

CAA Annual Complaints Report 2023-2024

CAP 2994



Published by the Civil Aviation Authority 2024

Civil Aviation Authority

Aviation House

Beehive Ring Road

Crawley

West Sussex

RH6 0YR

First published July 2024

Enquiries regarding the content of this publication should be addressed to:
Complaints@caa.co.uk

The latest version of this document is available in electronic format at:
www.caa.co.uk/CAP2994

Contents

Contents	3
Executive Summary	5
Key Headlines 2023-24	6
Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)	7
Complaint Performance & Themes Summary	11
Complaints received	11
Escalations	11
Complaint Themes and Trends	13
Stage 1 complaints	13
Stage 2 complaints	17
ICA & PHSO Referrals	18
Complaint Response & Outcomes	19
Stage 1 draft response performance	20
Stage 2 draft response performance	20
Stage 1 response performance	20
Stage 2 response performance	20
Remedial Actions	20
Root causes	21
ICA & PHSO Reviews	22
Closed ICA referrals	23
ICA Review outcomes	23
ICA Recommendations	23
ICA Referral costs	23
Closed PHSO cases	23
PHSO outcomes	23
Learning from complaints	24
Case by Case Learning	24
Root Cause Analysis Learning	25

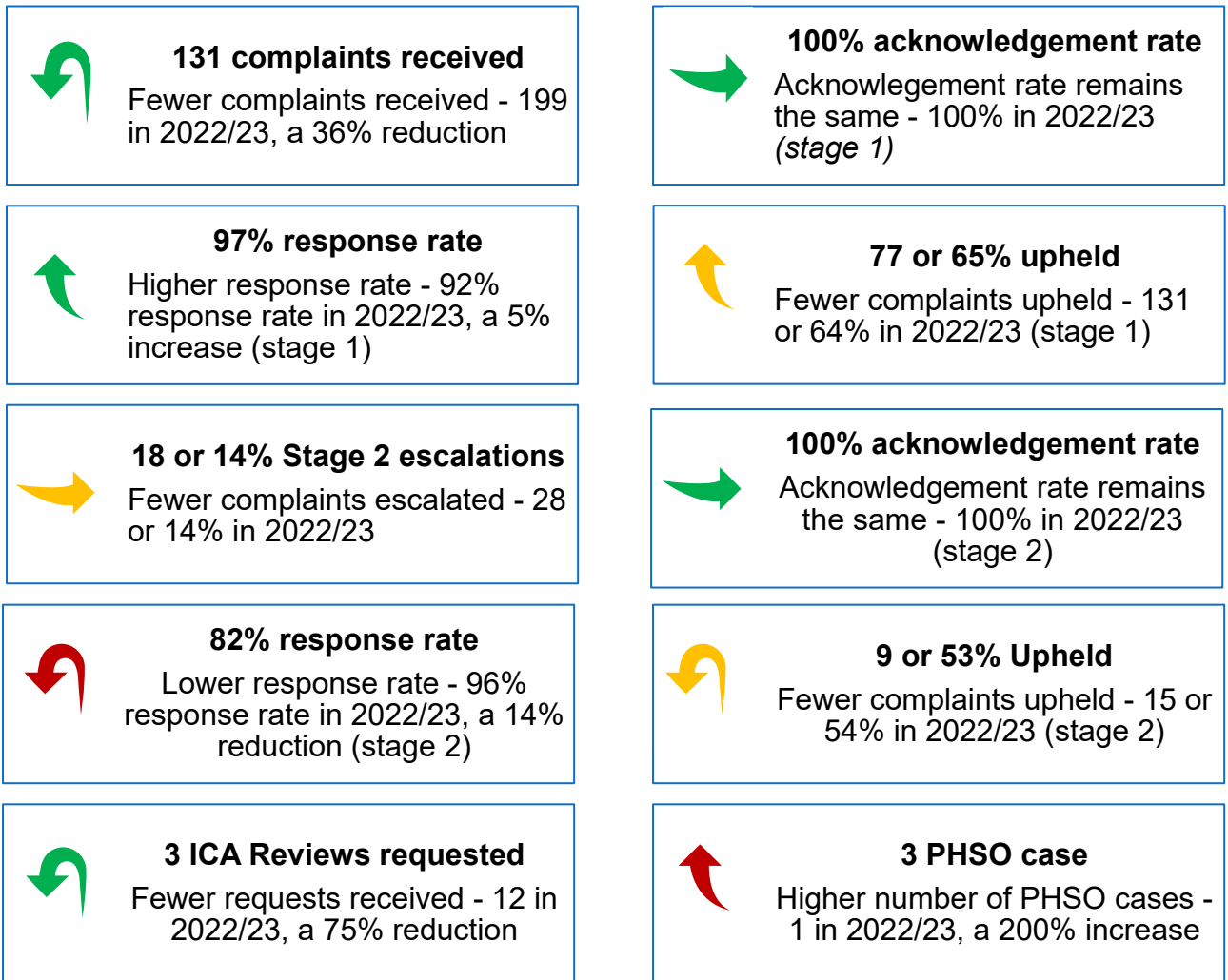
Learning outcomes	25
ICA Learning Recommendations	26
PHSO Learning Recommendations	26
Actions taken through learning from complaints	26
Service Improvements	26
Conclusion	28
Definitions	29
Key Performance Indicators	30
Abbreviations	32
Complaint handling quick guide	33


Executive Summary

1. This report provides information on the Civil Aviation Authority's (CAA's) performance on complaints against a set of Key Performance Indicators for the period of April 2023 – March 2024.
 - 1.1. It includes a summary of complaint volumes and themes, escalations, remedies taken to resolve, lessons learned and next steps, as well as findings from the Independent Complaint Assessors (ICA) and the Parliamentary & Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO) reviews.
 - 1.2. The total number of complaints received has decreased from 199 in 2022/23 to 131 in 2023/24, which equates to a 36% reduction, with the average number over 10 years being 164. Whilst a reduction was not anticipated due to the aviation industry opening up again following the pandemic, and certainly does not match other government agencies, contributing factors include the clearing of the backlog of applications relating to changes to UK law following the UK's exit from the EU, and the embedding of our learning from complaints process which has assisted in service delivery and process improvements.
 - 1.3. The majority of stage 1 complaints related to poor service (60%) and lack of CAA action (15%). In terms of business areas, the majority of our complaints related to our Shared Service Centre (SSC), a total of 59 (45.4%), although a reduction on last year. However, this can be attributed to the type of work they do, i.e., processing licence applications (11,003) and aircraft registrations (18,800), amongst others.
 - 1.4. Of the 199 complaints a total of 18 were escalated to stage 2 (see [Appendix D for process details](#)), a 36% reduction compared to the 28 escalated in 2022/23. In most cases complainants felt there was a lack of investigation, accountability, and detail, or factually incorrect in the stage 1 response. Escalations beyond the CAA to the ICA were 3 in total, a 75% reduction, compared to 12 in 2022/23. A total of three cases were assessed by the PHSO equating to a 200% increase on 2022/23, which can be attributed to a backlog of cases resulting in delays in cases coming to us.
 - 1.5. Our performance on responding to stage 1 complaints has improved - now on target with 95% responded to within timescale. However, we have seen a decrease in stage 2 responses within timescale, at 82%. This is below tolerance of 90%, which can be attributed to allowing time extensions for more complex complaints.
 - 1.6. We continue to use the opportunity to learn from complaints to transform complaints into intelligence to determine service improvements. A total of 63 lessons have been identified from complaints and 62 improvements have been made to services, including process changes within licencing applications and our Whistleblowing service, improved communications internally to ensure better collaboration, consistency and the customer experience, and updates to guidance and our website.

Key Headlines 2023-24

2. Highlights of complaint performance against key performance indicators and comparing 2023/24 performance to 2022/23 performance.




Total ICA costs £2,982.60
 Reduced ICA costs - £9,988.20 in 2022/23 (incurred by the CAA)

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

3. The following section details our performance against the set of CAA complaint KPIs.

KPI 1: Total number of complaints received (stage 1)

Description	Number
Total number of complaints received	131

KPI 2: Number of complaints escalated at each stage

- 3.1. If a complainant is unhappy with the the handling of their complaint they have the option to escalate to a stage 2 review, which is a higher-level internal review stage normally conducted and signed off at senior management level.
- 3.2. If after a stage 2 review they remain unhappy they can request a referral to the Independent Complaint Assessor (ICA) for a review. If they remain unhappy after an ICA review, the final escalation stage would be to request a Parliamentary & Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO) review via their MP.

