



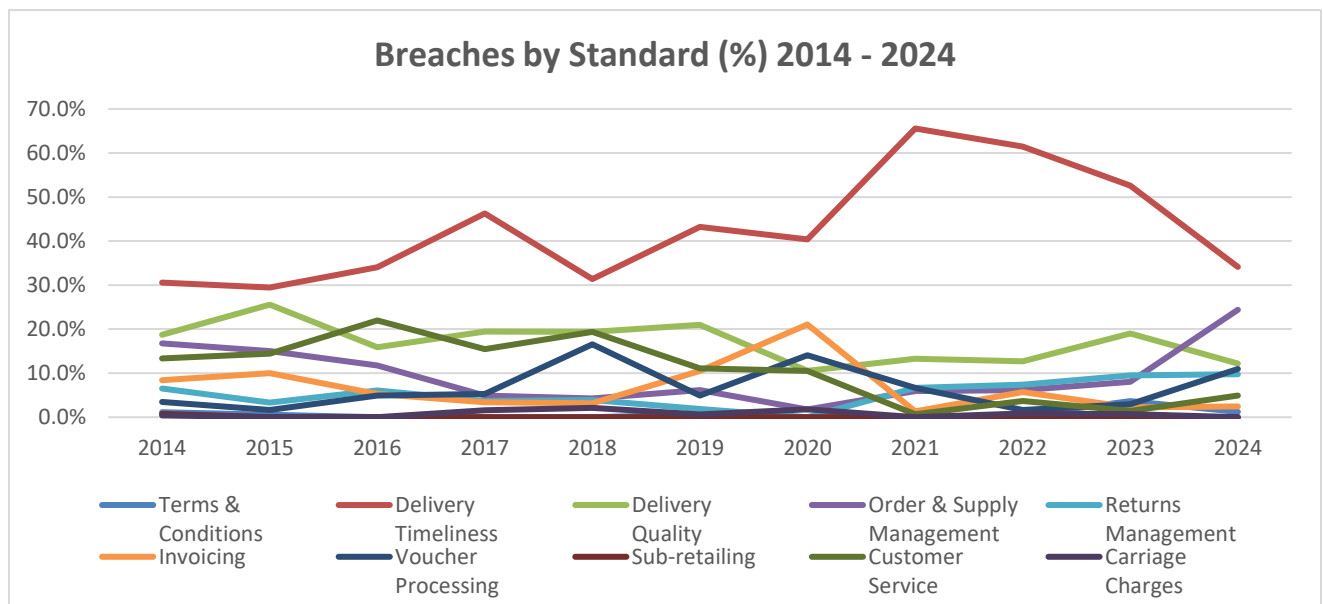
Press Distribution Review Panel Annual Report 2024

Executive summary

During 2024 we saw a decrease in the overall volumes of formal retailer complaints. In total there were eighty-two breaches to PDF service standards and four complaints were escalated to Stage Two Arbitration.

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Wholesale houses originating	n/a	n/a	40	34	47	40	27	40	44	29	30
Number of completed Stage 2 forms	159	117	167	289	283	153	54	135	207	105	65
Number of Stage 2 Breaches	262	180	264	324	284	162	57	151	244	137	82
No of complaints escalated to Stage	n/a	15	9	22	41	13	3	6	8	11	4

The chart below shows the % share of all formal complaints by Standard since 2014.

