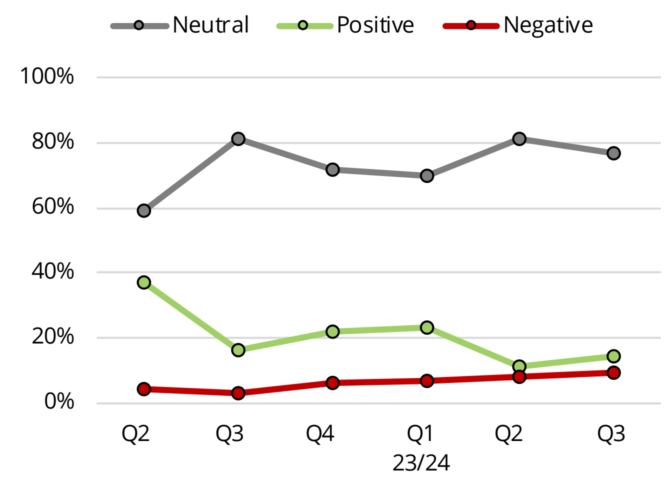
External

Core measures

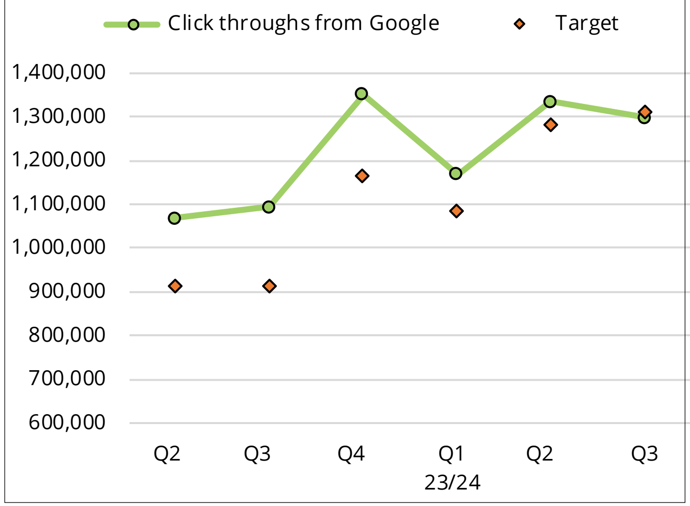
Sentiment of media coverage

Target: Positive should exceed negative



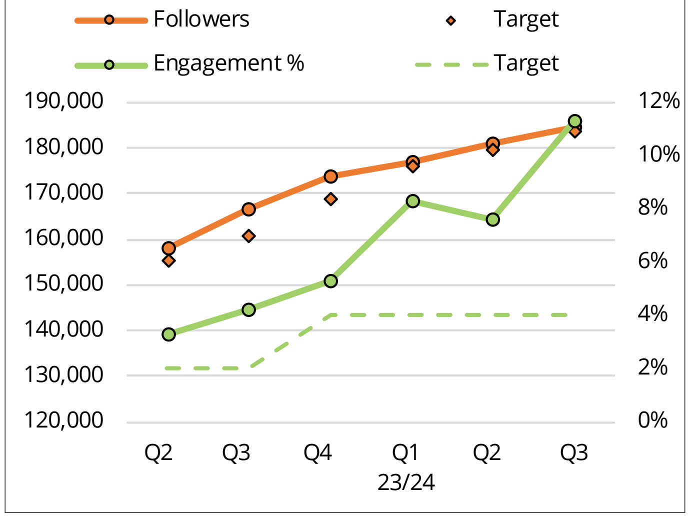
Click-throughs to our website from Google searches

