

Complaints Performance 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024

April 2024

Contents

Introduction.....	1
Performance summary.....	1
What are these complaints about?.....	5
Lessons learned from complaints.....	6



Introduction

- 1.1 We seek to provide excellent customer service across our organisation. Complaints are an opportunity to make improvements and learn from where we have fallen short.
- 1.2 We follow the model complaints handling procedure (CHP) developed by the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). If complainants remain unsatisfied with our response once they have gone through our process, they can complain to the SPSO. The SPSO will then decide whether to open an investigation or not.
- 1.3 Our complaints handling procedure is on our [website](#).
- 1.4 In addition to this annual performance report, we publish a quarterly summary of performance on the complaints we receive, the actions we take and areas for improvement we have identified. We also report on our performance in responding to complaints in terms of timescales and process.
- 1.5 This report covers the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. Some totals do not equal 100% due to rounding.

Performance summary

Table one: summary of complaints performance for 2023/24 and comparison to 2022/23

No.	Indicator	Performance April 2022 – March 2023	Performance April 2023 – March 2024	Comments on current performance
1.	Complaints received per 1,000 registrants	2.7	1.9	On 1st April 2024 there were 176,258 individual registrants on the Register. We received 337 complaints in 2023/24
2.	Percentage of complaints closed at stage one	97%	93%	We closed 314 stage one complaints
3.	Percentage of complaints closed at stage two	3%	7%	We closed 23 complaints at stage two. This includes 10 complaints which were escalated from stage one to stage two
4.	Average working days to respond at stage one	1	1	Our agreed timescale to respond to a stage one complaint is five working days
5.	Average working days to respond at stage two	14	16	Our agreed timescale to respond to a stage two complaint is 20 working days

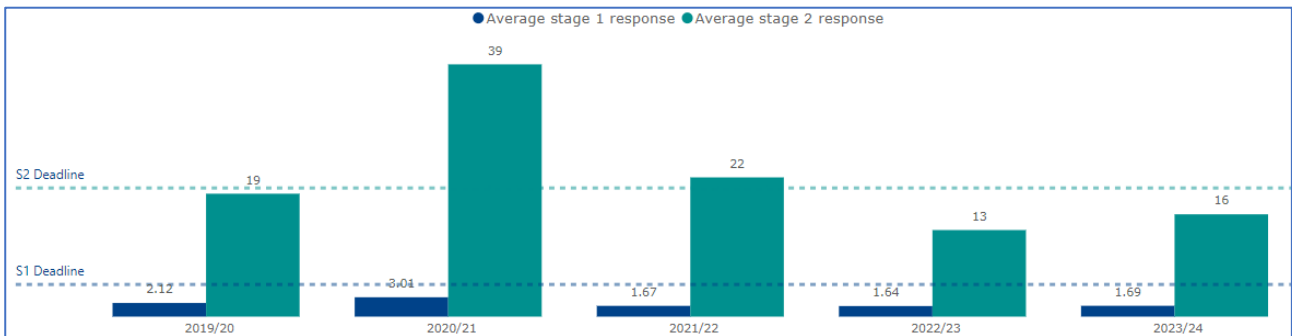
Complaints Performance
1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024

6.	Stage one complaints closed within five working days	99%	99%	We closed 308 stage one complaints within five working days
7.	Stage two complaints closed within twenty working days	93%	95%	21 of the 22 stage two complaints were closed within 20 working days. Not all complaints received in 2023/24 received a response in the same year (as some were received at the end of March 2024)
8.	Stage one complaints with an extension	1%	1%	We extended the deadline in two stage one complaints
9.	Stage two complaints with an extension	0%	0%	We extended the deadline in 0 stage two complaints
10.	Proportion of complaints where complainant was satisfied	100%	90%	Due to reporting methods, this figure is indicative only. See para 2.7 for detail
11.	Stage one complaints upheld	4%	4%	11 stage one complaints were upheld
12.	Stage one complaints not upheld	18%	25%	80 stage one complaints were not upheld
13.	Stage one complaints partially upheld	6%	4%	12 stage one complaints were partially upheld
14.	Stage one complaints resolved	72%	67%	'Resolved' is an outcome introduced on 1 April 2021. 209 stage one complaints were resolved
15.	Stage two complaints upheld	18%	5%	One stage two complaint was upheld
16.	Stage two complaints not upheld	36%	55%	12 stage two complaints were not upheld
17.	Stage two complaints partially upheld	36%	36%	8 stage two complaints were partially upheld



2.1 Our agreed timescales are to respond to stage one complaints within five working days, and stage two complaints within 20 working days. The following set of charts presents key information relating to our ability to respond within these timescales.