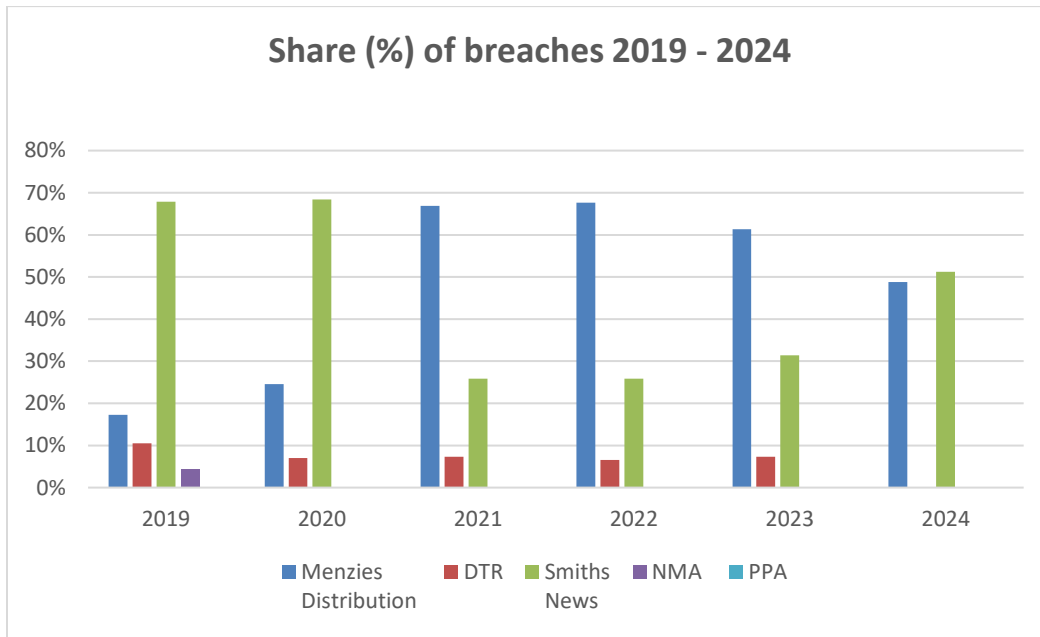


Again, the highest proportion of complaints relate to Delivery Timeliness which despite reducing its share remains the dominant cause of breaches to PDF standards. Delivery issues (Timeliness and Quality) prompt issues with Returns Management, and collectively these categories accounted for over 56% of all formal complaints during 2024.

Whilst the level of complaints has decreased the PDRP remains committed to improving the process and during 2024 repeated an online survey to retailers that had made a formal complaint in the year. The responses again provided insightful and there was a notable improvement in retailer opinion of the complaints process. The survey results are covered in more detail later in this report.

Complaints by Association / Wholesaler

The chart below shows the share of complaints by from 2019 to 2024.

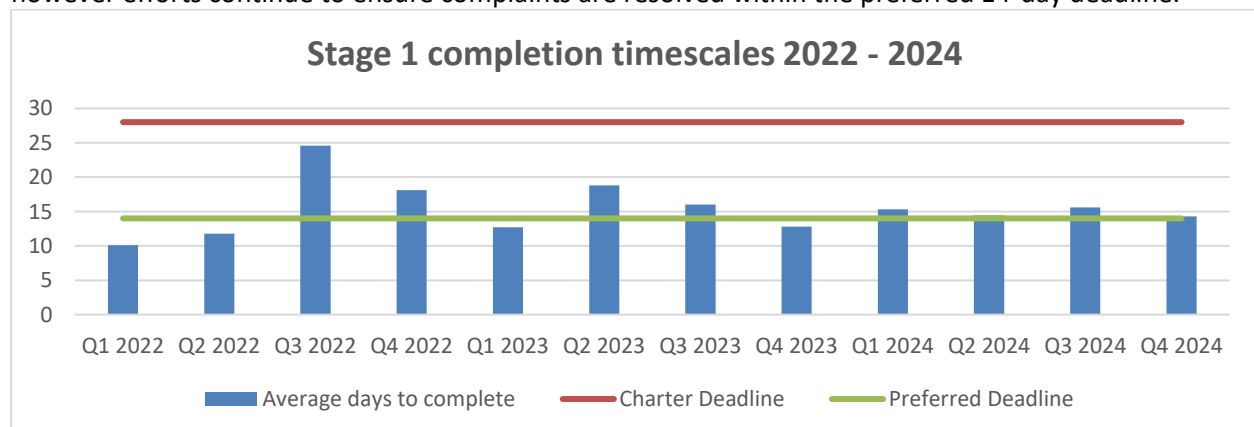


In terms of overall complaints for 2024 Menzies Distribution (In Post Newstrade) and Smiths News had an even share with Menzies having had a significantly higher proportion of complaints since 2021 seeing a reduction in share the last year. There were no complaints from NMA or PPA, and DTR ceased in 2023.