Description	Number
The number of stage 2 requests received	18
The number of ICA requests received	3
The number of PHSO referrals received	3

KPI 3: Percentage of complaints acknowledged within 5 working days at each stage

Description	Percentage
Percentage of stage 1 complaints acknowledged within 5 working days (Target 95%, Tolerance 90%)	100%
Percentage of stage 2 complaints acknowledged within 5 working days (Target 95%, Tolerance 90%)	100%

KPI 4: Percentage of draft response received from the business areas within 15 working days at each stage

Description	Percentage
Percentage of stage 1 draft responses received from the business area within 15 working days (Target 95%, Tolerance 90%)	89%
Percentage of stage 2 draft responses received from the business area within 15 working days (Target 95%, Tolerance 90%)	71%

KPI 5: The average time in working days for the business areas to provide a draft response at each stage

Description	Working Days
The average time in working days for the business area to provide a stage 1 draft response	11
The average time in working days for the business area to provide a stage 2 draft response	15

KPI 6: Percentage of complaints responded to within 20 working days at each stage

Description	Percentage
Percentage of stage 1 complaints responded to within 20 working days	95%
Percentage of stage 2 complaints responded to within 20 working days	82%

KPI 7: The average time in working days for a full response to a complaint at each stage

Description	Working Days
The average time in working days for a full response to complaints at stage 1	11
The average time in working days for a full response to complaints at stage 2	18

KPI 8: Number and percentage of complaints where an extension has been authorised
 3.3. There are times when an extension to the response timescale is necessary.

Description	Number	Percentage
Number & percentage of stage 1 complaints with an authorised extension	1	0.8%
Number & percentage of stage 2 complaints with an authorised extension	5	29%

3.4. The one stage 1 complaint where an authorised extension was applied was due to the complexity of the issue and cross-departmental involvement.

3.5. Of the five stage 2 complaints where an authorised extension was applied, they were extended due to the complexity of the issues raised.

KPI 9: The outcome of complaints at each stage (upheld / not upheld / partially upheld)

3.6. Of the 119 stage 1 complaints closed a total of 77 (65%) were upheld (in full or part). Whilst this is fewer than 2022/23, where a total of 131 (64%) were upheld, the percentage rate has gone up 1%.

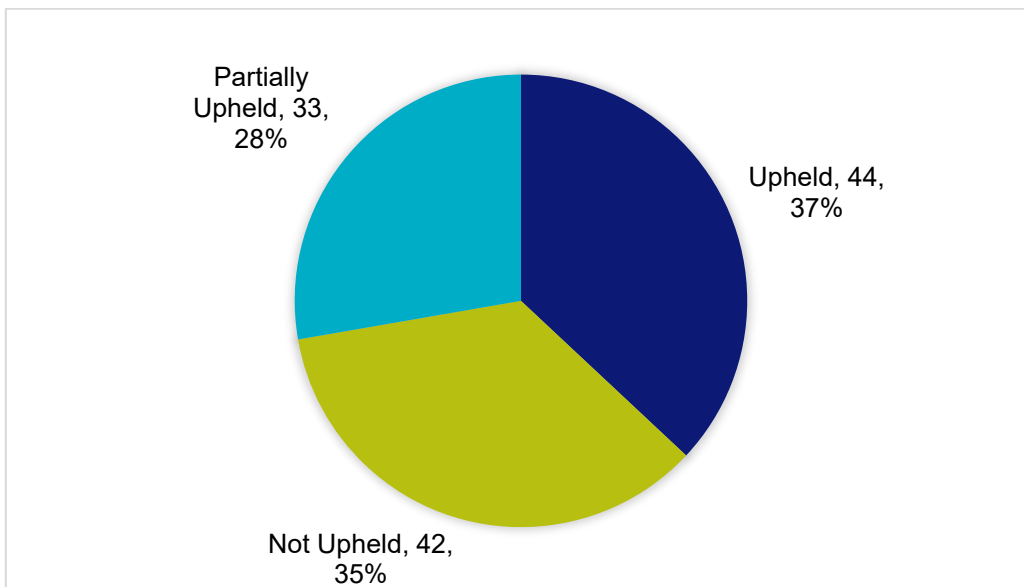


Figure 1: Stage 1 complaint outcomes (numbers & percentage)

3.7. Of the 17 stage 2 complaints closed, 9 (53%) were upheld (in full or part). Compared to 2022/23, this is a slight reduction in the upheld rate, which was 15 (54%).

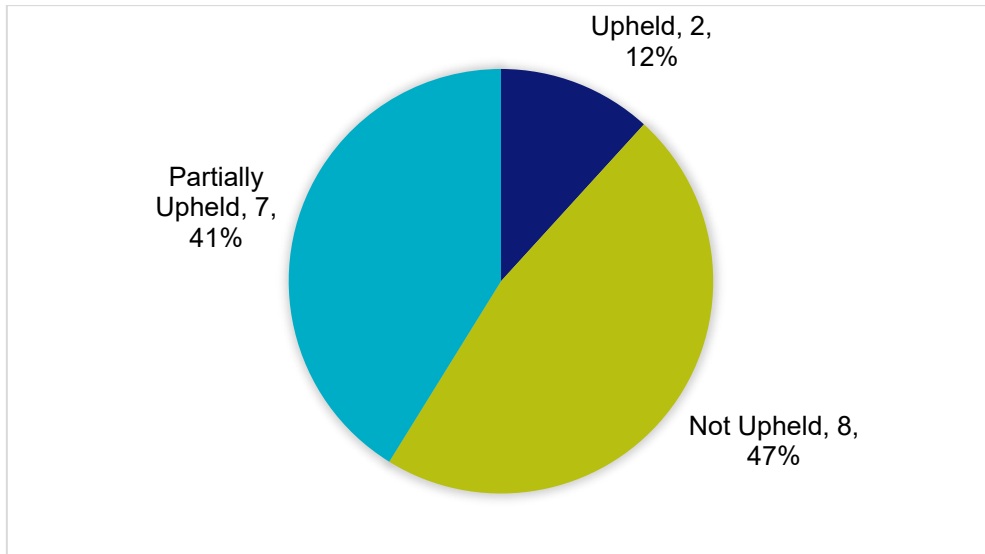


Figure 2: Stage 2 complaint outcomes (numbers & percentage)

KPI 10: Percentage of ICA referral requests acknowledged within 15 working days

Description	Percentage
Percentage of ICA referral requests acknowledged within 15 working days (Target 95%, Tolerance 90%)	100%

KPI 11: Percentage of ICA referral requests referred to the ICA within 15 working days

Description	Percentage
Percentage of ICA referral requests acknowledged within 15 working days (Target 95%, Tolerance 90%)	100%

KPI 12: The average time in working days for a complaint to be referred to the ICA

Description	Working Days
The average time in working days for a complaint to be referred to the ICA (target 15 working days)	2

Complaint Performance & Themes Summary

4. The following section provides a more detailed analysis on our complaint received, performance, themes, and outcomes.

Complaints received

4.1. Compared to 2022/23 (199 received), the number of complaints received between April 2023 – March 2024 (131), is a 36% reduction.

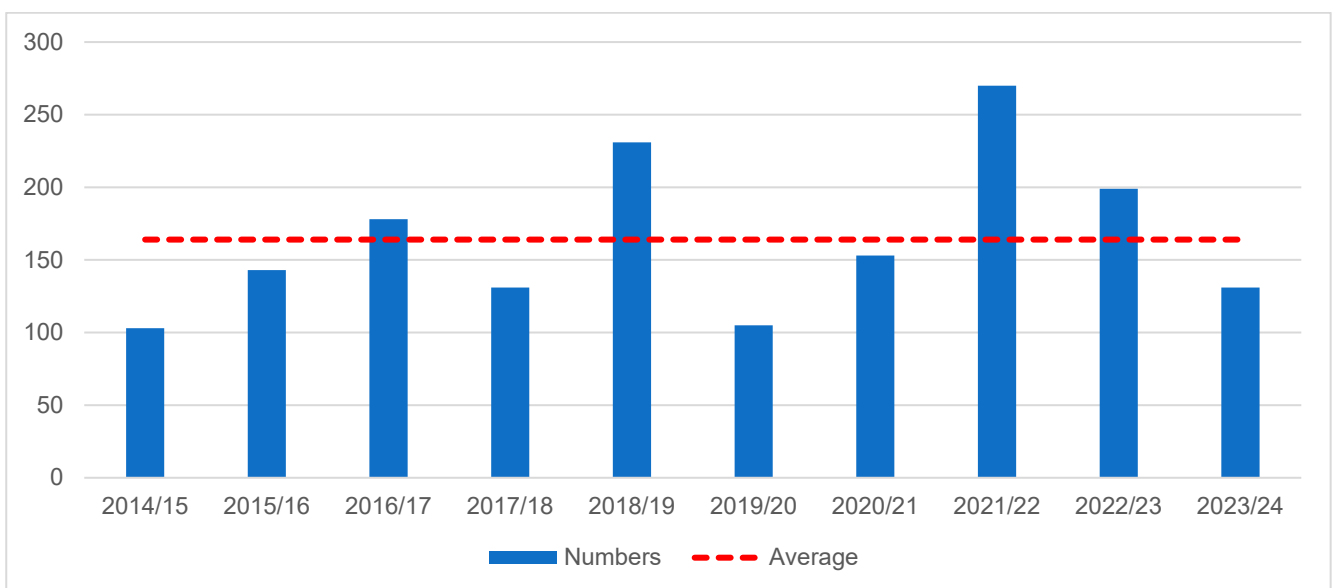


Figure 3: Number of stage 1 complaints received by financial year, the red dotted line reflects the average which is 164, although worth noting that the COVID years were probably not typical

