



Cabinet Office

Public Procurement Review Service Progress Report 2024/25

Trends from 6 April 2024 to 5 April 2025

Contents:

- 1. Public Procurement Review Service (PPRS) Highlights**
 - 2. Background**
 - 3. Promoting PPRS**
 - 4. Cases Received and Sectors Involved**
 - 5. Main Issues Raised**
 - 6. Top Issues and Action**
 - 7. Case Outcomes**
 - 8. Service Satisfaction Surveys**
 - 9. Forward Look for 2024/25**
- Annex A - Main trends for Central Government**
- Annex B - Main trends for Wider Public Sector**



1. Public Procurement Review Service (PPRS) Highlights

PPRS sits within the Cabinet Office and allows public sector suppliers and potential government suppliers to raise concerns, with the option to remain anonymous, where they believe that there has been poor public sector procurement practice. PPRS also accepts cases raised by suppliers concerning the late payment (i.e. not paid within 30 calendar days or as stated in the contract terms) of valid and undisputed invoices on a public sector contract.

The Progress Report sets out the main trends the service has seen from 6 April 2024 to 5 April 2025. It includes a comparison of procurement issues within the different sectors. It also addresses the outcome of feedback provided from user surveys and has a forward look for the financial year 2025/26.

PPRS received 89 cases in this financial year (plus 21 cases carried forward from the previous year) which represented a 25.1% decrease from 119 cases in 2023/24. Half (50.0%) of the cases were received from new service users. During this period, there were 14,415 contract opportunities posted on Contracts Finder.

The top 5 reported issues to PPRS this year were:

- 'Payment'
- 'Communication'
- 'Evaluation/Award'
- 'Transparency'
- 'Changing approach'

PPRS unblocked £328,599.67 in late payments in 2024/25 on behalf of suppliers and continue to maintain a 100% success rate in releasing valid overdue and undisputed invoices. There was a year-on-year increase of 28% in the number of payment cases, alongside a decrease in the value of unblocked payments from £3,469,265.75 in the previous year. The total amount PPRS has unblocked since the service began is £13.5 million.

In terms of resolution time, 84.3% of cases were resolved within 2 months of receipt for issues relating to a central government body, or within 3 months for issues relating to the wider public sector, such as local government.



2. Background

PPRS is one of a range of measures designed to make government easier to work with, helping suppliers (particularly Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) and Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprises (VCSEs) and levelling the playing field for those who wish to supply to the Government.

We welcome enquiries from all suppliers who have concerns about the conduct of a procurement process that they have been part of, or which they wish to participate in. An enquiry must relate to a specific procurement. The issue must have occurred in the last 2 years and concern a procurement process run by an in-scope contracting authority as defined by the Public Contract Regulations 2015 (PCR 2015). We also handle cases concerning the late payment (i.e. not paid within 30 calendar days or as stated in the contract terms) of valid and undisputed invoices on a public sector contract. If the supplier has not followed the correct action/procedures, or understood the process, our work would involve providing advice and guidance rather than a recommendation to the contracting authority.

We work with central government departments (CG) and the wider public sector (WPS) to help them understand concerns raised and to highlight best practice. Serious or persistent issues are escalated within contracting authorities and can be raised with the Small Business Crown Representative in addition to our investigations.

In some cases, our work leads adjustments in live procurements. In other cases, we ensure that lessons are learned, resulting in improvements in the way government sources future goods and services and ensuring suppliers are paid in accordance with Prompt Payment Policy. The majority of our cases are summarised and published¹ naming the contracting authorities whilst businesses that reported the cases remain anonymous.

It should be noted that trends are based on the type of complaint that has been investigated at the closure stage and do not always indicate that an incorrect procurement process has been identified.

Our [scope and remit](#) that was in place for 2024/25 can be viewed on GOV.UK.

3. Promoting PPRS

The Public Procurement Review Service now has a presence on GOV.UK alongside the other services of the Procurement Review Unit.

¹ Publication wording is published once agreed with the contracting authority. Where multiple complaints are received simultaneously we publish a joint summary of our findings. In the interest of transparency the supplier has sight of the wording prior to publication.



Additionally, PPRS is advertised online on Contracts Finder², which allows suppliers to search for information about public sector opportunities. Contracts Finder published 58,352 award notices in 2024/25. PPRS is also advertised on Find a Tender³ service (the Central Digital Platform) that allows organisations to search and apply for high value contracts (usually above £118,000) in the UK's public and utilities sectors. The Find a Tender service published 21,640 award and contract notices in 2024/25. PPRS is also promoted on the SME Hub⁴ on GOV.UK and is referenced within the commercial playbooks.

We have a promotional video on the Government Commercial Function (GCF) YouTube channel that has been shared with key stakeholders, along with a brochure outlining our processes and trends. These materials will be refreshed during 2025/26 to also include information on the Procurement Review Unit.

We continue to promote our marketing material through the Cabinet Office's SME Panel and Crown Representatives. Additionally, we work with the Small Business Commissioner, the SME Crown Representative, similar services in the Devolved Administrations⁵ and the VCSE Crown Representative to identify trends and share experience of best practices.

We worked closely with colleagues across the new Procurement Review Unit, to raise awareness of the new and existing services and to ensure our services are accessible.

² <https://www.gov.uk/contracts-finder>

³ <https://www.gov.uk/find-tender>

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/small-and-medium-business-hub>

⁵ Other services exist in: Northern Ireland - CPD Charter: <https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/publications/cpd-supplier-charter/> / Scotland - Single Point of Enquiry: <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Government/Procurement/Selling/supplier-enquiries> / Wales - Supplier Feedback Service: <https://gov.wales/topics/improvingservices/bettervfm/supplier-feedback-service/?lang=en>

