

The Service Complaints Ombudsman for the Armed Forces (SCOAF) provides independent and impartial oversight of the Service complaints system for members of the UK Armed Forces.

SCOAF Contacts

- In the last twelve months (April 2019 - March 2020), SCOAF received 753 contacts (emails, written correspondence and telephone calls).
- In Q1 2020, SCOAF received 186 contacts, which represented an increase of 6% on the 175 contacts received in Q4 2019 and a decrease of 1% on the 188 contacts received in Q1 2019.
- Of these 186 contacts, 175 were in-scope¹ and could be processed as applications.
- Of these in-scope¹ contacts, 26% were processed as referral requests, 43% were processed as investigations requests and 11% were not pursued further.

SCOAF Referrals

- Referrals requests received in Q1 2020 (46 requests) have risen by 64% compared to Q4 2019 (28 requests) and have risen by 48% compared to Q1 2019 (31 requests).
- In Q1 2020, 100% of referral requests closed were within timeliness targets².

Chart 1: Number of SCOAF quarterly contacts received, Q1 2018–Q1 2020

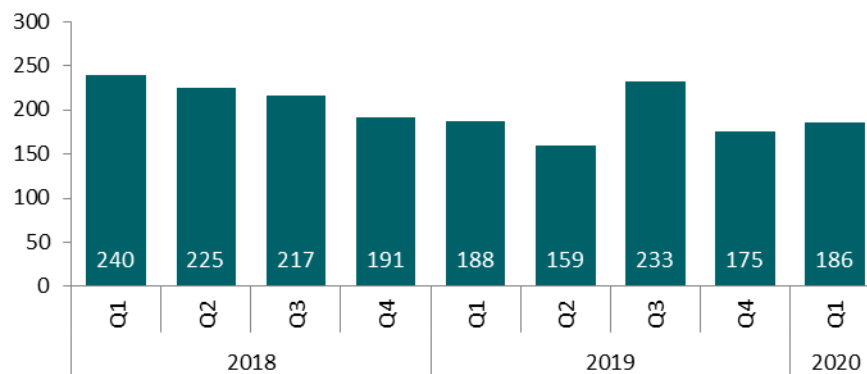
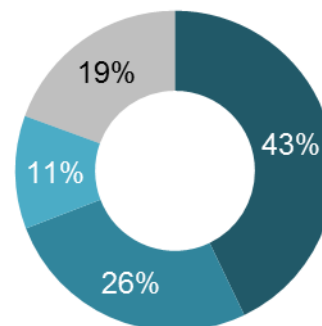


Chart 2: Breakdown of in-scope¹ contacts to SCOAF, Q1 2020

- Investigation
- Referred
- Not pursued
- Ongoing



- In scope contacts are all contacts which have the potential to lead to either an investigation request or a referrals request.
- The SCOAF referrals timeliness target is to make a Service complaints referral within 10 calendar days.

Quarterly Statistical Report

This report presents key findings from the casework of the Service Complaints Ombudsman for the Armed Forces. It supplements data released in the [Annual Report](#)

Figures presented are **provisional** and are subject to later revision. They are produced in the spirit of the [Code of Practice for Official Statistics](#)

SCOAF Contacts and Referrals

New enquiries to SCOAF are logged on the casework system and are referred to as contacts. Contacts that fall within the Ombudsman's jurisdiction are referred to as 'in scope'.

The Ombudsman can refer an individual's intention to make a Service complaint to their chain of command.

SCOAF Investigations

- In Q1 2020, the Ombudsman has received 75 investigation requests. This represents an increase of 3% when compared to Q4 2019 (73 requests) and a decrease of 7% when compared to Q1 2019 (81 requests).
- The most requests were for investigations into admissibility decisions and substance.
- 85% of all investigation requests were considered eligible for investigating.
- In the last 12 months, Royal Navy³ had the highest complainant upheld rates⁴ for Admissibility Decisions at 47% and the Army had the lowest with 27%. For Undue Delay, the RAF had the highest complainant upheld rates⁴ at 67% and Army had the lowest with 50%.
- In Q1 2020, 83% of eligible investigation requests closed were within SCOAF timeliness targets⁵. There was a 96% timeliness rate for Admissibility Decision Investigations, 89% for Undue Delay investigations, 67% timelessness rate for Maladministration and 60% timelessness rate for Substance investigations⁶.
- As of 31st March 2020, we have 38 unallocated substance and mal-administration cases - a decrease of 22% since 31st December 2019 (49 cases).

