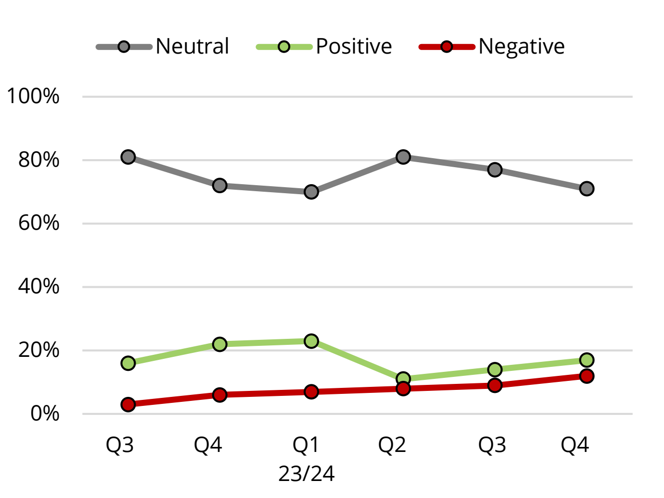
External

Core measures

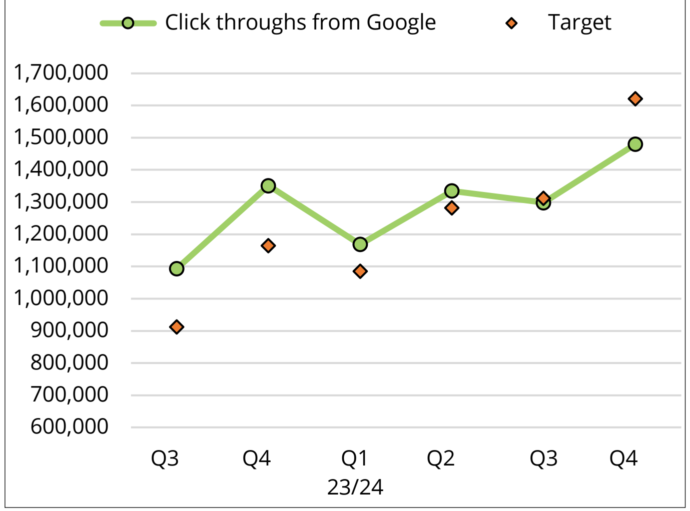
Sentiment of media coverage

Target: Positive should exceed negative



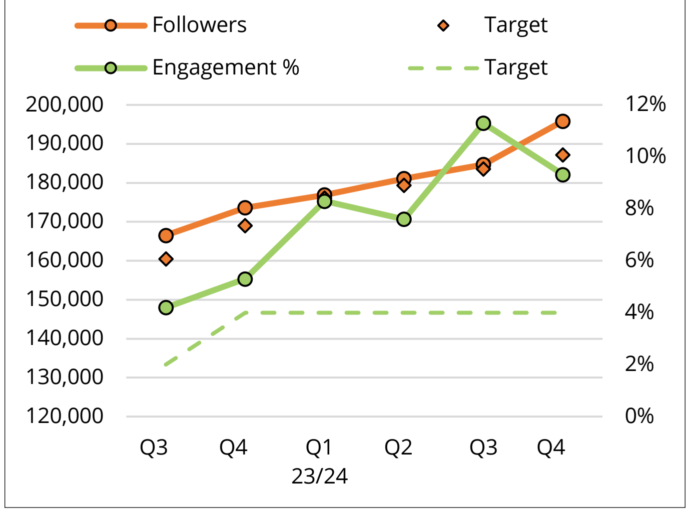
Click-throughs to our website from Google searches