4.2. Peaks were noted in May 2023 (16), November 2023 (15) & March 2024 (15), with a majority in May logged as ‘lack of CAA action’ relating to application processing, followed by ‘poor service’ relating to application processing and delays in responding to airline claims. In November & March the majority were logged as poor service relating to application processing delays, quality & systematic issues, and failure to respond to enquiries, followed closely by ‘lack of CAA action’ relating to unresolved issues around inaccuracy of data, inadequate processes or a lack of response. The peaks in 2022/23 were in May & June reflecting similar matters, with a majority related to application processing delays.

Escalations

4.3. Compared to 2022/23 (28 escalated), the number of complaints escalated to stage 2 between April 2023 – March 2024 (18), equates to a 36% reduction.

4.4. Our overall escalation rate based on the number of stage 1 complaints that have escalated to stage 2 in 2023/24 was 14%, which is the same as in 2022/23.

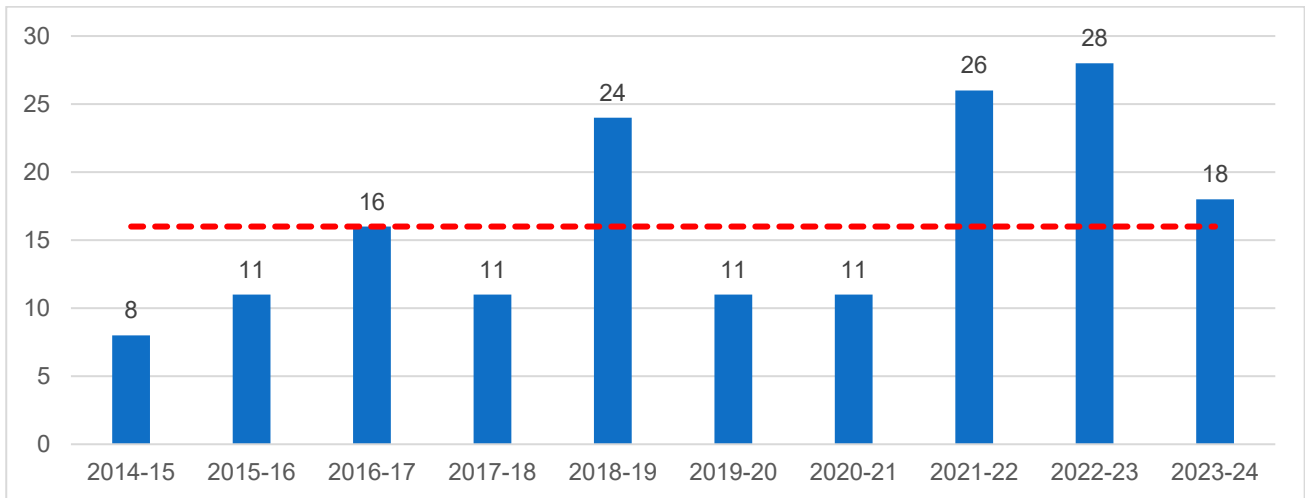


Figure 4: Number of stage 2 escalation requests by financial year, with the red dotted line reflecting the average which is 16

4.5. Peaks were noted in July & August 2023, and March 2024, with all but one logged as poor service, relating to application processing delays. The 2022/23 peaks were in July, August, October & November 2022 and mainly related to poor service or incorrect advice, concerning application delays.

4.6. Comparing the number of stage 1 complaints received with ICA referrals, it equates to 2% being escalated to the ICA, which is a 4% reduction on last year. Comparing the number of stage 2 complaints escalated to the ICA, this equates to 17%, which is a 26% reduction on last year.

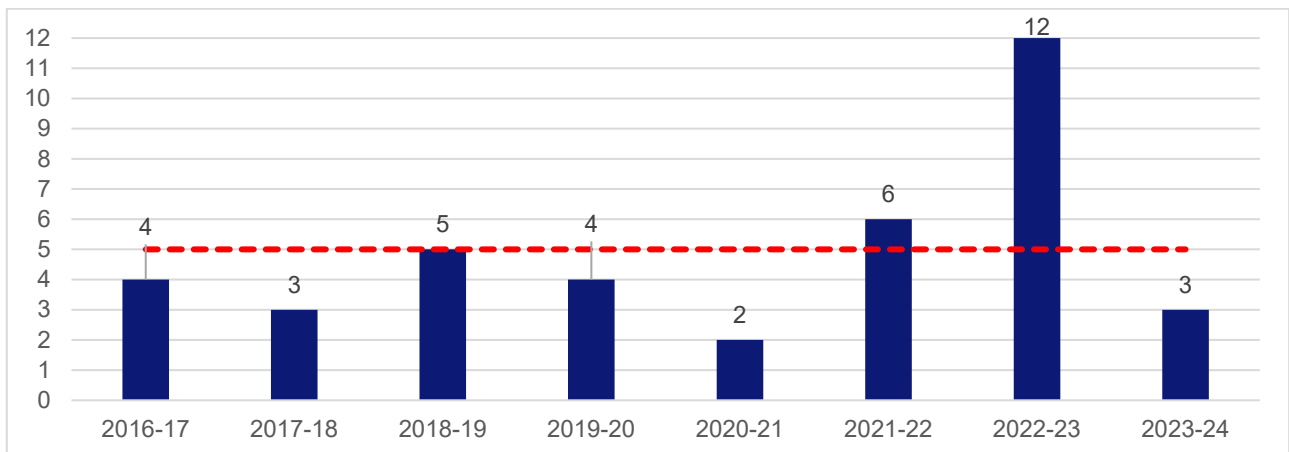


Figure 5: Number of ICA referral requests by financial years, with the red dotted line reflecting the average which is 5 **Please note:** we did not join the ICA scheme until 2016

4.7. In 2023-2024, a total of 3 ICA referral requests were received, equating to a 75% reduction this year compared to 2022-2023 (12). Whilst all related to different categories, 2 cited that a lack of response to all issues raised and a failure to listening, whilst the other felt unfairly treated, as reasons for referral to the ICA. We have improved the governance around complaints in the past year, which has improved our complaint reviews and responses reflecting the low escalation rates.

4.8. A total of 3 case was assessed by the PHSO between April 2023 – March 2024, a 200% increase on 2022/23, with 1 not being accepted for a formal investigation. The PHSO continue to record any preliminary reviews of complaint files as investigations in their annual figures, as opposed to only those cases that went on to be formally investigated.

Complaint Themes and Trends

5. Each complaint is assessed and logged under a category based on which one is it more weighted to and the appropriate CAA business area, allowing us to identify and analyse the types of complaints being received and any trends.

Stage 1 complaints

5.1. Between April 2023 – March 2024, the top 3 complaint type categories were Poor service, Lack of CAA action, and Staff behaviour.