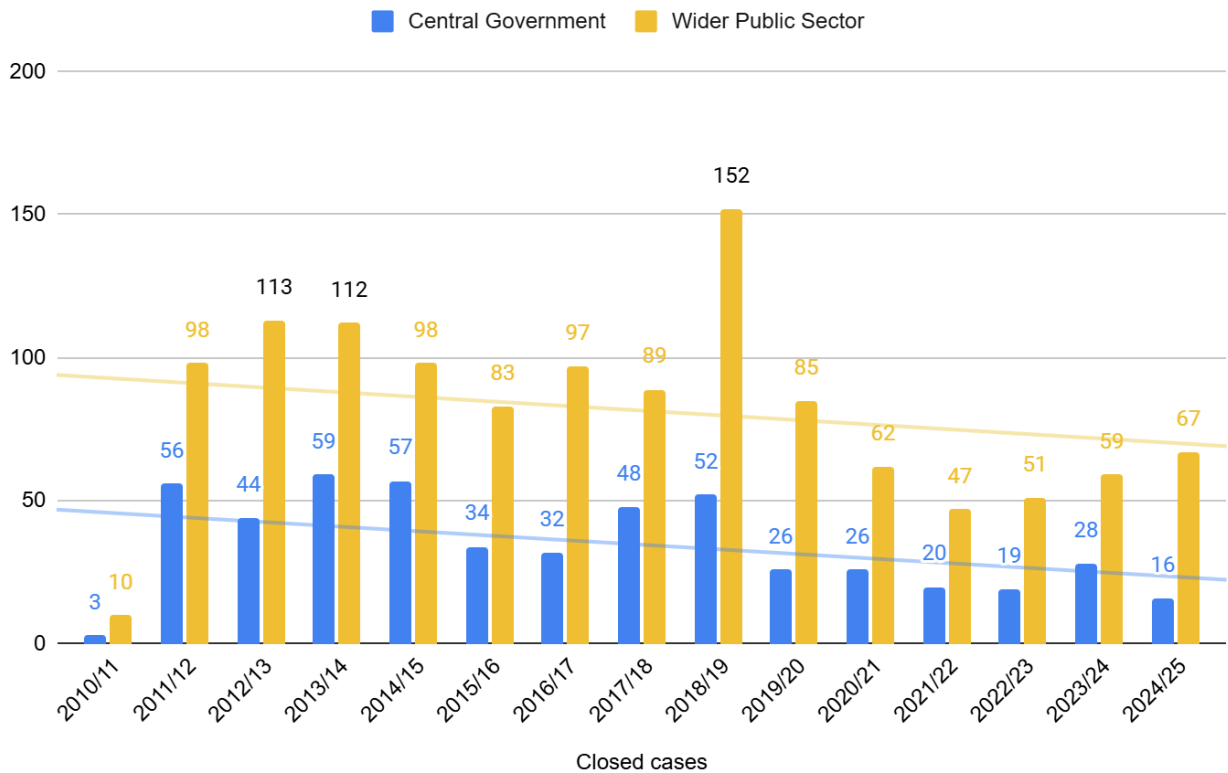


4. Cases Received and Sectors Involved

In the reporting year ended 5 April 2025, 89 new cases were received along with a further 21 cases which were carried forward from the previous year. This report focuses on the trends for the 83 cases handled through to closure; the remaining cases were either collapsed or rejected once further information was received.

Cases are rejected if new evidence arises indicating that the complaint raised falls outside our scope and remit. We collapse cases if we lose contact with a supplier, if they request to withdraw from the service, or if they request to work directly with the contracting authority. Eighteen cases were carried forward to 2025/26.

Chart 1: Sectors we have received concerns about since the service started (closed only):



The number of complaints received for CG has decreased from 28 cases in 2023/24 to 16 cases in 2024/25. There has been an increase in the number of cases received for WPS, from 59 cases in 2023/24 to 67 in 2024/25.

While there has been a decrease this year compared with recent years, case numbers remain at a historically low rate. The generally low rate is most likely due to the public sector buyers' familiarity with the current regulations, leading to an expectation that case numbers will increase in 2025/26.



Non-case Enquiries

PPRS continually reviews its processes and identifies areas for improvement. We track enquiries received to understand the volume that does not progress to a full case. Often, these are of a general nature seeking further information, or enquiries that could be handled directly by contracting authorities without the need to establish a case.

We handled 90 enquiries to 5 April 2025, compared to 156 enquiries handled by the same point the previous year. Additionally, we have also classified the nature of the enquiry to identify any further trends that could support our ongoing spot check programme. Of the enquiries received, 47 were not related to procurement processes and were signposted appropriately, while 18 were outside our scope and remit. Furthermore, 23 did not respond to our requests for further information needed to establish a case and 2 were referred to the Devolved Administrations. The remainder were answered by PPRS.



5. Main Issues Raised

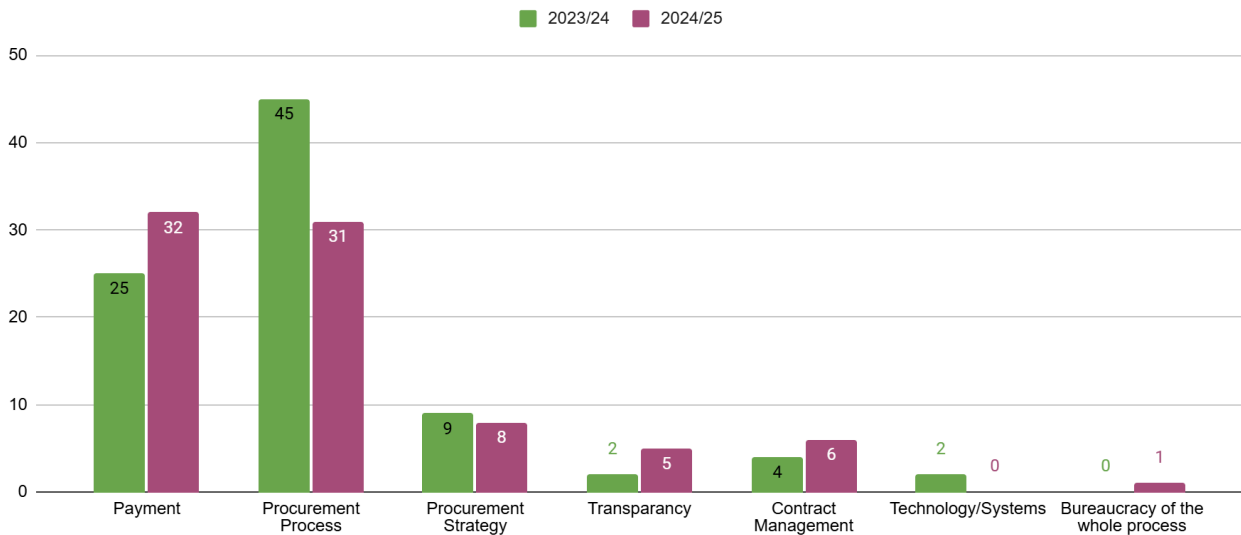
High Level Classification

We classify enquiries by the overarching nature of the issue. The types of concerns we investigate are categorised at the closure stage of the investigation. These fall under 7 categories:

- Procurement Strategy (the approach to achieving what the contracting authority requires from the procurement)
- Procurement Process (issues relating to the submission or evaluation of tenders)
- Late Payment
- Transparency (where the process was not clear)
- Technology/Systems (e.g. broken links or issues with eTendering Portals)
- Contract Management (problems at any stage of the contract management process)
- Bureaucracy of the Process (procurement red tape)

This high level classification enables us to produce and analyse trends around the main issues received.