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



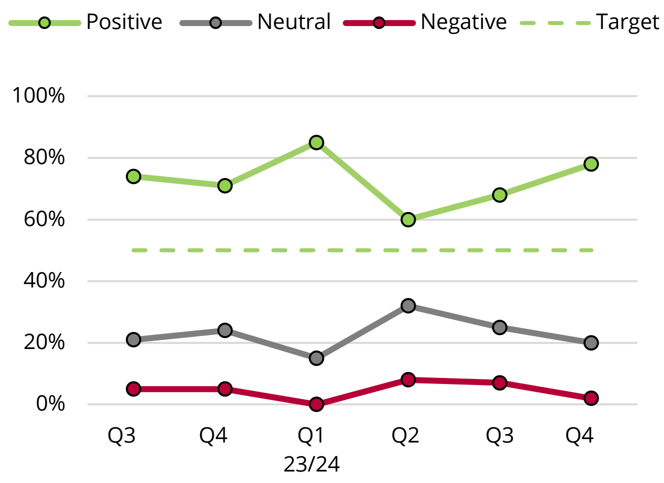
Social media engagements and followers

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



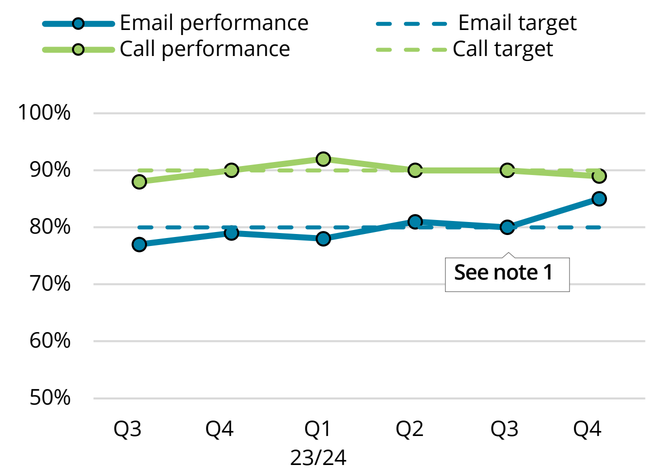
How stakeholders who attend our events view the SRA

Target: Positive feedback 50%



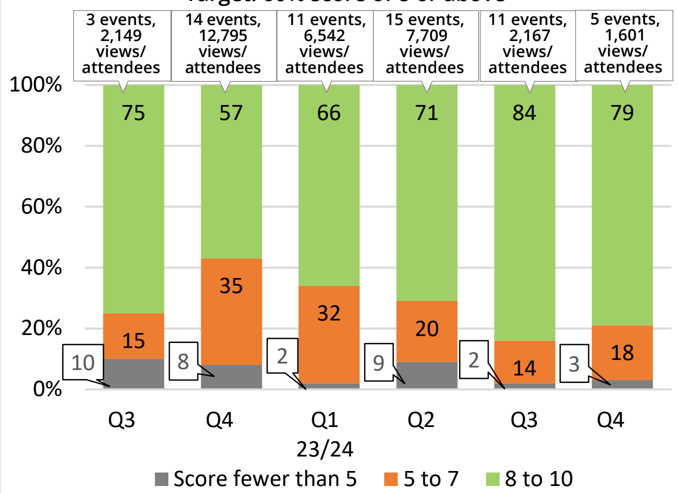
Customer feedback on our contact centre calls and emails

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 2023/24 data was collected during May only. This is because we ran an Institute of Customer Service (ICS) survey during June and July, rather than our standard telephone survey.

Sentiment of media coverage

In Q4 there was more positive media coverage than negative coverage for a 15th consecutive quarter.

Negative coverage was up as a proportion of all media coverage during Q4 compared to Q3. At 12%, it was double its level in Q4 last year (6%).

Topics that generated positive media coverage in Q4 were our:

- resources to help firms comply with the Transparency Rules
- new rules establishing fee restrictions in financial product mis-selling claims (the SRA Claims Management Fees Rules)
- thematic review of legal services provision for asylum seekers
- mergers and acquisitions warning notice
- stakeholder perceptions benchmarking survey
- Business Plan 2024/25.

Negative coverage during the quarter primarily dealt with the Legal Services Board (LSB) report into our handling of Axiom Ince, compensation fund fee increases and our financial penalties consultation.

Click-throughs to our website from Google searches

Click-throughs to our website by Google web search users in Q4 were up 10% from a year earlier, below the target of 20% year-on-year growth. This is due to the unprecedented surge in click-throughs from Google in Q4 of the previous year, when mainstream media coverage of Axiom Ince was at its height. There were far fewer click-throughs from search queries related to Axiom Ince in Q4 this year than during the same period a year earlier. The single search query that generated the largest year-on-year increase in click-throughs from Google in Q4 was 'SRA register'.

Social media engagements and followers

The number of SRA followers across all social media platforms reached more than 195,000 at the end of Q4, up 13% from a year earlier.

At 9.3%, the overall rate of engagement with SRA social media content during Q4 was down slightly from the historical high of 11.3% in Q3 but more than double our target rate of 4%. Engagements are user interactions with our content, including shares, likes, click-throughs and other clicks on posts. 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 Q4 included posts about:

- the Solicitors Qualifying Examination, such as upcoming assessment dates and explanation of the process for confirming qualifying work experience
- our non-disclosure agreements warning notice
- updated guidance for firms on complying with the Russia sanctions regime
- character and suitability guidelines for aspiring solicitors
- our report on potential causes of differential outcomes by ethnicity in legal professional assessments.

