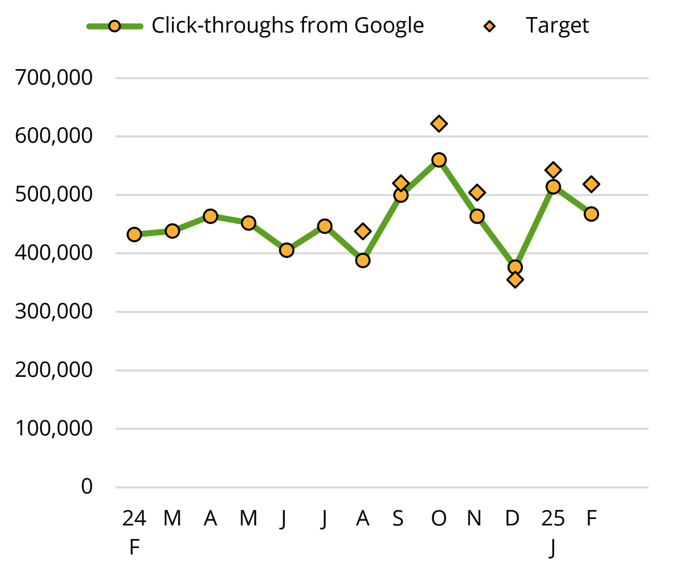
Customer

LHA: left-hand axis   RHA: right-hand axis

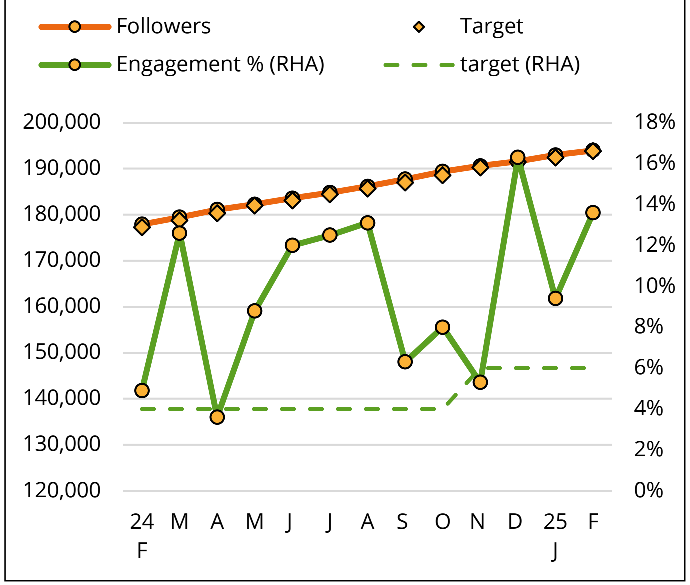
Click-throughs to our website from Google searches

Target: 20% more click-throughs than the same quarter a year earlier



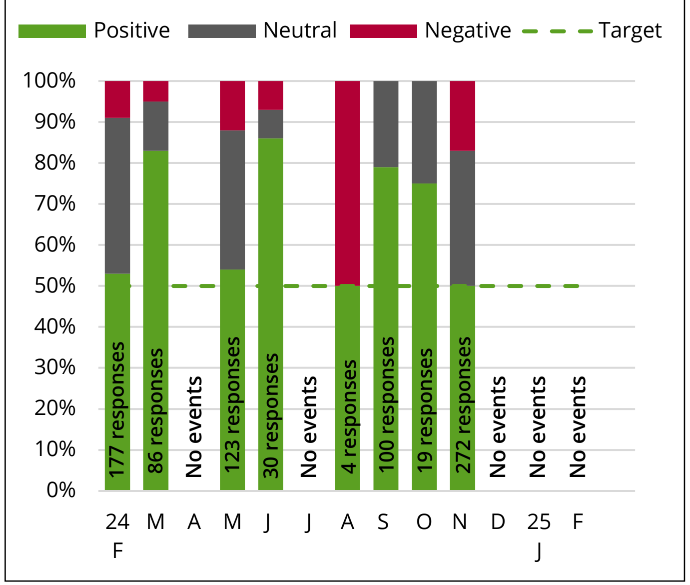
Social media engagements and followers

LHA target: To have 2,500 more followers each quarter
RHA target: To have engagement of at least 6 %



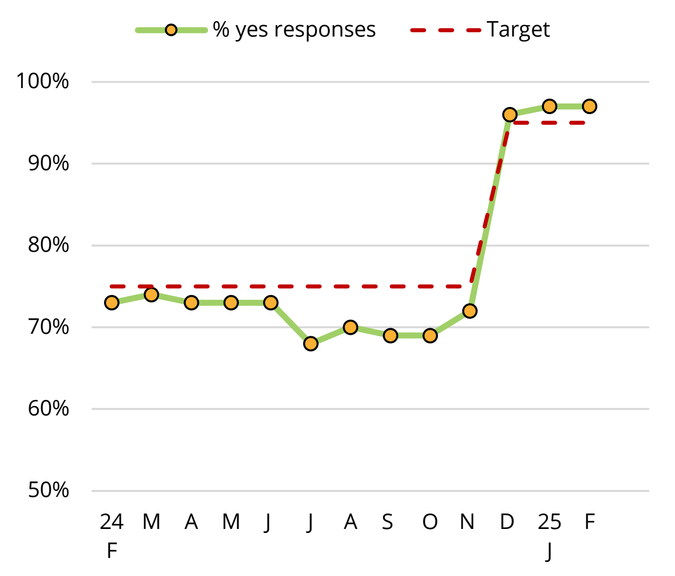
How stakeholders who attend our events view the SRA