Menzies Distribution change of ownership to In Post Newstrade will be reflected in future reporting.

Timescale to resolve complaints.

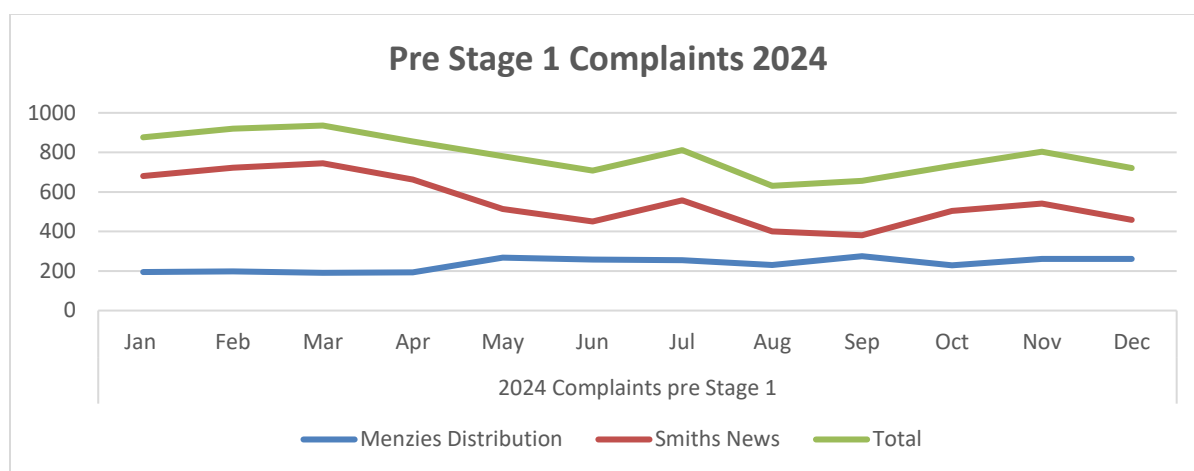
The chart below shows that the average time to conclude a complaint is well within the 28-day deadline, however efforts continue to ensure complaints are resolved within the preferred 14-day deadline.



Pre-Stage 1 formal complaints.

Wholesalers continue to provide details of retailer complaints raised prior to formal escalation and during 2024 there were a total of 9,433 informal complaints.

	2024 Complaints pre Stage 1												
Wholesaler	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Menzies Distribution	195	198	191	194	268	258	255	230	275	229	261	262	2,816
Smiths News	681	722	745	662	513	450	557	401	381	504	542	459	6,617
Total	876	920	936	856	781	708	812	631	656	733	803	721	9,433