Chart 2: Types of Issues raised - High Level - 2024/25 comparison against previous year:



In 2024/25 there was an increase in 'Payment' cases to 32 cases (38.6% of all cases) compared to 2023/24 where 'Payment' cases accounted for 25 cases (28.7%).

PPRS routinely reminds contracting authorities of their obligations under the Prompt Payment Policy and the PCR 2015 regulation 113⁶.

⁶<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2015/102/regulation/113/made>



'Procurement Process'- has decreased in cases from 45 in 2023/24 (51.7%) to 31 in 2024/25 (37.3%).

'Procurement Strategy' - has remained similar with 9 cases in 2023/24 (10.3%) and 8 cases in 2024/25 (9.6%).

'Transparency' - there was an increase in cases from 2 in 2023/24 (2.3%) to 5 in 2024/25 (6.0%).

'Contract Management' - there was an increase in cases from 4 cases (4.6%) in 2023/24 to 6 cases (7.2%) in 2024/25.

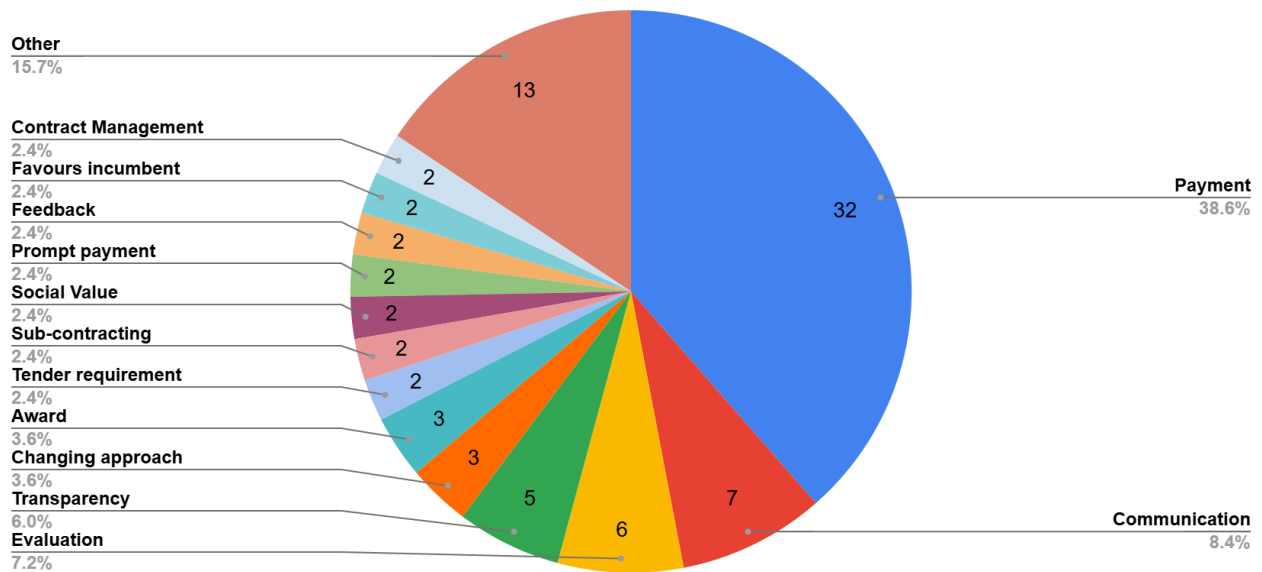
'Technology/Systems' - there were 2 cases (2.3%) in 2023/24 and there were zero in 2024/25.

'Bureaucracy of the whole process' - there was one case (1.2%) in 2024/25 where there were zero in 2023/24.

Sub Level Classification

Closed cases are further classified to provide a more granular level of detail to enable us to identify and analyse trends. Within this report we have grouped issues where a single case has been received as 'Other'.

Chart 3: Types of Issues raised - Sub Level 2024/25





Late payment accounted for more than a third (38.6%) of all issues reported to PPRS this year with 32 cases, compared to just over a quarter, 25 cases (28.7%), of all cases the previous year. Eleven payment cases were not upheld.

The next highest sub-issues are classified as follows:

- 'Communication' 7 cases, 8.4%, with 5 complaints upheld
- 'Evaluation' 6 cases, 7.2%, with 3 complaints upheld
- 'Transparency' 5 cases, 6.0%, with 3 complaints upheld
- 'Changing approach' 3 cases, 3.6%, with all 3 complaints upheld
- 'Award' 3 cases, 3.6%, with one complaint upheld

The concerns recorded under 'Other' include: 'Use of framework', 'Timescales', 'SME exclusion', 'Short deadlines', 'Not using model Ts and Cs', 'Length of documentation', 'Flow-down of terms', 'Financial assessment', 'Equivalents', 'Conflict of interest', 'Clarification', 'Advertisement' and 'Accreditation'.



6. Top Issues and Action

The main areas of complaints received against contracting authorities are outlined in the table below. ‘Upheld’ represents cases where we have made recommendations for change in the contracting authority’s processes and provided signposting to published guidance. ‘Not upheld’ refers to cases where the contracting authority has followed the correct procedures and we were able to educate suppliers. There was an increase in the number of complaints acknowledged by contracting authorities, indicating recognition that improvements could be made in the future.