Target: 50% of attending stakeholders give positive feedback



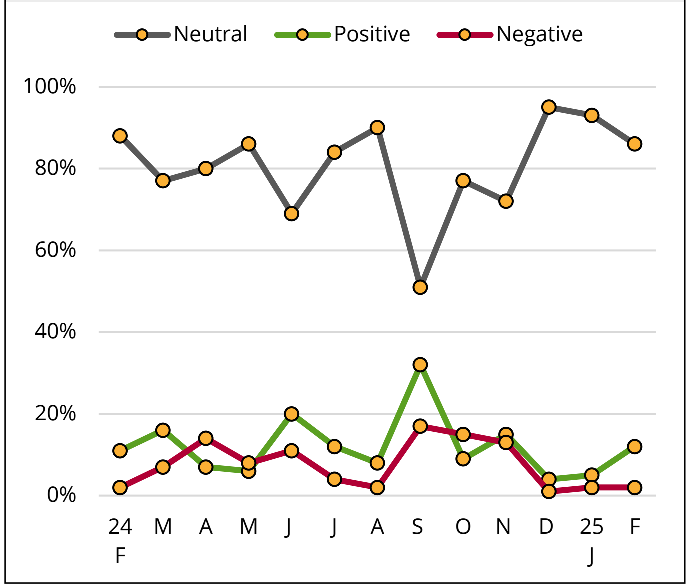
Website quality

Target: 95% of feedback providers saying a webpage was useful



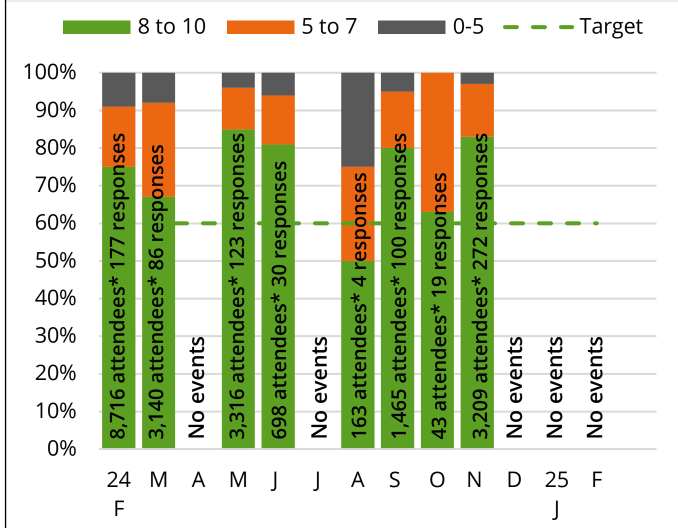
Sentiment of media coverage

Target: Positive should exceed negative



Events feedback – usefulness rating

Target: 60% of attendees score event usefulness at 8 or above. Scale: 1 = not useful at all, 10 = extremely useful

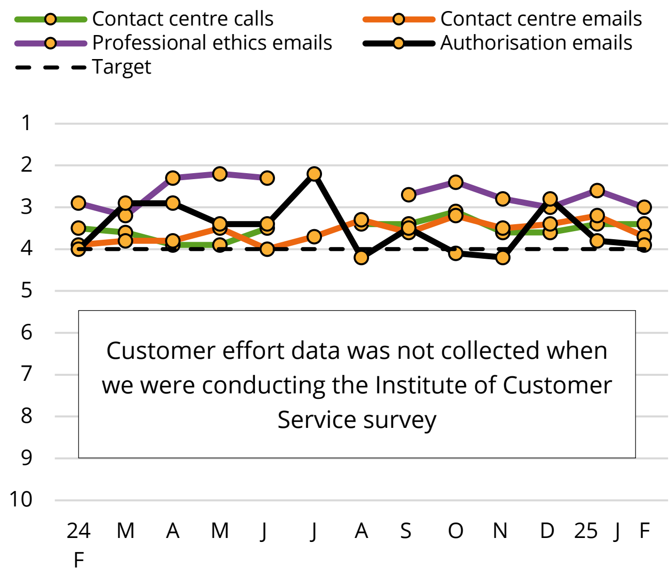


*Attendees is a combination of in-person event attendees and online views

Customer

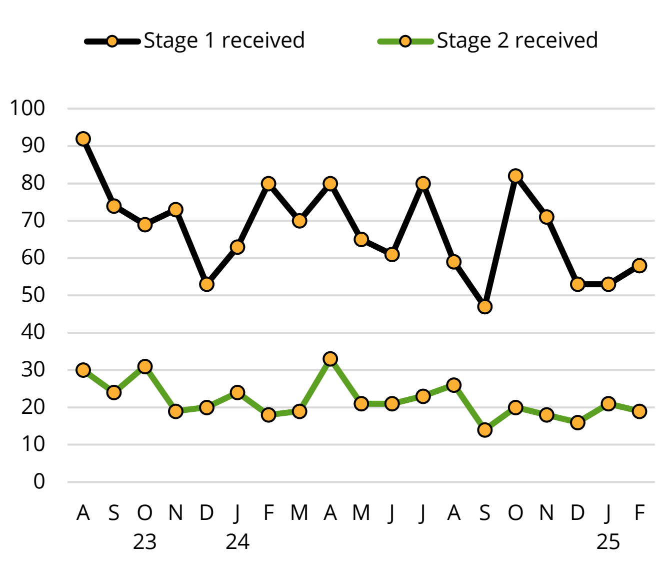
Customer effort

Target: Customer effort scores of 4 or fewer out of 10 (a lower score is a better score)



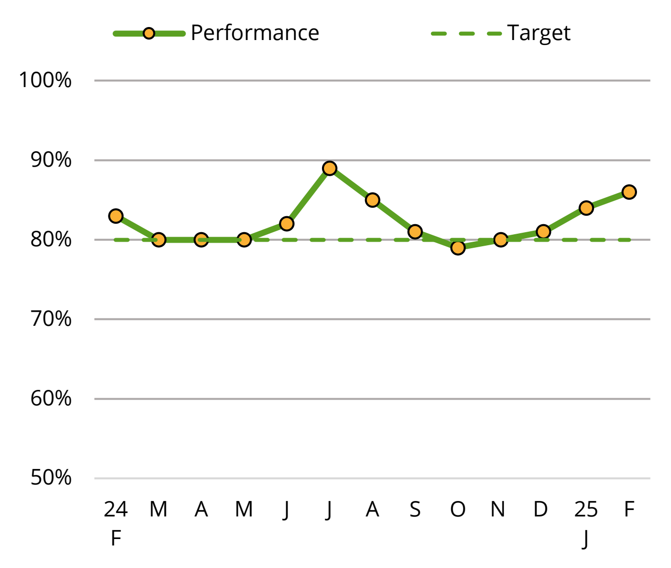
Number of complaints received

No target as this is a risk indicator measure not a KPI



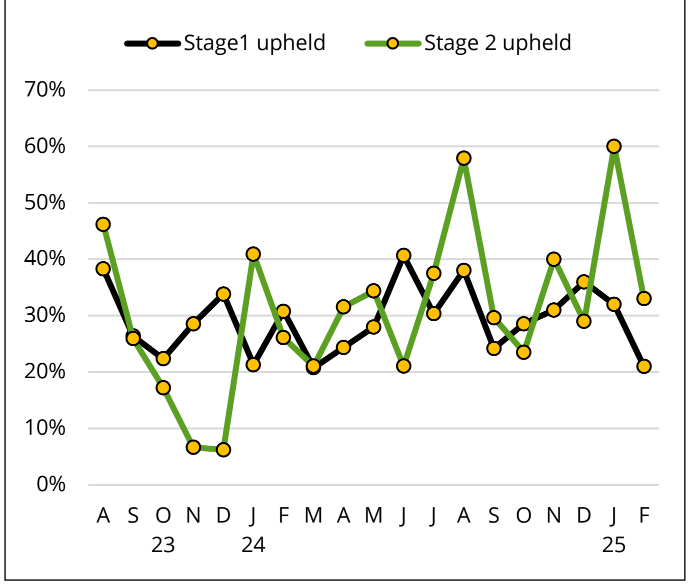
Contact centre – telephony service performance

