

Report to:	QSMTM Q4
Report by:	Helen Gardner- Swift, Head of Corporate Services (HOCS) Liz Brown, Finance and Administration Manager (FAM)
Meeting Date:	29 April 2021
Subject/ Title:	Enquiries Service Statistics Report VC149234
Attached Papers	N/A

Purpose of report

1. This Committee Report (CR) is required under the Key Document C1 Governance Reporting Arrangements and its purpose is to inform the Senior Management Team (SMT) of the Enquiries Service Statistics for 2020-21.

Recommendation and actions

2. I recommend that:
 - (a) the SMT notes the CR
 - (b) this CR is published in full as set out in paragraph 25

Executive summary

3. This report covers the following:
 - the numbers of enquiries received 2020-21 with comparative figures for 2019-20 and 2018-19
 - the outcome of enquiries 2020-21, with comparative figures for 2019-20 and the percentage increase/decrease as regards each type of outcome
 - analyses the number of enquiries responded to within the timescales set down in the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in the Performance and Quality Framework 2020-21, with comparative figures for 2019-20

COVID-19 pandemic

4. Our priority as an organisation has been to continue to provide key services and guidance within available resource while safeguarding the health, safety and wellbeing of our members of staff.
5. Since temporarily closing our office premises on 23 March 2020 and putting in place business continuity arrangements, we have maintained operational output within the constraints imposed by limitations on access to our office premises and our office systems. We continue to be able to respond to enquiries sent to us by email or by post and enquiries continue to be managed, as far as possible, in line with our enquiries procedures.
6. For the period 23 March 2020 until 03 June 2020 there were 8 members of staff who were able to work remotely using laptops and mobile phones (with no remote access to our office systems) and 3 members of staff who were able to carry out limited remote working using mobile phones. Subsequently, the remote working capacity was increased in two tranches and, from end of August 2020, all members of staff are now working remotely, with remote

access to the office systems. However, as our office premises remain temporary closed, we are not able to respond to telephone enquiries or enquiries in person.

Enquiries received

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
2018-19	351	360	338	330	1,379
2019-20	341	344	336	262	1,283
2020-21	177	317	172	192	860

7. There was a decrease of 423 enquiries received in 2020-21 compared to 2019-20 (33%) and a decrease of 519 compared to 2018-19 (38%). In 2019-20, the method of contact for 50% of enquiries received was via the telephone and, therefore, the reduction in the number of enquiries may be as a result of us not being able to provide a telephone enquiry service. However, a detailed analysis of the reasons for this reduction has not been undertaken and there may be other reasons why the number of enquiries has reduced. It should also be noted that there has been an increase in the number of enquiries in some of the types of outcome.

Enquiries closed by outcome

	2019-20		2020-21 Q1/Q2	2020-21 Q3/Q4	2020-21 total		Percentage change increase/ decrease
Making / responding to a request/request for review/appeal	478	37%	116	132	248	29%	8%
Submitting statistics to the portal	21	2%	153	9	162	19%	17%
DPA / FOIA / UK EIRs referrals to ICO	245	19%	57	56	113	13%	6%
Not an FOI issue	87	7%	32	42	74	9%	2%
Referred to other SIC website content	77	6%	27	21	48	6%	no change
No response needed	61	5%	21	25	46	5%	no change
Appeal portal	26	2%	13	21	34	4%	2%
Body under jurisdiction	57	4%	18	11	29	3%	1%
Missing code	40	3%	18	8	26	3%	no change
Other assistance given	12	1%	6	9	15	2%	1%
Press: request for comment/statement/interview	11	1%	11	4	15	2%	1%
Signposted to another body	28	2%	4	10	14	2%	no change
Publication scheme - advice	64	5%	6	6	12	1%	4%
Assessing or improving practice	20	2%	3	6	9	1%	1%
Governance/finance/resources	6	0%	5	1	6	1%	1%
Sent YRTK	10	1%	3	3	6	1%	no change
FOISA / EI(S)Rs / INSPIRE	15	1%	0	3	3	0%	1%
Request for training	7	1%	2	0	2	0%	1%
Other	5	0%	0	1	1	0%	no change
Publication scheme/Gtl	1	0%	0	1	1	0%	no change
Sent Word appeal form	8	1%	0	0	0	0%	1%

Intervention general enquiry	0	0%	0	0	0	0%	no change
Intervention specific case	0	0%	0	0	0	0%	no change
TOTAL	1279	100%	495	369	864	100%	

8. 5 enquiries were open at the end of the 2019-20 reporting year but are now closed and included in the Q1/Q2 figures above.
9. There was 1 open enquiry as at 31 March 2021.
10. Noticeable differences in the 2020-21 figures compared to the 2019-20 figures:
 - an overall decrease in the number of enquires received and responded to in 2020-21
 - an increase in the number of statistics portal enquiries in Q1/Q2 - the 2 main factors which caused this increase were:
 - public authority staff working remotely and not having access to their portal login and password
 - queries regarding the COVID-19 supplementary questionnaire issued by the Policy and Information Team (enquiries were received in response to email requests to complete the questionnaire and subsequent chaser emails) - numbers for this enquiry type reduced to normal levels in Q3/Q4

Response times

11. This report analyses the number of enquiries responded to within the timescales set down in the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in the Key Document C7 Performance and Quality Framework 2020-21 which are:
 - 90% to be responded to within 5 working days or fewer
 - 95% to be responded to within 20 working days or fewer.

	2019-20 Total			2020-21 Total		
	No	%		No	%	
≤ 5 days	1263	98.75%	98.75%	834	96.53%	96.53%
> 5 days / ≤ 20 days	15	1.17%	99.92%	27	3.43%	99.66%
> 20 days	1	0.08%	100%	3	0.34%	100%
TOTAL	1279			864		

12. Both KPIs were met in 2020-21.
13. It should also be noted that:
 - 3 enquiries received in Q1 2020-21 took more than 20 days to respond to and the reasons for this were:
 - 2 were received directly into individual mailboxes and, due to the limited access to office systems, were initially missed
 - 1 was received in the publication scheme mailbox and was dealt with by the Administrator when they were able to access this mailbox

14. Being able to respond to 99.66% of enquiries within 20 working days despite having limited access to our systems and a reduced number of staff able to work remotely between April and August 2020 is worthy of note. Also, this should be recognised as a good example of how our organisation has managed to maintain a service in challenging circumstances due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Risk impact

15. This report helps us to monitor and report on organisational outcomes and helps us to mitigate the risk of not performing our statutory functions and duties to a high standard.
16. The business continuity measures that are in place mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Equalities impact

17. The Enquiries Service is one of the main points of contact for this organisation and we aim to ensure that no one is unlawfully discriminated against when using this service.
18. The impact of the interim restriction of the service to email and postal enquiries, whilst the office premises are temporarily closed, is being monitored (as far as possible).

Privacy impact

19. There is no direct privacy impact arising from this report.

Resources impact

20. As this area of work falls with “business as usual”, the work required is undertaken within current resources.

Operational/strategic plan impact

21. The management and reporting on the Enquiries Service is classed as “business as usual” in the Operational Plan 2020-21.

Records management impact (including any key documents actions)

22. None.

Consultation and Communication

23. QSMTM minute.
24. An Enquiries report is included in the Annual Report.

Publication

25. I recommend that this committee report is published in full.