Fig 1.3: Investigation requests to SCOAF by case type, Q1 2020

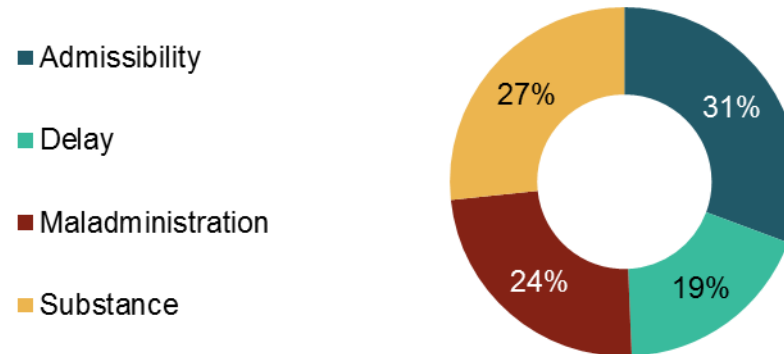
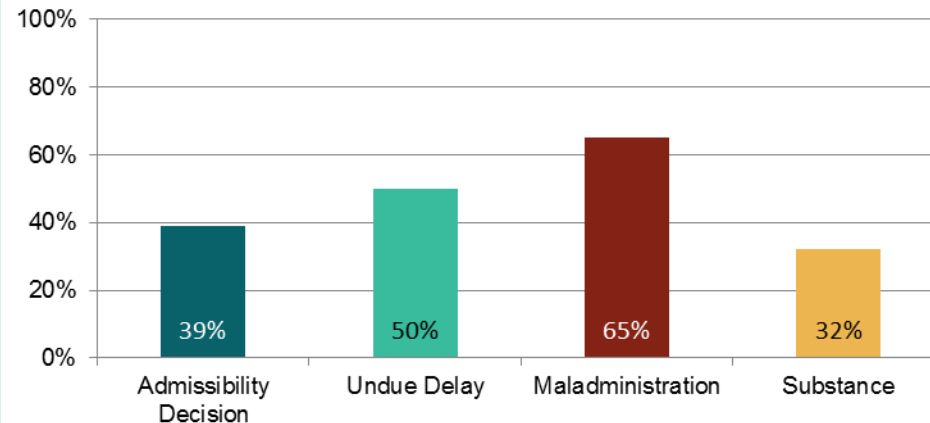


Fig 1.4: SCOAF investigation upheld rate³ by case type for the last 12 months, April 2019 – March 2020



3. Includes Royal Marines

4. Investigations upheld in favour of the complainant fully or partially.

5. The SCOAF investigations timeliness target is to complete the investigation and decision within 17 working days for investigations into Admissibility Decisions and Undue Delay and 100 working days for investigations into Maladministration and Substance .

6. This improvement on previous years is due to the introduction of the triage process whereby all Maladministration and Substance cases are now assessed on receipt to determine whether an investigation will be conducted. The criteria for making this decision can be found on our website.

SCOAF Investigations

The Ombudsman's powers of investigation are limited to:

- Review of **admissibility decisions**
- Undue delay** in the handling of a Service complaint or Service matter
- Substance** (merits) of a Service complaint that has been finally determined
- Maladministration** of a Service complaint that has been finally determined

Tri Service 'red flag' cases

- At end of Q1 2020, the three Services had 485 'red flag' complaints open – a 8% increase on the end of Q4 2019 (450 complaints), and an increase of 2% on the end of Q1 2019 (475 complaints).
- The RAF reported a 12% increase from 12 months ago, in the number of red flag cases (from 66 cases to 74 cases) while the Royal Navy reported an 1% increase (from 97 cases to 98 cases). The Army reported a less than 1% increase (from 312 to 313 cases).
- 56% of 'red flag' cases have been open for more than double the target period (48 weeks).
- On average (median⁷), cases have spent 33 weeks beyond the 24 week target.
- The average (median⁷) time a red flag has spent beyond the 24 week target is 51 weeks for the Royal Navy, 25 weeks for the Army and 30 weeks for the RAF.
- Royal Navy reported a 67% increase from 12 months ago, in the time outstanding for red flag cases (from 31 weeks to 51 weeks) while the Army reported an 21% decrease (from 31 weeks to 25 weeks) and the RAF reported a 29% increase (from 23 weeks to 30 weeks).