Figure one: Average working days to respond to complaints



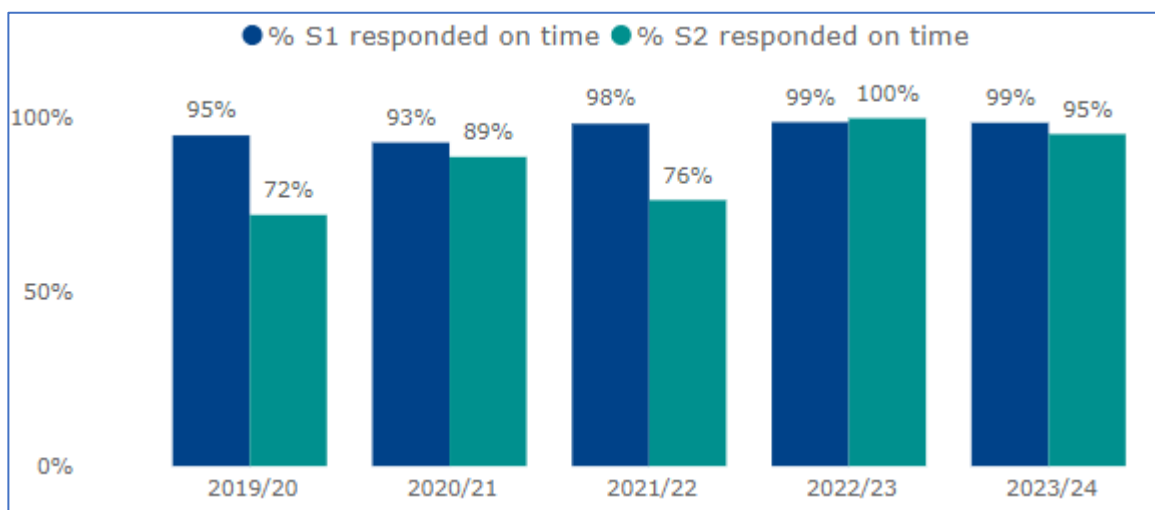
2.2 We have remained consistent with time taken to respond to a stage one complaint.

2.3 The number of stage one complaints upheld, not upheld and partially upheld has mostly been in line with the previous year’s performance.

2.4 Our average time to respond to a stage two complaint has increased from 14 to 16 working days.

2.5 The change in these averages is reflected in the percentage of complaints we respond to within the respective timescales, shown in Figure two.

Figure two: Percentage of complaints with response within timescale



2.6 We responded to 99% of all stage one complaints within the agreed timescales, consistent with the previous year. Our ability to respond to stage two complaints within the allocated timescale decreased from 100% in 2022-2023 to 95% in 2023-2024.



- 2.7 We do not currently ask complainants how satisfied they are with the outcome or handling of their complaint. We consider a customer to be unsatisfied with the outcome of their complaint where they have either told us directly that they are not satisfied, or where they have escalated their complaint to the next stage of the process. We consider customers to be satisfied in all other circumstances.
- 2.8 This year, we have gathered data from other public bodies overseen by SPSO to give a sense of how our complaints handling performance compares to other public bodies.

Table two: complaints handling figures for other public bodies in Scotland.

No.	Indicator	SSSC 2023-24	Care Inspectorate 2023-24	Social Security Scotland 2022-23*	Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service 2022- 23*
1.	Number of stage one complaints received	314	37	1,785	146
2.	Percentage of stage one complaints closed within five working days	99%	74%	80%	91%
3.	Percentage of stage one complaints upheld or partially upheld	7.3%	0%	42.6%	32.2%
4.	Average number of days to close a stage one complaint	1	5.8	4	3
5.	Number of stage two complaints received	23	24	355	82
6.	Percentage of stage two complaints closed within 20 working days	95%	82%	98%	88%
7.	Average number of days to close a stage two complaint	16	20.4	18	11
8.	Percentage of stage two complaints upheld or partially upheld	40.9%	34%	74.6%	57.3%

*Data for 2023-24 has not yet been published for this organisation.



What are these complaints about?

3.1 We received 337 complaints between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024.

- 93% (314) were received at stage one of the CHP
- 4% (13) were received directly at stage two
- 3% (10) were stage two complaints escalated from a previous stage one complaint.

3.2 Over the same period, we responded to 334 complaints. Note that not all complaints received in 2023-2024 received a response in the same year (as some were received at the end of March 2024 and have not yet been responded to) and some responses were to complaints received in 2022-2023.

- 93% (312) were at stage one
- 7% (22) were at stage two.

