

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 (January – December 2019), SCOAF received 754 contacts (emails, written correspondence and telephone calls).
- In Q4 2019, SCOAF received 175 contacts which represents a 25% decrease on Q3 2019 (233 contacts) and a 8% decrease on Q4 2018 (191 contacts).
- Of these 175 contacts, 161 were in-scope¹ and could be processed as applications.
- Of these in-scope¹ contacts, 16% were processed as referral requests, 43% were processed as investigations requests and 7% were not pursued further.

SCOAF Referrals

- Referrals requests received in Q4 2019 (26 requests) have fallen by 48% from Q3 2019 (50 requests) and fallen by 13% from Q4 2018 (30 requests).
- In Q4 2019, 100% of referral requests closed were within timeliness targets².

Fig 1.1: Number of SCOAF quarterly contacts received, Q1 2018 – Q4 2019

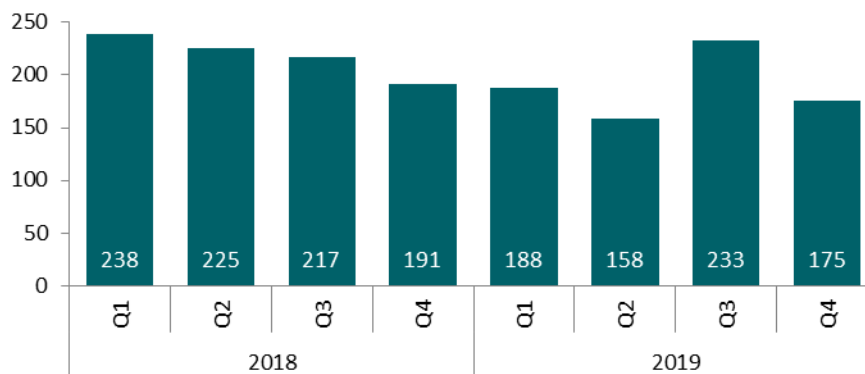
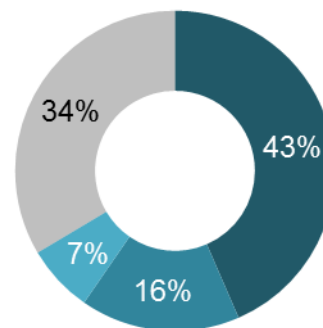


Fig 1.2: Breakdown of in-scope¹ contacts to SCOAF, Q4 2019

- 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 Q4 2019, the Ombudsman received 70 investigation requests. This represents a fall of 31% on Q3 2019 (101 requests) and a fall of 14% on Q4 2018 (81 requests).
- The most frequent requests were investigations into admissibility decisions and undue delay.
- In Q4 2019, 80% of investigation requests were considered eligible for investigating.
- In the last 12 months, Naval Service had the highest complainant upheld rates³ for Admissibility Decisions at 55% and the Army had the lowest with 32%. For Undue Delay, the RAF had the highest complainant upheld rates³ at 67% and Army had the lowest with 46%.
- In Q4 2019, 77% of eligible investigation requests closed were within SCOAF timeliness targets⁴. There was a 91% timeliness rate for Admissibility Decision Investigations, and 100% for Undue Delay investigations, 50% timeless rate for Maladministration and Substance investigations.
- As of 31st December 2019, we have 49 unallocated substance and mal-administration cases - a decrease of 34% since 30th September 2019 (74 cases).

Fig 1.3: Investigation requests to SCOAF by case type, Q4 2019

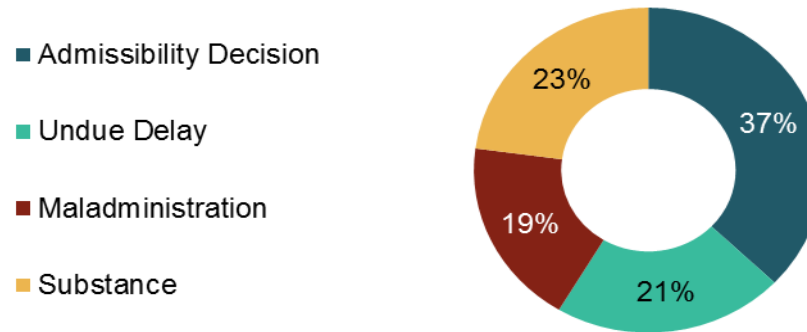
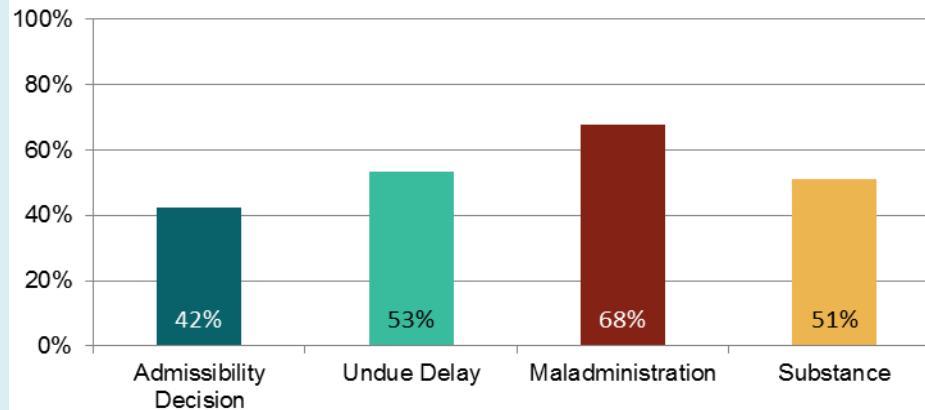


Fig 1.4: SCOAF investigation upheld rate³ by case type for the last 12 months, January – December 2019



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

4. 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 .