Target: 80% of calls answered in 20 seconds



Percentage of complaints upheld

No target as this is a risk indicator measure not a KPI



Click-throughs to our website from Google searches

Click-throughs to our website by Google web search users from November to February were up 17% from a year earlier, slightly below our target of 20% year-on-year growth.

According to recent reports, Google's use of generative AI to create summaries presented above search results could reduce click-throughs to websites by more than 60%. Our website may be partly immune to this effect, because of the Solicitors Register. Third-party experiences cannot easily replace it as an authoritative validation tool. However, it seems likely that Google's Search Generative Experience (SGE) will at least slow the growth of click-throughs to the SRA website through time. In this context, other regulators have anecdotally reported lower-than-expected traffic figures at recent UKRN (the UK Regulators' Network) meetings. They have attributed this to the rise of Google's generative search and the migration of users away from search to AI chatbots, such as Copilot and ChatGPT.

We will continue to optimise SRA website content for search engines and will explore the availability of Google SGE metrics, so that we can attempt to assess the impact of SGE appearances on click-throughs.

Website quality

From December to February, 97% of SRA website users who responded to our user feedback poll said the content they were viewing was useful, well above our target rate of 75%. During the period, users responded to the poll 10,695 times, and 10,332 of the responses were positive.

The top four pages (those that received the greatest number of positive responses) during the period were about qualifying as a solicitor. The fifth and sixth-highest rated pages were, respectively, guidance about conflicts of interest and guidance about client care.

Web pages for people who have had negative experiences with solicitors received high user-approval ratings. For example, 96% of responses said our web page for consumers about problems and complaints was useful.

In November, the aggregate user approval rating for the website was 72%. However, in late November, we introduced a new user feedback solution that filters out spambot responses and discourages gaming. For example, it prevents any given user from submitting multiple responses about a single web page over a brief period. Since then, the approval rating for the site has risen by more than 20 percentage points. Therefore, it's possible the approval rating for the site may have been higher than previously reported.

For this reason, we have increased the target average rating from 75% to 95%, having anticipated this possibility in our commentary in the last edition of the scorecard (the revised balanced scorecard).

Social media engagements and followers

The number of SRA followers across all social media platforms was just under 194,000 in February, up 9% from a year earlier and well above our target of 10,000 new followers per year. Nearly all audience growth during the period was on LinkedIn, while our following on X (formerly Twitter) fell.

Engagements are user interactions with our content, including shares, likes, click-throughs and other clicks on posts.

The average rate of engagement with SRA social media content from November to February was 10%, well above our target of 6%. Ten per cent was also our average rate of engagement for the 12 months to February 2025. Therefore, we have raised our target rate of engagement from 4% to 6%, which is higher than the worldwide industry standard and legal service sector benchmark.

SRA social content which drove particularly strong engagement from November to February included posts about:

- Solicitors Qualifying Examination (SQE) sample questions and related content for aspiring solicitors
- mass claims, including guidance for firms and information about the scale of ongoing investigations
- our guidance for in-house practitioners
- our public consultation on the rules around handling client money.

Sentiment of media coverage

Our target is that the volume of media coverage with expressly positive sentiment toward the SRA exceeds the quality with a negative sentiment. The majority of coverage is neutral. Over the period November to February this target was achieved across all months.

Proactive activity which contributed to positive coverage included:

- publication of a report into consumer vulnerability
- our warning notice on high-volume claims work
- our guidance on sham litigation and our guidance for in-house practitioners
- our thematic reviews of probate work and professional obligations
- our Compliance Officers Conference, held in November.

Negative coverage across the period resulted from issues such as :

- critical responses to our public consultation on client money
- criticism of prosecutions at the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal
- the Legal Services Board (LSB)'s report into our handling of Axiom Ince.

How stakeholders who attend our events view the SRA

Our target is that at least 50% of those providing post-event feedback state that they have a positive view of the SRA. During the November to February period we staged two events, both in November – our annual Compliance Officers face-to-face and virtual conferences. Across these 50% of delegates stated they were positive about the SRA – exactly the target figure.

A third of delegates (33%) were neutral about the SRA and 17% had a negative view. The conferences coincided with the release of the LSB's report into our handling of Axiom Ince – and this was a feature commonly referred to in free text answers on the post-event feedback forms. This likely explains the drop in positive responses in November and increase in negative responses.

Events feedback – usefulness rating

Our target is that, on average, at least 60% of attendees providing feedback give our events and webinars a score of at least eight out of 10 for how useful they found them.

We met this target in this period and have generally met it throughout the year. Across our November physical and virtual Compliance Conferences, 83% of delegates scored the events at least eight out of 10 (with 97% scoring them at least five).

Customer effort

The customer effort scores for Authorisation, Contact Centre and Professional Ethics continued to remain positive during the start of the business year. Performance for all areas was four or below (with a score of four or below a desired score, meaning the least effort for our customers).

Contact centre – telephony service performance

Our November to February performance has been strong, improving month on month. This is against new challenging key performance indicators (KPIs) for this business year. The average time to answer calls is fewer than 30 seconds.

Stage 1 and 2 complaints

<u>Number of complaints</u>

The number of stage 1 complaints trended downwards during November to February. The reduction may be attributable to the new process introduced in September to communicate decisions in the Assessment and Early Resolution Team (AERT). The number of stage 2 complaints has remained stable during the period, ranging from 16-21 stage 2 complaints per month.

<u>Proportion of complaints upheld</u>

The proportion of upheld stage 1 complaints has been stable across the period, continuing to range between 20% and 40%. The proportion of stage 2 complaints upheld has fluctuated more widely, which is to be expected, given the smaller numbers. It has gone from below 30% (five out of 17 complaints) in November to December 2023 to a peak of 60% (nine out of 15 complaints) in January. However, for the majority of the year, the proportion of upheld stage 2 complaints continues to sit between approximately 20% and 40% with no discernible trend either up or down.