How stakeholders who attend our events view the SRA

Seventy-eight per cent of attendees who responded to the question in Q4 said they had a positive perception of the SRA, while only 2% said they had a negative perception. (Note that all Q4 events were held before the publication of the LSB report into our handling of Axiom Ince.)

Customer feedback on our contact centre calls and emails

We continued to receive positive feedback regarding our calls to the contact centre and achieved an 89% positive response rate in Q4 (against our target of 90%). We achieved a high performance in our email satisfaction levels, achieving 85% against our 80% target in Q4. This was particularly positive as we were carrying out our annual exercise of renewing the profession's practising certificates. Strong system performance and our speedy response to calls and emails were key contributing factors.

Events feedback – usefulness rating

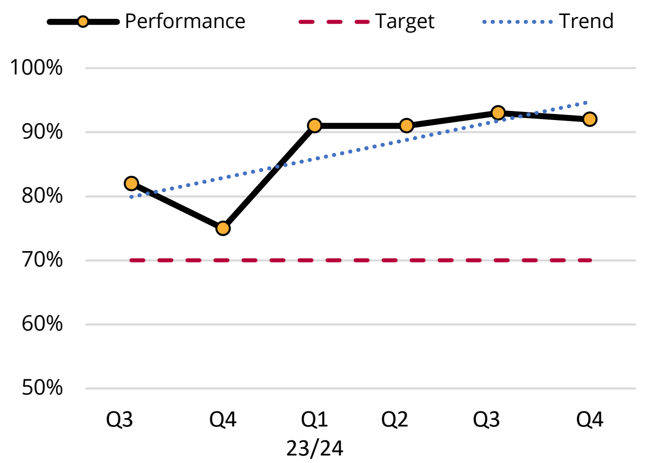
We held five standalone events during Q4, including two targeted at large firms with SRA relationship managers. Event attendance for the quarter totalled 1,601 (in-person, virtual streaming and virtual on-demand). Almost four out of five attendees who scored the usefulness of our events rated them eight out of 10 or higher.

