

Postal Redress Service (POSTRS): Independent Complaint
Reviewer Interim Report January - June 2018.

Introduction

This is my third report on POSTRS – which deals with disputes between postal operators who are members of the Service and their customers. This is an interim report covering 1 January to 30 June 2018.

My Role

I am an independent consultant and am not based at CEDR (the Centre for Effective Dispute Resolution), nor am I part of that organisation. There are two aspects to my role.

Firstly, I can consider individual complaints about certain aspects of the level of service provided by POSTRS. Under my terms of reference¹ and the rules of the Service² I am only able to consider points concerning POSTRS' or CEDR's quality of service in respect of alleged administrative errors, delays, staff rudeness or other such service matters. Other than referring to them where appropriate, I cannot comment on the content or validity of the Service's rules.

I can review cases where a user of the Service has complained to POSTRS or CEDR and, having been through CEDR's complaint process, remains dissatisfied. I cannot consider the merits or otherwise of decisions made by CEDR's adjudicators; nor can I investigate, consider or comment on the substance or outcomes of cases or applications made by claimants. Where appropriate, I may make recommendations based on my findings.

The second aspect of my role is to conduct overall reviews of service complaints and produce reports accordingly. These are based on findings from my reviews of individual complaints; and by examining and analysing all or some of the service complaints that POSTRS have handled as I see fit.

¹ <https://www.cedr.com/postrs/docslib/7-cedr-independent-reviewer-terms-of-reference.pdf>

² <https://www.cedr.com/postrs/scheme-rules/>

This Report

I had no complaints referred to me under POSTRS' complaints procedure during the first half of 2018. For the purposes of this report I therefore decided to review all the service complaints received by POSTRS between 1 January and 30 June 2018.

CEDR's Complaints Procedure

The complaints procedure³ covers POSTRS and it explains the scope of the procedure along with the two internal stages of review that take place before, if necessary, a complaint is referred to me.

The procedure is articulated clearly with timescales and information about what can be expected. In brief, if after the first stage response to a complaint a customer remains dissatisfied he or she can ask for escalation to stage two of the process, where a Director will review the complaint. Where this does not resolve the matter, the complaint can be referred to me for independent review.

My Findings

Quantitative

POSTRS continues to receive a very low number of complaints about its service. Out of the 227 cases it handled in this reporting period there were four complaints about POSTRS' own service performance. This represents 1.8% - which is up from 0.4% in 2017, but remains a statistically insignificant number of complaints.

Of the 227 total claims handled in the first half of 2018, 48% (109) received a final decision from an adjudicator. The remaining 52% were either outside the scope for investigation by POSTRS, or were settled without the need to progress to an adjudicator.

³ <https://www.cedr.com/complaints/>

POSTRS did not find wholly for the claimant in any of the 109 adjudicated cases; found partly for the claimant in eight cases (7%); and wholly for the postal operator in 101 cases (93%). This provides a useful context in which to view the complaints made about POSTRS itself. Very few cases were found in favour of the claimant, yet there were only four complaints about POSTRS - suggesting that the Service itself functions well on an operational level.

Table 1 below gives a breakdown of the service complaints about POSTRS:

Table 1

In Scope	Out of Scope	Partly in Scope	Total
1	2	1	4

One case was incorrectly classified as partly in scope, when it should have been out of scope. CEDR have corrected this and the accurate position is reflected in the table above. This was a simple clerical error.

Table 2 below gives a breakdown by outcomes for those cases not out of scope:

Table 2

Upheld	Partly Upheld	Not Upheld	Total
0	2	0	2

These remain very low numbers and it is not possible to identify any trends or themes. However, I found no evidence of any systemic or underlying issues.

Qualitative

I examined all four cases and am satisfied that the correct outcomes were reached. CEDR made goodwill payments in two instances (one for £25.00 and one for £10.00). These related to minor administration errors or delays in handling queries.

There was nothing to indicate whether the customers had accepted the goodwill offers. I raised this with CEDR's Head of Consumer Services who will follow up accordingly.

I also noted that one response to a customer was unsigned – but am satisfied that this was a one off oversight.

All cases were handled within the prescribed 30 working day timescale, with an average of 18 days and a range of 11 to 29 days.

Conclusion

In the context of the volume of work handled by POSTRS the frequency of complaints about its own quality of service remains low. This is evidence of a continuing good performance. However, I will monitor the situation in my full year report given the 1.4 percentage point increase in complaints as a total of claims handled.

The service complaints process is well articulated and the evidence from my review shows it to be working effectively. The responses to consumers that I looked at were of a good standard.

Recommendations

I have no recommendations.

Acknowledgements

I have been given open and unrestricted access to all POSTRS' and CEDR's systems and records along with carte blanche in respect of conducting this audit as I saw fit. I am very grateful for the patience and assistance given to me in terms of navigating systems and dealing with my various questions. I am grateful, too, for CEDR's responses to the occasional points that I raised as I examined the casework.

Chris Holland

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'CA Holland'.

Independent Complaint Reviewer

29 September 2018