MAIN TRENDS		
Issue	Context	Action
<p>‘Payment’</p> <p>Thirty-two cases raised</p> <p>CG 3 cases (2 upheld); WPS - 29 cases (19 upheld)</p> <p>(payment complaints are closed at the point where the supplier receives payment)</p>	<p>The cases concerned either the non-payment of valid and undisputed invoices or disputes regarding invoices.</p> <p>Where public sector invoices are not paid within 30 days and are not disputed, interest becomes liable as set out in the Late Payment of Commercial Debts (Interest) Act 1998. In addition, under the PCR 2015, public sector buyers must publish the amount of interest paid to suppliers due to late payment. As specified in regulation 113 of the PCR 2015</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/guidance/pro-mpt-payment-policy</p>	<p>We unblocked £328,599.67 in late payments on behalf of suppliers.</p> <p>We remind contracting authorities of their obligations under the PCR 2015⁷, including PPN 02/20⁸ and PPN 04/20⁹ that sets out information and guidance for public bodies on payment of their suppliers to ensure service continuity during the coronavirus outbreak.</p>

⁷<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukSI/2015/102/regulation/113/made>

⁸<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/procurement-policy-note-0220-supplier-relief-due-to-covid-19>

⁹<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/procurement-policy-note-0420-recovery-and-transition-from-covid-19>



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<p>'Communication'</p> <p>Seven cases:</p> <p>CG - 3 cases (2 upheld)</p> <p>WPS - 5 cases (4 upheld)</p>	<p>Suppliers were concerned about a lack of transparency in public sector procurements and that communication was either late or not clear enough.</p>	<p>In most cases, we upheld the supplier concerns and helped the customer authorities to understand best practice around supplier communications.</p>
<p>'Evaluation/Award'</p> <p>Six cases raised</p> <p>CG - 3 cases (2 upheld)</p> <p>WPS - 6 cases (2 upheld)</p>	<p>Concerns were raised on how the evaluation process was run, including the evaluation criteria and potential conflicts of interest within the evaluation panel. There were also concerns about the due diligence being undertaken prior to award</p>	<p>For the majority of cases, where complaints were not upheld, PPRS was able to confirm a fair and transparent process had been followed that aligned with the advertised opportunity.</p> <p>Where complaints were upheld, PPRS recommended that contracting authorities provide clear guidance on the way in which answers will be evaluated, to ensure all opportunities meet the PCR 2015 regulation 18, Principles of Procurement.</p> <p>Where improvements could be made in the future PPRS recommended that the Authority should consider referring to the Sourcing Playbook when planning future evaluations.</p> <p>PPRS also followed-up with the authorities, as appropriate, to review the implementation of this recommendation.</p>



<p>'Transparency'</p> <p>Five cases raised</p> <p>CG - 2 cases (one upheld)</p> <p>WPS - 3 cases (2 upheld)</p>	<p>Concerns were raised regarding inaccuracies in tender documentation, specifically around which procurement procedure was being adopted, as well as concerns over bias towards incumbent suppliers.</p>	<p>High quality tender documents are essential to maintaining transparency and ensuring that suppliers are able to tender effectively.</p> <p>High quality feedback ensures suppliers can improve their tenders over time.</p> <p>In just over half of cases, these complaints were upheld and best practice guidance was given to customer authorities.</p>
<p>'Changing approach'</p> <p>Three cases: CG - one case (upheld) WPS - 2 cases (both upheld)</p>	<p>These complaints related to changes in approach during a tender process. Suppliers were concerned that they had been disadvantaged by these changes.</p>	<p>In all of the cases, we were able to encourage customer authorities to improve their supplier communications, ensuring that suppliers understood the reasons for the changes.</p>

7. Case Outcomes

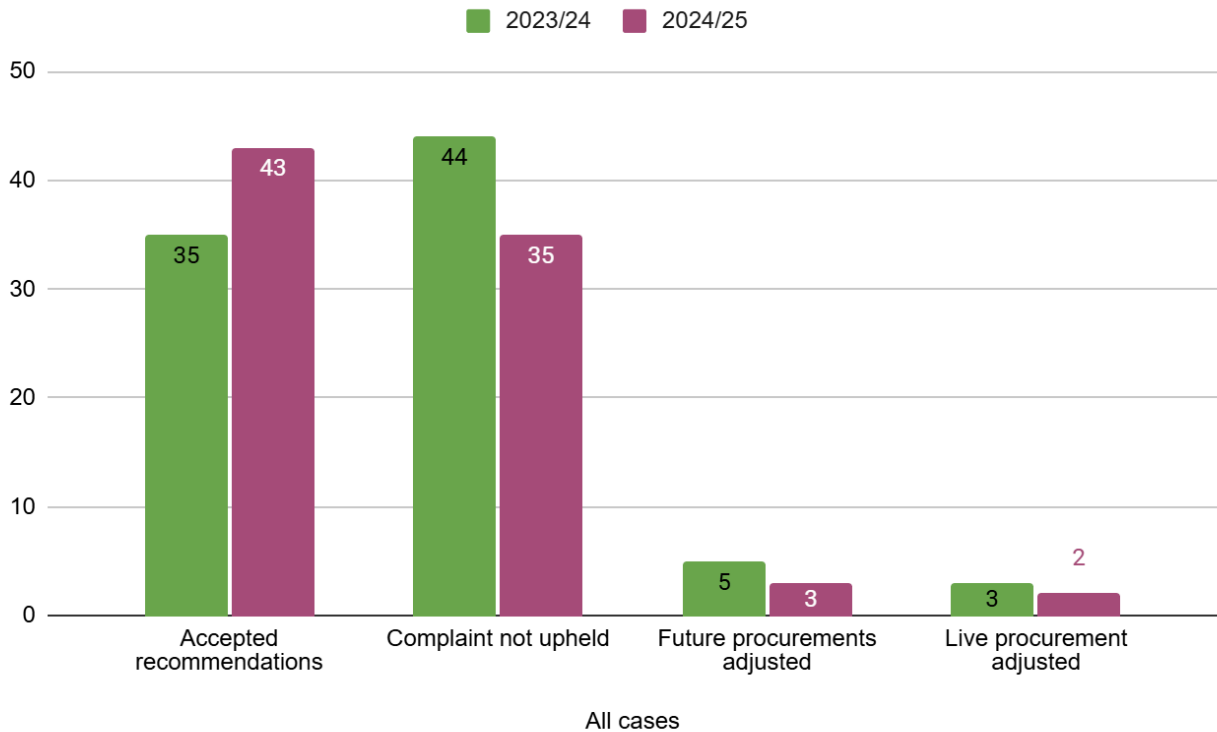
Where PPRS upholds a case, the main output is a report including best practice guidance. Under the new Procurement Act 2023, if we consider that the issues raised might have wider applicability to general public procurement practice, we work with the Procurement Review Unit and the commercial policy team to determine how to promote best practice. As this year marked the final year of the Public Contract Regulations 2015, the majority of cases involved directing people to existing guidance rather than driving new policy

Serious or persistent issues are escalated within contracting authorities and can be raised with the SME Crown Representative in addition to our investigations.