Delivery

Core measures

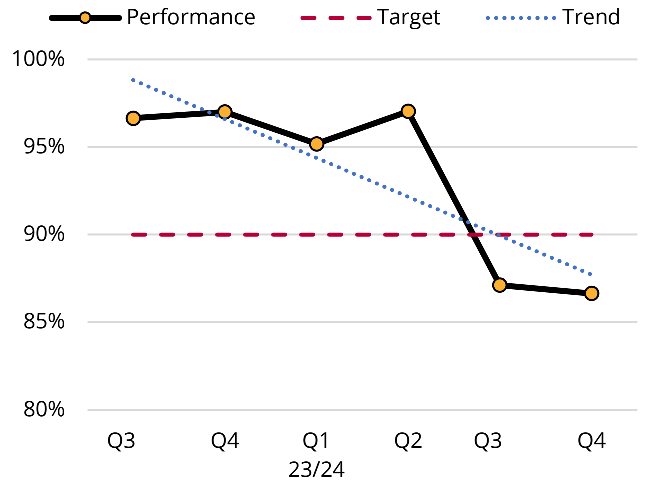
Contact centre

Target: 70% of calls answered in 60 seconds



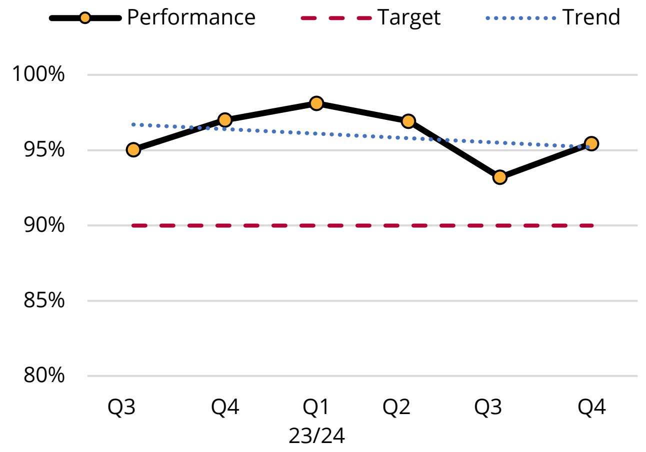
Authorisation – firms

Target: 90% of medium and high-risk applications dealt with in 3/6 months



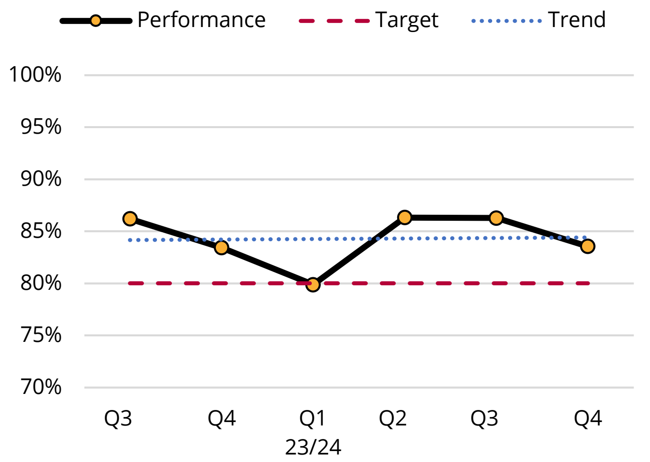
Authorisation – individuals

Target: 90% of medium and high-risk applications dealt with in 3/6 months



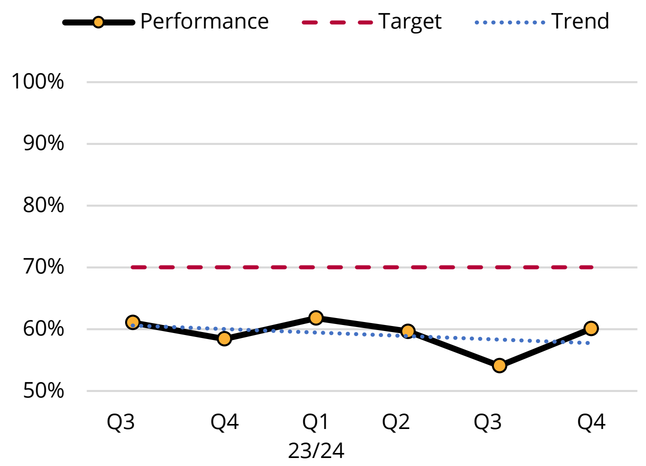
Assessment and early resolution

Target: 80% of assessments to be concluded within 2 months of being reported



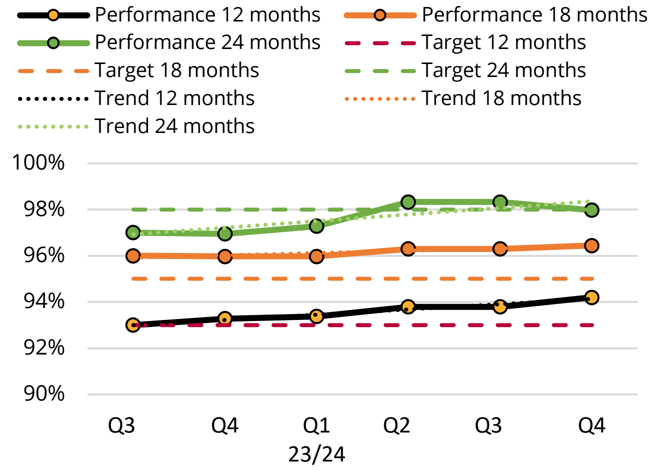
Investigations

Stretch target: 70% of investigations to be concluded within 10 months from case creation (post-AERT process)



Investigation and enforcement

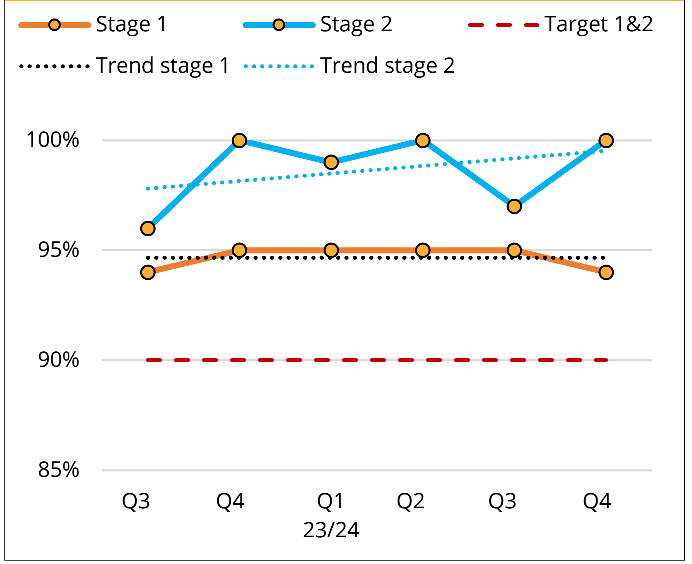
Target: 93% of cases to be completed within 12 months; 95% within 18 months; and 98% within 24 months



