subjects of complaints:



**a. Communication – keeping you informed**

6 out of 15 cases within this service standard were upheld/some upheld, these cases were all at stage 1.

**b. Communication – respect and dignity**

1 out of 5 cases within this service standard were upheld/some upheld, this case was at stage 1.

12. The subject upheld most often was communication – timeliness with 6 instances, followed by three subjects that were only upheld once: communication – respect and dignity, communication – timeliness, competent and responsible – handling information.

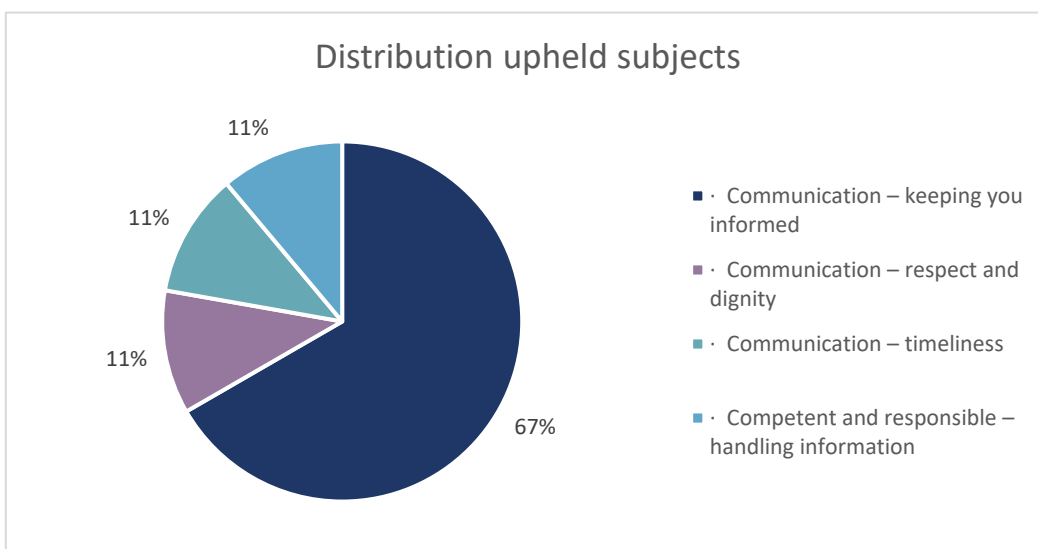


TABLE OF SUBJECTS, arranged by total frequency, and then by most upheld complaints	Stage 1 Upheld	Stage 1 Not Upheld	Stage 2 Upheld	Stage 2 Not Upheld	Stage 3 Upheld	Stage 3 Not Upheld	Total Upheld	Total Not Upheld	Total*
Communication – accessibility	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
Communication – clarity	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	3	3
Communication – keeping you informed	6	7	0	1	0	1	6	9	15
Communication – respect and dignity	1	2	0	2	0	0	1	4	5
Communication – timeliness	1	3	0	0	0	0	1	3	4
Communication – understanding	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Competent and responsible – ensuring impact	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Competent and responsible – expertise	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Competent and responsible – explaining our scope	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Competent and responsible – handling information	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	2	3
Competent and responsible – putting things right	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Competent and responsible – reaching sound outcomes	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Open and fair – fairness	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	2	2
Open and fair – impartiality and independence	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Open and fair – transparency	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Most cases have multiple subjects recorded; this will therefore not add up to the total of CSC cases for this reporting period

## Findings, learning and actions

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13. Actions taken as a result of CSCs determined in this quarter, where action other than an apology has been recorded:

<b>Case Ref:</b>	<b>Workflow Stage</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Substance of complaint</b>	<b>Head of Complaint Outcome</b>	<b>Decision</b>	<b>Learning and improvement recommendations</b>
<b>CSC-202309118</b>	Stage 1	Communication – keeping you informed	No allocation letter sent, apology issued and reflection by staff member.	Partially Upheld	Some Upheld - Apology given no other action taken	CR to issue allocation letters within timescale
<b>CSC-202311391</b>	Stage 2	Communication - keeping you informed	The line cut off mid-call and the case reviewer did not call back	Fully Upheld	Fully Upheld - Apology given and staff feedback	Where a call disconnects, we should attempt to call back