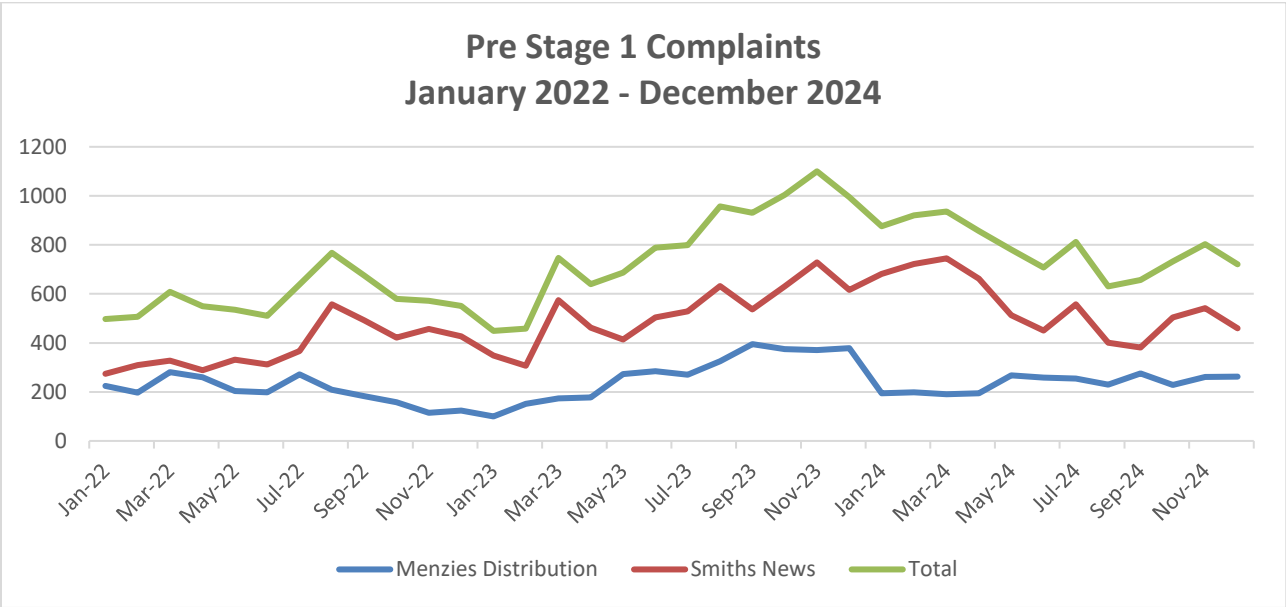
If we look at this compared to previous years.

	2022 Complaints pre Stage 1												
Wholesaler	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Menzies Distribution	224	197	281	260	204	199	272	209	183	158	115	124	2,426
News UK	5	17	7	4	8	9	7	4	11	13	7	1	93
Smiths News	274	309	327	289	331	312	367	558	492	421	457	427	4,560
Total	503	523	615	553	543	520	646	771	686	592	579	552	7,079

	2023 Complaints pre Stage 1												
Wholesaler	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Menzies Distribution	100	151	173	178	273	284	270	325	395	374	371	379	3,273
News UK	5	3	1	2	7	3	1	1	1	0	0	0	24
Smiths News	349	307	574	462	414	504	529	632	536	630	729	616	6,282
Total	454	461	748	642	694	791	800	958	932	1004	1100	995	9,579

	2024 Complaints pre Stage 1												
Wholesaler	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Menzies Distribution	195	198	191	194	268	258	255	230	275	229	261	262	2,816
Smiths News	681	722	745	662	513	450	557	401	381	504	542	459	6,617
Total	876	920	936	856	781	708	812	631	656	733	803	721	9,433

	2024 Complaints pre Stage 1 YOY%												
Wholesaler	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Menzies Distribution	95.0%	31.1%	10.4%	9.0%	-1.8%	-9.2%	-5.6%	-29.2%	-30.4%	-38.8%	-29.6%	-30.9%	-14.0%
Smiths News	95.1%	135.2%	29.8%	43.3%	23.9%	-10.7%	5.3%	-36.6%	-28.9%	-20.0%	-25.7%	-25.5%	5.3%
YoY	93.0%	99.6%	25.1%	33.3%	12.5%	-10.5%	1.5%	-34.1%	-29.6%	-27.0%	-27.0%	-27.5%	-1.5%



Overall, the level of pre formal complaints in 2024 was consistent with 2023, although significantly higher than 2022.

