

28 April 2017

Section 120 Quarterly Performance – Q4

LEGAL
OMBUDSMAN

1. Introduction:

1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Legal Services Board (LSB) with an overview of the performance of the Legal Ombudsman (legal jurisdiction) for quarter 4 (2016/17). This is in line with your requirements of Section 120 of the Legal Services Act 2007, as outlined in paragraph 3 of Appendix A to your letter dated 11 April 2016.

1.2. The report provides analysis of the performance of the scheme, focusing in particular on three key areas:

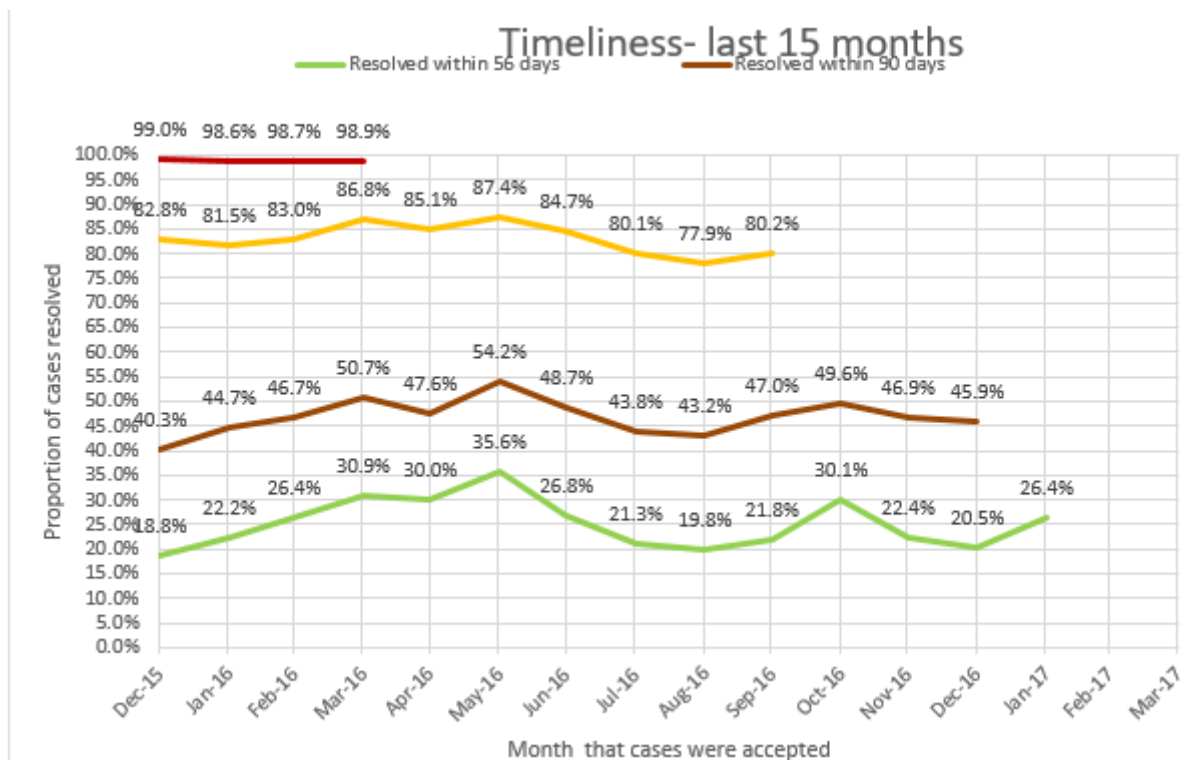
- Timeliness
- Quality
- Costs

1.3. The report also provides an update in respect of the actions and interventions that have taken place or are planned, to improve performance in areas where the Office for Legal Complaints' (OLC) expectations have not been met.

2. Timeliness:

2.1. During quarter 4, timeliness performance has remained broadly consistent and in line with the current expectations of the OLC Board. Timeliness performance is illustrated in the graph below (figure 1).