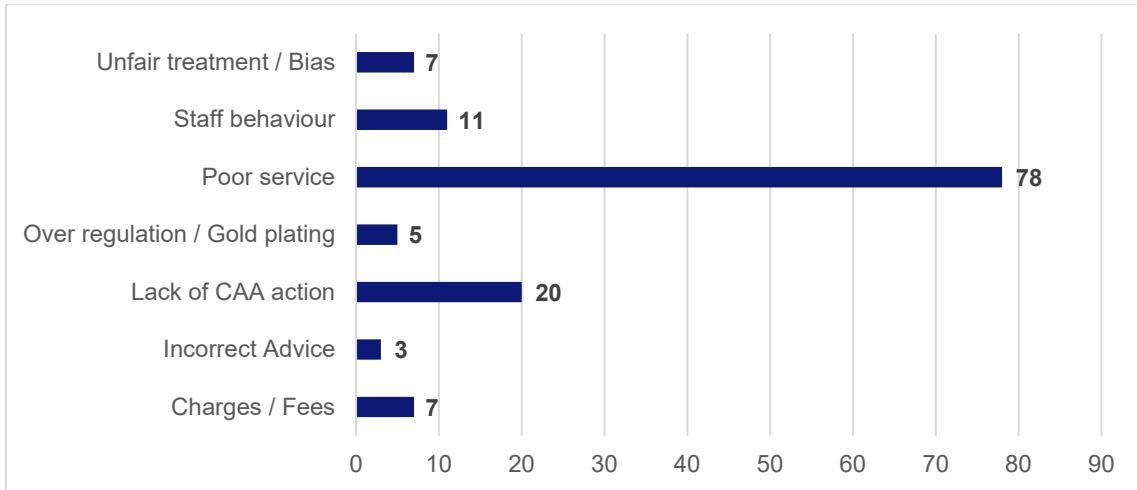


Figure 6: Complaints received by category (stage 1)

5.2. An analysis of the top 3 categories for stage 1 complaints has identified the following types of complaints:

Category	Type	Number of complaints
Poor Service	Application processing delays	42
	Failure to respond to enquiries	14
	Other (Quality & systemic issues)	22
Lack of CAA action	Lack of response	10
	Lack of processing actions	7
	Lack of information	1
	Decision making process	1
	Poor execution of policy / regulation	1

Category	Type	Number of complaints
Staff behaviour	Unprofessional handling	6
	Decision making process	3
	Poor execution of policy / regulation	2

Table 1: Types of complaints for top three themes (stage 1)

5.3. The 131 new complaints received during April 2023 – March 2024 related to the following CAA business areas:

Business Area	Number Received	Percentage
Aviation Security (AvSec)	2	1.53%
Communications Department (CD)	2	1.53%
Consumers & Markets Group (CMG)	8	6.11%
Chief Operating Office (COO)	1	0.76%
CAA Strategy & Policy Team (CSP)	1	0.76%
Human Resources (HR)	1	0.76%
International Group – Environmental Research & Consultancy (ID – ERCD)	1	0.76%
Investigation & Enforcement Team (IET)	1	0.76%
Office of General Counsel (OGC)	1	0.76%
Safety & Airspace Regulation Group – Airspace, Air Traffic Management & Aerodromes (SARG – AAA)	4	3.05%
Safety & Airspace Regulation Group – Airworthiness (SARG – AW)	1	0.76%
Safety & Airspace Regulation Group – Safety & Business Delivery (SARG – S&BD)	1	0.76%

Business Area	Number Received	Percentage
Safety & Airspace Regulation Group – Flight Operations (SARG – FO)	5	3.82%
Safety & Airspace Regulation Group – General Aviation (SARG – GA)	5	3.82%
Safety & Airspace Regulation Group – Medical (SARG – MED)	8	6.11%
Safety & Airspace Regulation Group – Remotely Piloted Aircraft System Unit (SARG – RPAS)	10	7.63%
Shared Service Centre – Centre Desk (SSC – C Desk)	59	45.04%
Shared Service Centre – Passenger Advice & Complaints Team (SSC – PACT)	9	6.87%
Air Safety Support International (ASSI) & HR	1	0.76%
Communications Department – External Information Services (CD – EIS), Chief Executive Officer Office (CE Office) & COO – Finance	1	0.76%
CD & CD – EIS	1	0.76%
COO – Finance & SARG – GA	1	0.76%
COO – Finance & SSC – C Desk	1	0.76%
SARG – AAA & SSC – C Desk	1	0.76%
SARG – AW & SARG – GA	1	0.76%
SARG – FO, SARG – GA & SARG - RPAS	1	0.76%
SARG – FO & SSC – C Desk	1	0.76%
SARG – RPAS & SSC – C Desk	1	0.76%

Table 2: Complaints received by CAA Business Area.

5.4. The table above shows that SSC received the majority of complaints, which can be attributed to the numbers of applications they handle.

5.5. The table below breaks the SSC complaints down further to provide further analysis based on the different teams within SSC.

SSC Team	Number Received	Percentage
Aeromedical Support (SSC – MED)	1	1.7%
Aircraft Certification (SSC – AC)	23	39%
Contact Centre (SSC – CC)	1	1.7%
Flight Crew Licensing (SSC – FCL)	9	15.3%
Licensing Assessment & Exams (SSC – LA&E)	18	30.5%
Licensing Support (SSC – LS)	7	11.9%

Table 3: SSC Team split for complaints received.

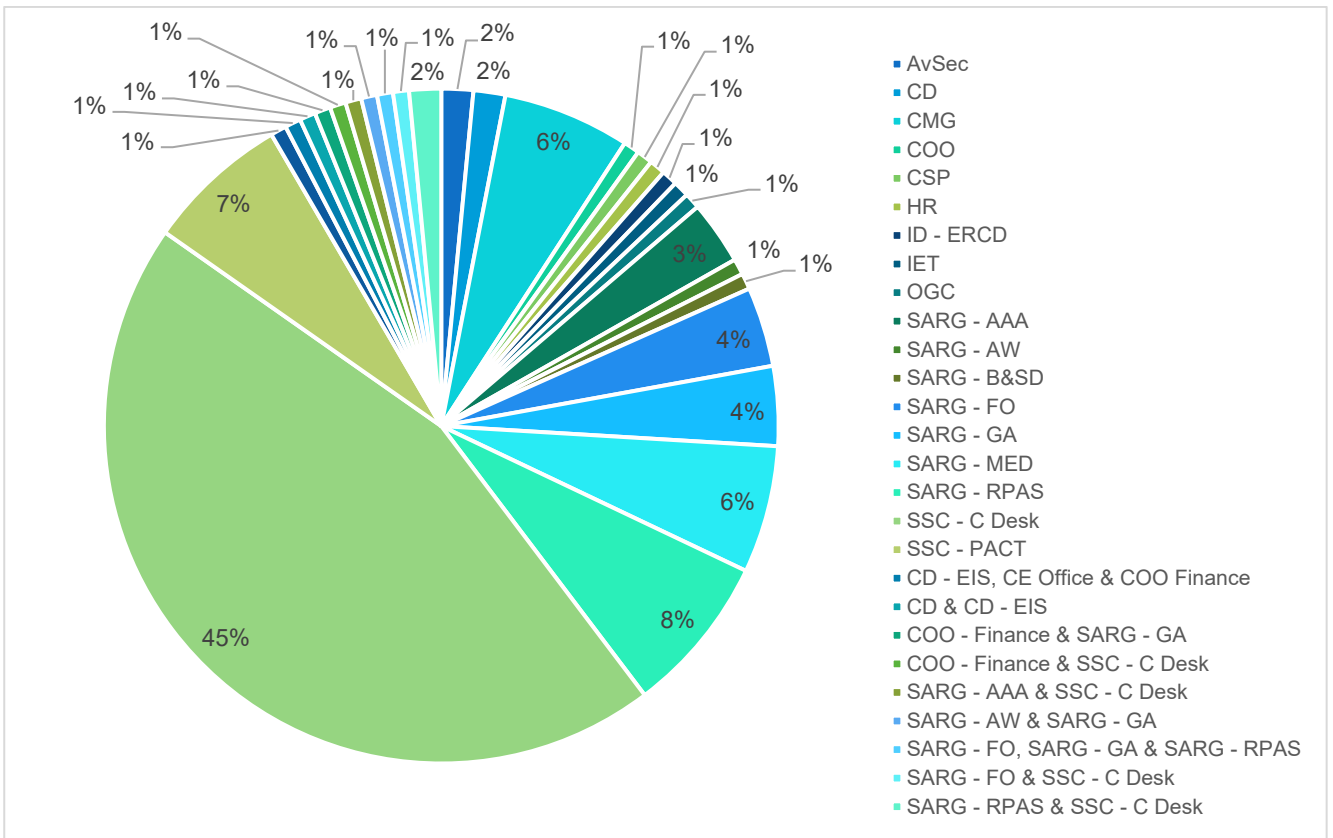


Figure 7: Complaints received by Business Area by percentage (stage 1). Acronyms spelt out in [Appendix C](#)

Stage 2 complaints

5.6. The same list of complaint type categories is used to select from when a stage 2 review is logged, but this could change based on the reason the complainant wishes to escalate.

5.7. Between April 2023 – March 2024, the top 2 categories on stage 2 escalations were Poor service and Staff Behaviour, a slight variation on stage 1 as none logged under Lack of CAA Action.

