

Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

Meeting Date	16 September 2026
Title	Annual feedback and complaints report 2025-26
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Executive Sponsor	Claire Amor, Executive Director of Corporate Affairs
Executive Summary The purpose of this paper is to provide the Committee with an overview of corporate complaints and feedback received by the HCPC between 1 April 2025 and 31 March 2026, including key trends, performance against service standards, learning outcomes, and positive feedback. In this time: • The HCPC received 1,114 complaints in 2025-26, up from 748 the previous year, averaging 93 per month with increases partially driven by international application challenges following on from the previous period. • 51% of complaints were upheld and 19% were partially upheld in 2025-26, which combined was slightly favourable to the previous period where 54% and 18% were recorded respectively. • Performance against the 15 day response standard fell to 57% in 2025-26 from 63% in the previous year, impacted by high volumes and resource constraints. • Positive feedback continued to be received regularly in 2025-26 with 66 instances, highlighting staff professionalism and support.	
Action required	The Committee is asked to review the information provided and seek clarification on any areas.
Previous consideration	This is an annual report to the Committee.
Next steps	None as a result of this report
Financial and resource implications	None as a result of this report

Associated strategic priority/priorities	Supporting healthcare workforce development through proportionate, agile regulation Putting patients at the centre of smarter, preventative regulation
Associated strategic risk(s)	SR01 - Delivery of Regulatory Requirements SR02 - Organisational Capacity SR07 - FTP Effectiveness - Case Communication
Risk appetite	Regulation - measured Compliance - measured
Communication and engagement	None as a result of this report
Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) impact and Welsh language standards	Tracking trends in complaints enables us to monitor and identify if there are any EDI or Welsh Language issues which we need to address.
Other impact assessments	• Data protection • Sustainability
Reason for consideration in the private session of the meeting (if applicable)	Not applicable

Annual Review of Feedback and Complaints 2025-26

1. Background

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to provide the Committee with an overview of corporate complaints and feedback received by the HCPC between April 2025 and March 2026, including key trends, performance against service standards, learning outcomes, and positive feedback.

2. Overview and summary

- 2.1 Complaints received in 2025-26 increased by 49% from the previous year and were at consistently higher levels throughout the year, with spikes in October 2025 and January 2026.
- 2.2 Increases in corporate complaints have been reported across the healthcare regulatory sector as has an increase in Fitness to Practise (FTP) referrals. The HCPC saw an increase of more than 40% in FTP referrals last year. For both corporate complaints and FTP referrals there has also been an increasing complexity to the correspondence received, linked to the use of artificial intelligence (AI). While AI has made it easier to raise grievances, it has also provided new challenges to the teams processing them.
- 2.3 The majority of complaints received were about functions and activities in relation to Registration and FTP processes, which received 62% and 33% of the complaints respectively; in comparison these percentages were 63% and 30% for the previous reporting period and remain proportionally similar. These two regulatory areas are the most public facing and have high levels of stakeholder engagement.
- 2.4 The main driver of complaint activity within Registration were related to international applications (82% of all Registration complaints), with themes around delays, communication and plagiarism investigations. Some of the issues were carried over into 2025-26 from the previous reporting period and had been a result of the challenges related to plagiarism processes and a surge in international applications. By the end of Q4 2025-26 complaint levels for Registration appeared to be showing signs of settling as some of those pressures eased and as process improvement work was realised.
- 2.5 The number of complaints received about FTP service also increased this year which was reflective of increased referral numbers and some capacity issues

that the team experienced; this presented challenges around communication, and case handling, which were the main themes recorded in complaints relating to FTP.

- 2.6 In summary, the year was characterised by sustained and high complaint volumes, driven mainly by Registration pressures linked to international applications, with FTP also contributing significantly, influenced by the increase in case volumes. While there were signs of stabilisation and improvement by year end, particularly in Registration, the level of upheld and partially upheld complaints, recurring communication and delay themes, and wellbeing-related concerns indicate that challenges remained. However, despite high complaint volumes, positive feedback was received regularly, showing ongoing examples of strong engagement and good service across the organisation.

3. Complaints received 1 April 2025 - 31 March 2026

- 3.1 The graph below (Figure 1) shows the number of complaints received each month in total and by department. A summary of activity is also provided in the text box on the right.
- 3.2 Table 1 shows complaint numbers over the last five years by month, monthly average and in total (current year highlighted). The total number of upheld complaints is stated in the line below (further analysis of upheld, partially upheld and not upheld complaints in section 5).