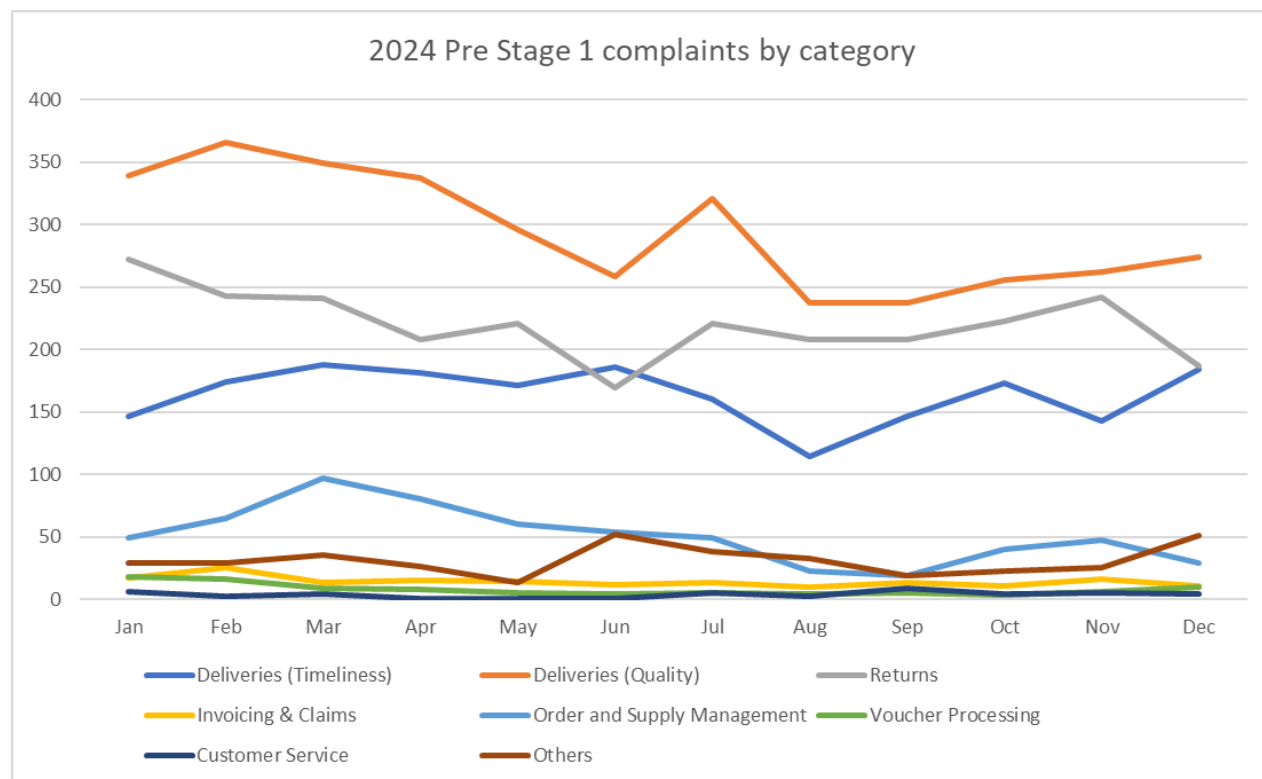
Variations in the volume of early-stage complaints between the two wholesalers remain which could be in part be accounted for by process differences: notably:

- Smiths News offer additional telephone and email contact points separate to the usual Customer Service teams through which these queries are raised as an automated complaint. Automated complaints are subsequently managed by the Customer Service team.
- Whereas Menzies Distribution (In Post Newstrade) manages its customer complaints via call agents which can result in many of their queries been resolved through the Customer Service team.

Both Menzies Distribution (In Post Newstrade) and Smiths News have robust internal processes to manage complaints once received. These include a 48-hour (24 hour if possible) response period with updates provided to the retailer, and a three-stage escalation process.

Consolidated Pre-Stage 1 complaints 2024.

The PDRP continues to consolidate pre-Stage 1 complaints into generic categories, which are summarised below.



Generic category 2024	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	FY	% YTD	YoY %
Deliveries (Timeliness)	146	174	188	181	171	186	160	114	146	173	143	184	1966	21%	-20%
Deliveries (Quality)	339	366	349	337	296	258	321	237	237	256	262	274	3532	37%	8%
Returns	272	243	241	208	221	169	221	208	208	223	242	187	2643	28%	-1%
Invoicing & Claims	17	25	13	15	14	12	13	10	13	11	16	11	170	2%	-40%
Order and Supply Management	49	65	97	80	60	54	49	23	19	40	47	29	612	6%	62%
Voucher Processing	18	16	9	8	5	4	5	4	5	3	6	10	93	1%	-34%
Customer Service	6	2	4	1	1	1	5	2	9	4	5	4	44	0%	-60%
Others	29	29	35	26	13	52	38	33	19	23	25	51	373	4%	47%
TOTALS	876	920	936	856	781	736	812	631	656	733	746	750	9433	100%	-2%

The dominant categories are Delivery related (Timeliness and Quality) accounting for 58% of informal complaints followed by Returns, which will be a consequence of delivery issues. The collective total of Delivery and Returns related complaints accounted for 86% of all informal complaints.