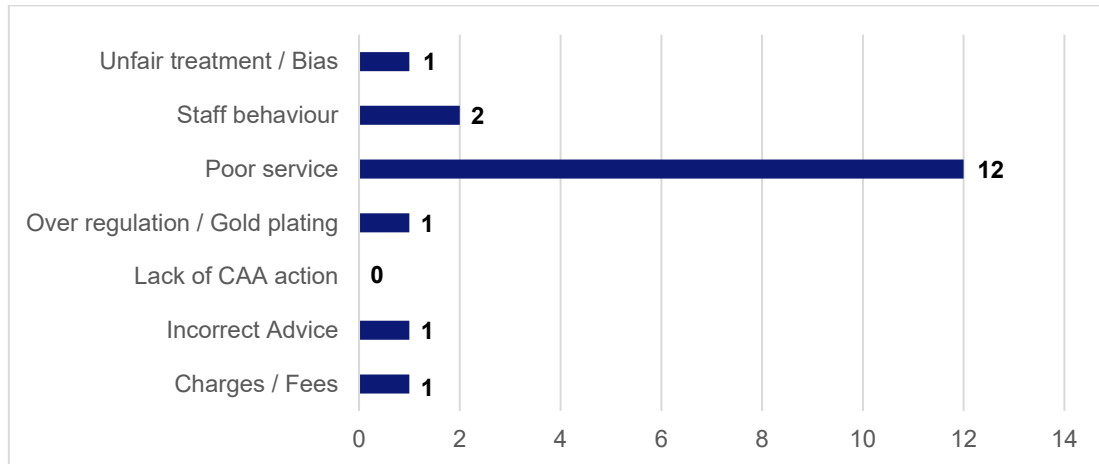


Figure 8: Complaints received by category (stage 2)

5.8. The 18 stage 2 complaints received during April 2023 – March 2024 related to the following CAA business areas:

Business Area	Number Received	Percentage
AvSec	1	5.6%
CMG	2	11.1%
SARG – FO	1	5.6%
SARG – GA	2	11.1%
SARG – MED	1	5.6%
SARG – RPAS	3	16.7%
SARG – C Desk	4	22.2%
ASSI, HR & CD - EIS	1	5.6%
CD – EIS, CE Office & SSC – C Desk	1	5.6%

Business Area	Number Received	Percentage
COO – Finance, OGC & SSC – C Desk	1	5.6%
SARG – GA & SSC – C Desk	1	5.6%

Table 4: Stage 2 complaints received by CAA Business Area. Acroymns spelt out in [Appendix C](#)

5.9. The table above shows that SSC receive a majority of the stage 2 complaints, again attributed to the work they do, i.e., number of applications they handle. However our SARG – RPAS team were closely behind with 3 escalations to stage 2.

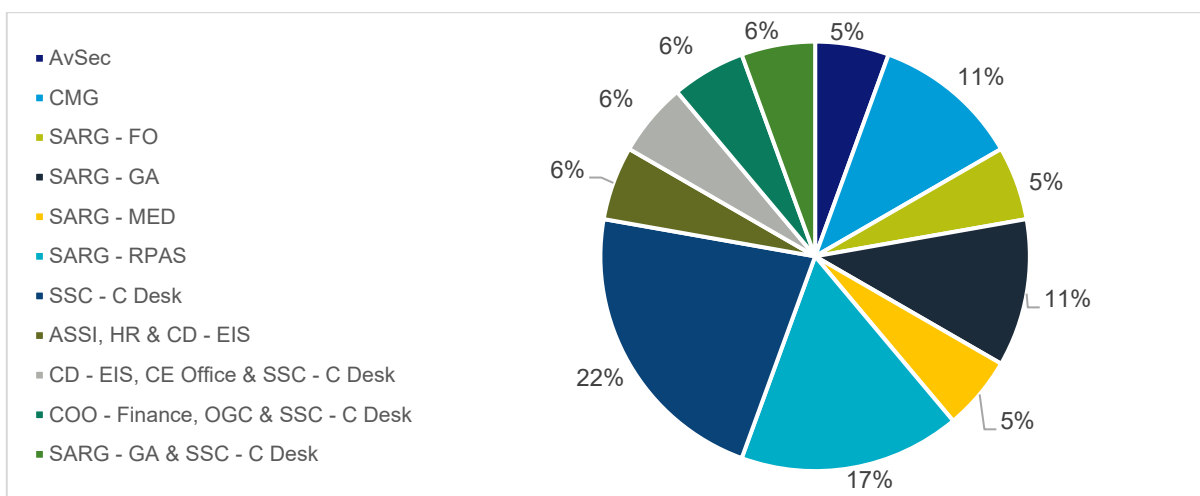


Figure 9: Complaints received by Business Area by percentage (stage 2). Acroymns spelt out in [Appendix C](#)

ICA & PHSO Referrals

5.10. The same list of complaint type categories is used to select from when an ICA review is logged but may again change due to why the complainant wishes to escalate.

5.11. Between April 2023 – March 2024, the categories on ICA escalations were Incorrect Advice, Staff Behaviour, and Unfair treatment / bias, a variation from stage 1 & 2.

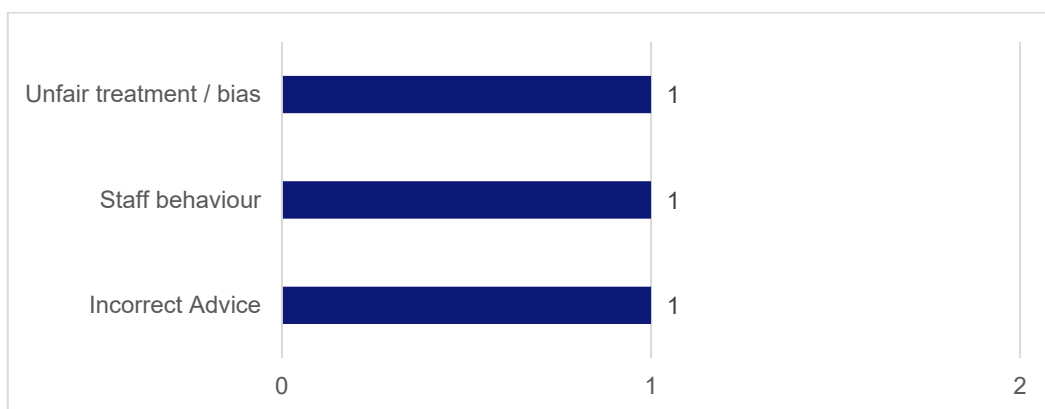


Figure 10: ICA Referrals received by category

5.12. The three PHSO cases related to Unfair treatment / bias & Over regulation / gold plating.

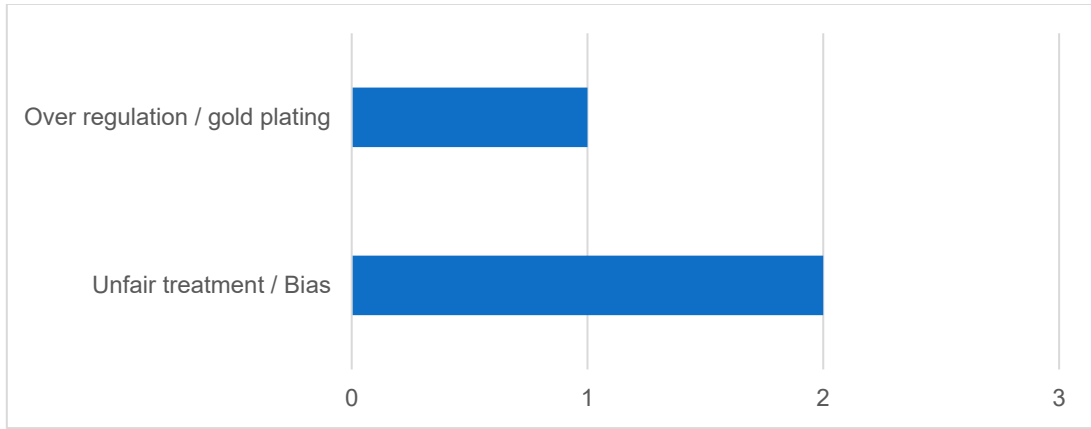


Figure 11: ICA Referrals received by category

5.13. The 3 ICA referrals received related to the following CAA business areas:

Business Area	Number Received	Percentage
ASSI, HR & CD -EIS	1	33.3%
SARG – GA	1	33.3%
SSC – C Desk	1	33.3%

Table 5: ICA referrals by CAA Business Area. Acroymns spelt out in [Appendix C](#)

5.14. The 3 PHSO cases related to the following business areas:

Business Area	Number Received	Percentage
OGC & SARG - MED	1	33.3%
SARG – AAA	1	33.3%
SARG - RPAS	1	33.3%

Table 6: PHSO cases by CAA Business Area. Acroymns spelt out in [Appendix C](#)

Complaint Response & Outcomes

- Once a complaint is allocated to the relevant business area, they have 15 working days to provide the complaints team with a draft response, and all CAA complaints must be responded to within 20 working days of receipt of the complaint.

- 6.1. Where a business area is unable to meet the draft response deadline, they can request an extension from the Complaints team and would normally be due to a timely and / or incomplete investigation rather than due to staff absence or availability.