<u>Board correspondence</u>

Board members are occasionally sent correspondence from complainants. From 1 April 2025 our updated Corporate Complaints Policy will include a section to make it clear to complainants that such correspondence will not be responded to by the Board personally. Correspondence will continue to 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 a response if needed. Or, in cases where we had already managed contact with the complainant, filed without a response.

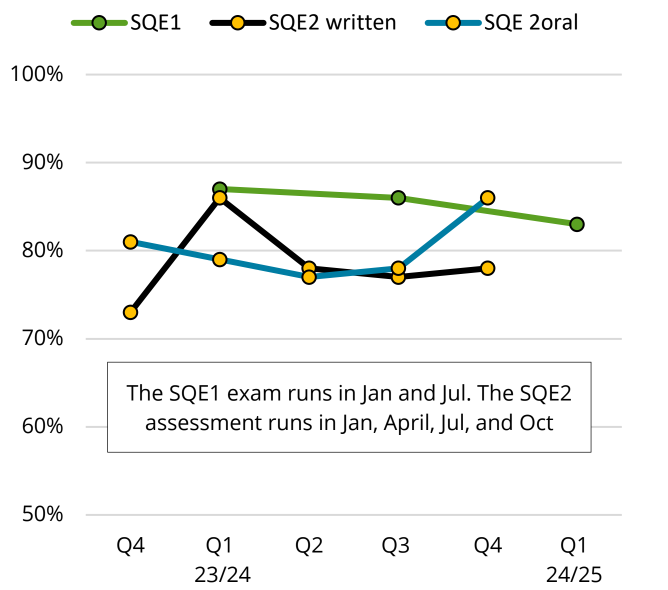
There were two instances during the November to February period where a change of action occurred as a result of considering Board correspondence. In relation to one closed file, we wrote to acknowledge and apologise for a delay in dealing with a customer's report. The second instance related to an ongoing investigation. We wrote to acknowledge handling delays, took on board feedback about our processes and explained next steps for handling the ongoing investigation

Delivery

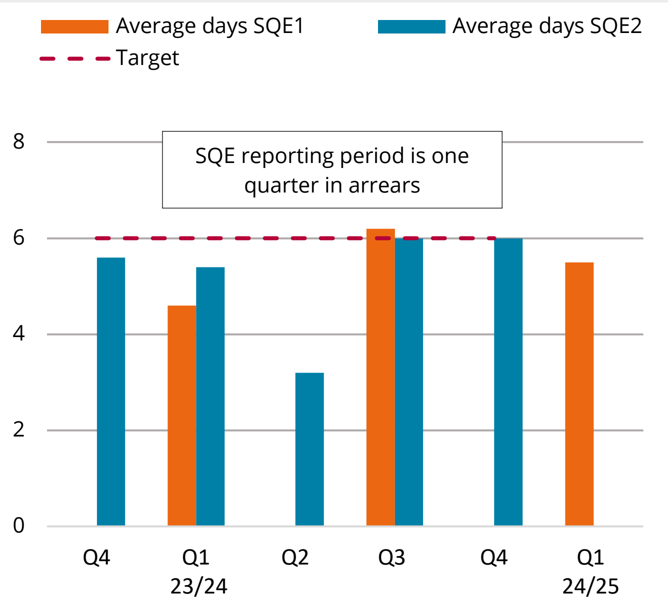
LHA: left-hand axis RHA: right-hand axis

Education and training

Target: 70% satisfaction with administration on day of exam

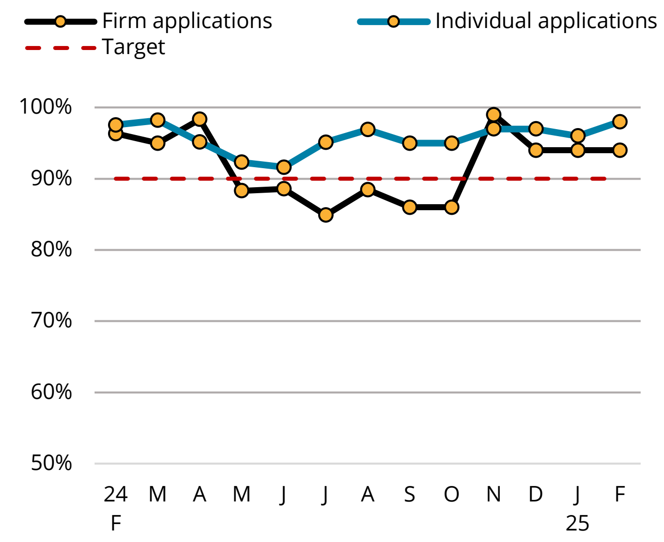


Target: Deliver an SQE reasonable adjustment plan within 6 days

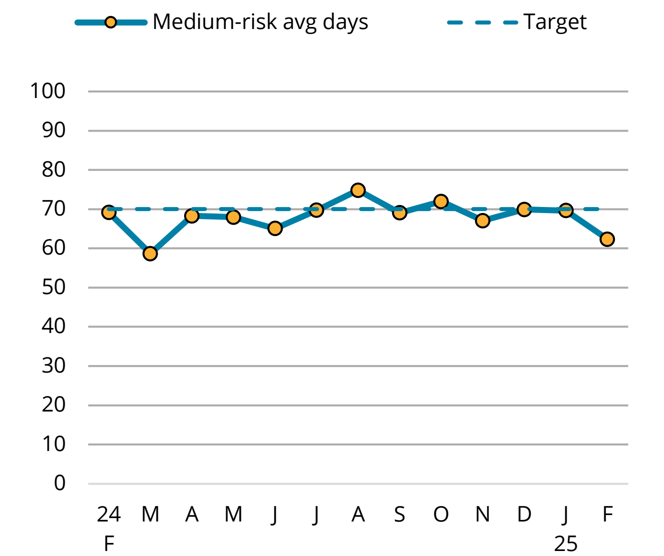


Authorisation

Target: High-risk applications completed in 6 months and medium-risk applications completed in 3 months

