

Monday, 09 October 2023

Progress has been made in handling customer complaints but there remain gaps in capturing and using learning

Comptroller and Auditor General issues latest report

Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG), Lynn Pamment, has today, 9 October 2023 published a report on ***Handling and Learning from Complaints - Follow Up***.

The report follows up on the 19 recommendations made by the C&AG in her report *Handling and Learning from Complaints* (July 2020) as well as one recommendation from her report, *Management Information in Education - Follow Up* (August 2020). It evaluates:

- the progress made in implementing agreed recommendations
- the extent to which the recommendations as implemented have addressed the improvement areas identified in the report; and
- the adequacy of plans for the implementation of any outstanding recommendations.

Lynn Pamment found that the Government has shown a significant commitment to and investment in relaunching and updating the Customer Feedback Policy since her 2020 review. However, since it was first published, there have been inconsistencies in the way and the extent to which the Policy's commitments have been adopted by departments. In addition, while processes to support and monitor compliance with the Policy have been developed, these have not yet been made fully effective to ensure high quality handling and learning are applied across all Government services and departments.

The C&AG found that both the quality of information available on customer feedback and its analysis have significantly improved since the 2020 Report. However, improvements are chiefly focussed on the 'mechanics' of handling complaints and the types of complaints received. There has been much less focus on the efficiency, effectiveness and reputational benefits of ensuring that learning is taken from complaints. There is as yet no one, coherent, prioritised and resourced action plan to deliver on the stated duty to ensure all customers can easily provide feedback on public services.

The C&AG notes that data from the most recent Quality Assurance Framework audit (covering the period from January to August 2023 and excluding Health and Community

Services data) shows that: only 39% of complaints were recorded as having been acknowledged within the Service Level Agreement (SLA) target time (2 working days); closure of complaints was an average of 32 days over the SLA; and only 7.5% of complaints included an improvement action.

While there has been an expansion of the Key Performance Indicators used to monitor the delivery of the Customer Feedback Policy, there has been no development in the information which is made public. There is much more to do to ensure that the public has a good view of how the Government of Jersey performs against its Policy objectives, in particular in learning from complaints and avoiding repetition.

This follow up review concluded that 14 of the 20 relevant recommendations made in the two 2020 reports have been implemented, five have been partially implemented and one has not been implemented.

Lynn Pamment said:

“The Government clearly recognises that a persistent and consistent focus on delivering the commitments and requirements of the Customer Feedback Policy is key to improving the quality of the services it provides.

“Important progress has been made since my 2020 review. The Policy is aligned with good practice and associated high-quality processes are increasingly in place.

“However, maximising the efficiency, effectiveness and reputational benefits of ensuring that learning is taken from complaints requires that all Government departments set and uphold the same high standards of welcoming and managing complaints, all customers of public services are equally enabled, encouraged and supported to provide feedback, including complaints, arrangements extend to services that are commissioned with public funding and information on complaint themes and also how they are managed clearly drives changes in practice.

“Improvements made since my 2020 report are very encouraging: I have observed the Government’s ambition to develop customer centric services through its Customer Experience and Customer Insight developments. Ensuring that a ‘levelling up’ approach is achieved, avoiding wide variation in how customers experience different Government services, should be the driver for future decision making.”

The report *Handling and Learning from Complaints - Follow Up* can be found at: <https://www.jerseyauditoffice.je>

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- The 2023 Audit Plan can be found at: www.jerseyauditoffice.je
- Lynn Pamment took up the Office of C&AG on 1 January 2020 for a fixed term of seven years. Following the introduction of the Comptroller and Auditor General (Jersey) Law 2014 the term of office is fixed at seven years and is non-renewable.
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