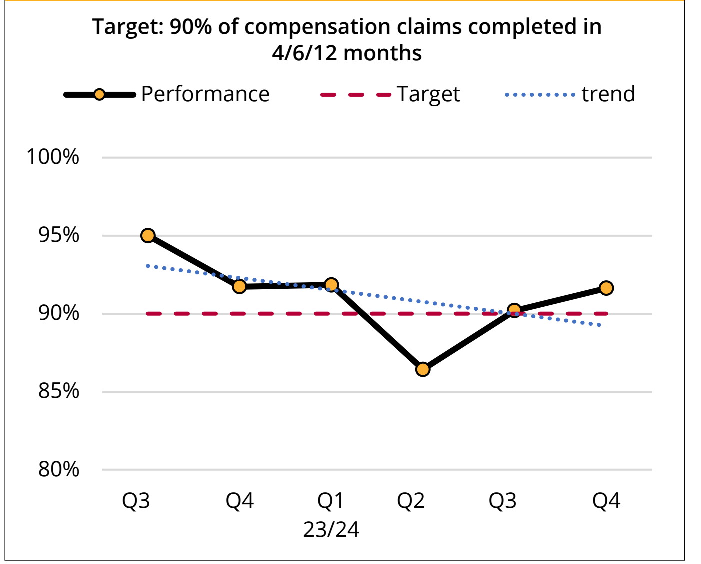
Delivery 2

Core measures

Stage 1 and 2 complaint handling



Compensation fund



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 Q4, achieving an overall performance of 92% against our target of answering 70% of calls within 60 seconds. Furthermore, we exceeded our target of responding to 95% of emails within five days.

Authorisation – firms

We continued to feel the impact of the loss of experienced resource to internal and external moves during Q4. Performance for medium/high-risk applications remained at 87%, slightly below the target of 90%. This was anticipated, with the new team going through training and development, which can take between 12 and 18 months.

The performance remained strong in Q4 for low-risk applications, 99% of which were closed within service levels, and overall performance for the year was positive for all risk categories.

Authorisation – individuals

Performance remained strong throughout Q4, resolving 95% of all medium/high-risk applications in three/six months, exceeding the target of 90%. This reflected the consistently strong performance throughout the year, achieving 95% within SLA overall in 2023/24.

Performance in relation to low-risk cases was similarly strong, closing 99% of low-risk cases within SLA in Q4 (against a target of 90%) and 99% for the whole of 2023/24 (please note, these measures are not shown on the scorecard but are provided here for further context).

Assessment and early resolution (AERT)

Assessment and early resolution continued to exceed the key performance indicator (KPI) of concluding 80% of assessments within two months of being reported, achieving around 85% over Q4. We expect this to be challenging moving into Q1 2024/25 due to a significant increase in concerns reported to us and are working with the team on plans to address this.

Investigations and enforcement

Investigations and enforcement continue to meet or exceed their KPIs of resolving 93% of investigations within 12 months, 95% within 18 months and 98% within 24 months.

Investigations in 10 months

Investigations have a new stretch target of concluding 70% of investigations within 10 months of assessment. We finished Q4 at 60%. We introduced this challenging target to monitor the impact of new ways of working. We are also planning further changes. Once we have embedded these changes, we will have evidence to show whether this target remains a realistic stretch target and/or what KPI we should put in place for this stage of the process. We will report to the Board in summer 2025 on this.

Stage 1 and 2 complaint handling

During Q4 the business consistently exceeded its KPI targets to respond to 90% of stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints within process timelines.

In Q4, we received 188 stage 1 complaints and upheld 33% (62). This is compared to 24% in Q2 and 30% in Q3*.

In Q4, we received 59 escalated complaints at stage 2 and upheld 41% (24). This is compared to 23% in Q1 and 37% in Q2*.

Board correspondence

From time to time, members of the Board are sent correspondence from complainants. Our Corporate Complaints Policy is in the process of being updated 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 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 we had already managed contact with the complainant, we filed it with no response.

There were two instances in Q4 where a change of action occurred as a result of considering Board correspondence. In one, we apologised to an individual where we had failed to update them on the progress of their matter due to staff sickness. We then reallocated the matter to another member of staff. The other related to information, rather than a complaint, which we have taken into account while drafting updated guidance.