Stage 1 draft response performance

- 6.2. A total of 123 draft stage 1 responses were provided between April 2023 – March 2024. Overall, **89%** of those draft responses were received from the business within the agreed timescale, which is just below our tolerance level of 90%.
- 6.3. A total of 14 stage 1 complaints did not meet the draft response deadline of 15 working days, of which only 1 had an authorised extension, following a request from the business area.

Stage 2 draft response performance

- 6.4. A total of 17 draft stage 2 complaint responses were provided between April 2023 – March 2024. Overall, **71%** of those draft responses were received from the business within the agreed timescale, which is below our tolerance level of 90%.
- 6.5. A total of 5 stage 2 complaints did not meet the draft response deadline of 15 working days, all of which requested an extension.

Stage 1 response performance

- 6.6. A total of 125 stage 1 complaints were responded to between April 2023 – March 2024. Overall, **95%** of those responses were sent to the complainant within the agreed timescale, which meets our target of **95%**. In 2022-23 the response rate was within tolerance at 92%, equating to a 3% increase on last year.

Please note: the closed figure will be a different figure to the number of complaints received due to a cross over with previous months.

Stage 2 response performance

- 6.7. A total of 17 stage 2 complaints were responded to between April 2023 – March 2024. Overall, **82%** of responses were sent to the complainant within the agreed timescale, which is below our tolerance of 90%. In 2022-23 the stage 2 response rate was above target at 96%, equating to a 14% reduction on last year. This can be attributed to the delayed drafts / extensions required by business areas to complete their reviews.
- 6.8. A total of three stage 2 complaints did not meet the agreed response deadline of 20 working days, due to the complexity of the cases being reviewed.

Remedial Actions

- 6.9. Most complaints can be resolved by apologising for the poor level of service or delays incurred and assurances of any learnings. On other occasions additional

actions may be necessary like expediting or re-assessing applications, dispatching licences or medical certificates, explaining processes if there are misunderstandings, and explaining decision making processes on more complex complaints. A number of complaints require time-consuming investigations involving third parties and can be challenging to identify remedial actions, and reaching an impasse is the only solution.

6.10. There may be some occasions where it is appropriate to refund fees paid, agree to waiver fees and if there is evidence of financial loss being suffered we may consider offering compensation in accordance with guidelines. During this reporting period for stage 1 complaints a total of £10,691.00 in fees have been refunded and £614.00 charges waived, but no compensation payments have needed to be made.



Figure 12: Refunds and waived fees (stage 1 complaints)

6.11. The same principles apply to stage 2 complaints. One stage 2 complaint made a payout of fees totalling £466.20, with no other charge waivers or compensation payments made.

Root causes

6.12. Our learning from complaints mechanism is embedded in following its introduction in August 2022, which involves recording the root cause of all complaints at all stages. A developed list of root causes is used by complaint handlers to select from, which allows us to identify any trends, learning and potential improvements to services.

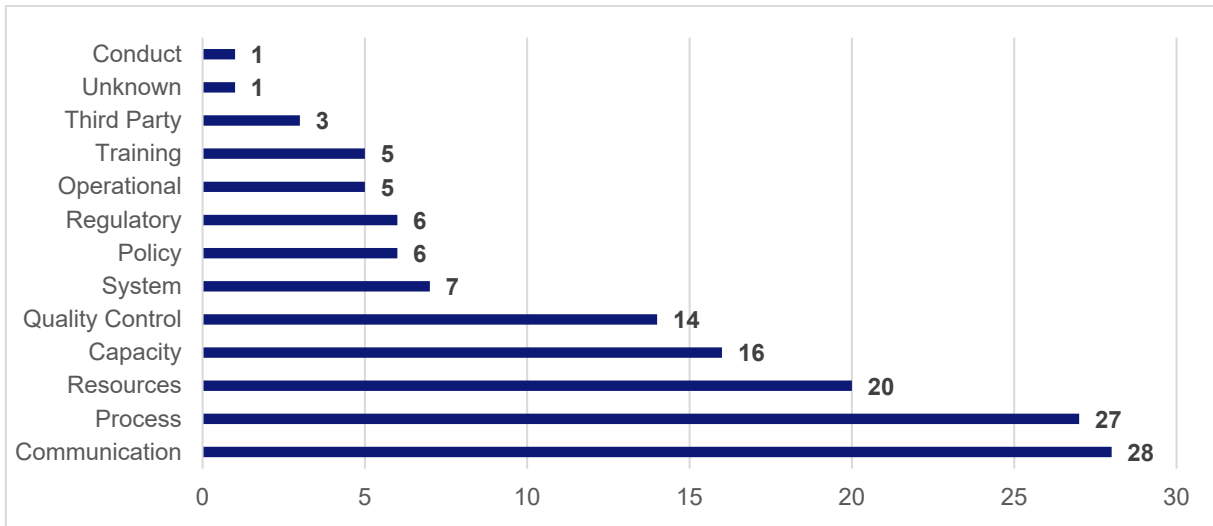


Figure 13: Root causes identify (upheld / partially upheld stage 1 complaints)

Please note: a variation in number of root causes compared to upheld complaints is due to some complaints having more than 1 root cause

6.13. Key themes of stage 1 complaint root causes are communication, process, resources & capacity.

6.14. The same principles apply for stage 2 complaints for logging the root cause.

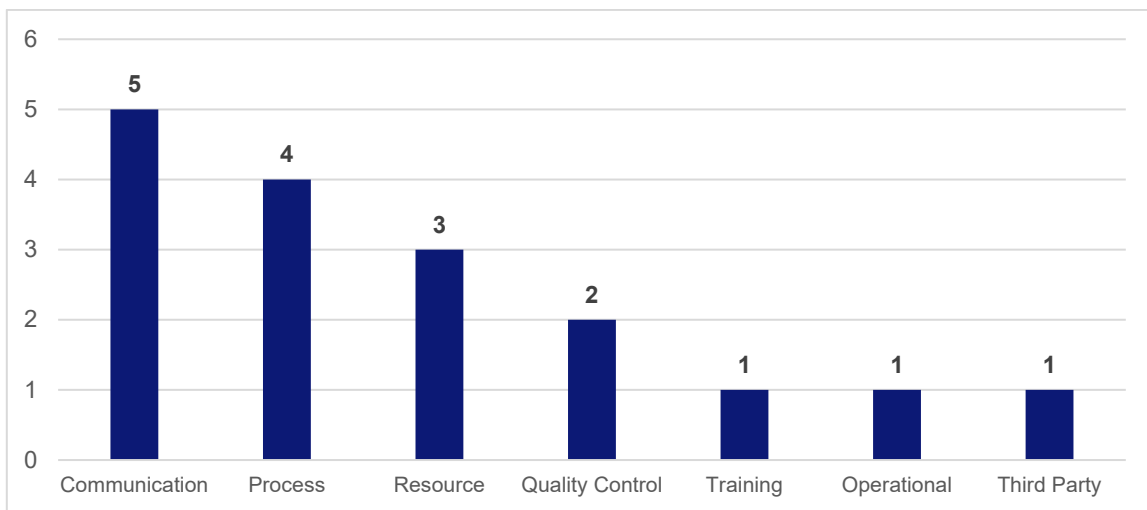


Figure 14: Root causes identify (stage 2 complaints)

Please note: a variation in number of root causes compared to upheld complaints is due to some complaints having more than 1 root cause

6.15. Key themes of stage 2 complaint root causes are communication, process, resources, and quality control. Demonstrating similarities with stage 1 complaints.

ICA & PHSO Reviews

6.16. The following section provides a more detailed analysis on the ICA & PHSO reviews outcomes, costs and recommendations.

Closed ICA referrals

6.17. A total of 3 ICA reviews were closed by the ICA between April 2023 – March 2024.

Please note: the closed figure may reflect referrals from last year due to a cross over, the time period allowed for reviews, and the complexity of a complaint.

ICA Review outcomes

6.18. The ICA will also advise of their outcome, based on the same principles we use for stage 1 and 2 complaints. Of the 3 closed ICA reviews 2 (67%) were upheld and 1 (33%) was partially upheld.