Prompt review resulted in changes being made to 2 live procurements. We handled 35 cases where the contracting authority had followed the correct procedure and we were able to advise the supplier to help them understand what had occurred and why. This represented a decrease from 44 cases the previous year.



Chart 4: Outcome of closed cases - 2024/25 comparison against previous year



Collapsed and rejected cases

Out of 92 cases managed, 2 cases were rejected and 7 cases were collapsed. This compared to 23 cases (8 rejected, 15 collapsed) in the previous year. Cases are rejected if new evidence indicates that the complaint falls outside our scope and remit. We collapse cases if we lose contact with a supplier, they request to withdraw from the service, or they request to work directly with the contracting authority.



8. Service Satisfaction Surveys

We aim to handle CG cases within 60 days and WPS cases within 90 days. In 2024/25 84.3% of cases were managed through to conclusion within this service level agreement (SLA).

Feedback surveys are sent directly to suppliers and contracting authorities following case closure. Feedback from suppliers has shown that we have a positive impact on public sector procurement by recommending changes in contracting authorities' procurement activities.

Supplier Feedback

A total of 63 surveys have been sent to suppliers. We had 33 responses, giving a 52.4% response rate, up from 47.2% the previous year.

- 87.5% agreed it was easy to find information on PPRS, down from 97.1% the previous year
- 93.8% agreed the process and outcome was explained, down from 94.1% the previous year
- 81.8% were satisfied with the service provided, down from the previous year
- 83.3% were happy that the caseworker understood the issues involved and was professional throughout, this question was introduced this year
- 96.9% would use the service again, up from 90.9% the previous year
- 90.6% would recommend the PPRS to others, down from 91.2% the previous year

Contracting Authority Feedback

A total of 66 surveys have been sent to contracting authorities that have been contacted by PPRS and we have received 22 responses giving a response rate of 33.3%, which has remained the same as the previous year.

- 95.5% agreed the process and case outcome was explained, down from 100% the previous year
- 100% were happy that the caseworker understood the issues involved and was professional throughout, this question was introduced this year
- 100% agreed that the advice received and recommendations were useful, up from 90% the previous year
- 100% agreed that PPRS is a helpful route to question procurement practice, up from 95% the previous year

Actions in response to Feedback

We rely on the surveys to give us information to help improve the service we provide going forward. We received a lot of positive feedback from both suppliers and contracting authorities, some of the comments this year have include:



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- *“Issue was concerning unpaid invoices and we wanted to remain anonymous. PPRS managed to resolve the matter without revealing [the] company’s identity- Thank you!”*
- *“[T]he premise behind the PPRS and the fact it exists is fantastic.”*
- *“[W]e found the service to be great and in our case validated our initial concerns.*
- *“Excellent service. Really helped me.”*
- *“Worked very well within scope in a timely manner, offered a full debrief and understood context and purpose.”*
- *“The staff actioning the issue we’re experienced, knowledgeable and professional.”*
- *“I was very impressed and will use this service to help improve any insufficient procurements so that the industry can continuously improve especially in light of the new regime changes in procurement.”*

In terms of making improvements to the service we have taken on the constructive feedback received below:

You Said	Our response
<p><i>“You listened. I'm not sure you completely understood.”</i></p> <p><i>“I think a bit more personal contact would have been better, to explain our concern in person (via Microsoft Teams or similar) at the start of the process.”</i></p>	<p>We will commit to offering a conference call at the start of every case to understand the concerns better.</p> <p>We will start each case with an agreed statement of what is to be reviewed, including a list of the evidence we will be requesting.</p>
<p><i>“I think that sometimes, it's not clear why you have made a decision”</i></p> <p><i>“[T]he case was closed and no issues found but with no feedback as to why that was the conclusion reached”</i></p>	<p>We will increase the level of detail in our end of case report to ensure users can understand both the conclusion we have reached and why we reached the conclusion</p>



9. Forward Look for 2025/26

The service is committed to continuous improvement. We will adapt the service outputs in line with policy, feedback, trends and issues.

With the go-live of the new Procurement Act 2023 and the launch of the new Procurement Review Unit (PRU) it is a good opportunity to reflect on historic trends and ensure that the service is fit for purpose.

The top five reported issues are likely to have changed but continued relevance under the new act, particularly:

- Payment - the introduction of implied payment terms in public contracts¹⁰ ensures that payment cases will have a clearer footing
- Evaluation/changing approach - PPRS is expecting to see an increase in queries in this space, particularly around the competitive flexible procedure¹¹ and the ability to refine award criteria
- Transparency - the increased publication requirements under the new act may give rise to more points of contention

Our priorities for 2025/26 include:

- Increase our understanding of the new Procurement Act through continuous professional development
- Monitor emerging trends as cases are raised under the new Procurement Act and share them across the public sector commercial space
- Providing an active feedback loop to suppliers and customer authorities to accelerate the adoption of the new Procurement Act once it goes live:
 - Continue to work with suppliers through the transition to ensure that their concerns are heard and responded to
 - Continue to work with contracting authorities through the transition to ensure that recommendations are taken forward in future procurements
 - Continue to work with teams across the GCF to feedback on the issues that are raised to improve commercial capability