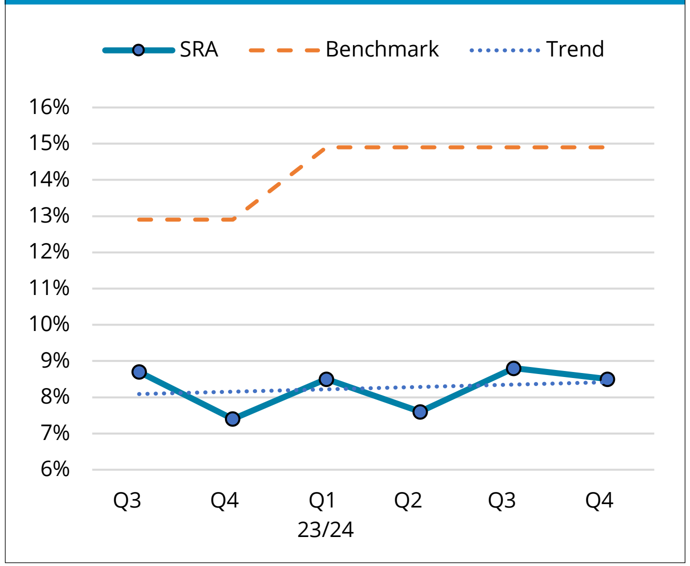
* Please note, these are revised figures following improvements to data checks.

Compensation fund

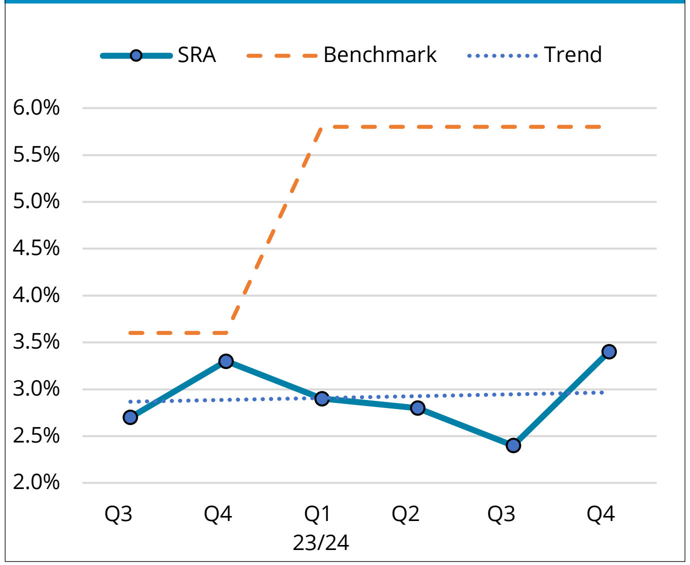
We have continued to see improvements in compensation fund performance as the year has progressed, with a particularly strong performance in Q4. This is important as the volume of claims received continues to be high, driven by the number of interventions. We are making good progress with the claims related to Axiom Ince and continue to meet the committed prioritisation approach.