Figure 1 – Legal Jurisdiction Timeliness Performance



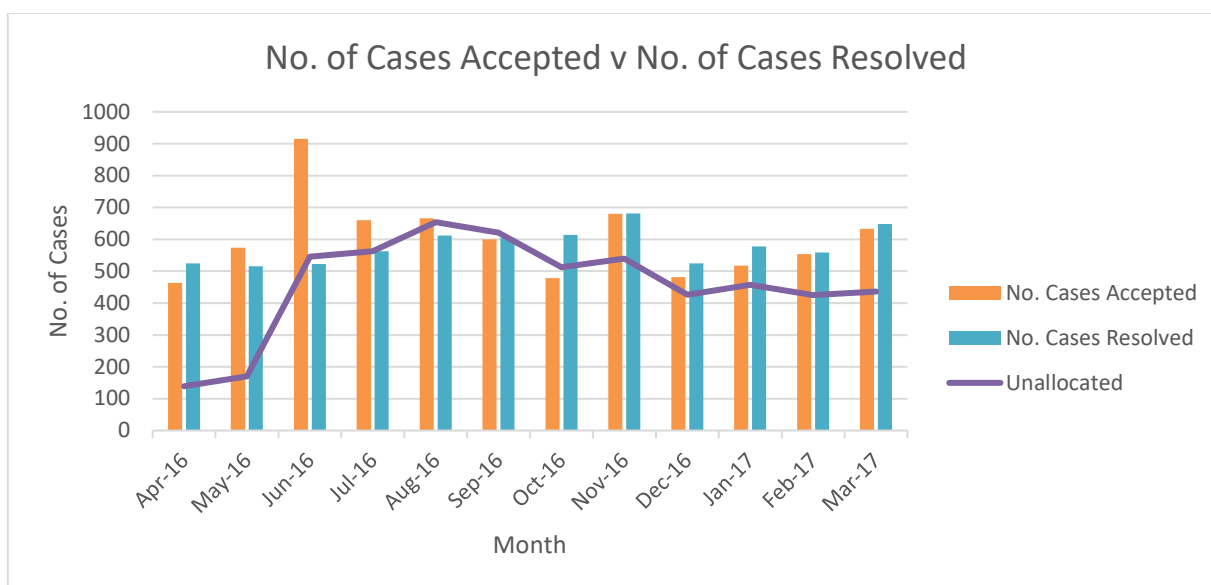
2.2. Performance against the 180 day target continues to be impacted by the large number of cases that were accepted for investigation during the summer; this was as a result of the backlog of work at the assessment stage of our process as previously reported. However, in March, performance against this measure increased, which has continued into quarter 1.

2.3. Figure 1 also illustrates that performance against the 90 day timeliness target has decreased slightly since October, and remains below the target of 60%, however, going into quarter 1 performance has returned to around 49%

2.4. Timeliness performance continues to be impacted by the significant level of unallocated cases. The OLC acknowledges the impact of the measures being taken to mitigate this issue. This is evidenced in the graph in figure 2 which shows that the number of cases resolved exceeded the number of cases accepted every month during quarter 3 and quarter 4.

2.5. Implementation of a targeted approach to allocations has seen the unallocated work reduce significantly, from approximately 620 at the beginning of quarter 3 to 436 at the end of quarter 4, reflected in the graph in figure 2.

Figure 2 – The number of Cases Accepted compared with the Number of Cases Resolved per month