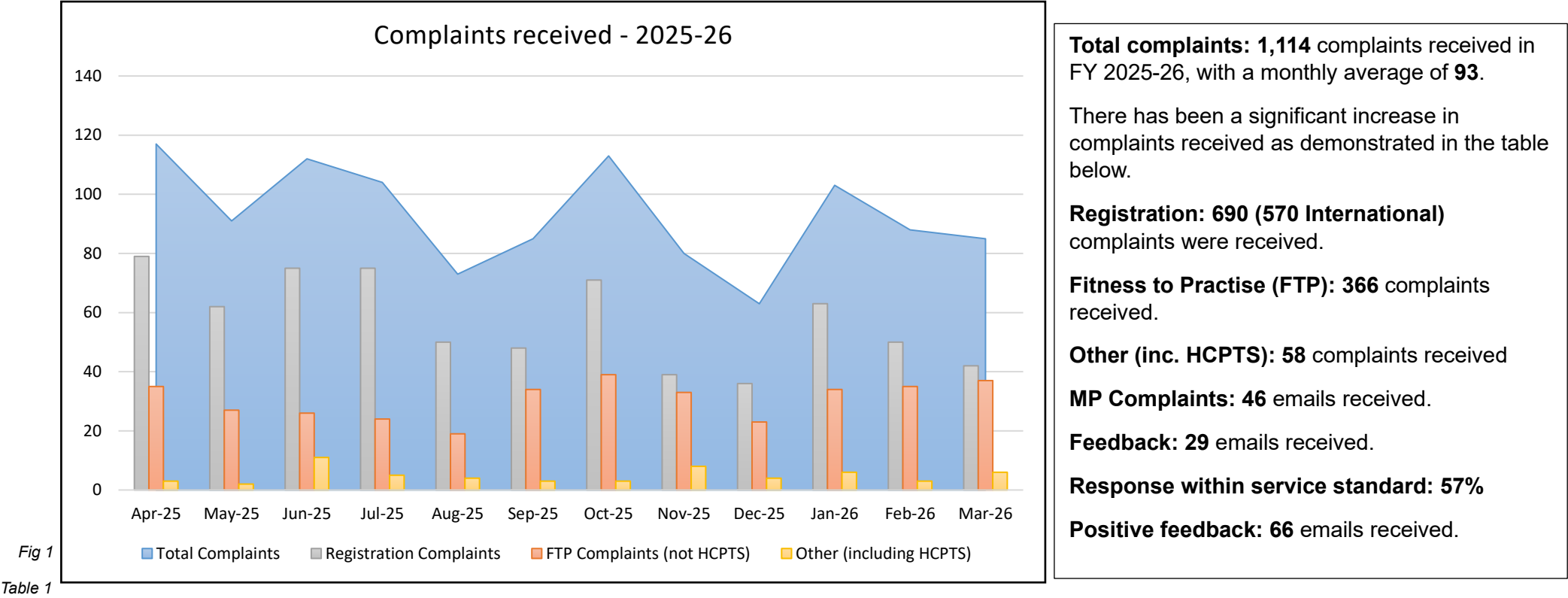


Fig 1

Table 1

	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	Total	Average
2021-22	57	45	78	50	68	56	64	95	39	62	46	49	709	59
2022-23	40	127	68	48	51	49	54	48	29	46	43	47	650	54
2023-24	40	41	42	26	36	41	31	32	27	44	47	26	433	36
2024-25	54	59	50	60	58	51	47	63	51	80	86	89	748	62
2025-26	117	91	112	104	73	85	113	80	63	103	88	85	1114	93
Upheld total	62	57	74	52	43	42	58	37	26	53	36	34	574	48