¹⁰ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2023/54/section/68>

¹¹ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2023/54/section/20>

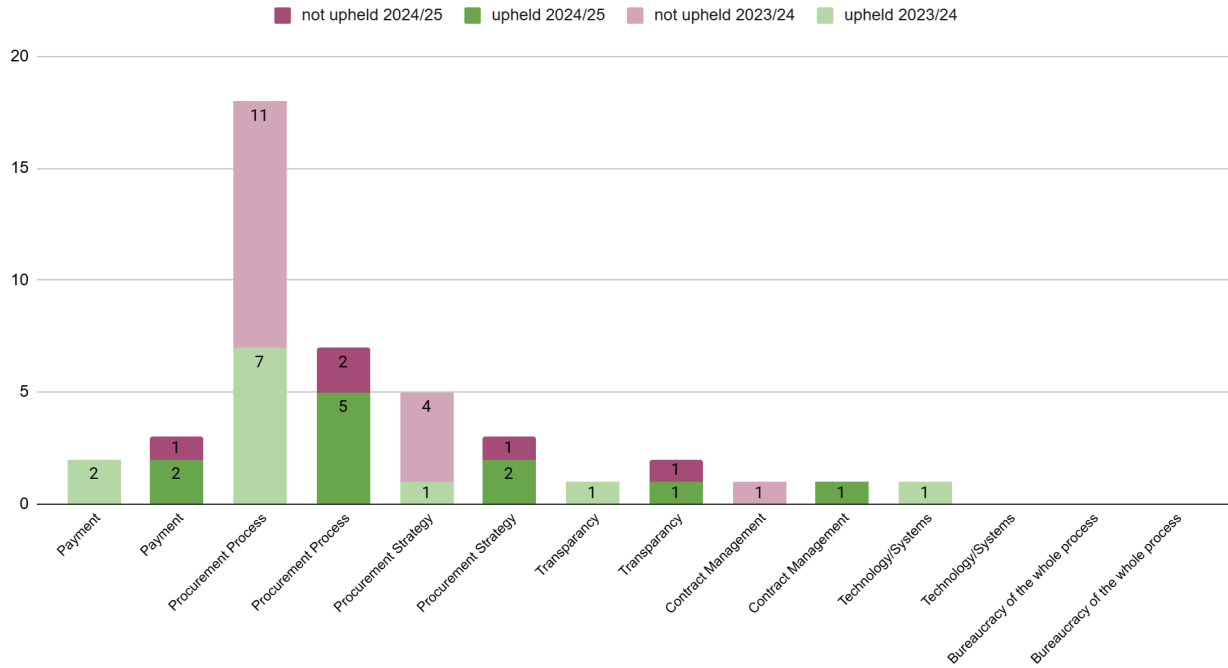


- Share the lessons learned from our reviews more widely in order to increase the quality of public sector procurements



Annex A - Main Trends for Central Government

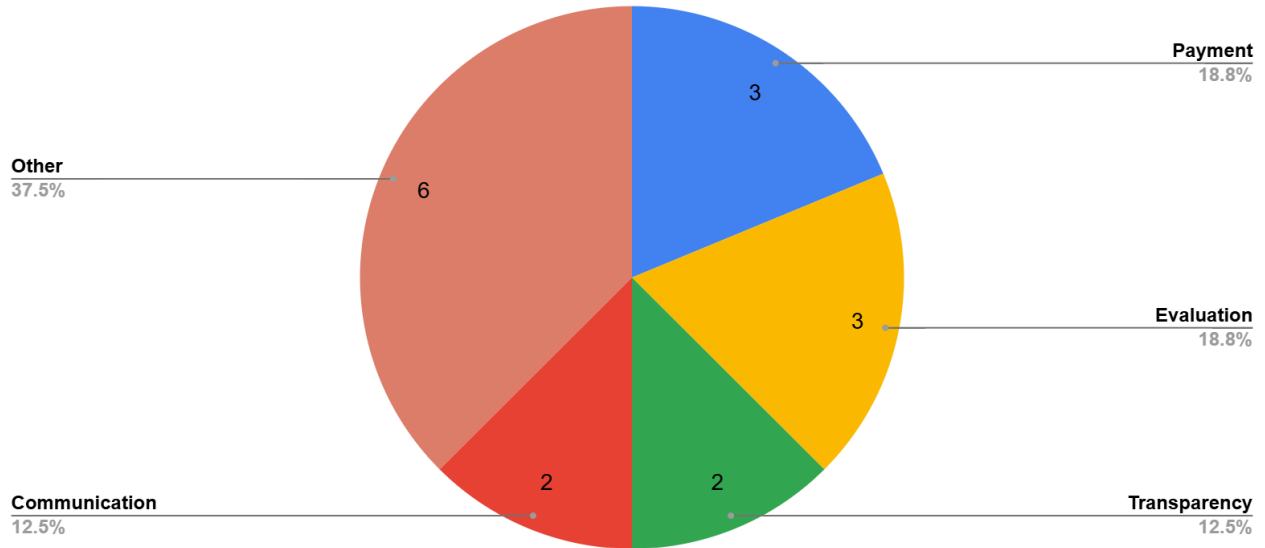
Chart 5: Issues investigated with CG - High Level - 2024/25 comparison against previous year



We investigated 16 cases classified as CG in 2024/25, an increase from 28 the previous year. Cases classified as ‘Procurement Process’ had the highest number of complaints with 7 cases, a decrease from 18 the previous year, 5 complaints were upheld, which is a decrease from 7 cases upheld in 2023/24. Cases categorised under ‘Procurement Strategy’ decreased in this sector this year, accounting for 3 cases, where 2 were upheld, compared to 5 cases, where one was upheld in the previous year.