People

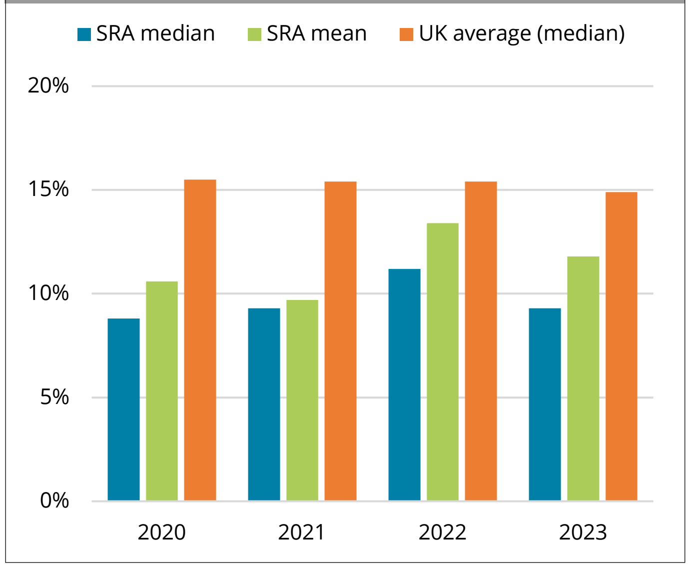
Voluntary staff turnover



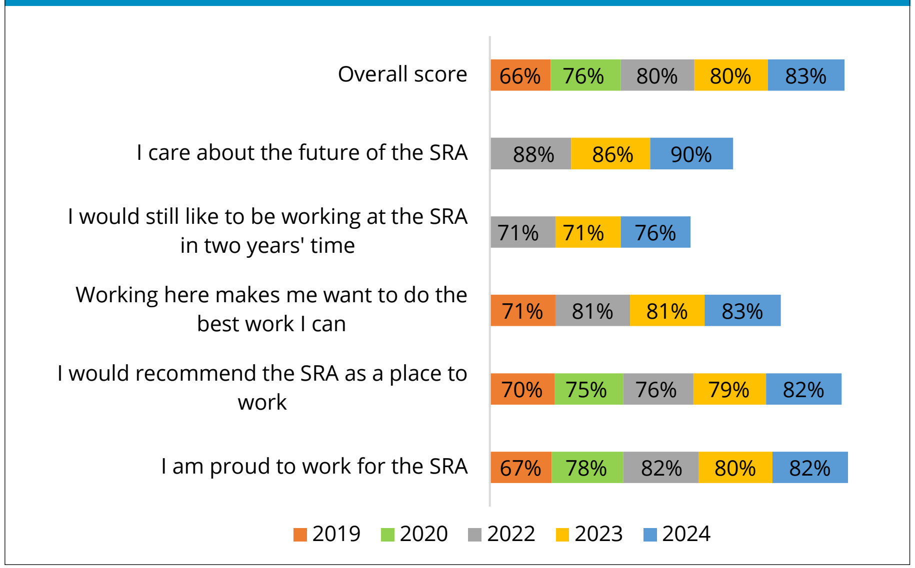
Time lost to sickness



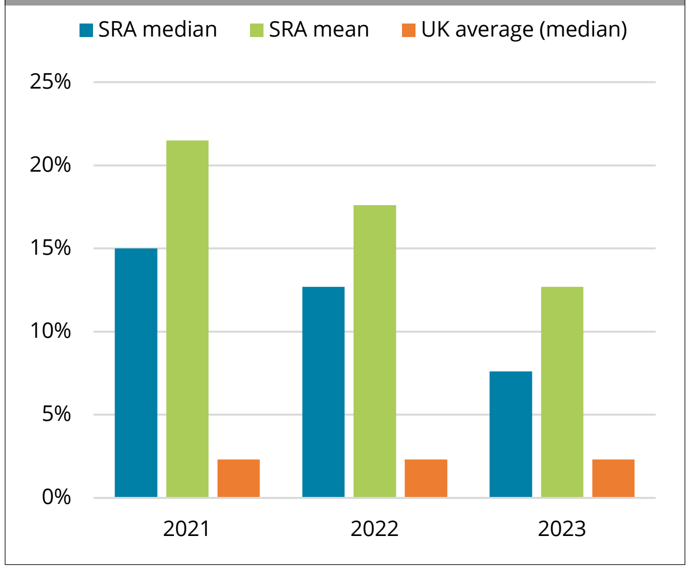
Gender pay gap



Staff engagement



Ethnicity pay gap



Voluntary staff turnover

Staff turnover continues to fluctuate between 7% and 9% this quarter. There is no apparent reason for this, but it indicates stability within the organisation while the recruitment market remains volatile and competitive.