4 Complaint themes (these can be multiple per complaint)

4.1 This section provides further details about the main areas of negative feedback received during the review period.

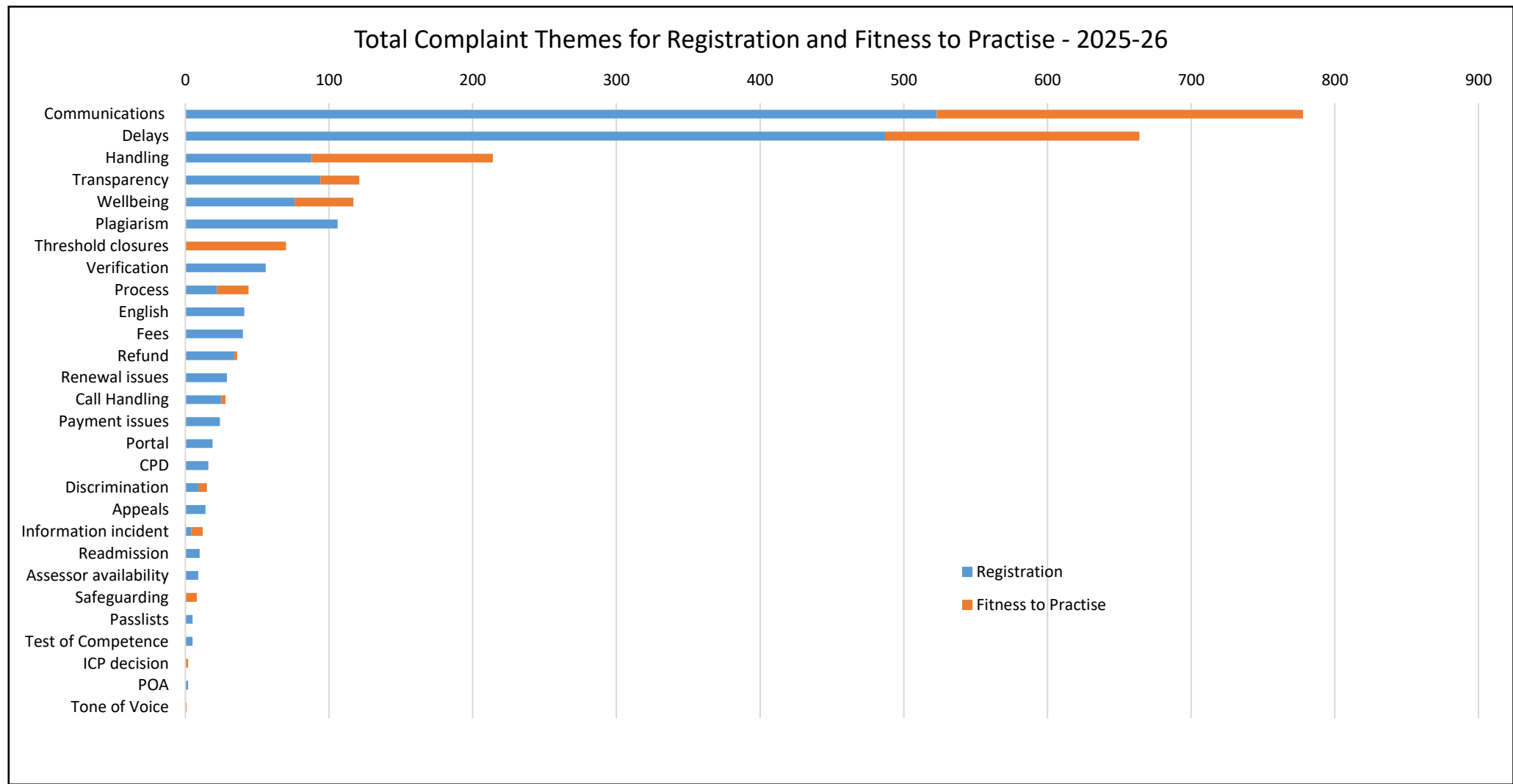


Fig 3

4.2 Upheld or partially upheld complaints accounted for a clear majority of complaint outcomes during the year and the themes identified above reflect the main issues that required attention.

Item 12

- 4.3 Registration was the leading area for complaints for most of the year. Plagiarism investigations continued to be a recurring factor, particularly where applicants experienced extended processing times.
- 4.4 FTP complaints remained relatively high throughout the year. Themes were consistent: communication issues, case handling concerns, and complaints about threshold closure decisions (March 2026 saw a significant increase in threshold closure decision complaints, with 13 received).
- 4.5 HCPTS complaint numbers were generally low but appeared intermittently, with some upheld or partially upheld complaints relating mainly to communication, scheduling, postponements, or hearing-related impacts.

5 Complaint outcomes

- 5.1 The HCPC records whether complaints are upheld, not upheld, or partially upheld. This is an assessment based on the validity of the main aspects of the complaint and any subsidiary issues. The Feedback and Complaints Manager makes this assessment to ensure consistency and neutrality.
- 5.2 The two graphs below show the outcome distribution across the organisation by month for the current reporting period 2025-26 (Fig 4), and also in total, in comparison with the previous two reporting years (Fig 5).