Target: 20% up from the same quarter a year earlier



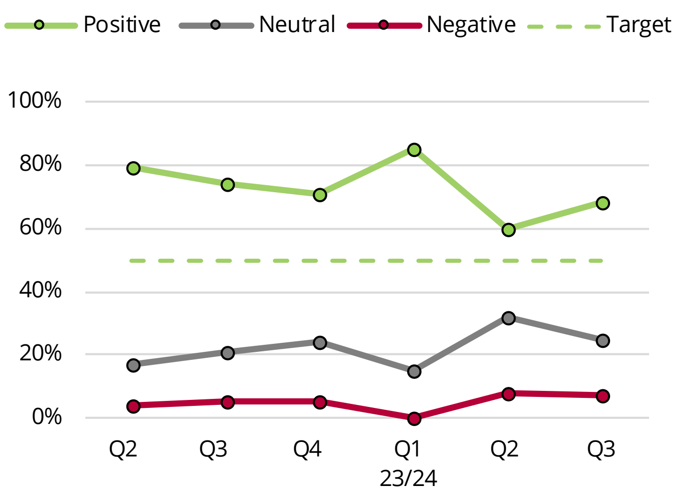
Social media engagements and followers

Target: Followers – 2,500 increase per Q, Engagement % – 4%



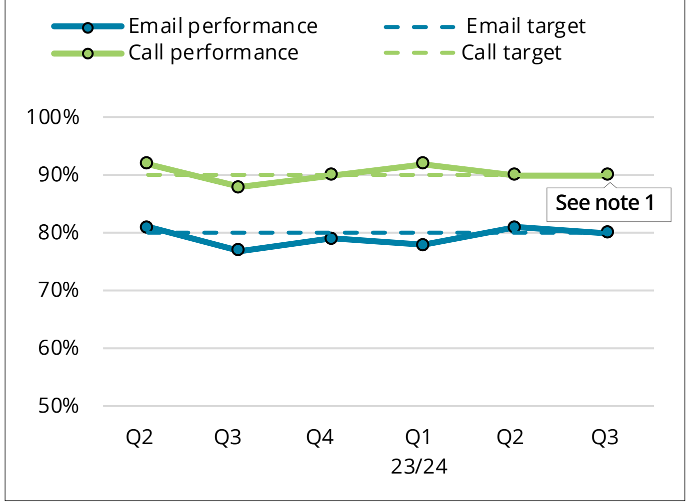
How stakeholders who attend our events view the SRA

Target: Positive feedback 50%



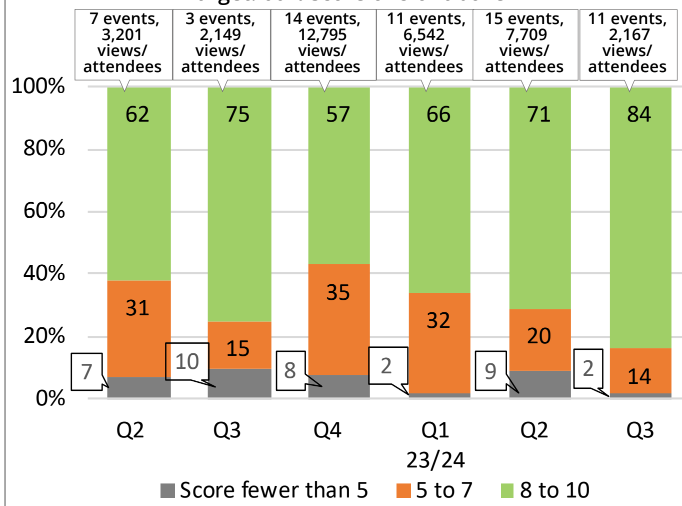
Customer feedback on our contact centre calls and emails

Target: % of satisfied responses – calls 90%, emails 80%



Events feedback – usefulness rating

Target: 60% score of 8 or above



Scale: 1 = not useful at all, 10 = extremely useful

Notes:

1. Q3 figure is for May only, due to not doing the telephone survey in June and July due to the Institute of Customer Service Survey.

Sentiment of media coverage

In Q3 there was more positive media coverage than negative for the 14th consecutive quarter.

Negative coverage was marginally up as a proportion of all media coverage during Q3 compared to the previous quarter.

Topics that generated positive media coverage in Q3 were our:

- warning notice on financial product mis-selling claims and associated guidance on mass claims
- fining regime consultation
- asylum thematic review
- warning notices on mergers and acquisitions, client account shortages and strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs).

Negative coverage during the quarter dealt with various aspects of the proposal that we regulate Chartered Institute of Legal Executives practitioners, including Law Society criticism of the proposal, and our plans to increase the annual compensation fund fees levied on regulated individuals and firms.

Click-throughs to our website from Google searches

Click-throughs to our website by Google web search users in Q3 were up 19% from a year earlier, slightly below the target of 20% year-on-year growth in click-throughs from Google. The search query that generated the largest year-on-year increase in click-throughs from Google was 'sra register'.

Social media engagements and followers

The number of SRA followers across all social media platforms reached almost 185,000 at the end of Q3, up 11% from a year earlier.

At 11.3%, the overall rate of engagement with SRA social media content during Q3 was the highest on record and almost triple our target rate of 4%. Engagements are user interactions with our content, including shares, likes, click-throughs and other post clicks. The current benchmark social engagement rate in the government sector is approximately 2%. It is around 1% in the professional services sector.