Chart 6: Issues investigated with CG - Sub Level - 2024/25



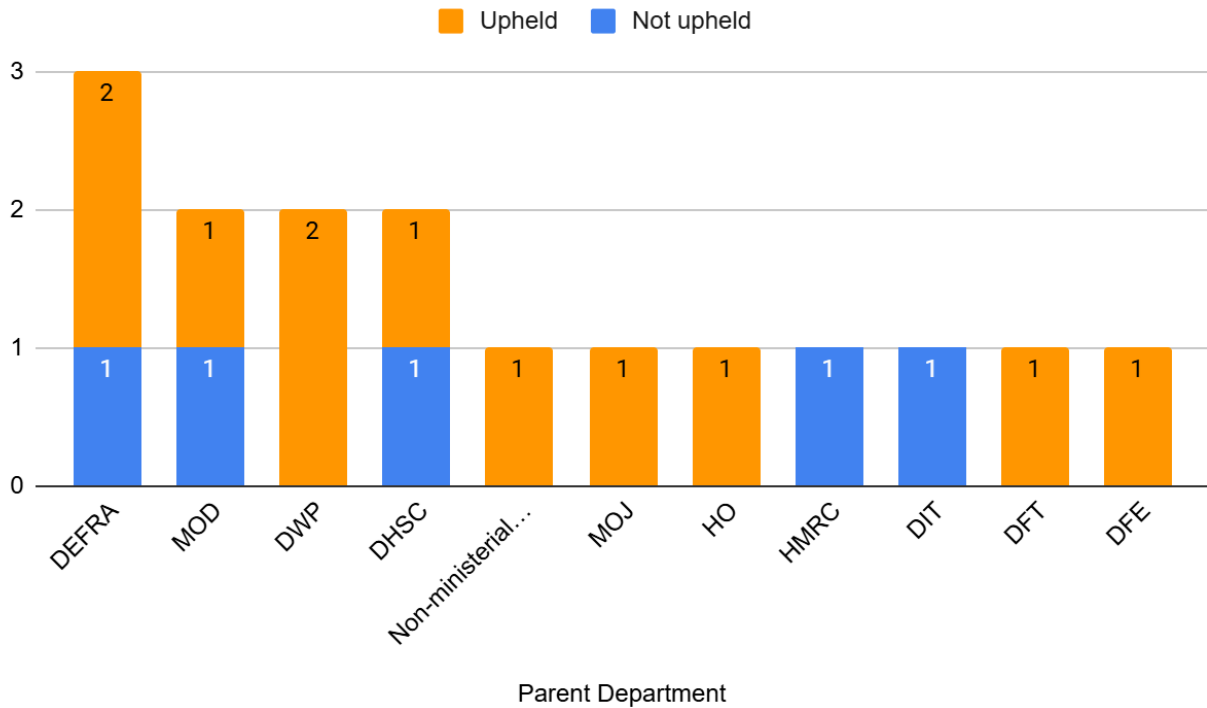
‘Payment’ and ‘Evaluation’ were the highest reported issues for CG with 3 cases. Two ‘Payment’ complaints were upheld, where the Contracting Authority accepted our recommendations. Two ‘Evaluation’ cases were upheld, one where the authority agreed to change their strategy in the future and one where a live procurement was adjusted. ‘Transparency’ and ‘Communication’ both received 2 complaints.

In the previous year the highest reported issues were regarding ‘Use of framework’ with 7 cases and ‘Communication’ with 4 cases.

Individual complaints were received regarding ‘Timescales’, ‘Sub-contracting’, ‘Feedback’, ‘Equivalents’, ‘Contract management’ and ‘Changing approach’.



Chart 7: CG department split of cases not upheld and upheld 2024/25

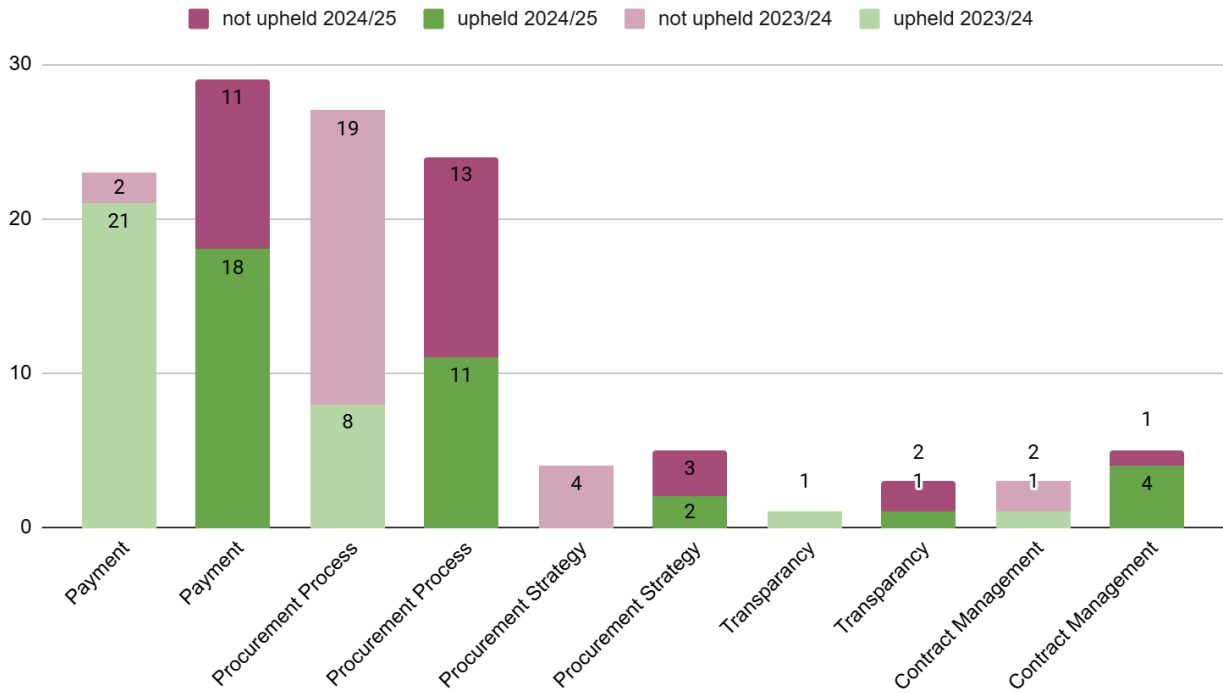


68.8% (11 cases) of the complaints made on CG cases were upheld in 2024/25, up from 42.9% (12 cases) of complaints that were upheld in 2023/24. A detailed breakdown of complaints upheld can be seen in Section 6: Top Issues and Action above (page 10).