Fig 4

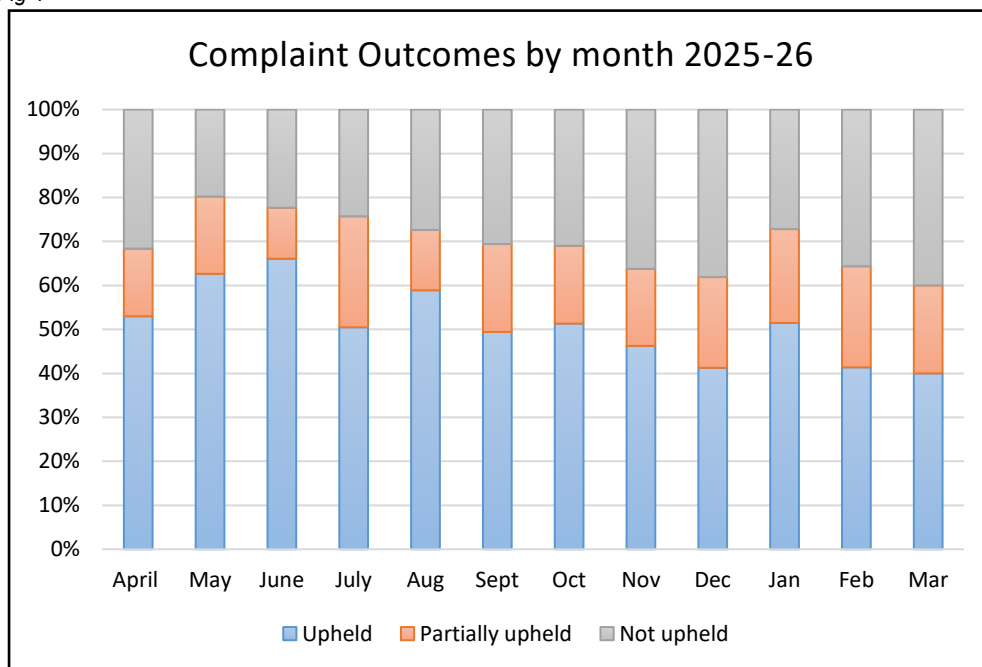
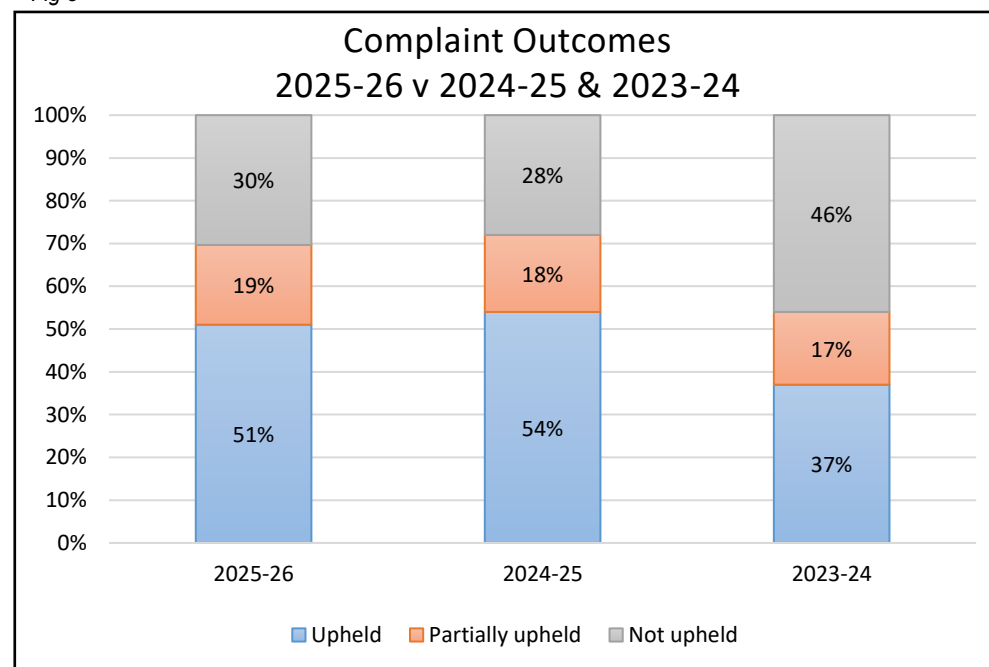


