

<b>Meeting</b>	OLC Board Meeting	<b>Agenda Item No.</b>	12
		<b>Paper No.</b>	109.10
<b>Date of meeting</b>	26 October 2020	<b>Time required</b>	15 Mins

<b>Title</b>	<b>Service Complaints Adjudicator's Interim Report</b>
<b>Sponsor</b>	Siobhan Fennell
<b>Status</b>	OFFICIAL

<b>Executive summary</b>
<p>This paper provides the Board with the Service Complaint Adjudicator's interim report for 2020/21 and sets out the outcome of the complaints that have been considered so far this business year.</p> <p>The report highlights a significant decrease in the number of Stage 3 complaints seen by the Service Complaints Adjudicator and covers the findings and recommendations made in the first six months of this year.</p> <p>Improvements to the way in which the Legal Ombudsman handles service complaints have steadily been made over the last two years; firstly with the appointment of a dedicated Customer Experience Specialist, followed by the appointment of a Senior Ombudsman in mid-2019.</p> <p>The demand for service complaints significantly increased in 2018/19 and 2019/20, leading to much longer wait times at Stage 1 of the process. However, the appointment of a second Customer Experience Specialist in January 2020, combined with fewer service complaints in the first half of this year, has seen those wait times reduce to six weeks.</p> <p>These improvements are reflected in the Service Complaint Adjudicator's interim report, and emphasises the hard work carried out by the service complaints team in resolving complaints internally, and restoring confidence in the service we provide to our customers.</p> <p>A summary of the service complaints received at each stage over the last five years, and the first six months of this year, can be found in <b>Annex A</b>.</p>
<b>Recommendation/action required</b>
Board is asked to note this report.

---

# Service complaint Adjudicator Mid-Year report 2020-2021

---

1. This report sets out the outcome of the service complaints I have considered so far this business year.

## **2020-21 service complaint workload**

2. I considered 5 complaints about LeO's service so far this business year, including 59 individual issues of complaint that were within my remit.

3. I supported 4 individual issues of complaint, which represents an uphold rate of 7%, which is the lowest I can ever recall in my five years as SCA. This shows the improvement I reflected on last year in the handling of service complaints at LeO and the resolution of those concerns at Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the service complaints process.

4. In the first half of this year the decline in the number of Stage 3 complaints being referred to me has continued. I have received 7 complaints so far this business year (this time last year I had received 22 complaints).

5. A breakdown of the service complaints I have seen are set out in annex A.

## **Areas for service improvement**

6. Given the small number of upheld complaints, I have made only one recommendation to LeO for service improvement and I am pleased to report on the action LeO have taken at annex A to this report.

## **Overall impression**

7. As in previous years the majority of complaints are resolved at the first two stages of the complaints process and do not come to me. While I have not upheld the full decision made in 4 of the cases I have seen, overall the decisions and explanations provided at the first two stages of the complaints process are appropriate.

8. I am pleased to report again that where I have had concerns about the service provided that LeO have apologised for that and have agreed to the remedies I recommended.

Claire Evans  
**Service Complaint Adjudicator**

**2020-21 service complaint workload:**

1. The table below provides information about the number of service complaints received at each stage over the last five years, including the first six months of this business year.

Year	Number of complaints Stage 1	Number of complaints Stage 2	Percentage Stage 1 to 2	Number of complaints Stage 3	Percentage Stage 2 to 3
2015/16	98	33	34%	12	36%
2016/17	118	51	43%	21	41%
2017/18	129	42	32.5%	20	47.5%
2018/19	183	45	24.5%	28	62%
2019/20	164	51	31%	36	70.5%
2020/21	44	24	55%	7	29%

2. As I set out above, the 5 service complaints I considered raised in total 59 individual issues of complaint about LeO that were within my remit. I supported 4 individual issues of complaint (7%) in 4 cases I looked at. This is significantly lower than the uphold rate has been since I became SCA and it shows the concerted effort made at Stage 1 and Stage 2 to resolve service complaints.

3. As I noted in my report last year I have been particularly impressed by the consideration and analysis that has gone into the service complaints investigations at Stage 2. The improvement in the Stage 2 complaint responses has been especially good to see, given my more negative comments about Stage 2 during the 2018-19 business year.

4. I commend the work of the Service Complaints Team this year and the continued improvement in the service complaint investigations and responses.

**Service issues:**

5. I have upheld the following complaints where LeO's service could have been better and an appropriate remedy for that had not been offered earlier in the complaints process:

Service Complaint Area	Number of upheld complaints
Representations not fully considered	1
Premature referral to the Regulator (Remedy)	1
Issues with communication with the parties	2
Remedy	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4</b>

6. For the first time since becoming SCA I have not upheld any complaints about delays at LeO. This does not mean that cases have not been subject to delay but that those have been appropriately picked up on and apologised for earlier in the service complaints process.

7. I would also commend the Service Complaints Team for the way they managed the significant delays at Stage 1 of the service complaints process over the second half of the last business year. I am seeing those cases now. In the cases I have seen appropriate action was taken to manage expectations about the delays at the outset, updates were provided as necessary and apologies offered.

**Redress:**

8. During this business year I have made the following recommendations for redress: Chief Ombudsman apologies for the service issues I have identified; the consideration of a missed issue in the representations about a decision; and for LeO to write to the Regulator to confirm that a referral had been made prematurely.

9. Overall, I have been content with LeO's approach to redress.

**Service Improvement:**

10. So far this business year I have made only one recommendation for service improvement. I recommended that LeO remind staff that a misconduct referral for failure to cooperate should only be made once that failure has occurred and not before. LeO have drafted a Knowledge Alert which will be shared with relevant staff as a reminder about this requirement of the Scheme Rules.