Annex B - Main Trends for Wider Public Sector

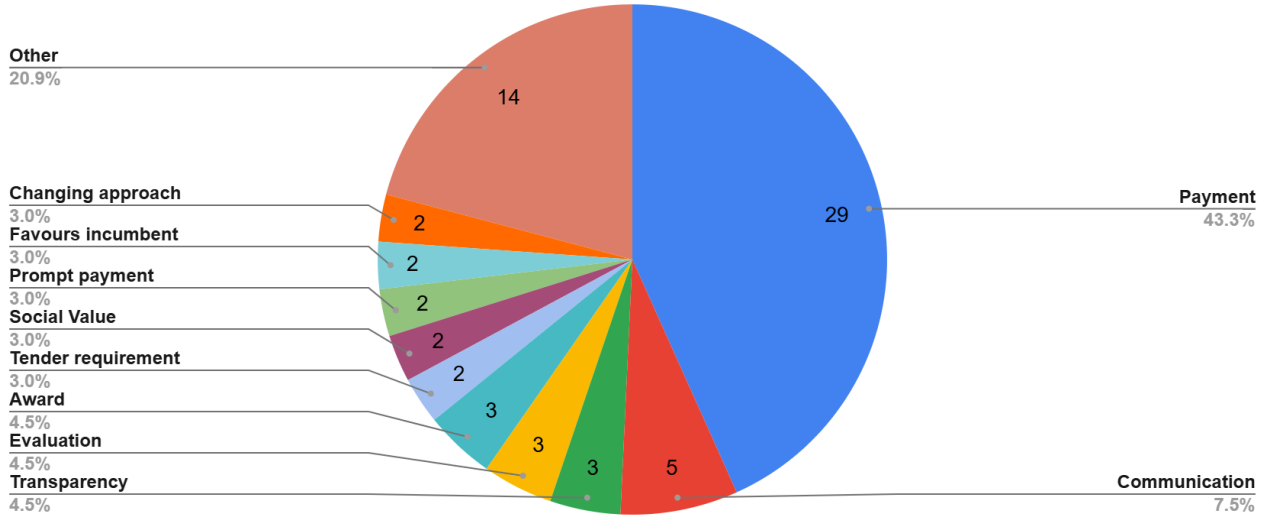
Chart 8: Issues investigated with the WPS - High Level - 2024/25 comparison against previous year



The WPS accounted for 80.7% of cases, the number of complaints closed increased from 59 (67.8%) in 2023/24 to 67 this year. In 2024/25 'Payment' received the highest number of complaints, 29 cases, up from the 23 cases closed the previous year. 'Procurement Process' cases continued to be prevalent with 24 cases, down from 27 cases the previous year.



Chart 9: Issues investigated with the WPS - Sub Level 2024/25



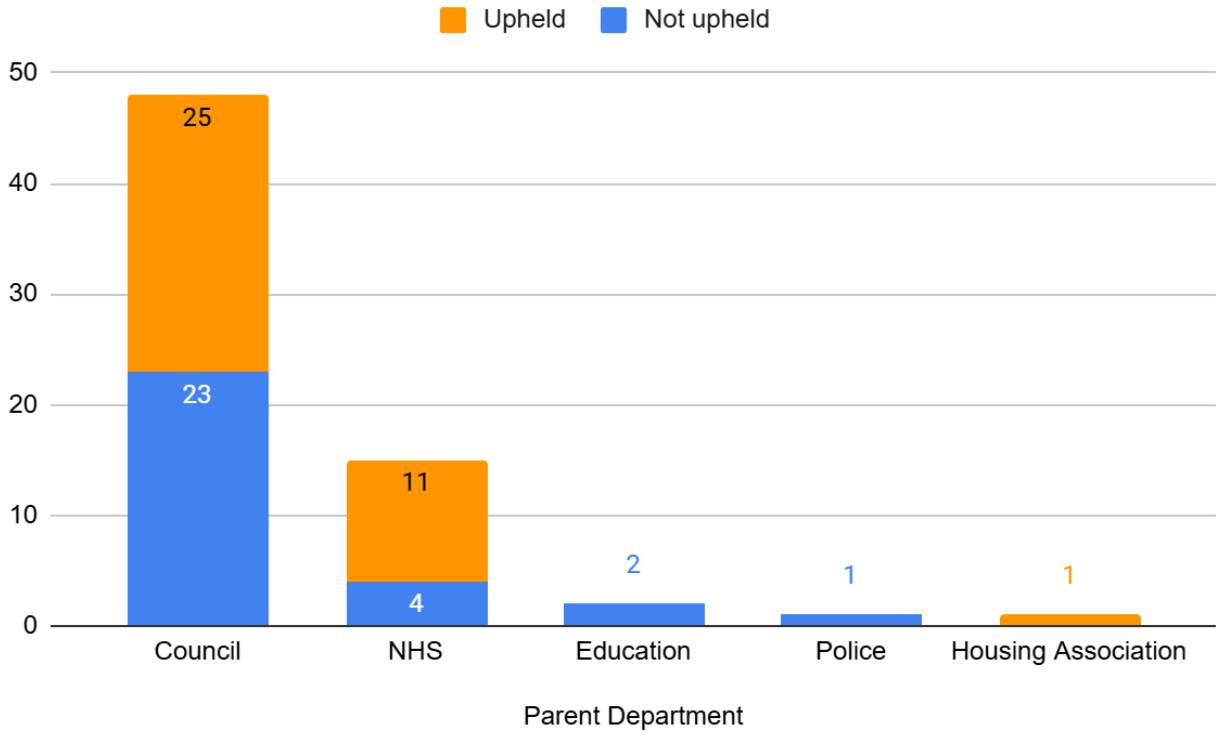
Late payment accounted for 43.3% (29 cases) of all WPS issues reported to PPRS in 2024/25. This is an increase to the previous year where 'Payment' represented 39% (23 cases) of WPS complaints. 'Communication' at 7.5% is a large increase to the previous year where only a single complaint was received. 'Transparency', 'Evaluation' and 'Award' received 3 complaints. 'Tender requirement', 'Social value', 'Prompt payment', 'Favours incumbent' and 'Changing approach' received 2 complaints.

In the previous year the highest reported issues were regarding 'Payment' with 23 cases, 'Evaluation' with 12 cases, 'Transparency', 'Tender requirement', 'Tender process', 'Procurement procedure used', 'Feedback' and 'Cancellation' with 2 cases.

The concerns recorded under 'Other' include issues raised with; 'Use of framework', 'Sub-contracting', 'SME exclusion', 'Short deadlines', 'Not using model Ts and Cs', 'Length of documentation', 'Flow-down of terms', 'Financial assessment', 'Feedback', 'Contract management', 'Conflict of interest', 'Clarification', 'Advertisement' and 'Accreditation'.



Chart 10: WPS - sector split of cases not upheld and upheld 2024/25



The majority of WPS complaints were upheld. Overall 37 out of 67 WPS cases (55.3%) were upheld in 2024/25 similar to 2023/24 where 31 cases out of 59 (52.5%) were upheld.

In the previous year the NHS was the subject of 20 cases, where 15 were upheld. Councils were the subject of 32 cases where 15 were upheld.