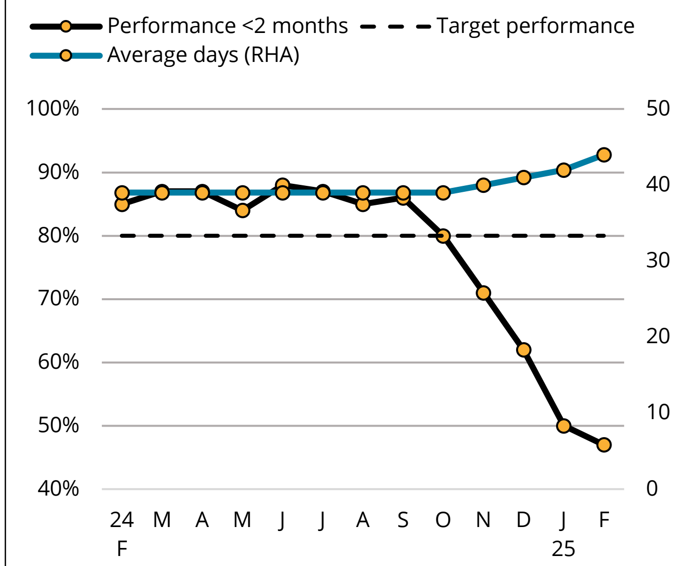


Target: Medium-risk firm applications dealt with within 70 days on average



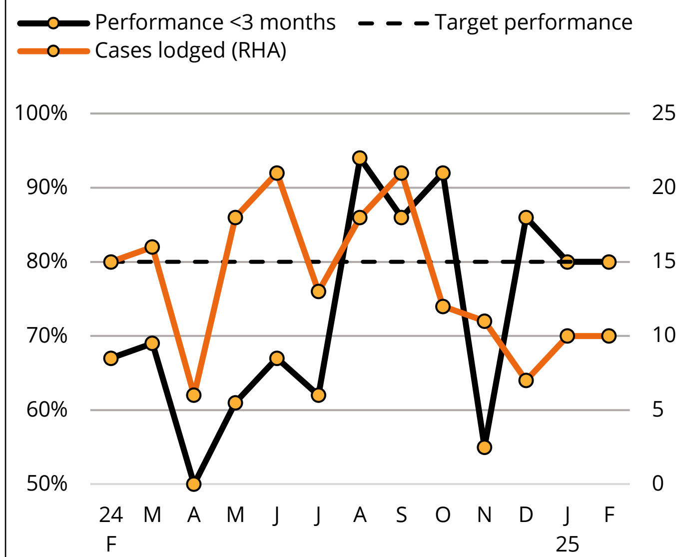
Investigations & enforcement (AERT)

LHA target: 80% of AERT cases completed within 2 months RHA: Ave days to complete AERT case assessments



Investigations & enforcement – legal

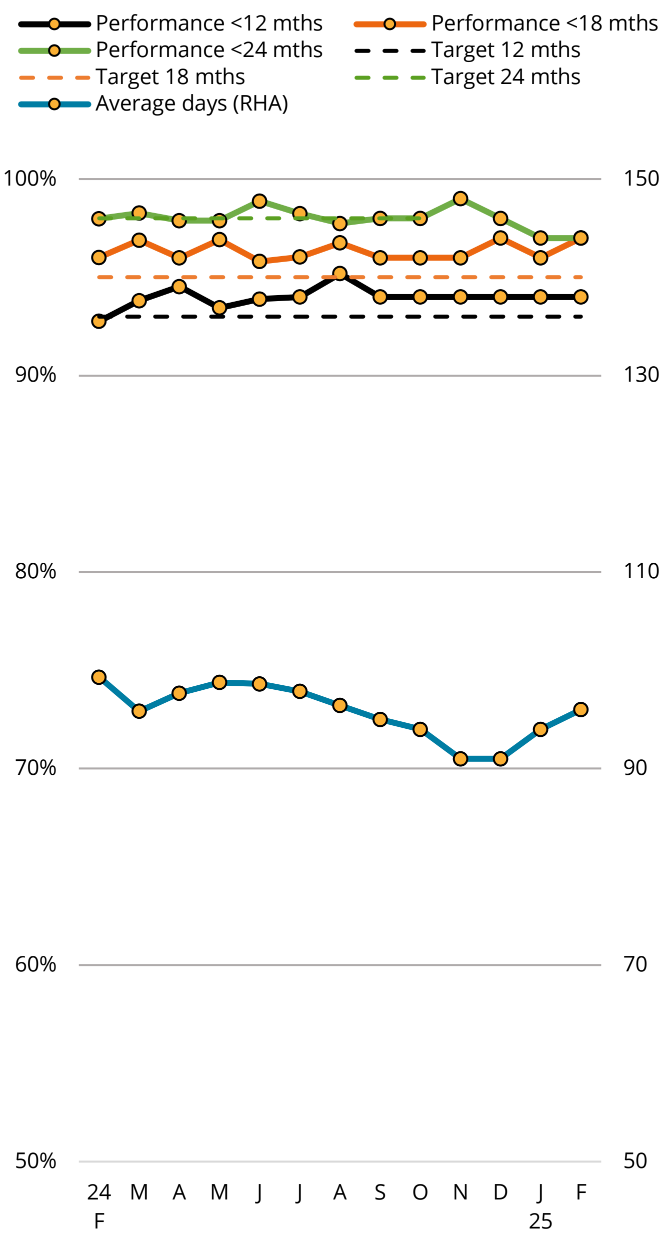
LHA target: 80% of cases lodged with SDT within 3 months. RHA: number of cases lodged with SDT



LHA: left-hand axis RHA: right-hand axis

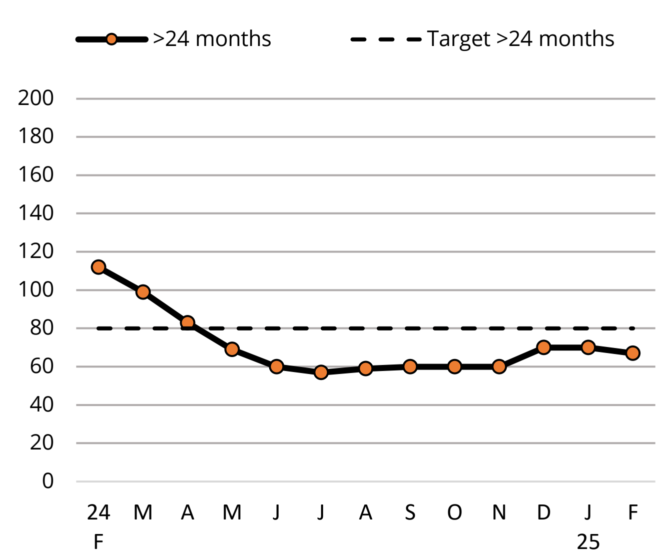
Investigations & enforcement

LHA target : 93% of investigation cases completed within 12 months, 95% within 18 months and 98% within 24 months.
RHA: average days AERT & investigation cases to completion