Through the PDF and PDRP both wholesalers are committed to resolving issues before they become formal complaints.

It is important to again recognise that the level of informal and formal complaints as a proportion of total supply chain activities that could trigger service failures does remain low.

Retail Delivery Time (RDT) Performance

Despite delivery related issues remaining the primary driver of both formal and informal complaints, the agreed industry metric, Retail Delivery Times (RDTs), showed an overall improvement in performance of 0.7% in 2024 Vs 2023, as the table below demonstrates. Whilst this is positive, continued adherence to agreed delivery standards remains important.

Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Average
2023	93.0%	93.4%	92.0%	92.4%	92.7%	93.1%	93.5%	91.2%	90.9%	90.7%	91.3%	89.5%	92.0%
2024	93.4%	93.6%	93.2%	92.3%	92.7%	91.2%	91.7%	93.3%	92.7%	93.1%	92.8%	91.9%	92.7%
YoY	0.4%	0.2%	1.2%	-0.1%	0.0%	-2.0%	-1.7%	2.1%	1.8%	2.4%	1.5%	2.4%	0.7%

Retail survey

The 2023 retailer survey in which retailers that had made a formal complaint were invited to give their views was repeated in Q1 2024.

Those responding:

- Saw a significant improvement in their complaint been upheld and received restitution
- Reported an improvement in the ease of completing a complaint, which is positive given the transition to an online process
- Registered an improvement in been kept up to date on the progress of their complaint
- Noted that there was overall Retailer satisfaction that a fair process had taken place

However, issues remain in retailers' view of the time taken to resolve complaints and a significant number did not feel confident that the issue had been resolved going forward.

There were several initiatives during 2024 prompted by the results of the 2023 retailer survey: notably:

- An interview with PDRP Chair (The Fed, May 2024) to increase awareness of the complaints process
- Wholesalers have aligned processes and timings updating retailers on the progress of complaints
- Both wholesalers and NFRN sent electronic postcards to all retailers which included a QR code linking to The Charter and complaints process. Again, to increase awareness
- The PDF website was updated to improve guidelines for retailers using the complaints process
- Both wholesalers are now tracking the outcome of individual complaints to enhance reporting

To date there has been satisfactory progress against the key outputs from the survey but there is clearly further effort required. The survey will be repeated during Q1 2025.

The PDRP remains fully committed to reporting of compliance to service standards and positively supporting the supply chain to identify solutions to the benefit of retailers.

As chair of the PDRP I would like to thank the PRDP members, the PDRP Administrator, PDF Administrator, and Arbitrator for their input and support over 2024.

Performance (Summary) data is summarised below and includes history of breaches by standard, association, and timeliness. Details of breaches by wholesale location are in Appendix 1.

Summary Data

This data summarises the PDRP's monitoring of the PDC and its complaints process and provides transparency of performance against key measures of delivery and customer service.

1. Full year comparisons including breakdown by standards.

The table below shows total forms completed, breaches, Stage 2 arbitrations, and breaches by Standard by full year 2014 - 2024.