SRA social content that drove particularly strong engagement in Q3 dealt with the Solicitors Qualifying Examination (SQE), including our 'Friday Quiz' (which features SQE sample questions), posts about our work in relation to SLAPPs and compliance-focused information about anti-money laundering.

How stakeholders view our events and feedback

We held 11 events during Q3, including standalone events, Consumer Protection Review roundtables and innovation-themed events. Event attendance for the quarter totalled 2,167 (in-person, virtual streaming, and virtual on-demand). Four out of five attendees who scored the usefulness of our events rated them eight out of 10 or higher.

Sixty-eight per cent of attendees who responded to the question in Q3 said they had a positive perception of the SRA, while only 7% said they had a negative perception.

Customer feedback on our contact centre calls and emails

Customer Satisfaction scores were positive in Q2, achieving our aims of 90% for calls and 80% for emails. Satisfaction data was not collected for the whole of Q3, due to running the Institute of Customer Service surveys.

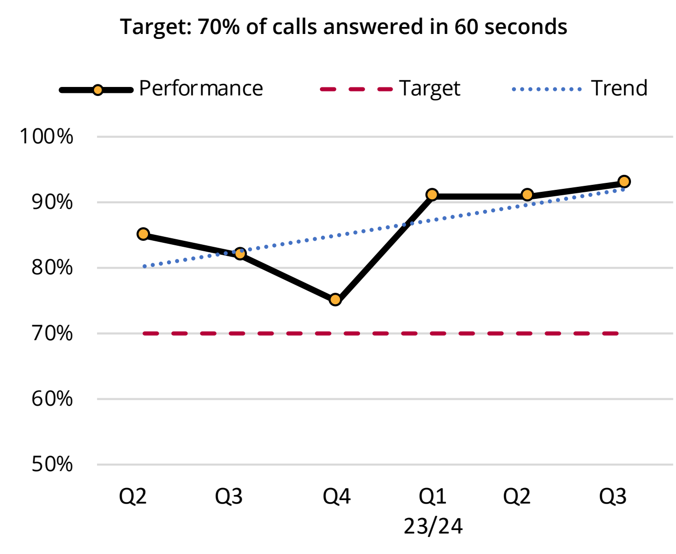
Events feedback – usefulness rating

Those attending our events in Q2 were less positive about the SRA than in other quarters. This was mainly driven by stakeholders who attended our annual SQE conference – including training providers, candidates and law firm representatives – being less likely to be positive about the SRA than other groups of stakeholders.