14. The following recommendations were issued this quarter:

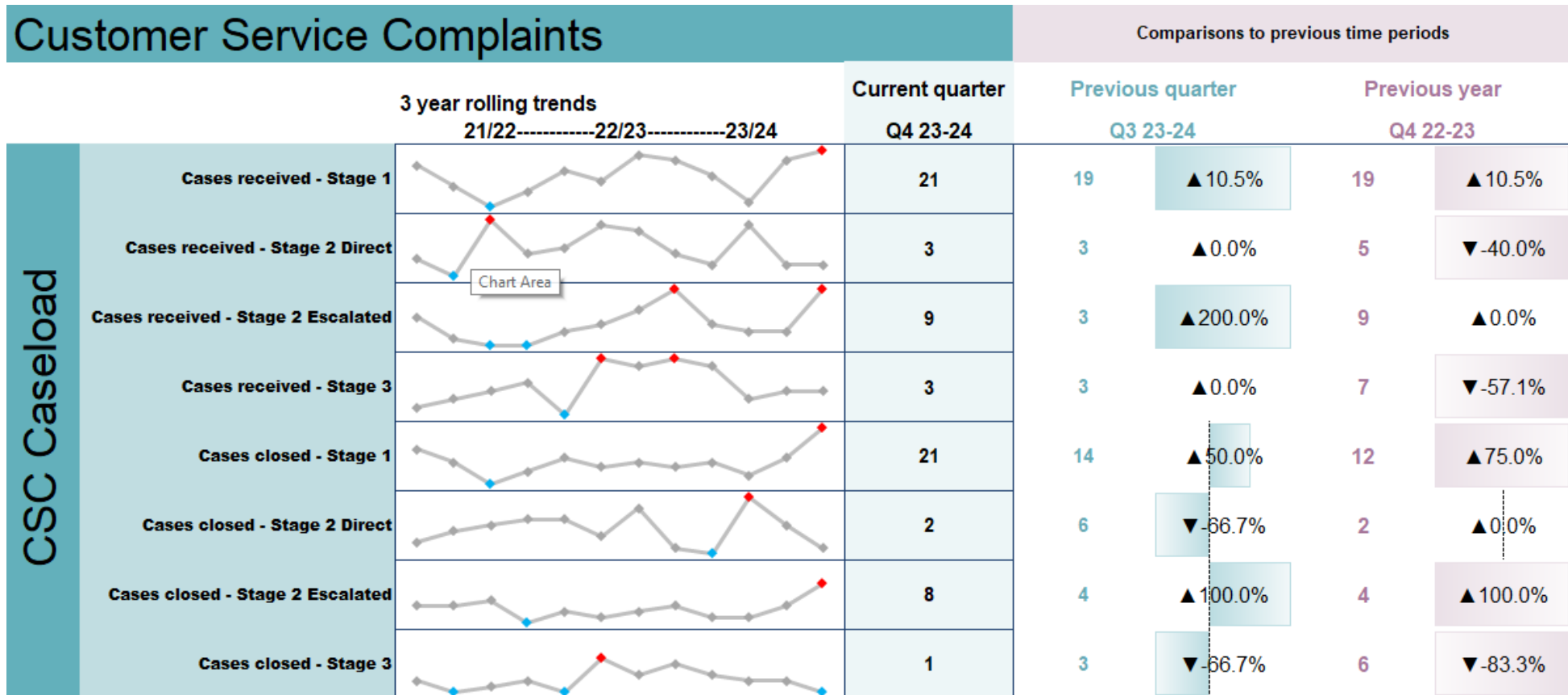
- Improve timeliness of communication
- Ensure calls are returned where necessary

## Future development and actions

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15. We have been again seeing an increase in disproportionate time spent on individual complainants. We put in place controls to limit this for SPSO to not respond within a 6 month timeframe however we need to have a mechanism for collation, storing and then allowing the complainant to make new CSCs if appropriate.
16. We will look at drafting up supporting text over the next quarter that will set out the process to support a decrease in disproportionate time being spent this will include template text that CRs can issue.
17. We will be issuing updated CSC guidance following on from analysis and development of our quarterly CSC report.

## Appendix 1: CSC Caseload Dashboard



Highest points highlighted in red  
Lowest points highlighted in blue



## Appendix 2: Standards and guidance

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18. 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. Published reports can be read here: [Service standards performance | SPSO](#)
19. Customer Service Complaints are made when a complainant feels we have not met our customer service standards. The standards that are covered by this process can be read here: [Our customer service standards | SPSO](#)
20. CSCs are recorded and tracked on SPSO's case management system and we publish the outcome of complaints and the actions we have taken in response. We monitor and analyse CSCs for trend information to ensure that we identify areas where our service could be improved and take appropriate action.
21. CSCs may be closed at different stages of the procedure:
  - **Stage 1 - Frontline Resolution** refers to complaints closed at stage 1 of the procedure, with no escalation to the next stage
  - **Stage 2 - Investigation** refers to complaints handled and closed directly at stage 2 of the procedure (Frontline Resolution was not attempted)
  - **Stage 2 - Escalated Complaints** refers to complaints handled at Stage 1 and subsequently escalated to, and closed at stage 2.
  - **Stage 3 - Independent Review** is when the SPSO procedure has been completed and our final decision has been issued, but the service user remains unhappy with our response or the way we have handled the complaint. At that point, the service user can ask our Independent Customer Service Complaints Reviewer (ICSCR) to consider it. The ICSCR provides an annual report on these complaints and it is published on our website here: [Service standards performance | SPSO](#)