Year	Forms	Breaches	Stage 2	Standard									
				Terms & Conditions	Delivery Timeliness	Delivery Quality	Order & Supply Mgt	Returns Mgt	Invoicing	Voucher Processing	Sub-retailing	Customer Service	Carriage Charges
2014	159	262	n/a	3	80	49	44	17	22	9	2	35	1
2015	117	180	15	1	53	46	27	6	18	3	0	26	0
2016	167	264	9	0	90	42	31	16	14	13	0	58	0
2017	289	324	22	0	150	63	16	12	11	17	0	50	5
2018	283	284	41	0	89	55	12	11	9	47	0	55	6
2019	153	162	3	1	70	34	10	3	17	8	0	18	1
2020	54	57	3	0	23	6	1	0	12	8	0	6	1
2021	135	151	6	0	99	20	9	10	2	10	0	1	0
2022	207	244	8	1	150	31	15	18	14	4	0	9	2
2023	105	137	11	5	72	26	11	13	3	4	0	2	1
2024	65	82	4	1	28	10	20	8	2	9	0	4	0
All years	1734	2147	122	12	904	382	196	114	124	132	2	264	17
All years %				0.6%	42.1%	17.8%	9.1%	5.3%	5.8%	6.1%	0.1%	12.3%	0.8%

The table below shows the share (%) of all Stage 1 complaints by category.

Year	Terms & Conditions	Delivery Timeliness	Delivery Quality	Order & Supply Management	Returns Management	Invoicing	Voucher Processing	Sub-retailing	Customer Service	Carriage Charges
2014	1.1%	30.5%	18.7%	16.8%	6.5%	8.4%	3.4%	0.8%	13.4%	0.4%
2015	0.6%	29.4%	25.6%	15.0%	3.3%	10.0%	1.7%	0.0%	14.4%	0.0%
2016	0.0%	34.1%	15.9%	11.7%	6.1%	5.3%	4.9%	0.0%	22.0%	0.0%
2017	0.0%	46.3%	19.4%	4.9%	3.7%	3.4%	5.2%	0.0%	15.4%	1.5%
2018	0.0%	31.3%	19.4%	4.2%	3.9%	3.2%	16.5%	0.0%	19.4%	2.1%
2019	0.6%	43.2%	21.0%	6.2%	1.9%	10.5%	4.9%	0.0%	11.1%	0.6%
2020	0.0%	40.4%	10.5%	1.8%	0.0%	21.1%	14.0%	0.0%	10.5%	1.8%
2021	0.0%	65.6%	13.2%	6.0%	6.6%	1.3%	6.6%	0.0%	0.7%	0.0%
2022	0.4%	61.5%	12.7%	6.1%	7.4%	5.7%	1.6%	0.0%	3.7%	0.8%
2023	3.6%	52.6%	19.0%	8.0%	9.5%	2.2%	2.9%	0.0%	1.5%	0.7%
2024	1.2%	34.1%	12.2%	24.4%	9.8%	2.4%	11.0%	0.0%	4.9%	0.0%
All years	0.6%	42.1%	17.8%	9.1%	5.3%	5.8%	6.1%	0.1%	12.3%	0.8%

2. Full year breaches by Wholesaler / Association

	Association	Standard										Total
		Terms & Conditions	Delivery Timeliness	Delivery Quality	Order & Supply	Returns Management	Invoicing	Voucher Processing	Sub-retailing	Customer Service	Carriage Charges	
2024	Menzies	0	19	8	3	0	2	4	0	4	0	40
	News UK/DTR	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Smiths News	1	9	2	17	8	0	5	0	0	0	42
	NMA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	PPA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	1	28	10	20	8	2	9	0	4	0	82
2023	Menzies	2	52	16	5	2	2	3	0	1	1	84
	News UK/DTR	2	5	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	10
	Smiths News	1	15	10	3	11	1	1	0	1	0	43
	NMA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	PPA	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	5	72	26	11	13	3	4	0	2	1	137

3. Timeliness of completion of Stage 1 complaints

2024

Wholesaler/Publisher	Number of Complaints	Not completed in 28 days	Average time for completion (days)
Menzies Distribution	40	5	13.1
Smiths News	42	2	18.3

2023

Wholesaler/Publisher	Number of Complaints	Not completed in 28 days	Average time for completion (days)
DTR London	10	2	20.9
Menzies Distribution	84	8	16.6
Smiths News	43	1	14.1

