

**THE SOLICITORS REGULATION
AUTHORITY'S
PERFORMANCE & PROGRESS
AGAINST THE TARGETS
DURING THE PERIOD
1 APRIL 2008 TO 31 MARCH 2009**

**SUMMARY OF PERFORMANCE
February 2009**

TIMELINESS TARGETS

Timeliness Target T3 – 12-Month Closures

All Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) complaints from the date of receipt to take no longer than 12 months to investigate and conclude, apart from in exceptional circumstances.

At the end of March 2008 there were 50 cases over 12 months old within SRA.

- At the end of February 2009, there were 17 cases open over 12 months old within SRA.

Timeliness Target T4 – 18-Month Lodging with Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal

All SRA complaints where there is a referral to the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal (SDT), from the date of receipt to take no longer than 18 months to investigate and conclude, prepare fully, and lodge with SDT, apart from in exceptional circumstances.

- Between April 2008 – February 2009, SRA lodged 19 cases with the SDT. SRA reports that all 19 cases were lodged within the 18-month target deadline.
- At the end of February 2009, there were 25 cases being prepared for the SDT. SRA reports that all 25 cases were between 0 -18 months old as at the end of February 2009.

SUPPORTING KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPIs)

During the 2007/08 Plan year SRA received 4,647 new complaints.

- Between April 2008 – February 2009, SRA received 5,472 new complaints, 913 cases (20%) above its year-to-date forecast of 4,559.

During the 2007/08 Plan year SRA closed 4,943 complaints.

- Between April 2008 – February 2009, SRA closed 5,061 complaints, 360 (8%) above its year-to-date forecast of 4,701.

At the end of March 2008 there were 1,018 complaints with SRA.

- The number of cases with SRA has increased by 412 cases, from 1,018 at the end of March 2008 to 1,430 at the end of February 2009.

At the end of March 2008 there were 404 unallocated cases within SRA, 40% of the SRA caseload (1,018).

- By the end of February 2009, there were 640 unallocated cases within SRA, which is 45% of the SRA caseload (1,430).

During the 2007/08 Plan year SRA closed 596 (12%) of cases using outsourcing firms.

- Of the 5,061 total closures made since the start of the Plan year in April 2008, 655 cases (13%) have been closed using outsourcing firms.

OUTCOME OF DECISIONS TARGETS

Outcome of Decisions Target Q2: Fair & Reasonable Outcome

In 90% of closed complaints, SRA to achieve a fair and reasonable outcome with no significant case failings.

- Performance against Quality Target Q2 is based on a combined measure of quarterly audits of case files already reviewed by the SRA, the feedback received from adjudicators, and the index provided by the Legal Services Ombudsman.
- The first three quarter's results (April to December 2008) show that SRA achieved 84% against the Outcome of Decisions Target, 6 percentage points below the Commissioner's target of 90%.

SUPPORTING KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPIs)

During the 2007/08 Plan year the Legal Services Ombudsman (LSO) upheld SRA handling of the complaint in 81% of cases referred.

- Between April 2008 – February 2009, the LSO upheld SRA's handling of the complaint in 75% of cases referred.

PLAN IMPLEMENTATION TARGETS

Plan Implementation Target P1 – Priority Initiatives

Priority initiatives to support the delivery of the Law Society's 2008/09 complaints handling Plan are delivered to time and cost in accordance with the Plan, and meet all related milestones and benefits to be realised.

- In the 2008/09 Plan, SRA identified a number of strategic objectives within its improvement agenda:
 1. Improved decision-making;
 2. Process standardisation; and
 3. Year 3 of the Equality & Diversity programme.
- Performance against this target can only be measured by the Commissioner's Office at the end of the Plan year (March 2009).

Plan Implementation Target P2 – Equality & Diversity

Within the Plan year 2008/09 to meet their delegated statutory Public Duty, LCS and SRA to comply with the Law Society's Public Duty requirements on Equality and Diversity (E&D) including addressing all recommendations made in the LCS E&D audit report May 2007 and the SRA E&D audit report October 2007.