Note: SCOAF investigation timeliness statistics for QSR Q4 2019 are restricted to completed investigations. This differs from QSR Q1 2019 to QSR Q3 2019 where SCOAF investigation timeliness statistics included cases closed as SCOAF declined to investigate after a triage decision. Figures are not comparable between these publications.

SCOAF Investigations

The Ombudsman's powers of investigation are limited to:

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

Tri Service 'red flag' cases

- At end of Q4 2019, the three Services had 450 'red flag' complaints open – a 3% decrease on the end of Q3 2019 (464 complaints), but an increase of 6% on the end of Q4 2018 (426 complaints).
- Naval Service reported a 21% increase from 12 months ago, in the number of red flag cases (from 75 cases to 91 cases) while the RAF reported an 18% increase (from 55 cases to 65 cases). The army reported a 1% decrease (from 296 to 294 cases).
- 60% of 'red flag' cases have been open for more than double the target period (48 weeks).
- On average (median⁵), cases have spent 32 weeks beyond the 24 week target.
- The average (median⁵) time a red flag has spent beyond the 24 week target is 46 weeks for the Naval Service, 27 weeks for the army and 22 weeks for the RAF.
- Naval Service reported a 13% increase from 31 December 2018, in the time outstanding for red flag cases (from 41 weeks to 46 weeks) while the Army reported an 12% decrease (from 31 weeks to 27 weeks) and the RAF reported a 30% decrease (from 31 weeks to 22 weeks).

Fig 1.5: Number of Service complaints (tri Service) beyond 24 week target (i.e. red flag cases)

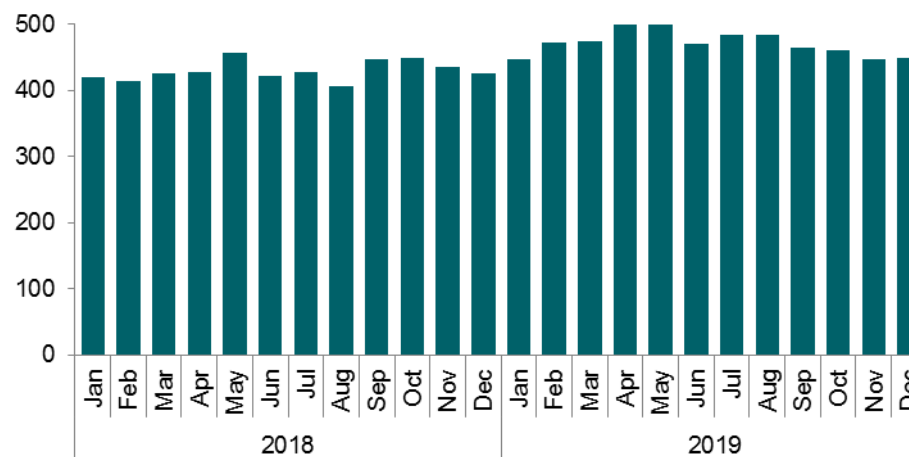
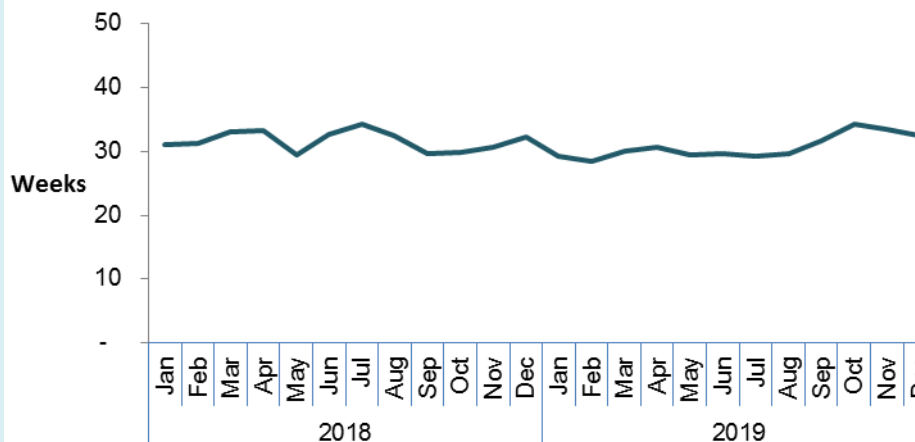


Fig 1.6: Median⁵ number of weeks spent over 24 week target for red flag cases



5. 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 31st December 2019.