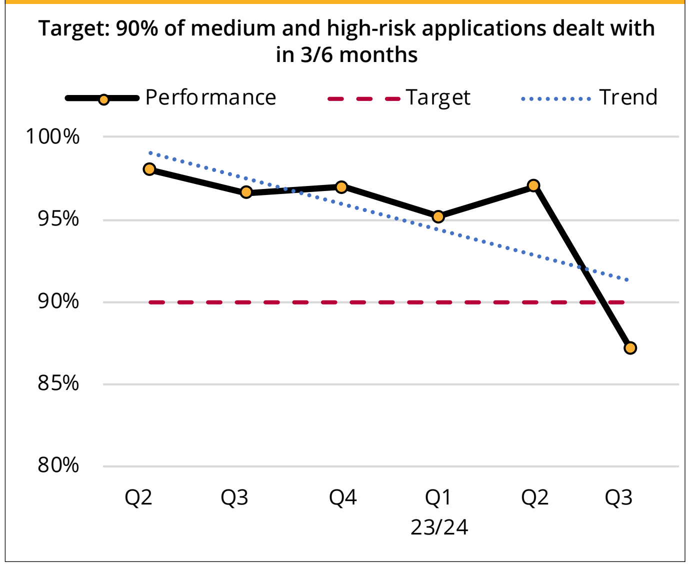
Delivery

Core measures

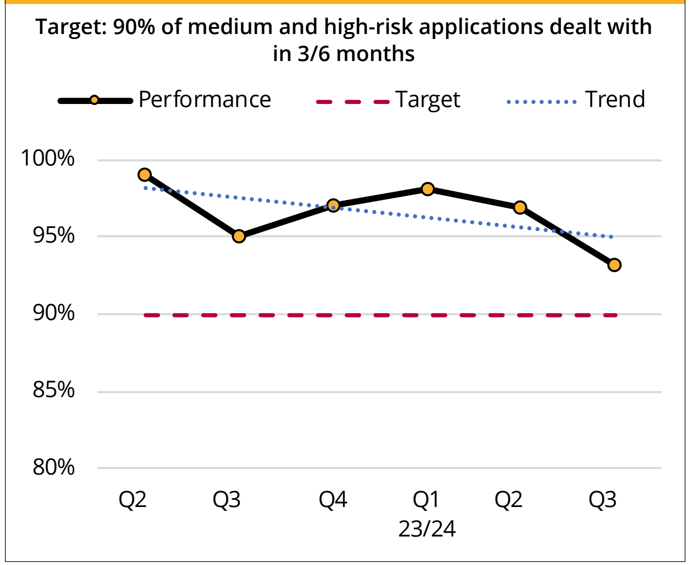
Contact centre



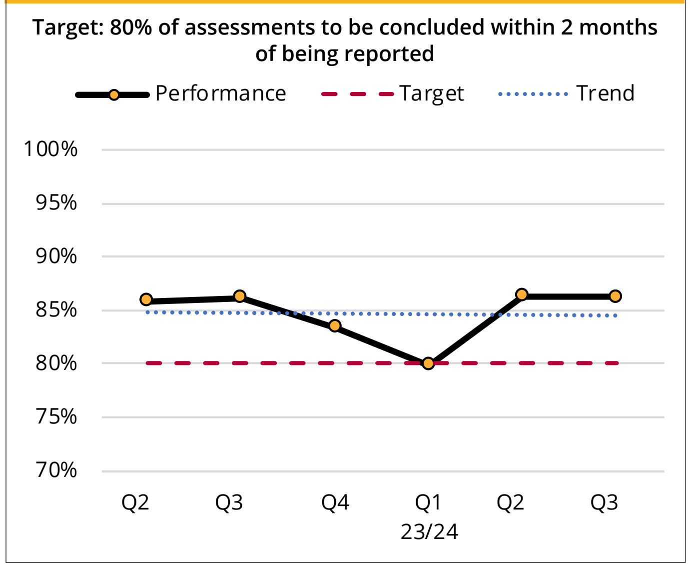
Authorisation – firms



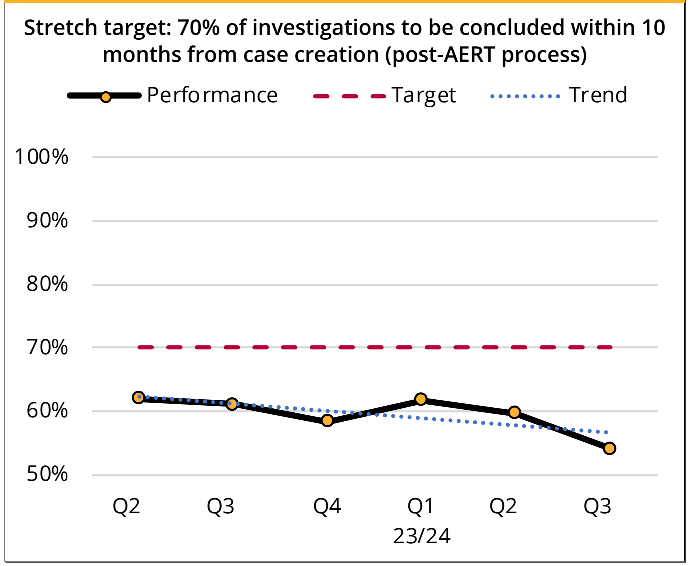
Authorisation – Individuals



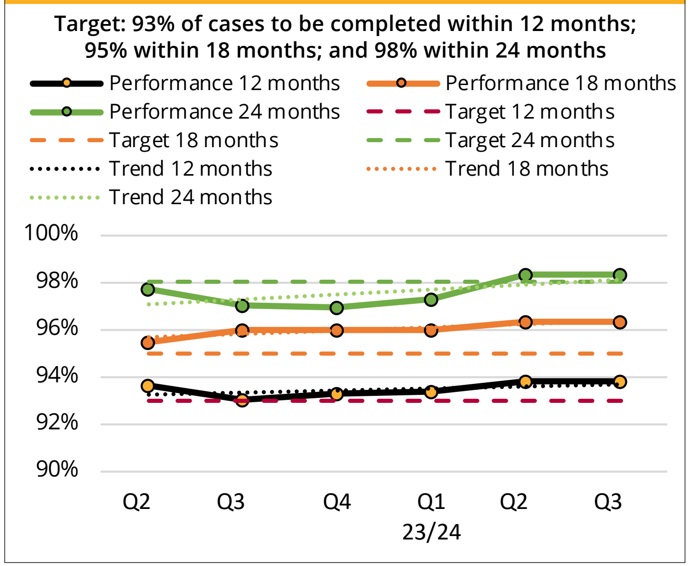
Assessment and early resolution



Investigations

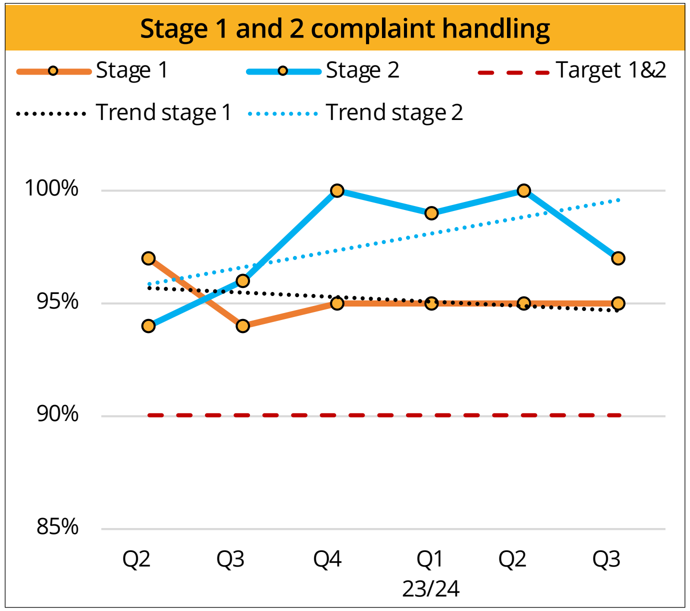


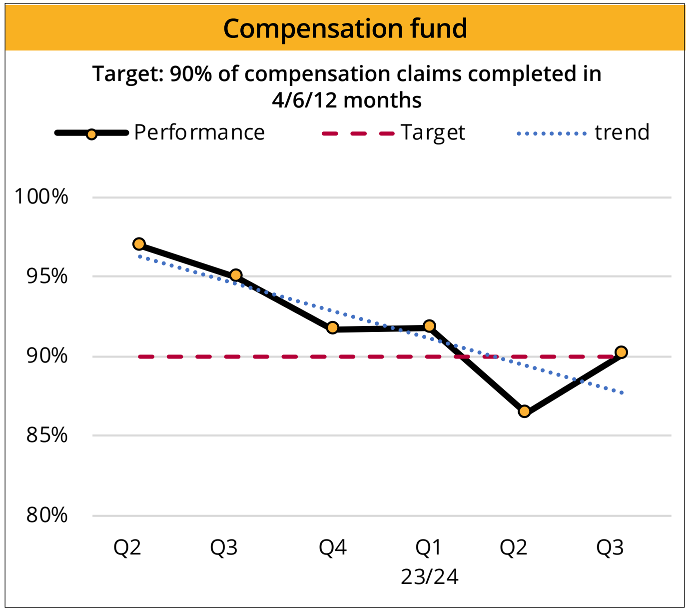
Investigation and enforcement



Notes:

Delivery 2





Notes:

1. Stage 1 and 2 complaint handling targets: to handle stage 1 complaints within 15 days and stage 2 within 20 days. Stage 1 is the response from the team concerned and stage 2 is the response from our Corporate Complaints team, where the matter is not resolved at stage 1.
2. Compensation fund targets: 90% of straightforward claims concluded in four months; 90% of moderate complexity claims concluded in six months; and 90% of complex claims concluded in 12 months.

Contact centre

Performance has been positive in Q2 and Q3, achieving an overall performance of 92% against our target of answering 70% of calls within 60 seconds. Furthermore, we achieved our target of responding to 95% of emails within five days.

Authorisation – firms

KPI performance was strong in Q2, with 97% of medium and high-risk applications closing within service levels. In Q3, as a result of the loss of experienced resource to internal and external moves, the performance for medium/high-risk applications fell to 87%. This was anticipated and new team members are currently going through training and development.

Authorisation – individuals

Performance was positive throughout Q2 and Q3, achieving key performance indicators (KPIs) of 97% and 93%, respectively, for medium and high-risk applications. This period saw record-high receipts of SQE assessment exemptions in March, April and May and included the keeping of the roll exercise throughout April and May.

Assessment and early resolution, investigations and investigation and enforcement

Across Q2 and Q3 we have successfully met all four of our primary timeliness targets:

- assessment and early resolution: 80% of initial assessments of reports to be completed within two months
- investigation and enforcement post-assessment: 93% of investigations concluded within 12 months,
- investigation and enforcement post-assessment: 95% within 18 months
- investigation and enforcement post-assessment: 98% within 24 months.