Fig 5



Item 12

- 5.3 The combined proportion of complaint outcomes that were either upheld or partially upheld has marginally decreased when compared to the previous year (Fig 5); and as a measure of performance, this is a slight improvement but still below the performance reported in 2023-24.
- 5.4 The graphs below show the outcome distribution for Registration in Figure 6 and FTP in Figure 7, across the year by month. Registration did show improved performance as the year progressed to year-end, FTP fluctuated throughout the year, although with slightly favourable metrics overall.

Fig 6

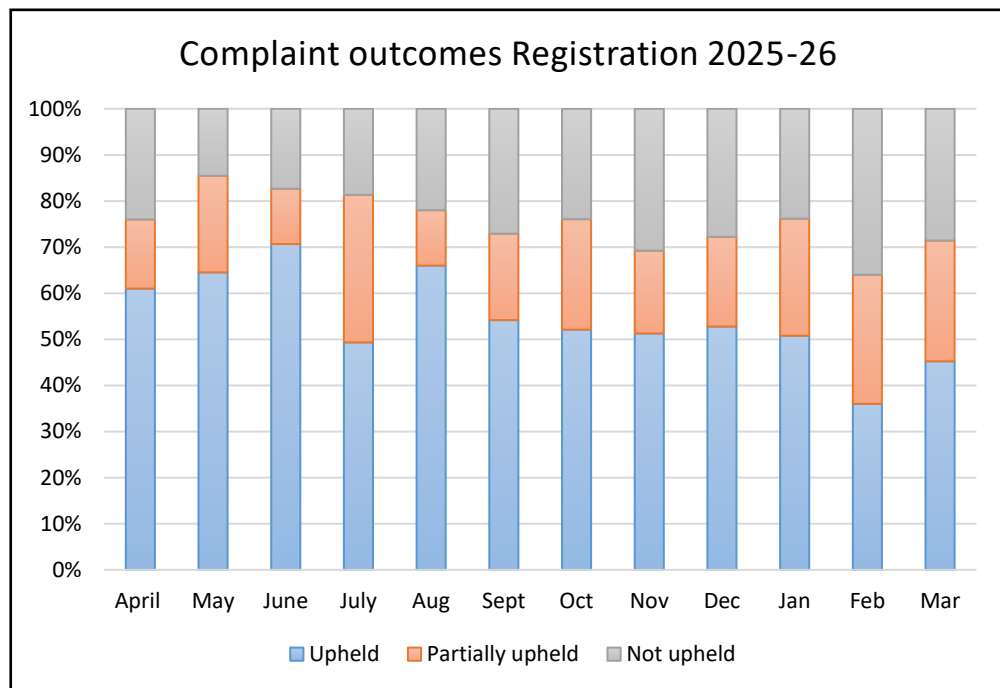
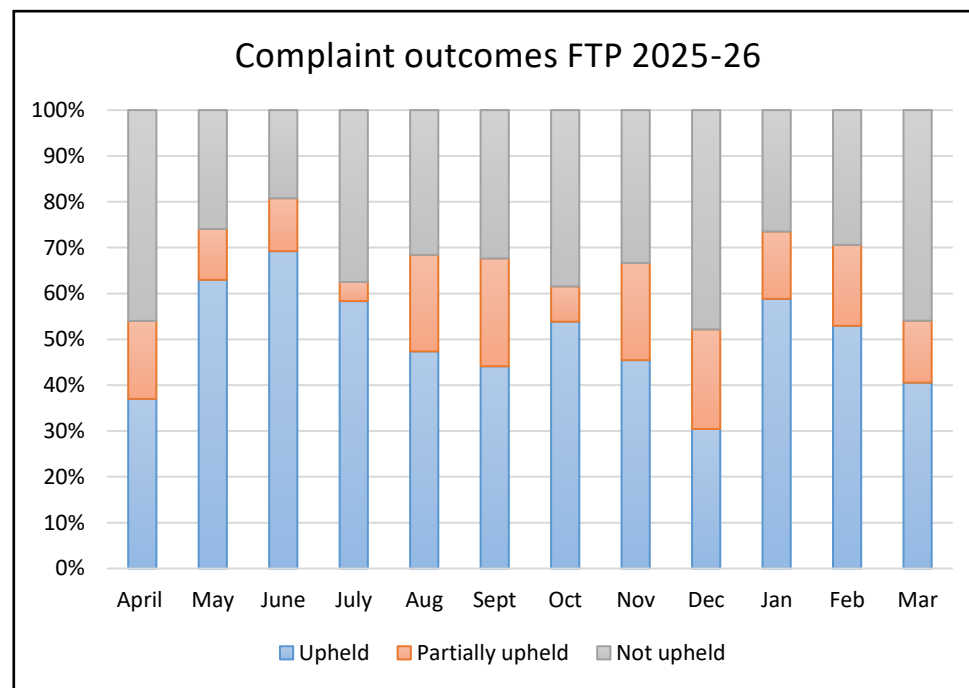