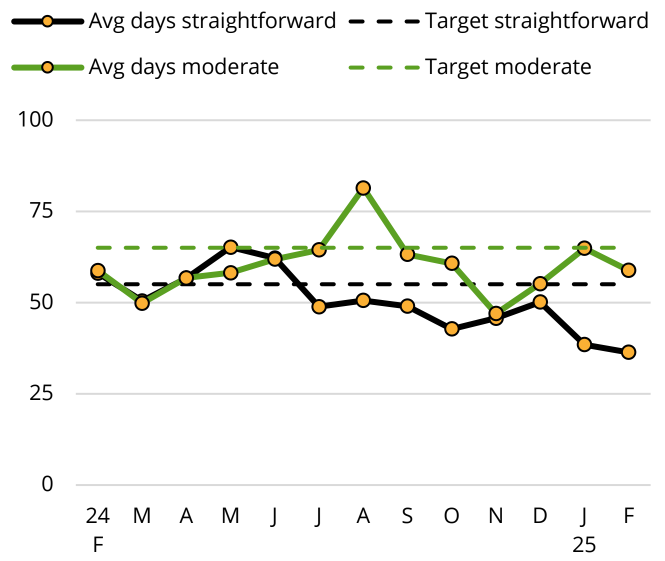
I&E – number of cases more than 24 months old

No target as this is a risk indicator measure not a KPI



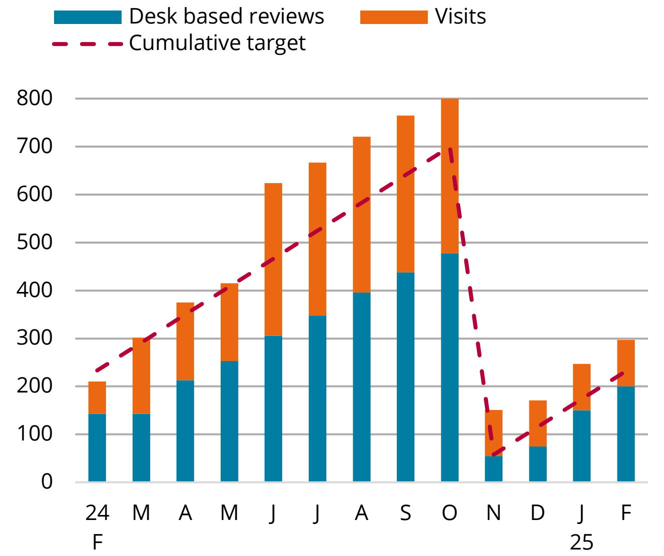
Client protection claim closure days

Target: 55 days for straightforward cases, 65 days moderate cases



Anti-money laundering

Target: 700 cumulative desk-based reviews and visits over the whole of the 2023/24 year



Education and training

It was noted at the January Board performance review that the new education and training measures would need review to ensure the most appropriate customer service measures of performance. This scorecard therefore includes a new measure reporting on how satisfied SQE candidates sitting exams were with the administration on the day. This has replaced a measure reporting on how many SQE 2 candidate responders considered the tasks set in the exam to be clear. The new measure has the benefit of considering all SQE candidates. Feedback shows the majority of candidates are satisfied with the exam administration on the day. Timelines for the agreement of reasonable adjustment plans are generally good.

Authorisation – firm applications

Performance across the team was strong between November and February, with KPIs being met across all application types.

Authorisation – individual applications

Performance remained strong throughout November to February. This reflects the sustained levels of performance over the previous year.

Assessment and early resolution (AERT)

Since October AERT have received 1,333 more reports than expected, an increase of 29% compared to forecast. This has negatively impacted our performance towards our KPI of resolving 80% of cases within two months. We achieved 80% in October, reducing to 47% by February. The average number of days taken to complete assessments increased to more than 40 in February. We have put in place measures to manage the increase, including improved ways of working and additional temporary resource. We estimate that we will return to delivery within the KPI in the autumn of 2025, assuming the level of reports received stays at the level seen so far this financial year. We are permanently increasing resource in response to the rise in reports being a sustained trend, but it will take time to recruit and train new staff. We are continuing to work as hard as we can to drive performance whilst identifying further efficiencies so that we can return to meeting the target as soon as possible.

Legal

Having achieved our goal in the four months up to October of lodging 80% within the KPI of three months despite a spike in cases going to Tribunal, we remained consistent in this period which saw a falling off in referrals.

Investigations and enforcement

We aim to complete 93% of investigations within 12 months, 95% within 18 months and 98% within 24 months. We continued to consistently meet or exceed the 12 and 18-month measures. In January and February, we resolved 97% within 24 months towards the 98% target. This is because of a 49% increase in investigations created between October to February to 1087 cases, compared to 729 in the same period 12 months earlier. We are anticipating a medium-term impact on these KPIs due to the increase of reports being passed out for investigation from AERT. We have however increased the number of resolutions per month by 13% this business year, compared to last.

Because of the increase in reports referred by AERT, there has been an immediate impact on individual case-holdings, which are currently above the maximum of 25 we aimed to achieve through the improvement programme. We are taking steps to address this, including through improvements and additional temporary and permanent resource as a consequence of the increase in reports being a clear sustained trend. We anticipate having completed all required recruitment and being at the increased headcount by the end of the calendar year, at which point we expect the average case holding to return to 25 per officer.

We also have a stretch target of resolving 70% of investigations within 10 months from assessment. This was, on average, 60% between October and February. This is consistent with our previous performance against this aspirational measure, which we always understood was a challenging target.

Investigations and enforcement – older cases

We aimed to reduce the number of investigations more than 24 months old by 50%, to around 80, by June 2024 through our improvement programme. We exceeded this target, reducing this number to 60. This increased to 70 by December because of the increase in receipts. We have a plan in place to address this. We ended February with 67 and we have forecast to return to around 60 by March, with further reductions in April and May.