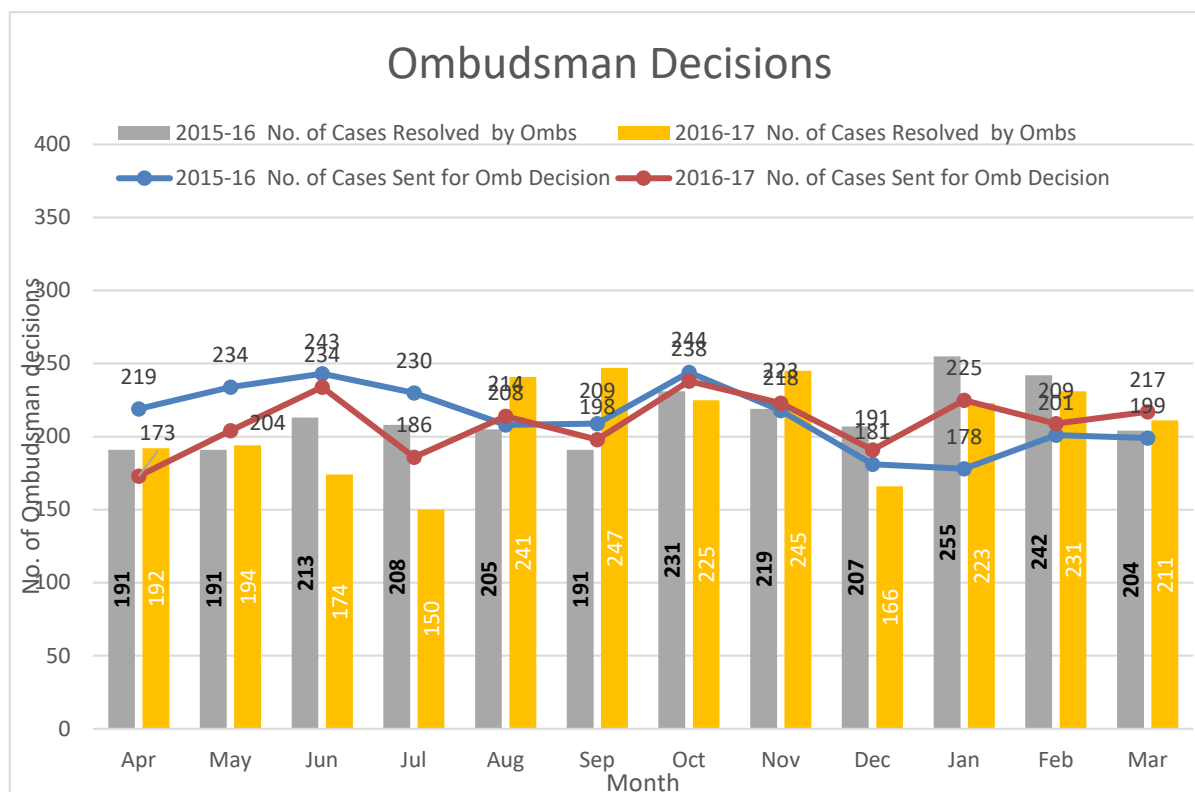


2.6. The graph in figure 2 is also indicative of the incremental improvement in productivity within the Resolution Centre since June. This can in part be attributed to the new rolling recruitment programme and increased staffing levels, the triage process and the other performance improvement initiatives that have been outlined in previous reports. March saw the second highest closure performance in the 16-17 financial year; resolving a total of 648 cases which also increased our performance against our 56 day measure.

2.7. The OLC welcome the increase in the number of informal resolutions over

the previous six month period. The percentage of cases resolved informally has increased from 32% in previous years to 36% in the 2016-17 financial year. This can in part be attributed to the new performance improvement initiatives, such as triage and the telephone project, which encourages investigators to use the phone wherever possible during the course of their investigations. This not only has benefits to quantitative performance but also qualitative performance and the customer experience.

Figure 3 – Ombudsman Decisions / Productivity



2.8. The Ombudsman team have sustained performance during quarter 4, which has meant that the number of cases awaiting decision has remained consistent. The Operational Management Team are managing the impact of reduced resource within the Ombudsman team (due to long term sickness and recent resignation) to ensure that the positive work completed over the previous six months is not undone.

