

Report to:	QSMTM Q2 2023-24
Report by:	Helen Gardner- Swift, Head of Corporate Services (HOCS) Liz Brown, Finance and Administration Manager (FAM)
Meeting Date:	09 November 2023
Subject/ Title:	Enquiries Service Statistics Report 2023-24 VC196950
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 Q1 and Q2 2023-24.

Recommendation and actions

2. I recommend that:
 - (i) the SMT notes the CR
 - (ii) this SMT agree the publications arrangements set out in paragraph 21

Executive summary

3. The Commissioner has a power to give advice on the operation of freedom of information (FOI) and uses this power to provide an Enquiries Service to the public and public authorities. Anyone with a question about FOI can contact us for advice and this service is one of the main points of contact with us. Since the introduction of FOI in 2005, we have answered more than 27,500 enquiries.
4. This CR covers the following:
 - the numbers of enquiries received in 2023-24 Q1 and Q2 with comparative figures for 2022-23 and 2021-22.
 - the outcome of enquiries in 2023-24, with comparative figures for 2022-23.
 - analyses the number of enquiries responded to in Q1 and Q2, within the timescales set down in the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in the Performance and Quality Framework 2023-24 and with comparative figures for 2022-23.

Enquiries received

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
2021-22	178	208	137	160	683
2022-23	163	185	236	224	808
2023-24	230	208			438

5. There was a 43% increase in the number of enquiries received in Q1 this year, compared to Q1 in 2022-23. However, this increase is consistent with the number of enquiries received in Q3 and Q4 2022-23.

Enquiries closed by outcome

	2022-23		2023-24 Q1/Q2	2023-24 Q3/Q4	2023-24 total	
	No	%	No	No	No	%
Making / responding to a request/request for review/appeal	284	35%	125		125	29%
DPA / FOIA / UK EIRs referrals to ICO	127	16%	112		112	26%
Submitting statistics	143	18%	36		36	8%
Not an FOI issue	38	5%	35		35	8%
Referred to other SIC website content	42	5%	32		32	7%
No response needed	40	5%	21		21	5%
Body under jurisdiction	27	3%	14		14	3%
Other assistance given	5	1%	11		11	3%
Missing code	23	3%	9		9	2%
Publication scheme - advice	6	1%	7		7	2%
Assessing or improving practice	15	2%	6		6	1%
Press: request for comment/statement/interview	12	1%	5		5	1%
Sent Word appeal form	5	1%	5		5	1%
Signposted to another body	17	2%	4		4	1%
FOISA / EI(S)Rs / INSPIRE	2	0%	4		4	1%
Other	7	1%	2		2	0%
Governance/finance/resources	9	1%	2		2	0%
Sent YRTK	4	0%	1		1	0%
Intervention general enquiry	0	0%	1		1	0%
Intervention specific case	0	0%	0		0	0%
SAR/RFI consultation	2	0%	0		0	0%
Publication scheme/Gtl	1	0%	0		0	0%
Request for training	0	0%	0		0	0%
TOTAL	809	100%	432		432	100%

6. 1 enquiry was open at the end of the 2022-23 reporting year but is now closed and included in the Q1 and Q2 figures above.
7. There were 7 open enquiries as at 30 September 2023.
8. Public authorities are now familiar with the change in how they submit their statistics which explains the fall in the number of enquiries regarding this topic.

Response times

9. This CR 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 2023-24 which are:
 - 90% to be responded to within 5 working days
 - 95% to be responded to within 20 working days.

	2022-23 (Q1-4) Total			2023-24 (Q1-2) Total		
	No	%		No	%	
≤ 5 days	788	97.4%	97.4%	411	95.1%	95.1%
> 5 days / ≤ 20 days	20	2.5%	99.9%	21	4.9%	100%
> 20 days	1	0.1%		0	0.00%	-
TOTAL	809			432		

10. Both KPIs were met in Q1 and Q2 2023-24.

Risk impact

11. We have policies and procedures providing guidance on how to respond to enquiries to ensure that such requests are appropriately managed and responded to. These policies and procedures mitigate against the risk of not complying with our duties and responsibilities.
12. This CR contributes towards the control measures aimed at reducing the likelihood and impact of risk relating to information governance and data protection.
13. This CR also 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.

Equalities impact

14. The Enquiries Service is one of the main points of contact for our organisation and we aim to ensure that no one is unlawfully discriminated against when using this service.

Privacy impact

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

Resources impact

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

Operational/strategic plan impact

17. The management of and reporting on the Enquiries Service are undertaken as “business as usual” in the Operational Plan 2023-24.

Records management impact (including any key documents actions)

18. None.

Consultation and Communication

19. QSMTM Q2 minute.
20. A report on the Enquiries Service is included in the Annual Report.

Publication

21. I recommend that this CR is published in full.