Appendix 1: 2024 Breaches by wholesale location

Wholesale Location	Terms & Conditions	Delivery Timeliness	Delivery Quality	Order & Supply	Returns Management	Invoicing	Voucher Processing	Sub-retailing	Customer Service	Carriage Charges	Total
Barnstaple				1	1						2
Birmingham					1		1				2
Bow		2									2
Chester		1							1		2
Crawley				1							1
Croydon		2		1	1						4
Edinburgh		1									1
Fareham			1								1
Hammersmith				2							2
Hemel	1	1		2			1				5
Hornsey		2			1						3
Hull			1	1							2
Linwood		1									1
Newbridge		2									2
Newcastle				2			1				3
Newport		1		1	1						3
Nottingham				1	1						2
Oxford		1									1
Ryde							3				3
SEL		4	4	1					2		11
Sheffield		1	1				1				3
Shotts		1									1
Shrewsbury		1	1	1							3
Stockport		1		5	1		1				8
Stockton		1									1
Stockton			2	1					1		4
Wakefield		5									5
Wednesbury					1						1
Yeovil							1				1
York						2					2
Total	1	28	10	20	8	2	9	0	4	0	82

2023 Breaches by wholesale location

Wholesale Location	Standard										Total
	Terms & Conditions	Delivery Timeliness	Delivery Quality	Order & Supply	Returns Management	Invoicing	Voucher Processing	Sub-retailing	Customer Service	Carriage Charges	
Barnstaple			1								1
Birmingham		1	3		2						6
Chester		6	1								7
Crawley				1		1					2
Croydon		1									1
DTR London	2	5		3							10
Dundee		1									1
Eastbourne		3									3
Grays							1				1
Hornsey					1						1
Ipswich		1									1
Linwood	1	6									7
Milton Keynes					1						1
Newbridge		4	1								5
Newcastle		3									3
Newport	1	8	1		3						13
Plymouth							1				1
Preston		2	1								3
SEL		3	1	1	1						6
Sheffield		8	4	2					1	1	16
Slough					1						1
Southampton				1	1				1		3
Stevenage		1	1	1							3
Stockport			2								2
Stockton		7	4	1							12
Wakefield	1	9	3	1	1	2	1				18
Wednesbury			1		1						2
Yeovil		1	1		1						3
York		2	1				1				4
Total	5	72	26	11	13	3	4	0	2	1	137

Appendix 2: Governance

The Press Distribution Review Panel (PDRP) was established to:

- a. Encourage compliance with the Press Distribution Charter (PDC).
- b. Provide comment on compliance issues.
- c. Ensure continuity of arbitration decisions.
- d. Provide an ongoing mechanism for the identification of trends.
- e. Collect, audit, and publish data on compliance.

The Charter is backed by a free, fair, fast, and reliable complaints process which covers most non-commercial aspects of newspaper and magazine distribution. If a retailer has a complaint about a serious or persistent failure to achieve a PDC standard, there are a number of options that can be used to start the complaints process.

The complaints process is a process that puts great emphasis on resolving issues locally yet provides a final independent arbitration.

The PDC provides a simple, 2-step process that enables a retailer to raise any issue on agreed standards and have it resolved efficiently as follows:

Initially it is recommended that the retailer attempts to resolve the issue informally by discussion with the wholesaler.

Stage 1 – If the issue remains unresolved informally, the retailer should contact the company it believes is responsible for the service failure, complete or download a complaint form and return as guided.

Stage 2 – If unsatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1 or it has not been completed by the wholesaler within a reasonable time, the PDF Administrator can ask to refer the complaint to an independent Arbitrator for final adjudication.

Membership of the Press Distribution Review Panel 2024

The PDRP members for the year under review were:

Graham Read (Independent Retailer)
Paresh Vyas (Independent Retailer)
Brian Murphy/Peter Williamson (NFRN/ Independent Retailer)
Fiona Campbell, Ryan Waterhouse (Menzies Distribution (In Post Newstrade))
Diane Sampson (NMA)
Trevor Hudson (PPA)
Paul Smith (Smiths News)
Steve Cripwell (Independent Chair)

Linda Windsor (PDRP Administrator)
Mark Farris (PDF Administrator)

Independent Arbitrator

Neil Robinson