- SRA, in the 2008/09 Plan states that it will take the following action during the year:
 - Gather more robust E&D data from its stakeholders;
 - Identify the E&D characteristics of more users of its services; and
 - Assess more of its own procedures and policies from an E&D perspective.

- Performance against this target can only be measured by the Commissioner's Office at the end of the Plan year (March 2009).

COST EFFICIENCY TARGETS

Cost Efficiency Target C2: Caseworker Productivity

SRA to deliver during the Plan year a 5% efficiency in caseworker productivity and achieve on average 5.64 closures per caseworker.

During the 2007/08 Plan year SRA achieved a yearly average productivity of 5.57 closures per caseworker against its internal target of 5.37 closures per caseworker.

- Between April 2008 – February 2009, SRA reports that its average productivity was 6.5 closures per caseworker per month. This is 15% above the Commissioner's target of 5.64 closures per caseworker.

SUPPORTING KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPIs)

During the 2007/08 Plan year SRA spent £4.360 million on complaints handling, £199K (4.3%) below its 2007/08 budget of £4.559 million.

- Between April 2008 – February 2009, SRA spent £4.409 million on complaints handling, £192K (4.6%) above its year-to-date forecast of £4.216 million. SRA report that its total budget for 2008/09 is £4.600 million.

At the end of March 2008 there were 59.3 staff in post within SRA, 3.7 (6%) below the 63 shown in the 2007/08 Plan.

- At the end of February 2009, SRA reports that it had 61.17 staff in post, 4.03 (6.2%) below the 65.2 staff it said it would need in place during the month.

SRA – Staff in post	Management	Caseworkers	Support	Total
February 2009	11 (18%)	31 (50%)	20 (32%)	61

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Caseload	Complaints that are still in the complaint handling process, and have not yet been concluded.
Complaint	This is an expression of dissatisfaction about the service provided by a firm of solicitors or the conduct of an individual solicitor where LCS or SRA take action to conciliate or investigate.
Conciliation	This is a process leading to the resolution of the complaint by agreement between the consumer and solicitor without the need for a formal decision by the LCS or SRA.
Conduct Complaints	A complaint that relates to the actions/behaviour of an individual solicitor rather than the service received by the firm of solicitors as a whole. Conduct complaints are handled by the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA).
Legal Complaints Service (LCS)	The Legal Complaints Service (LCS) is responsible for dealing with complaints about the service provided by solicitors in England and Wales to consumers.
Outsourcing	In order to help it reduce the number of complaints it has in its system, LCS and SRA use a number of Solicitor's firms to which they outsource cases to be dealt with.
The Plan	Each year the Commissioner requests that LCS & SRA provide an Improvement Plan showing how they will deliver performance improvements to their complaints handling system and processes.
Productivity	Productivity is measured by the number of cases closed by those caseworkers involved in complaints handling in any given period.
Redress Conduct Complaints (RDCs)	Complaints that relate to both the service provided by a solicitor (or firm of solicitors) as well as the actions/behaviours of an individual solicitor. Redress Conduct Complaints (RDCs) are handled by both the Legal Complaints Service (LCS) and the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA).
Service Complaints	Complaints that relate to the service provided by a solicitor or firm of solicitors where LCS can seek compensation for the consumer as a form of redress. Service complaints are handled by the Legal Complaints Service (LCS).
Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal (SDT)	The Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal (SDT) is the body responsible for adjudicating upon circumstances of alleged misconduct by solicitors in relation to breaches of the Solicitors Code of Conduct and other related rules.
Special Payments	These are used to compensate the consumer for loss, inconvenience or distress caused by failings in the LCS or SRA service.
Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA)	The Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) is responsible for regulatory and disciplinary matters; setting and maintaining standards and handling complaints that allege misconduct against solicitors.
The Law Society	The Law Society is responsible for representing solicitors, and promoting their work.
Unallocated Cases	These are complaint cases that have not yet been assigned to a caseworker to deal with.