Fig 7



- 5.5 For complaints that were not upheld, the complainant is provided with details of any relevant actions, policies and procedures relevant to their complaint so they can understand why actions have or have not been taken.

6 Performance against service standard

- 6.1 Our service level is 15 working days to provide a substantive response to complaints from the date of receipt.

6.2 The graphs below illustrate performance over the year by month and in total against the previous two years.

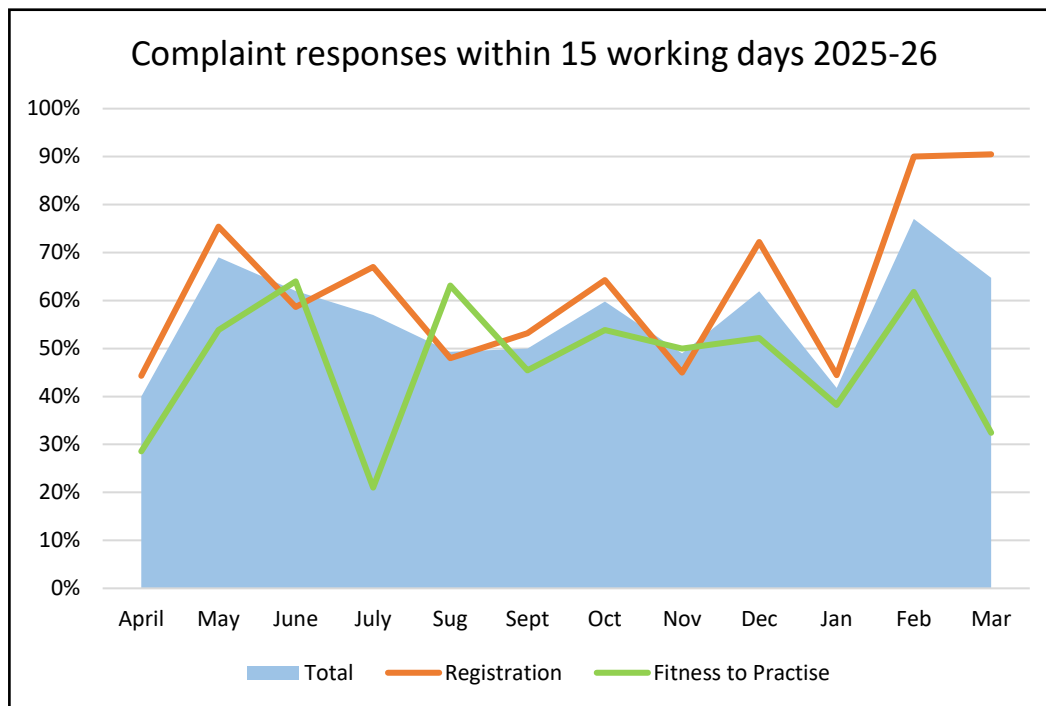


Fig 8

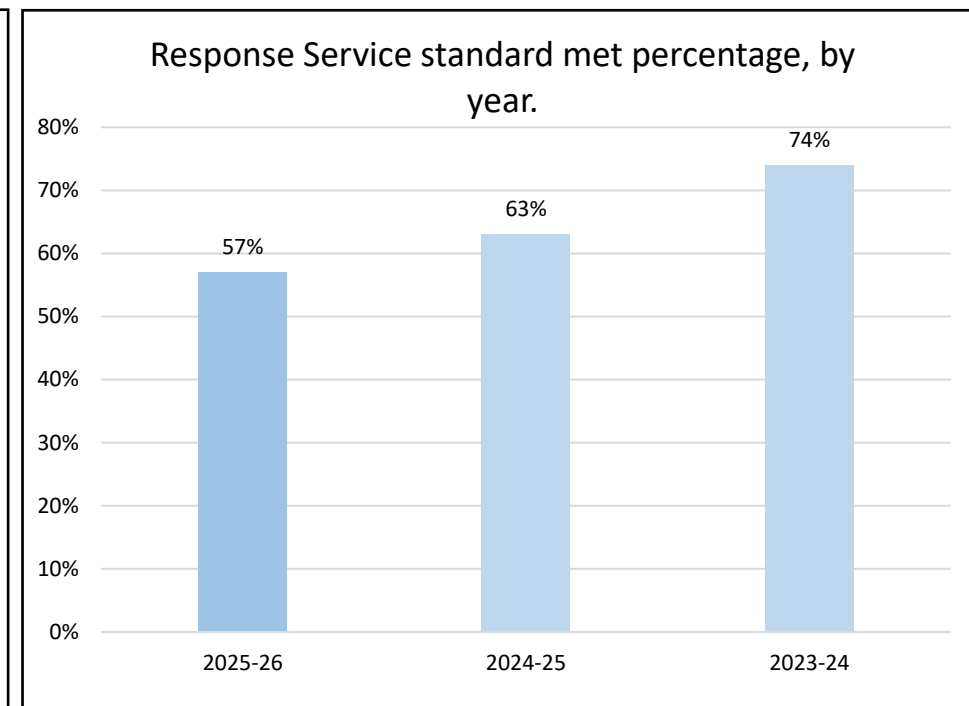


Fig 9

6.3 Fewer complaints (57%) were responded to within our service standard in 2025-26 when compared with the previous two years in Figure 9. However, there were periods of fluctuation throughout the year as shown in Figure 8.

6.4 Registration response times improved dramatically in the last quarter and were 90% within compliance for both February and March 2026, whereas FTP continued to find it challenging in meeting this standard.

6.5 Higher volumes of complaints, staff turnover and complaints that are complex generally make it harder to maintain this standard and we are working with teams to continue to improve this measure especially in FTP.

7 Learning from complaints

7.1 Where complaints are upheld, apologies are given and as far as is possible remedial action is taken. Where the complaint identifies a systemic issue, corrective action is taken, and we seek to learn from what went wrong to prevent a recurrence.

7.2 During this review period, a number of corrective actions and learning points have been drawn from complaints or feedback and some are part of wider process planning and improvements that should impact positively on complaint contact. Below are some examples:

Process Improvements examples

- Identified inconsistent/unclear guidance regarding re-opening previous Investigating Committee Panel no case to answer decisions, also known as the 3 - year rule. As a result, we have updated internal and externally facing guidance and ICP decision template.
- Identified poor call answer rate (FTP), resulting in the implementation of a new call reporting system for improved monitor of call performance by Managers. (Clobba)
- Recognised delays in sending ICP decisions, resulting in Revised ICP notification process including timescales, responsibilities and templates.