3.3 Of the stage one complaints closed, most (221 complaints) were about one of our processes. Of those, the most frequent topics involved:

- 48 about the processing timescales
- 43 about the fees process (for example, requesting a refund)
- 30 about qualification requirements
- 19 about our removal process
- other process-related complaints included those about our conditions not met process, our Fitness to Practise investigation processes and timescales, and our application further information request processes.

The comparatively high number of complaints about processes is expected given that these relate to areas of high-volume and high-impact work where we are in most contact with registered workers and stakeholders. The table below provides information about the volume of work received in the areas above to give a sense of scale for the number of complaints received compared to the work carried out.

Table three: volume of work processed compared to stage one complaints received.

No.	Indicator	Total number	Number of related stage one complaints	Proportion of stage one complaints received in relation to total number processed
1.	Unique individuals on the register on 1st April 2024	176,258	337	0.2%



2.	Applications and renewals processed	80,124	91*	0.1%
3.	Annual fees paid	116,858	43	0.04%
4.	Fitness to Practise referrals received	4,614	22	0.5%
5.	Qualification assessments created	397	30	7.6%
6.	Removals from the register	37,046	19	0.05%

*This figure includes all complaints about processes relating to applications and renewals, including processing timescales, the condition not met process and the further information process.

3.4 We can categorise the other complaints as follows:

- 38 about MySSSC (for example, the service not working as expected)
- 32 about communications (for example, the tone of our letters or the methods we used)
- 16 about customer service (for example, poor customer service or inaccurate information provided)
- 3 about our website
- 1 about events.

3.5 Of the stage two complaints closed, the most common categories are:

- Fitness to Practise processes
- about our removal process
- about qualification requirements.

Lessons learned from complaints

4.1 We always apologise when we get things wrong. Whether we uphold a complaint or not, we always look for ways to make improvements to our service and products.

What happened	How we resolved things
Multiple registrants called as they were having issues providing further information via their MySSSC account.	<p>An issue affecting multiple users from providing further information through their MySSSC account.</p> <p>There was an issue with how the portal was presenting a sub-grid of employment records and the multi-line free text field to the user, meaning that validation was not executing correctly</p>



	<p>which in turn meant the button to submit was not available.</p> <p>This required an update to the code to evaluate the grid elements correctly, which in turn allowed the validation to execute and return the submit button to the user, when appropriate.</p>
<p>A Notice of Decision was published, and the complainant felt it went into too much detail and that certain information should have been redacted.</p>	<p>Although we were satisfied that decision to publish the Notice of Decision was correct, we will take consideration to the information we publish and look to summarise items, such as the place where the worker is employed.</p>
<p>A letter was sent to Police Scotland to request information in relation to an FTP case. There were inaccuracies within the letter that stated the worker was currently working with vulnerable people while they were actually unemployed, which led the worker to believe we had misled the police in order to retrieve the information.</p>	<p>We issued apologies for the human errors made during the case. We confirmed the letter we sent to Police Scotland was a template but was incorrect, we explained based on the case we were still entitled to the information. We have since updated the wording in the letter template.</p>
<p>A worker was upset with the tone of communications received when leaving the Register due to retirement.</p>	<p>Currently, when someone retires, our communication does not acknowledge this. This could give more value to the worker's commitment to social services.</p> <p>This issue has been taken forward as part of our communications review for 2023-24.</p> <p>Additionally, we are proposing to build into our online system an option for people to tell us they wish to leave the Register, and if they do, they will be presented with a drop-down list of reasons why they are leaving the register. If they select retirement, then we are proposing that an email go out to the worker thanking them for their commitment and wishing them well.</p>
<p>A complaint was received on multiple points regarding the renewal process and the process for notifying registrants when they are going to be removed from the register for failure to pay fees or complete renewals. It was noted within the outcome letter that while multiple reminders were sent to the worker about</p>	<p>As noted above, we are currently reviewing all our communication. This issue will be taken forward as part of the communications review for 2023-24.</p>



<p>the need to submit his renewal, not all the reminders refer specifically to the requirement to pay the annual fee, particularly the Notice of Decision.</p>	
<p>A member of the public called in relation to a referral he had made to Fitness to Practise. During the call he was advised he would be given the information he was looking for through a subject access request. This was incorrect, due to the staff member not knowing the SAR process in detail.</p>	<p>All staff in Fitness to Practise will be given guidance on how subject access requests are dealt with so the mistake will not be repeated.</p>
<p>Concerns were raised by a service manager about how we go about interviewing service users.</p>	<p>We met with the service manager and agreed that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• our Regulatory Improvement and Hearings team could provide him with future staff training on how our fitness to practise processes work• we would review our existing factsheets and create a resource specifically about how we interview vulnerable witnesses.





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