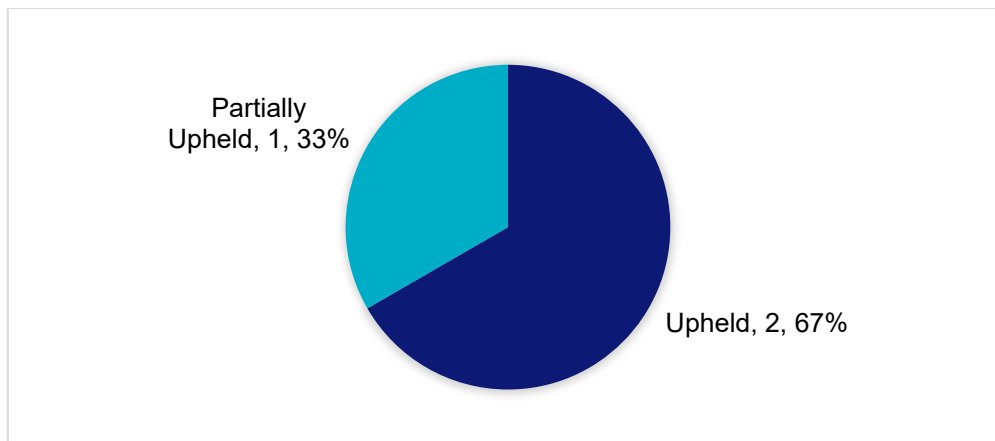


Figure 15: ICA referral outcomes (numbers & percentage)

ICA Recommendations

6.19. The ICA recommended ex-gratia payments, totalling £100.00, on one case in recognition of our service failure.

ICA Referral costs

6.20. All ICA reviews incur costs to the CAA via the Department for Transport (DfT). The total cost incurred between April 2023 – March 2024 was **£2,982.60**. This is a 70% reduction on 2022/23, where totals costs were £9,988.20.

Closed PHSO cases

6.21. A total of two PHSO cases were closed.

PHSO outcomes

6.22. The PHSO will also advise of their outcome, based on the same principles we use for stage 1 and 2 complaints. Of the two PHSO cases closed this year one was not taken forward for a full investigation and the other was not upheld.

Learning from complaints

7. Complaints are a valuable insight tool to learn more about the experiences of people using our services, identify any trends and pinpoint any recurring issues. It is an opportunity to reflect, analyse and transform complaints into learning and intelligence to determine areas for improvement.

7.1. There are three ways we identify learning from complaints, which are:

- Case by Case learning
- Root Cause Analysis
- ICA & PHSO Recommendations

7.2. Overall, a total of 63 lessons have been identified from our complaints between April 2023 – March 2024, which equates to 71% of the 89 upheld (full or part) complaints where learning was identified. More details are below based on the form in which it was identified.

Case by Case Learning

7.3. During the investigation into the complaint, the complaint handler will identify the root cause and determine if there are any improvements to services that can be considered and implemented.

7.4. A total of 36 lessons have been identified as a result of complaints received, with a total of 54 service improvements being made.

Please note: The service improvement number may be higher as this figure will include improvements completed on lessons learned from 2022 onwards.

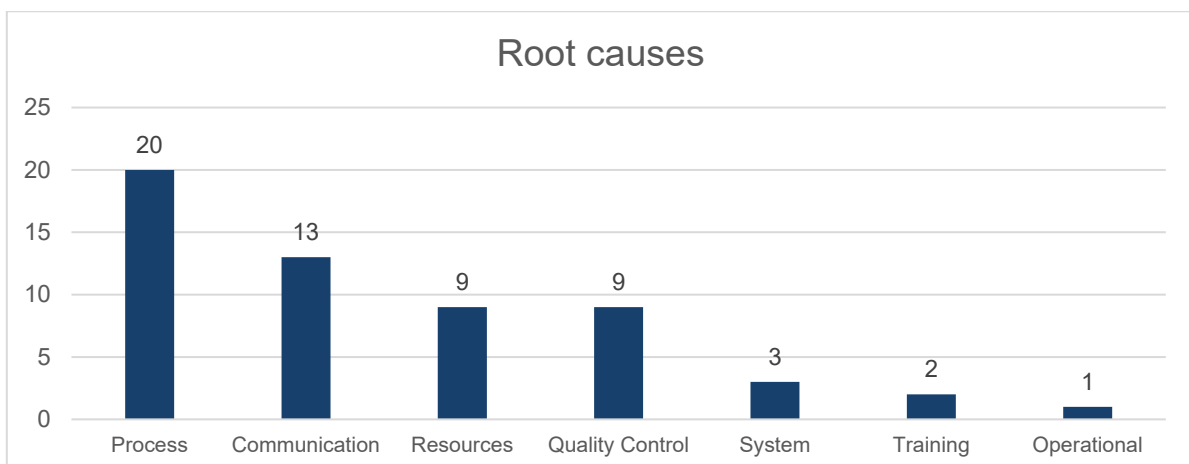


Figure 16: Case by case learning root causes (stage 1 & 2)

7.5. Key themes of case by case learning identified are process, communication, resources and quality control.

Root Cause Analysis Learning

- 7.6. In addition to learning being identified when handling a complaint, a root cause analysis of all upheld / partially upheld stage 1 complaints is carried out monthly to identify any additional or missed learning. Any learning identified is reviewed by senior managers to decide if there is a potential to take forward or not. This is to be extended to other complaint stages in 2024/25.
- 7.7. Following a root cause analysis, an additional 27 lessons have been identified, with a total of 8 service improvements being made as a result, with more to follow.
- 7.8. The same principles apply in identifying the root cause of the learning, allowing us to identify any trends in the learning.



Figure 17: Learning from complaint root cause themes (all complaint stages)

- 7.9. Key themes of root cause analysis learning are communication and process.

Learning outcomes

- 7.10. We have also developed a list of learning outcomes, which allow us to identify the overarching learning outcome themes from the service improvements identified from the root cause of the complaints. Key themes of learning outcomes are process, quality control, communication and training.

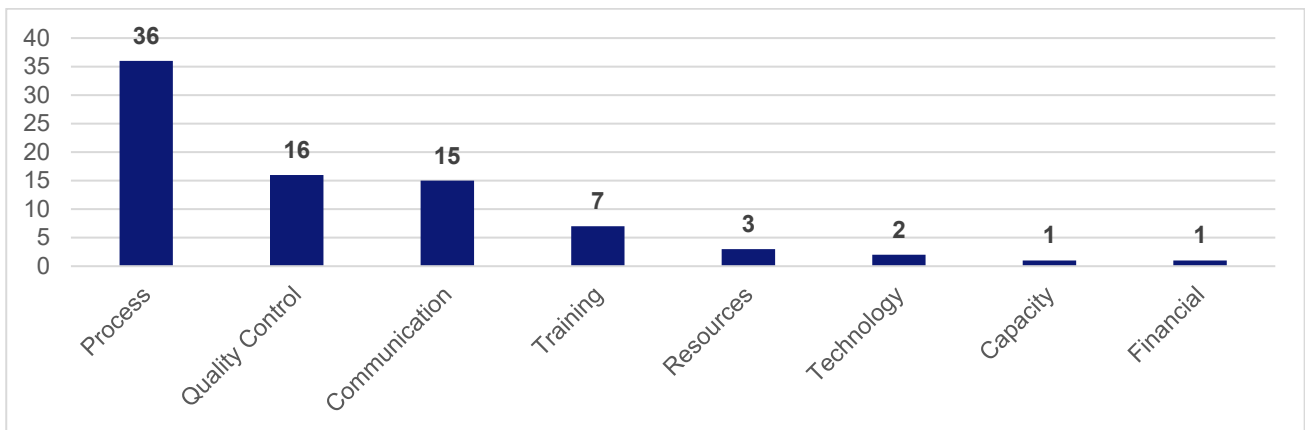


Figure 18: Overarching learning outcomes (all complaint stages & learning mechanisms)

ICA Learning Recommendations

- 7.11. When the ICA completes a review of a complaint, they may make recommendations for learning or suggested actions to take, and these are all logged as part of our learning from complaint process. Any recommendations or actions must be agreed by the business area before the ICA send their final response.
- 7.12. Due to the low number of ICA cases and a majority of those cases were upheld, there was only one recommendation made by the ICA following completed reviews.
- 7.13. The recommendation made was related to taking the opportunity to apologise for the delays incurred with an application which was not detected in either our stage 1 or 2 responses.

PHSO Learning Recommendations

- 7.14. When the PHSO completes their investigation, they may make recommendations for learning or suggested actions to take, and these are all logged as part of our learning from complaint process. Any recommendations or actions must be agreed by the business area.
- 7.15. With no 'upheld' or 'partially upheld' PHSO cases there were no recommendations made.

Actions taken through learning from complaints

- 7.22. The examples below demonstrate service improvements and / or changes that have been made to CAA services as a result of learning from complaints.