- Highlighted the FTP case update template was wordy and difficult to understand the current stage of the case and what was happening next or timescales. The case update template has been updated to make the current status, next steps and timescales clearer and the support available for Registrants and witnesses has been improved on each template. Customer Service training to be delivered to support the updated templates.
- A new process was introduced for contacting registrants promptly, where a direct debit instruction has been cancelled and an instalment missed.
- Online payment messages were updated temporarily to provide time to resolve an online payment issue affecting new applications and readmissions.
- Short-term workarounds implemented and website guidance updated related to an issue with payments from some international countries and verification codes being sent out as SMS. This ensured continuity while a fix was being applied.
- Health and Character declarations processes reviewed for more efficient and fairer decisions.
- A new Registrant/Applicant portal authentication process went live to provide a better experience and fewer issues. It was also updated to include a hyper link at the declarations page to the health and character guidance.
- Prompted an internal review of international application processes resulting in improved communication with applications undergoing plagiarism investigation and updated information on the website in relation to plagiarism and the use of AI in applications. SLAs were also introduced to stages of the process and communicated with applicants; and training provided to more Registration Officers to reduce processing times.
- Improved assessor availability planning with Registrantion and Partner teams as a result of gaps highlighted through complaints.
- Website updated to better represent Speech and Language Therapy imagery following feedback about appropriateness.
- Post Code finder tool deployed to portal to support efficiencies in application process on line for UK Applicants
- Renewals Online submission form – minor amends and typos were made to the questions, and guidance material, to improve readability and improve registrant understanding
- CPD Webinars in the CPD Week to support registrants.
- Updating CPD guidance and assessor training material to improve timeliness on CPD Audit timeframes
- Training for contact centre colleagues so they can give international applicants information on their application