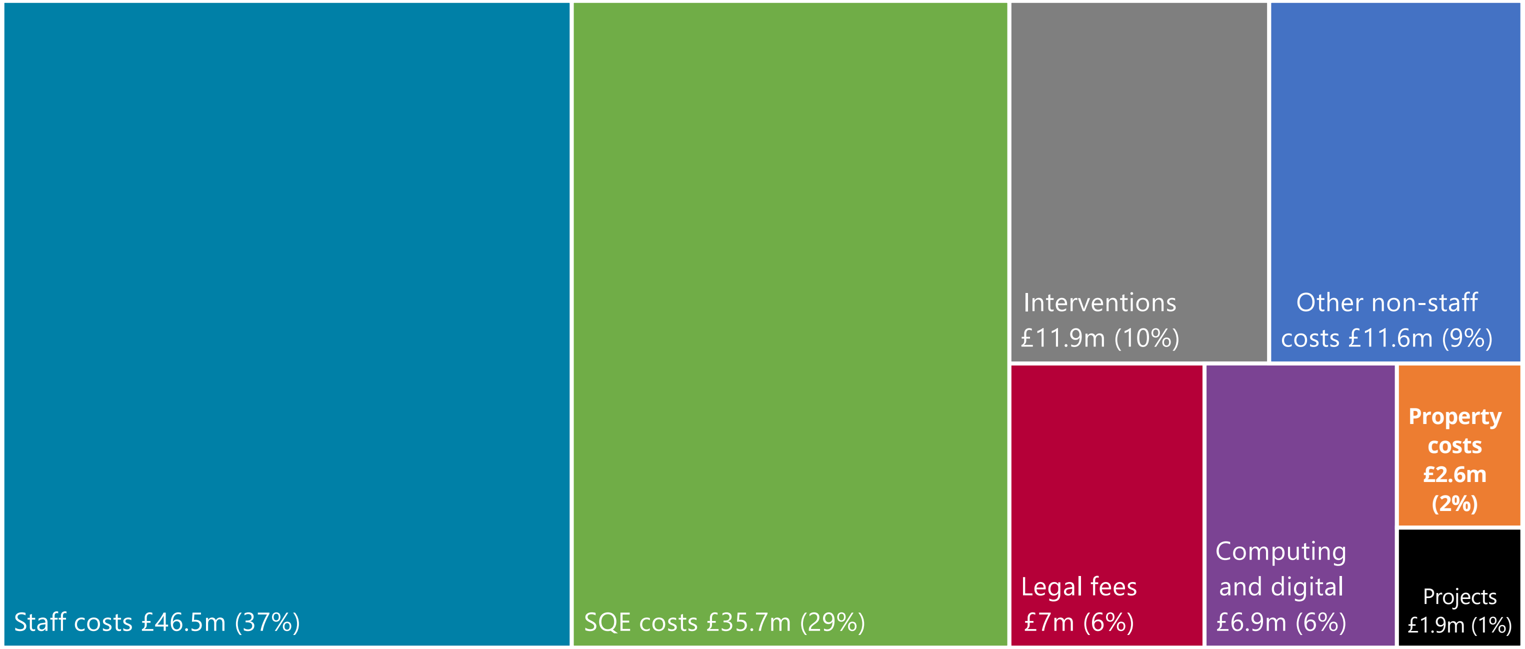
Time lost to sickness

Time lost to sickness has increased, likely because of some longer-term absence in the business. 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 suggest the benchmark data is 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 indicates that the public sector is having a heavy influence on this benchmark, quoting an increase in anxiety and stress since the Covid pandemic.

Where we spend our money



Variance to forecast November 2023 - October 2024

£m	Actual	Budget	Variance	Variance %
Income	127.54	124.90	2.64	2.1%
Staff costs	46.51	46.95	0.44	0.9%
Other costs	75.64	75.93	0.29	0.4%

Variance to budget November 2023 - October 2024

£m	Actual	Budget	Variance	Variance %
Income	127.54	118.05	9.49	8.0%
Staff costs	46.51	46.51	-	0.0%
Other costs	75.64	70.36	5.28	-7.5%

Income for the year remains in excess of budget predominantly due to additional income from the Solicitors Qualifying Examination (SQE) due to higher candidate numbers. This is offset by increased costs associated with delivering the exam.

There is also increased income from the compensation fund which reflects the increased costs of interventions, specifically costs associated with the retrieval and storage of files from intervened firms due to increased volumes . Regulatory income was ahead of budget due to increased applications from exemptions from elements of SQE. This is related to the overall increase in candidate numbers

Expenditure on staff costs is in line with budget for the full 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 the reduced underspend. This has allowed us to bring in additional stafff to support key operational functions.

Within non-staff costs there are a number of variances with the cumulative effect appearing to be a significant overspend against budget. The increased costs associated with higher SQE candidate numbers are offset by increased income from examination which accounts for the largest part of the increased costs, but with no overall imapct to the SRA overall position.

Additionally there is an underspend of around £2m 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 resource time but at this stage not a large amount of additional project cost which is typically external support. Within non-staff costs there is an overspend on external legal fees of around £2.2m. As a consequence of the improvement work within Investigation and Enforcement, we have seen a reduction in older cases being investigated. Many of these have resulted in referrals to the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal and therefore additional cases with external law firms who support with this work. We expect to manage this overspend within the approved budget for the year. The potential impact within the next financial year was considered by the Board as part of the budget approval in September.

The overall position for the financial year (subject to adjustments through the year end audit process) is now a £6.1m surplus, significantly favourable to the original budget position which was a £1.2m surplus. This was also influenced by an increase of £1.3m (almost 15%) in the value of our investments in the year.