This sustained performance provides strong evidence that the changes introduced through the investigation and enforcement improvement programme have stabilised our ability to manage work in progress. In addition, at the end of Q3, we reduced the number of investigations over 24 months old to 57, a 65% reduction from the 162 we had when we launched the new ways of working in July 2023. At the same time we have made significant reductions in the total number of investigations over 18 and 12 months old, and the the legal team have exceeded the existing target for lodging cases with the Tribunal of 80% within 20 weeks, averaging 94%, and the new stretch measure of 60% of cases within 3 months.

The only area of timeliness where we have struggled to make improvements is the new stretch target to resolve 70% of investigations within 10 months (post assessment and early resolution). This had been set at an aspirational level to provide appropriate stretch for our teams and to track impacts of the work to improve our levels of performance (which would not be fully evident in the cases measured in this target until later in the year). We will keep under review whether this is a realistic target is or whether the complexity of our investigations suggests this is unrealistic for the majority of our work, and report further to the Board on this in summer 2025.

Stage 1 and 2 complaint handling

During Q2 and Q3, we consistently exceeded our KPI targets to respond to 90% of stage 1 and stage 2 complaints within process timelines. Details on how many complaints we upheld are as follows:

- In Q2, we received 230 stage 1 complaints and upheld 65 (28%).
- In Q3, we received 204 stage 1 complaints and upheld 64 (31%).
- In Q2, we received 70 stage 2 complaints and upheld 12 (17%).
- In Q3, we received 64 stage 2 complaints and upheld 20 (31%).

From time to time, members of the Board are sent correspondence from complainants. Our Corporate Complaints Policy is under review and will be updated in the autumn to include wording to make it clear to complainants that such correspondence will not be responded to by the Board personally and will be forwarded to the business for a response under the Corporate Complaints Policy, if needed.

All Board correspondence received by the Corporate Complaints team was dealt with appropriately, either acknowledged and dealt with under the complaints process or forwarded to the business for an appropriate response if needed, or in cases where contact had already been managed with the complainant filed with no response. There were two instances in Q2–3 where a change of action occurred as a result of considering the correspondence. One which led to a further call with an ex-solicitor to provide advice on their use of the term 'solicitor' and a second matter where the business agreed to wait for the outcome of the complainant's legal applications to be heard before publishing information.

Compensation fund

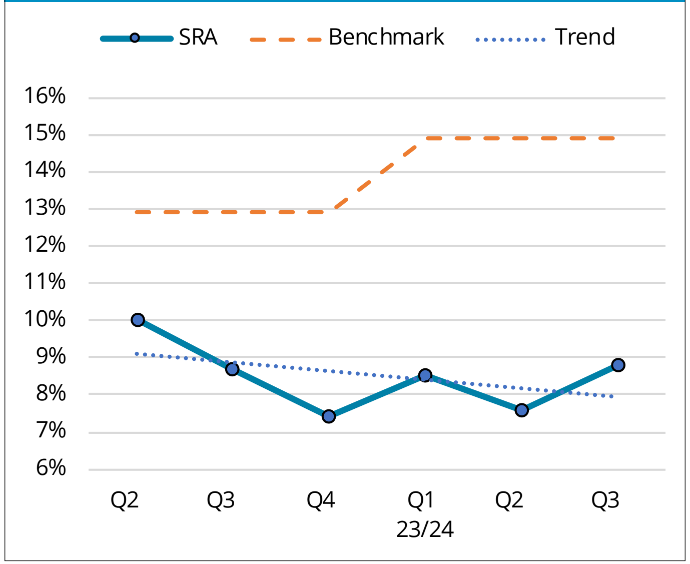
Compensation fund performance has remained strong across the quarter and has returned to being within target. We continue to see a high volume of claims but are maintaining performance and meeting the committed prioritisation approach for Axiom Ince claims.