3. Quality:

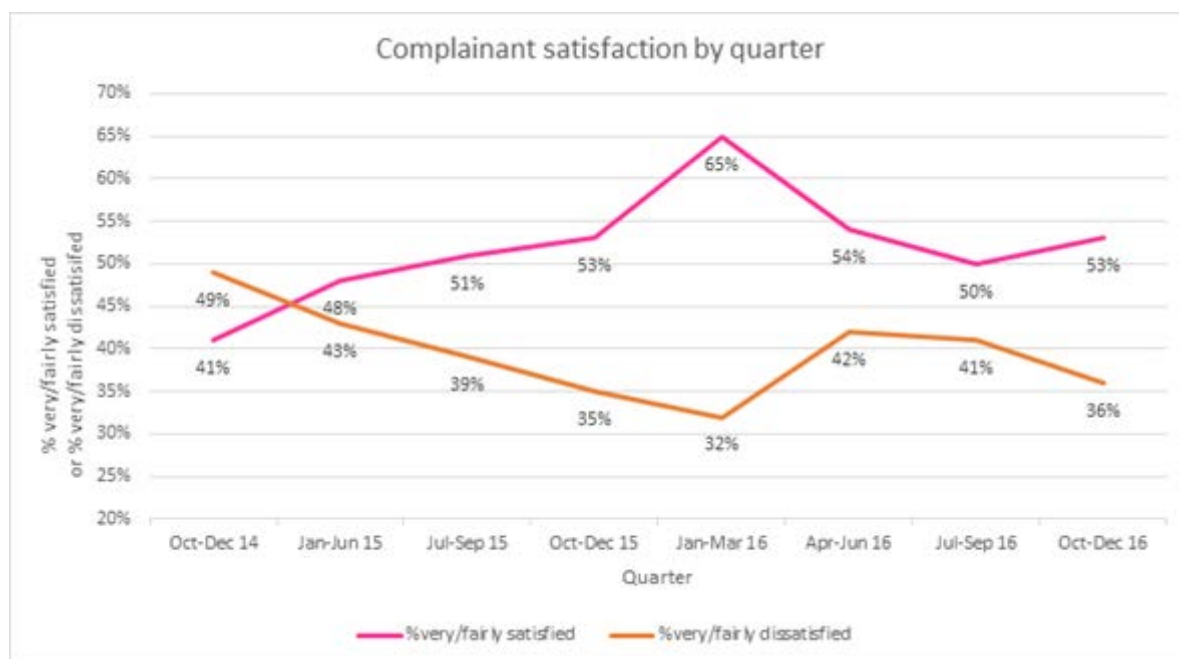
3.1. The percentage of complainants and service providers (within our legal jurisdiction) satisfied with the service they received, irrespective of the outcome of their case, has decreased slightly from 62% in Q3 to 60% in Q4. Overall, this level of satisfaction has remained at a similar level since quarter 2 of 16-17.

3.2. Figure 4 shows that there has been a slight increase on the previous quarter in the percentage of complainants who were satisfied with the service provided by the Legal Ombudsman, 50% in quarter 3 rising to 53% in quarter 4. During the same period there

has been a decrease in complainants dissatisfied with our service from 41% in quarter 3 to 36% in quarter 4. It appears likely that these increases in satisfaction are linked to a corresponding increase in satisfaction with outcome for complainants over the same period.

3.3. In addition we have seen a decrease in the percentage of service providers who are satisfied with our service from 83% in quarter 3 to 74% in quarter 4. Again it appears likely that this decrease in satisfaction is linked to correspond with a decrease in satisfaction with outcome for service providers over the same period.

Figure 4 – Complainant Satisfaction Results



3.4. Our internal customer satisfaction surveys are providing us with the opportunity to be more responsive to customer feedback. Customer satisfaction at the initial contact stage remains high, with lower levels of satisfaction reported at investigation stage. Drivers of dissatisfaction at investigation stage echo the end of process customer satisfaction reviews in terms of indicating that continued work to address issues of delay, and the provision of more regular updates will have a positive impact on reported levels of customer satisfaction.

4. Costs:

4.1. The cost KPIs are currently being met, as outlined in the update of 10 April and no interventions are planned or expected in this area.

5. Actions Taken:

5.1. A number of initiatives have been introduced to improve performance in the past 9 months. These have been outlined in detail in previous quarterly Section 120 reports. The aim of these initiatives have been to:

- reduce queues and backlogs by a structured allocation process;
- increase the capacity to investigate more cases, capitalising on the return of our control over our resources, ongoing recruitment and continuing to recruit flexibly, together with the controlled use of overtime;
- increase the efficiency of the investigation process;
- maintain an adequate throughput of Ombudsman decisions.

5.2. A number of these initiatives are now business as usual within the investigation process; such as triage and our rolling approach to recruitment. These are contributing to the steady, incremental gains that are now impacting positively on the service which is being provided to our customers. We will continue to explore and implement performance initiatives in order to incrementally improve performance further, however, the focus of the Executive and the OLC Board is now on the modernisation programme.

5.3. . The purpose of the programme is to ensure that we continue to improve our scheme; providing a more efficient and cost effective service and embed customer service principles. The LSB will continue to be updated on our modernisation programme within the regular reporting schedule