

Postal Redress Service (POSTRS): Independent Complaint Reviewer Report January - June 2022.

1. Introduction

This is my eleventh report on POSTRS - which deals with complaints about postal operators who are members of the Service. It covers 1 January to 30 June 2022.

CEDR (the Centre for Effective Dispute Resolution) have agreed that rather than an interim report followed by a full year report, from now on I'll produce a full report every six months.

2. My Role

I am an independent consultant and am not based at CEDR, nor am I part of that organisation. There are two aspects to my role.

I can review cases where users of the Service have complained to POSTRS or CEDR and, having been through the complaints procedure, remain dissatisfied with the outcome. I cannot consider the merits or otherwise of decisions made by CEDR's adjudicators; nor can I investigate or review the substance or outcomes of claimants' applications. I may make recommendations based on my findings.

The second aspect of my role is to review complaints about the Service generally, and produce six monthly reports. These are based on my findings from any individual complaints that I've reviewed; and by examining and analysing all or some of the service complaints about POSTRS as I see fit.

3. CEDR's Complaints Procedure

CEDR's complaints procedure¹ covers POSTRS. It explains the scope of the procedure and the two internal review stages 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 CEDR's first stage response to a complaint a customer remains dissatisfied they can ask for escalation to stage two of the process, where a senior manager will review the complaint. Where this does not resolve the matter, it can be referred to me for independent review.

¹ <https://www.cedr.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/CEDR-Complaints-Procedure.pdf>

4. This Report

There was only one complaint, so my report is brief.

5. My Findings

(a) Quantitative

POSTRS received 302 applications during this reporting period, which is 15% fewer than the preceding six months.

CEDR had one complaint about the Service, representing 0.3% of the applications (down from 1.4% compared to the six months before).

Of the 302 total applications handled, 44% (133) received an adjudicator's final decision. The remaining 56% either fell outside of POSTRS' investigative scope, or were settled without progressing to adjudication. This is broadly in line with expectations.

Of the 133 adjudicated claims, POSTRS found wholly for the claimant in 10 cases (7.5%); partly for the claimant in four cases (3.0%); and wholly for the postal operator in 119 cases (89.5%). Again, this is in line with the norm.

It's not my role to comment on claims or their outcomes; I include these data for contextual purposes only.

With only one complaint, it's pointless to include tables giving breakdowns. Suffice to say that the complaint was in scope and was not upheld. CEDR classified it correctly.

(b) Qualitative

(i) Timescales

CEDR acknowledged the complaint in one working day and completed their Stage 1 review in 18 working days.

(ii) Casework and Outcomes

The complainant felt that POSTRS was incompetent; failed to take account of information; was obstructive; and closed a claim incorrectly. They wanted their claim re-assigned, and a POSTRS staff member removed from handling the claim.

CEDR's Stage 1 review was comprehensive, and established that the customer had in fact not completed an important part of the claims process; it was also established that the customer had acknowledged that they'd read and understood the process at the start of the claim.

CEDR had helpfully explained what the customer needed to do to progress matters, and had not unreasonably closed the claim – promising to re-open it immediately the customer obtained relevant documentation. The case was indeed later re-opened.

In short, CEDR found no grounds for this complaint. I agree. There were no administrative failings, and the process was followed competently throughout without obstruction.

6. Conclusion

One complaint is a commendably low number, and my review suggests that POSTRS is maintaining a very good performance.

The Stage 1 response was of a high standard.

I have nothing further to add, other than to congratulate POSTRS.

7. Recommendations

I have no recommendations.

Acknowledgements

I conducted my review remotely, with the customary open and unrestricted access to the systems and records that I needed. I remain grateful to CEDR for facilitating this - and I had carte blanche in respect of conducting this audit as I saw fit.

Chris Holland



Independent Complaint Reviewer
8 July 2022