Anti-money laundering (AML)

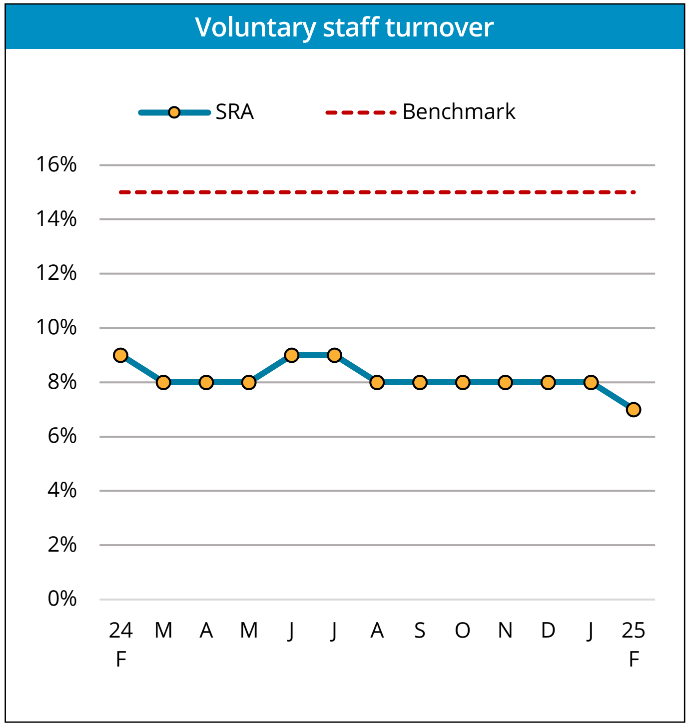
The annual full year target for 2024/25, consistent with the prior year, is 700 inspections. (Inspections include desk-based reviews and onsite visits). The target for the first four months of the 2024/25 year, November 2024 to February 2025, was 232 inspections. During the period we delivered 297 inspections (128% of target).

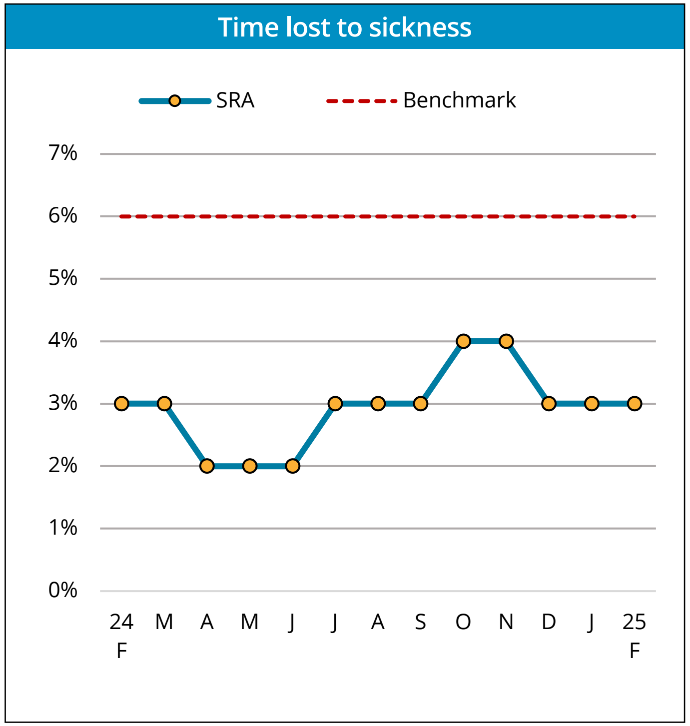
We achieved this positive performance as a result of streamlined processes, making full use of desk-based reviews alongside the onsite inspections; and the retention and development of AML colleagues, whose skills and knowledge have led to quicker and more effective inspections.

Client protection

We have continued to improve the monthly closure rates and the average days across both straightforward and moderate cases. We have been below target for both case matter types every month during the quarter and, as at the end of February, are at 36 days for straightforward (target 55) and 62 days for moderate (target 65) The significant improvement in relation to straight forward cases is partly due to us dealing with a high volume of applications in relation to rectification costs. These applications are relatively easy to evidence and result in prompt payment.

People





Voluntary staff turnover

Staff turnover is stable, with a slight decrease in February to 7%. It remains below the external benchmark of 15%. We typically see a slight increase early in the calendar year as people tend to look for new jobs after the festive period. The recruitment market remains volatile and competitive. 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.

Time lost to sickness

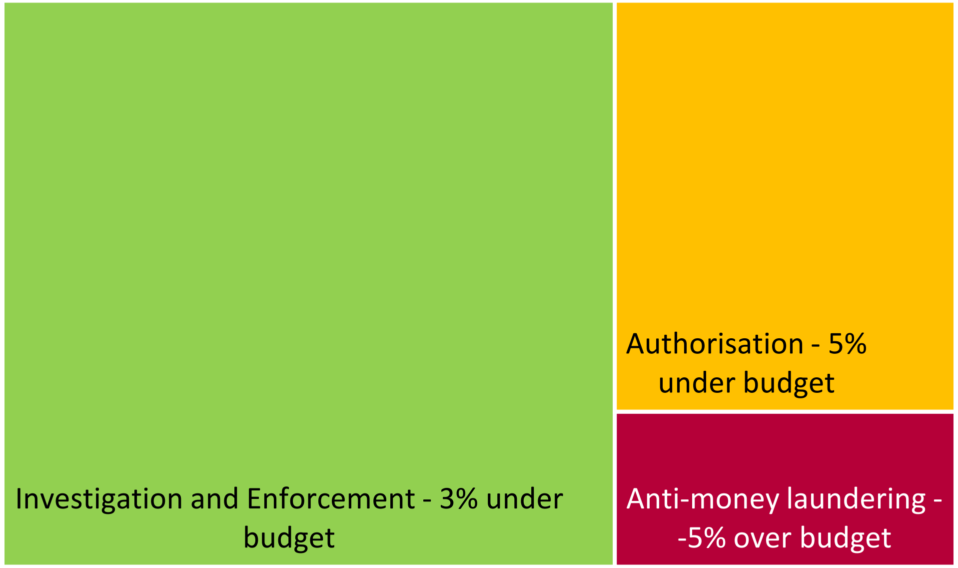
Time lost to sickness is also stable at 3% and at the same level as this time last year. This is below the external benchmark of 6%. We continue to monitor the trend and promote our wellbeing initiatives and other interventions, such as our employee assistance and occupational health provisions. Analysis indicates that the public sector is having a heavy influence on the external benchmark, quoting an increase in anxiety and stress since the Covid pandemic.