Internal

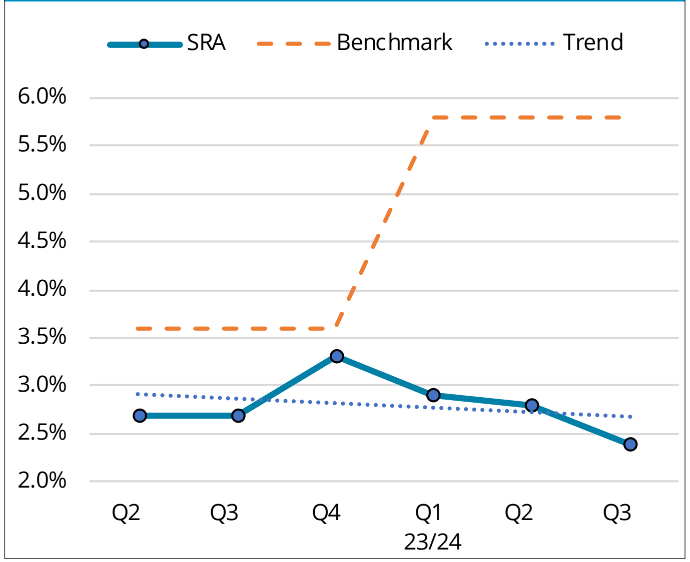
Core measures

Topical measures

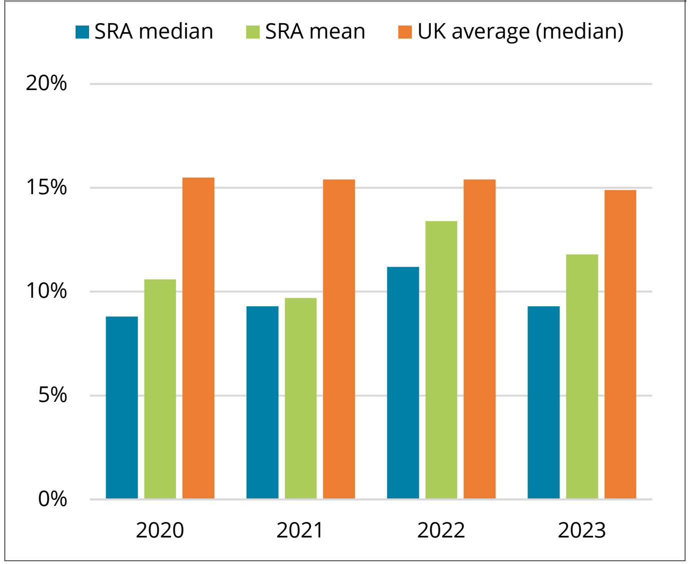
Voluntary staff turnover



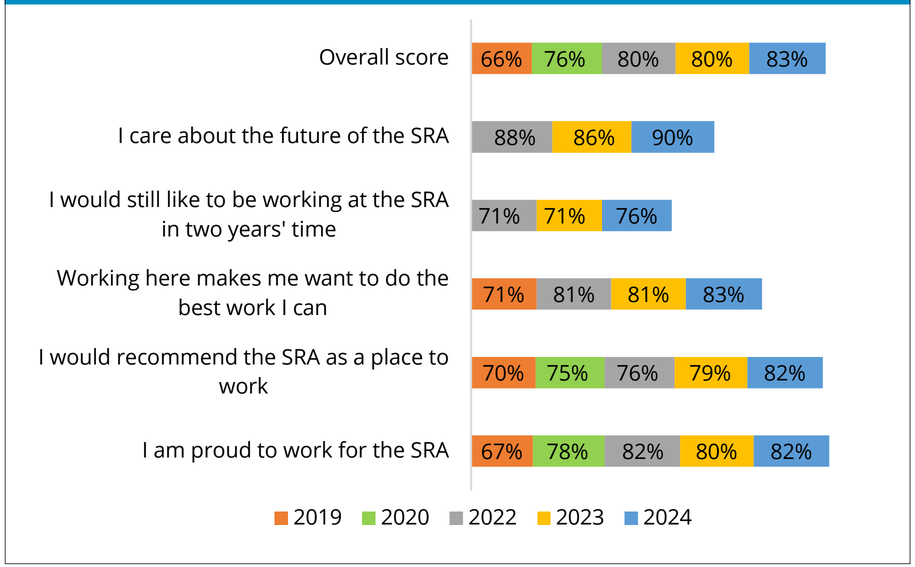
Time lost to sickness



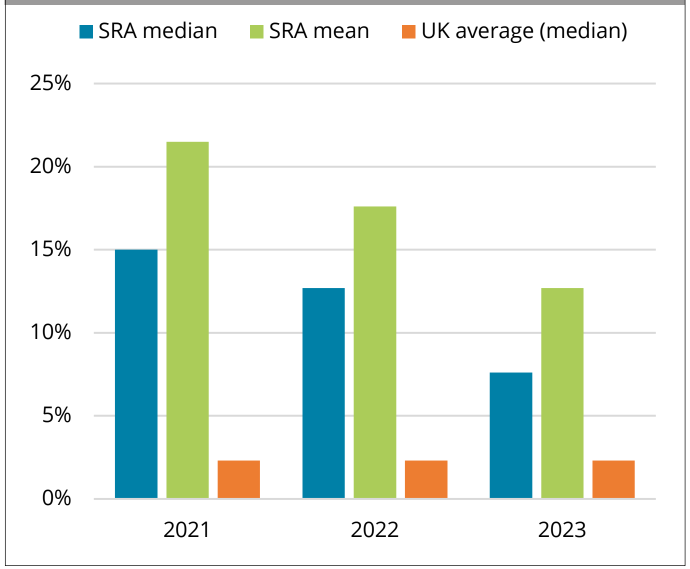
Gender pay gap



Staff engagement



Ethnicity pay gap



Internal

Voluntary staff turnover

Staff turnover is fluctuating between 7% and 9% each quarter. There is no apparent reason for this variation but this suggests some stability within the organisation while the recruitment market remains volatile.

Time lost to sickness

Time lost to sickness has decreased slightly, possibly due to the time of year. We continue to monitor the trend and promote our wellbeing initiatives and other interventions, such as our employee assistance and occupational health provisions.

Turnover and sickness – benchmark data

Both turnover and sickness remain below the external benchmark. The analysis continues to report the data being influenced heavily by those sectors which have awarded lower or no pay awards in the last couple of years. The benchmark for sickness is 5.8% compared to 3.6% previously. Analysis is reporting the public sector having a heavy influence, quoting an increase in anxiety and stress post pandemic.

Gender and ethnicity pay gap

Our latest pay gap reporting has been published. The data was recently discussed at our Remuneration Committee in February and Board in July. The Board requested we consider modelling the data to see what would make a difference to the gaps. It also requested we research the ethnicity pay gap data of other organisations in the sector to act as a comparison. We plan to work on these requests during quarter four. The new data from 5 April 2024 has been analysed and will be reported to the Remuneration Committee in September. We continue to work on the action plans in place.

Staff engagement

Full analysis of the 2024 annual staff engagement survey was reported to Board in July. Our action plan in response to the survey has now been published. It covers reward, change, wellbeing and leadership.

Financial

Where we spend our money

Variance to forecast November - July 2024

£m	Actual	Budget	Variance	Variance %
Income	98.30	97.20	1.10	1.1
Staff costs	32.44	32.48	0.04	0.1
Other costs	60.49	59.87	-0.62	-1.0

Variance to budget November - July 2024

£m	Actual	Budget	Variance	Variance %
Income	98.30	91.80	6.50	7.1
Staff costs	32.44	32.60	0.16	0.5
Other costs	60.49	56.45	-4.04	-7.2

Income

Income for the year remains in excess of budget, predominantly due to additional income from the SQE due to higher candidate numbers. This is matched by corresponding increased costs associated with delivering the exam, meaning a neutral net impact.