Service Improvements

- 7.23. Following complaints relating to our Engineers' licence and Private Pilots Licence (PPL) applications, improvements have been made to the application process, which has reduced the processing time.
- 7.24. Collaboration and engagement between our Licensing and Finance Teams has introduced new guidance for processing customer refunds to ensure there is a clear approvals process, providing consistency and status tracking ability.
- 7.25. Our CAP1404 has been updated to reflect the difference between 'Provisionally Suspend' and 'Suspend' in relation to airspace infringement cases, to ensure a better understanding, how it fits with legislation and the importance from a safety perspective.
- 7.26. Our Whistleblowing policy and process has been updated to ensure we are as transparent as the law allows in responding and ensuring our decisions are fully documented through improved record keeping.
- 7.27. To improve communication, consistency, collaboration and the customer experience:

- The guidance on applications from Type Rating Examiner (TRE) with EASA qualifications has been updated on our website.
- Where complaints involve multiple teams, we identify a lead investigator to manage them, and
- The RPAS Operational Authorisation Application Assessment process has been updated to reflect that if an application reaches 5 hours and is believed will go over 7 hours, the applicant must be informed before any further charges are applied.

7.28. Improved internal processes relating to correspondence addressed to our CEO / Chairs office when a complaint is identified, to ensure complainants are guided to the best route open to them.

7.29. Quality control checks have been introduced on Flight Instructor (FI) renewals to ensure correct tracking and reduce delays for applicants.

7.30. Monthly meetings have been introduced by our Flight Operations and General Aviation teams to improve communication internally between teams to ensure a joined up approach with stakeholders.

7.31. Basic information on our complaint handling process is provided to all new employees at their induction.

Conclusion

8. In conclusion, this year, we have seen an reduction in all stages within complaints; 36% reduction on stage 1 & stage 2 complaints, with ICA cases reduced by 75%. However there has been a 200% increase in PHSO cases, but please note that while this figure appears large it only equates to 3 cases and appears to be linked to how the cases have been handled by the PHSO.
- 8.1. As set out in our plans for this year we have continued to meet our target of acknowledging all stage 1 & 2 complaints within 5 working days, and respond to stage 1 complaints within timescale, currently at our target of 95%, which is an improvement on last year. However, there has been a reduction in our respond rate to stage 2 complaints, currently sitting at 82%, which is below our tolerance of 90%. This can be attributed to many of our stage 2 reviews being complex cases requiring additional time and resourse to resolve.
- 8.2. An awareness and training programme of how we approach complaint handling has been introduced, starting with the the induction process for new staff, to provide a basic overview and training. In addition, training sessions have been provided for managers as part of a management training programme.
- 8.3. With our learning from complaints process embedded we continue to learn from complaints to improve service delivery and the customer experience. To assist further in our learning we have introduced an additional learning mechanism on Quality Assurance, focusing on identifying knowledge gaps throughout the CAA on complaint handling, investigation and responding to complaints skills and tools, which will allow us to tailor our training and guidance.
- 8.4. Over the next year we plan to:
- Embed our Quality Assurance framework to identified knowledge gap and training opportunities on our complaint investigation and response skills.
 - Develop further our training and awareness of complaint handling further through guidance and tailored training for colleagues in supporting them to investigate and resolve complaints efficiently and effectively.
 - A review of our complaints policy and process to ensure amendments are made where necessary.
 - To further develop our reporting for senior managers to support the monitoring of our complaint handling function.
 - Introduce a complaint handling satisfaction survey to gain feedback and insight on complaint handling directly from our complainants.

APPENDIX A

Definitions

Complaint = an expression of dissatisfaction, however made, about the standard of service, actions, or lack of action by us, affecting an individual or group of customers / stakeholders.

Stage 1 = Initial stage of the CAA complaints process.

Stage 2 = Escalated complaints as customer were dissatisfied with the stage one response.

ICA = Escalated complaint to an external agency as the customer remains dissatisfied following the outcome of a stage 2 escalation.

PHSO = Escalated complaints to the Ombudsman as the customer remains dissatisfied following the outcome of an ICA review.

Upheld = The service did not reach the standard that is expected. (*Something has gone wrong*)

Partially Upheld = This would be used where we have found that there was evidence of service failure in one or more elements of the complaint, even if other parts of the complaint were not upheld.

Not Upheld = The service provided was of a standard that is expected.

APPENDIX B

Key Performance Indicators

KPI 1: Total number of complaints received = This indicator records all stage 1 complaints received at the CAA.

KPI 2: Number of complaints escalated at each stage = This indicator records all complaints that were escalated beyond stage 1 to stage 2, an ICA and / or PHSO review.

KPI 3: Percentage of complaints acknowledged within 5 working days at each stage = This indicator records the percentage of complaints at stage 1 & 2 acknowledged within 5 working days, which is measured from the date of receipt.

KPI 4: Percentage of draft responses received from the business area within 15 working days at each stage = This indicator records the percentage of complaints at stage 1 & 2 where a draft response was received from the business area within 15 working days.

KPI 5: Average time taken in working days for the business areas to provide a draft response at each stage = This indicator represents the average time in working days for a draft response to be provided to the complaints team by the business area.

KPI 6: Percentage of complaints responded to within 20 working days at each stage = This indicator represents the percentage of all stage 1 & 2 complaints responded to within 20 working days, which is measured from the date of the acknowledgment.

KPI 7: Average time taken in working days to respond to a complaint at each stage = This indicator represents the average time in working days for a full response to be provided to the complainant at stage 1 & 2.

KPI 8: Number and percentage of complaints where an extension has been authorised at each CAA stage = This indicator represents the number & percentage of complaints where an extension has been authorised at stage 1 & 2.

KPI 9: The outcome of complaints at each stage (upheld / not upheld / partially upheld) = This indicator represents the number & percentage of complaints at each stage where the outcome has been recorded as upheld, not upheld or partially upheld.

KPI 10: Percentage of ICA referral requests acknowledged within 15 working days = This indicator records the percentage of ICA referral requests acknowledged within 15 working days, which is measured from the date of receipt.

KPI 11: Percentage of ICA referral request referred to the ICA within 15 working days = This indicator records the percentage of ICA referral requests referred to the ICA within 15 working days, which is measured from the date of receipt.

KPI 12: The average time in working days for a complaint to be referred to the ICA = This indicator represents the average time in working days for an ICA referral request to be referred to the ICA.

APPENDIX C

Abbreviations

ASSI	Air Safety Support International
AvSec	Aviation Security
CD	Communications Department
CD – EIS	Communications Department – External Information Services
CE Office	Chief Executive Officer office
CMG	Consumers & Markets Group
COO	Chief Operating Office
COO – Finance	Chief Operating Office – Finance
CSP	CAA Strategy & Policy Team
HR	Human Resources
ID – ERCD	International Group – Environmental Research & Consultancy Department
IET	Investigation & Enforcement Team
OGC	Office of General Counsel
SARG - AAA	Safety & Airspace Regulation Group – Airspace, Air Traffic Management & Aerodromes
SARG – AW	Safety & Airspace Regulation Group – Airworthiness
SARG – S&BD	Safety & Airspace Regulation Group – Safety & Business Delivery
SARG – FO	Safety & Airspace Regulation Group – Flight Operations
SARG – GA	Safety & Airspace Regulation Group – General Aviation
SARG - MED	Safety & Airspace Regulation Group – Medical
SARG - RPAS	Safety & Airspace Regulation Group – Remotely Piloted Aircraft System unit
SARG – S&BD	Safety & Airspace Regulation Group – Safety & Business Delivery
SSC – C DESK	Shared Service Centre – Centre Desk
SSC – PACT	Shared Service Centre – Passenger Advice & Complaints Team

APPENDIX D

Complaint handling quick guide

Raising concerns

We would always encourage you to contact the relevant business area in the first instance if you have any queries, concerns, challenges or issues, who will aim to respond quickly.

However, if it is clear that the matter needs a more detailed investigation you can raise a complaint and we have a two-stage complaint procedure.



Stage 1

You can make your complaint in person, by phone, by email or in writing.

We will acknowledge receipt within 5 working days, and aim to respond within 20 working days, we will tell you if more time is required.

There are some complaints that have alternative routes and we will tell you if this is the case.

If you are dissatisfied with our response, you can request to escalate to stage 2 within 28 days of receiving our stage 1 response.



Stage 2

A review of the handling of our stage 1 complaint will be conducted by a senior manager, not previously involved.

We will acknowledge within 5 working days and aim to respond within 20 working days, we will tell you if more time is required.

If you are dissatisfied with our stage 2 review, you can request a referral to the ICA within 3 months of receiving our stage 2 response.



Independent Complaint Assessors (ICA)

If, having followed all stages of our internal complaint process, you are still dissatisfied, you can contact the CAA's Corporate Complaints Specialist and request a referral to the ICA.

The ICA will respond directly with their findings and recommendations to the complainant and copy in the CAA.



Parliamentary & Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO)

If, following an ICA review, you do not agree with the outcome, you can contact your Member of Parliament (MP) and ask for your complaint to be referred to the PHSO.