Financial

Income and expenditure for the four months ended February 2025

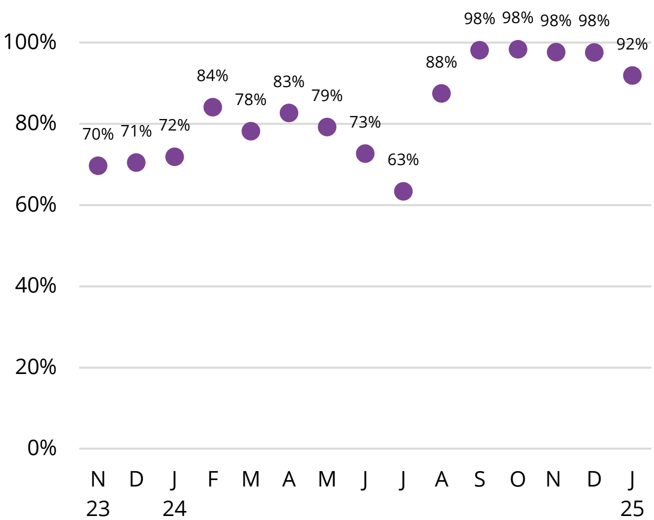
Budget by activity	Actual £m	Budget £m	Variance £m	Variance %
Practising fee income	(23.6)	(23.4)	0.2	1%
SQE income	(16.2)	(26.6)	(10.4)	-39%
Income from compensation fund	(4.5)	(5.6)	(1.1)	-20%
Regulatory income	(0.9)	(1.1)	(0.2)	-18%
Investments/interest	(1.3)	(0.9)	0.4	44%
Total income	**(46.5)**	**(57.6)**	**(11.1)**	**-19%**
Investigation and enforcement	15.1	15.6	0.5	3%
Education and training	16.9	27.0	10.1	37%
Client protection	5.4	6.4	1.0	16%
Authorisation	6.1	6.4	0.3	5%
Anti-money laundering	2.3	2.2	(0.1)	-5%
Total expenditure	**45.8**	**57.6**	**11.8**	**20%**
Total	**(0.7)**	**0.0**	**0.7**	

Expenditure for regulatory activities which have a surplus/deficit impact



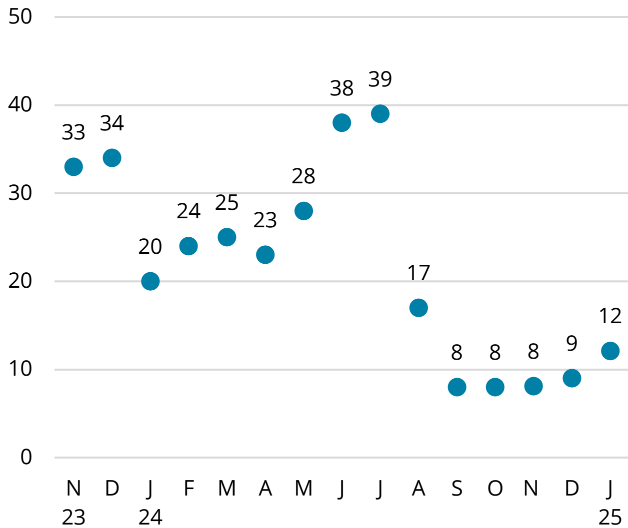
Supplier invoice payment

Target: to pay 100% of invoices within 30 days



Supplier invoice payment

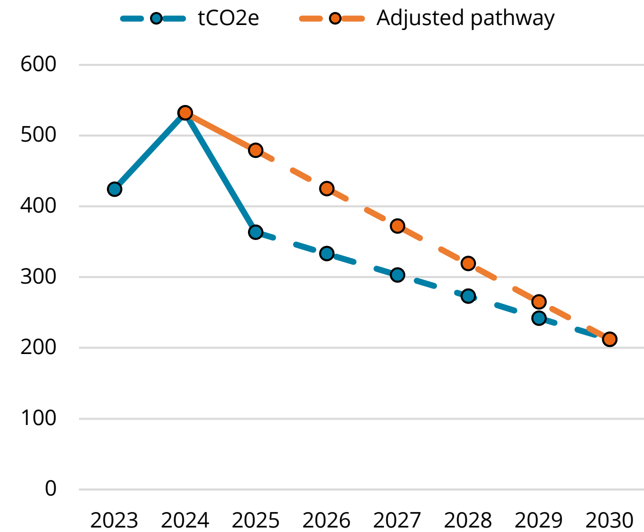
Average days to pay



Short-term pathway to net zero

Target: 50% reduction in our total carbon emissions by 2030

tCO2e = tonnes (t) of carbon dioxide (CO2) equivalent (e)



Overall income and expenditure

Income from practising fees is slightly ahead of budget. We expect the full-year figure to be circa £1m in excess of budget, based on the increasing numbers of practising solicitors. Income overall is below where we would expect it to be for this time of year, particularly for the SQE, which is £10m under budget. We expected higher candidate numbers in January. However, this reduced income results in a commensurate reduction in costs, as the income funds the costs of the examinations. Income from the compensation fund is also lower than budgeted. This is due to lower levels of interventions in the year to date than forecast. This income is also offset by reduced costs, shown within the client protection activity line.

Expenditure overall is around £11m under budget year to date, which relates to the reduced levels of income discussed above. The underlying surplus/deficit position is broadly in line with budget as shown by the immaterial variance.

Activity-based cost versus budget

The table presents our approximate expenditure on activity-based costs for our five regulatory activities. Authorisation expenditure is below budget due to vacancies within the Authorisation team. Anti-money laundering shows as 5% over budget, but this is a relatively small overspend of £0.1m and is related to overhead costs allocated to this activity.

Spend is reported as green if it is 95%–100% of budget, as amber if it is 90–95% or 101–2% of budget, and red if it is less than 90% or greater than 102% of budget.

Supplier invoice payment

Supplier payments continue to be paid in a timely way, with more than 90% paid within 30 days (our standard terms) since September. There was a slight dip in January compared to the previous four months, with 92% of payments paid within 30 days. Despite resourcing issues, 99% of January invoices were paid within 60 days and the average days to pay was 12.

A new financial transactions team leader and head of finance started in March, which should help improve return payment performance to the high levels seen last year.

Short-term pathway to net zero

tCO2e = tonnes (t) of carbon dioxide (CO2) equivalent (e)

In 2024 total emissions spiked, increasing by 108 tCO2e, which is mainly due to higher staffing levels with more commutes to the workplace. In addition working from home emissions increased by 54 tCO2e.

As a result, our original pathway to achieve our goal of a 50% reduction by 2030 was not realistic. Because of this, we have recalculated our planned reductions year on year so that we can still reach our goal for 2030, represented by the orange line.