There is also reduced income from the compensation fund, which reflects the continuing lower-than-budgeted costs of interventions. Regulatory income is also running ahead of budget due to increased applications from exemptions from elements of SQE. This is related to the overall increase in candidate numbers.

Expenditure

Expenditure on staff costs was 0.5% under budget for the first nine months of the year. We saw a small increase in the level of voluntary staff turnover earlier in the year, which resulted in larger underspends in the earlier part of the year. Headcount is now much closer to budget, resulting in the reduced underspend. The forecast for the full year is that staff costs will be broadly in line with budget.

Within non-staff costs, there are a number of variances with the cumulative effect being a significant overspend against budget, which is however net neutral overall when considered with income. The increased costs associated with higher SQE candidate numbers are offset by increased income from examinations. The below budget spend on interventions is offset by reduced income from the compensation fund.

Additionally, there is an underspend of around £1.8m on project activity as we have reprioritised during the year with our focus shifting towards the ongoing consumer protection work. This has taken up a lot of internal resources' time, but, at this stage, not yet a large amount of additional external project cost. Within non-staff costs, there is an overspend on external legal fees of around £2.2m, which we expect to increase to more than £3m by the end of the financial year. The reduction in the number of older cases under investigation noted in the Delivery scorecard has had a financial consequence. Many of these investigations have resulted in referrals to the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal, meaning there are additional cases where external law firms needed to support with this work. We expect to manage this overspend within the approved budget for the year. The potential impact for the next financial year will be considered by the Board as part of the 2024-25 budget review.

Forecast

The revised forecast for the financial year is now a £2.7m surplus. This is a slight reduction from a £3m surplus we previously reported, but significantly favourable to the original budget position of a £1.2m surplus. The final position will also depend on the performance of investments, where large variances can be experienced from month to month.