Chart 5: Number of Service complaints (tri Service) beyond 24 week target (i.e. red flag cases)

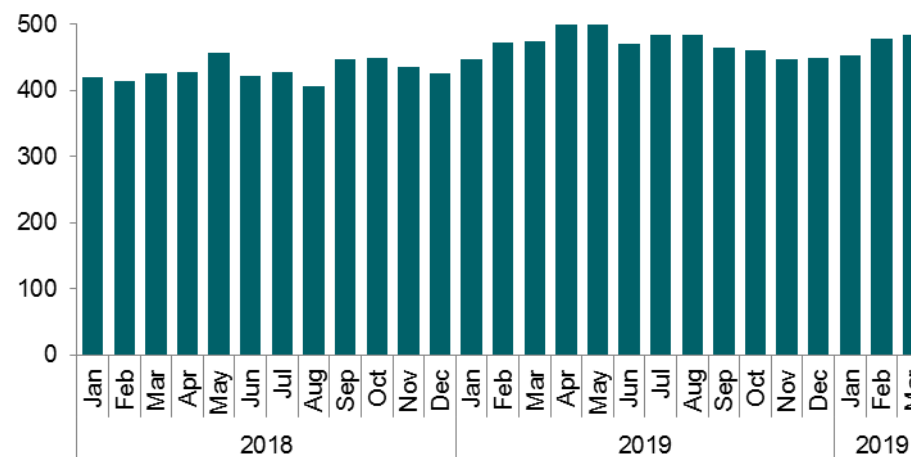
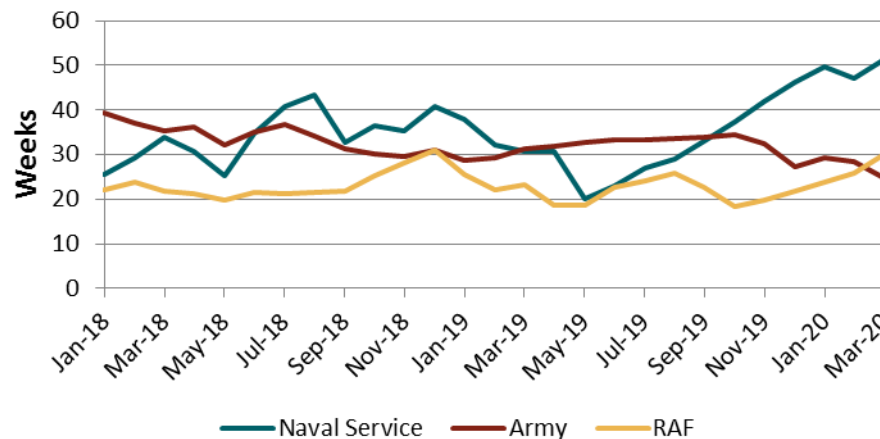


Chart 6: Median⁷ number of weeks spent over 24 week target for red flag cases by Service



7. The median is a type of average. The median case is the mid-ranked case of all cases ranked by number of weeks spent over target. The median number of weeks spent over target is the median case's number of weeks spent over target.

Tri Service 'red flag' cases

From January 2013, the Services were tasked by the Ministry of Defence (MOD) to resolve 90% of Service complaints within a 24-week timeline. 'Red flag' cases are those which have exceeded this target. It is a Key Performance Indicator as set out by MOD.

Quarterly Statistical Report issued by

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About the data

SCOAF caseload data was extracted from the SCOAF casework system as at 30th September 2019. Data on the tri Service 'red flag' cases was extracted from Joint Personnel Administration system (JPA) as at 30th September 2019.