

PHSO Quality and Service Standards

We use the quality and service standards to determine how successfully we are achieving our strategic aims.

- ✓ Our service is easy to access (links to Strategic Aim 1)
- ✓ We deal with each case promptly (links to Strategic Aim 2)
- ✓ Our work is impartial and objective (links to Strategic Aim 5)
- ✓ We fully consider what people tell us, and we treat them with courtesy and respect (links to Strategic Aim 2)
- ✓ We exercise our discretion fairly and consistently and are clear about the rationale we have used (links to Strategic Aims 2 and 5)
- ✓ We apply a consistent method when we carry out our work and we make sure that people/organisations in jurisdiction are kept informed. The method and communication are evident in our case files (links to Strategic Aim 2)
- ✓ We give clear, evidence-based outcomes to customers and organisations in our remit (links to Strategic Aims 2, 3 and 4)
- ✓ Our investigations and the remedies we recommend are proportionate and appropriate (links to Strategic Aim 2)
- ✓ We use the outcomes of complaints to identify root causes and promote wider service improvement and learning (links to Strategic Aims 3 and 4)
- ✓ Our record keeping is accurate, and we make sure that the information we hold is kept secure and confidential (links to Strategic Aim 5)

What do the Quality and Service Standards mean?

- ✓ Our service is easy to access (links to Strategic Aim 1)
- ✓ We fully consider what people tell us, and we treat them with courtesy and respect (links to Strategic Aim 2)

This means that:

- The public are aware of our services
- People get clear information and advice at the outset
- We respond to individual customer needs when people access our service
- People feel that we have understood their issue and they have had the opportunity to be involved.

We will use customer surveys to gather information at all stages of the process to decide whether customers feel listened to, informed and involved.

We measure how many people access our service through different channels, every day.

We measure our service complaints and responses.

We will continue to gather face-to-face feedback from groups and the media, including social media.

✓ **We deal with each case promptly** (links to Strategic Aim 2)

This means that:

- We avoid unnecessary delay
- We complete assessments within 20 working days of receipt by the Office to the point at which we accept or decline the case for investigation, or resolve the complaint through the assessment process.
- We conclude investigations within 13 weeks.
- We minimise the number of cases over 26 weeks old.
- We will address service complaints that we accept for review within 16 weeks (many service complaints are not accepted for review and are addressed in a shorter time in Operations).

We measure our performance against these metrics.

Quality sampling, quality audits and performance data will help us understand any avoidable delay in handling our casework and decide what action we need to take.

✓ **Our work is impartial and objective** (links to Strategic Aim 5)

This means that:

- Our decisions comply with the guidance set out in manuals and supporting materials
- We share our findings and decisions with customers and organisations at the draft stage
- Our decisions will withstand challenge
- We will reopen complaints if there is relevant new evidence that we have not already considered and it calls our previous findings into question.

We measure this through performance data, quality sampling and consideration if reviewing our decision.

- ✓ **We exercise our discretion fairly and consistently and are clear about the rationale we have used** (links to Strategic Aims 2 and 5)

This means that:

- Staff follow the established method and process
- We apply our jurisdiction consistently.

We measure this through quality sampling and consideration of reviewing our decision. We also use other feedback we gather from customer and organisation feedback.

- ✓ **We apply a consistent method when we carry out our work and we ensure people/organisations in jurisdiction are kept informed. The method and communication are evident in our case files** (links to Strategic Aim 2)

This means that:

- Our case files reflect our method
- Customers can easily follow the progress of their complaint and we update them every four weeks, or at intervals we agree at the start of the case
- We set clear expectations at the outset, and fulfil our commitments
- We adapt our interaction with customers according to their preferences and needs
- We engage with our customers early and often
- We pursue the necessary lines of enquiry to resolve a complaint
- We seek to eliminate the causes of delay in reaching a decision
- If we decide not to complete a process step or to complete the work in a different way, we clearly record our rationale for doing so.

We measure this through customer feedback, quality sampling, quality audits and performance data. We also use feedback from cases we consider if reviewing our decision.

- ✓ **We give clear, evidence-based outcomes to customers and organisations in our remit** (links to Strategic Aims 2, 3 and 4)

This means that:

- Our decisions meet the standards set out in the supporting manuals and other guidance
- We share our findings in draft form with the customer and the organisations/individuals involved
- Our decisions will withstand challenge

- We will reopen cases if we find an investigation was flawed or if there is relevant new information.

We measure this through quality sampling and quality audits. Performance data, plus information from line management and peer comparisons will also support whether the process has been proportionate, appropriate, effective and efficient.

- ✓ **Our investigations and the remedies we recommend are proportionate and appropriate** (links to Strategic Aim 2)

This means that:

- The investment in completing our work is proportionate to the matters being considered
- Recommended remedies are SMART and are in line with our Principles for Remedy and precedent cases in the Typology of Injustice

We measure this through quality sampling, and also through considering cases under review.

- ✓ **Our record keeping is accurate, and we make sure that the information we hold is kept secure and confidential** (links to Strategic Aim 5)

This means that:

- Staff comply with the guidance about information security and use of the systems/tools available to them
- We identify and name records and/or documents
- We keep records up to date
- We do not disclose confidential information inappropriately
- If breaches of information security occur, we identify them and promptly address the root causes.

We measure this through themed quality sampling and team audits.

We measure compliance with DP subject access and FOI requests plus any/all information breaches.

- ✓ **We use the outcomes of complaints to identify root causes and promote wider service improvement and learning** (links to Strategic Aims 3 and 4)

This means that:

- We will publish case summaries

- We will identify themes in our caseload for consideration and strategic action where appropriate
- We will complete systemic investigations and publish our findings
- We will use our experience of complaint handling and insight gathered from our work to support and make recommendations to organisations in our jurisdiction.

We measure this through performance data, quality sampling, quality audits and by considering cases if reviewing our decision.