7.3 Most learning from complaints is department specific. One theme which has been cross-organisational, particularly in relation to the Registration and FTP departments, is the negative impact on stakeholders when they are not kept regularly updated or have difficulty in contacting a suitable person to assist them. Those issues continue to be addressed by the departments and some feature in the process improvements noted above.

- 7.4 Complaints about the tone and content of correspondence were previously a consistent theme that appears to have been successfully addressed through the Tone of Voice review three years ago. It was noted by the Committee to keep this under review, and there continues to be no significant indications of tone of voice being an issue. Further, we received positive feedback in this respect in response to the threshold closure decision complaint outcome, the complainant said, *'the tone of the recent emails from FTP has improved since I initially raised the complaints against your registrant;'* and *'Thank you for that. It does make a difference.'*
- 7.5 The Executive Leadership Team (ELT) and relevant heads of processes receive a monthly complaints summary report which contains details of complaint metrics, including themes and performance measures. Where feedback identifies serious systemic errors, these are considered for inclusion on the operational risk register or assurance work planning.

8 Positive feedback

- 8.1 The HCPC logs positive feedback alongside complaints to help ensure that good practice is noted alongside areas that could be improved. During the review period, we logged 66 instances of positive feedback and below are several examples of the type of positive feedback we receive.

From a Registrant having difficulties renewing who had reached out on the telephone, *'(Registration Advisor) was absolutely fantastic, offering different ways of solving the issue, and going above and beyond to help me. He was warm, and efficient. This was one of the best customer service calls I have experienced. You are lucky to have him in your team. Thank you (RA)! All solved now!'*

From an international applicant, *'Thank you so much.... I'd like to extend my sincere gratitude to you for the support and dedication you have shown throughout my registration process. Every step you have taken, from guiding me through the requirements to assisting with verification, has played a vital role in making my registration successful. I truly appreciate your patience, professionalism, and timely communication. Thank you once again for helping me reach this important milestone in my professional journey.'*

From the subject of a recent substantive review hearing, *'I wanted to take a moment to express my sincere gratitude to you (Hearings Officer) — not only for your ongoing support, but also for the reassuring manner in which you've engaged with me throughout. Your calm and encouraging approach made a real difference, particularly as I was feeling anxious at times. I would also like to extend my thanks to (Presenting Officer), whose support I've valued in the past and continue to appreciate; to (Paralegal), for her kindness and guidance; and to the legal assessor, who was both helpful and considerate. Reflecting on my experience last year, the professionalism and compassion shown by **the team** this year truly stood out. It helped put me at ease and made the entire process feel far more manageable.'*

Item 12

From a the subject to an FTP case, 'Dear (Case Manager), Thank you for your regular updates and prompt responses. I'm especially grateful to all involved for the thorough review and the positive outcome of the findings. I sincerely appreciate your respectful communication and support throughout.'

From an international applicant to the Registration Manager, 'Thank you ever so much for your kind message. Many thanks to the team for acknowledging my concerns and for providing a quick response. I truly appreciate this.... I am very grateful to everyone in your team for this support.'

From a Registrant to the Registration Manager, 'I just wanted to thank you for taking the time to reply and investigate what's gone on. I do appreciate your efforts; it has made a stressful experience easier.'

From a Professional Body following a conference session delivered by HCPC Professional Liaison Consultants, 'They were phenomenal yesterday' and 'thank you so much again for enabling their attendance. I think it will have created a new storm of requests – it was a brilliant session and a great day!' and 'Massive thanks again, now pondering what else we might do collaboratively!!'

- 8.2 Positive feedback is highlighted to employees and their managers when received. A personal thank you from ELT is sent to the person named in the positive feedback using our feedback and rewards system.
- 8.3 We have continued to increase awareness of positive feedback received and the fact that it is valued and recorded, and examples of positive feedback are regularly celebrated on the intranet throughout the year.

9 Welsh language standards compliance

- 9.1 We received no complaints relating to Welsh language standards compliance for the year 2025-26.