

SOUTH WEST EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS CENTRE REPORT 2014

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Introduction

The South West Employment Rights Centre (SWERC) provides pro bono independent, impartial and confidential advice to clients. These principles enable Plymouth University Law students to broaden their practical legal skills and employment law knowledge with client interviewing, research, negotiations, letter writing and advocacy. Our advisors are second and third year law students who take employment cases from the initial client interview, through the Tribunal process, including disclosure and drafting statements, to undertaking the advocacy at full Employment Tribunal hearings. In this respect, we can distinguish ourselves from the majority of other university law clinics as we offer both advice and representation. The work undertaken at the Centre provides an invaluable opportunity for our students to gain practical work experience and the results over the years have been impressive. We have recovered significant sums in compensation for unfairly dismissed and discriminated workers ranging from a week's wages of £26.00 to awards in excess of £70,000.

The students are dedicated and hardworking: this year's cohort has amongst them some truly talented lawyers for the future and their dedication is transposed on to their work. The support from the University allows SWERC to have an office where students can research their cases and exchange knowledge as well as conduct their interviews. The office is an amazing place to be with lively debate and plenty of coffee being consumed. Our main source of work is from local Citizens Advice Bureaux in Plymouth and the South Hams with whom we have been working closely over the past few years. SWERC Officer Manager (currently Natasha Mason an aspiring barrister) receives the referral and attempts are made to contact the client to arrange an appointment. Referral calls are made 3-4 times a week; messages are left on clients' answer machines with a request to contact us. This is done four times following a referral; after the fourth unsuccessful attempt to contact a client the Office Manager will email the relevant CAB. Once a client has been contacted, a reply email will be sent to the CAB with information of a following appointment. We have enclosed data for the first three quarters of 2014 in order to give an idea of the volume of work undertaken and the variety of cases taken.

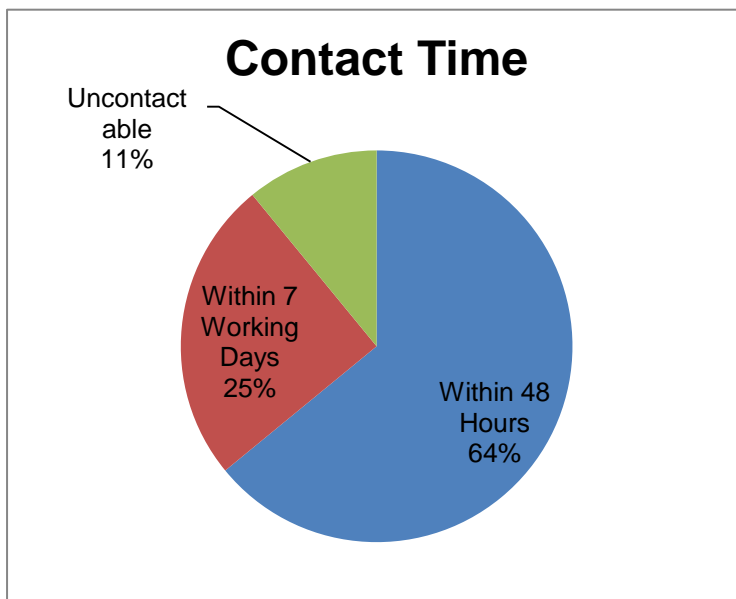
1 Statistical Data 2014

Reporting period 01 January 2014 – 31 March 2014.

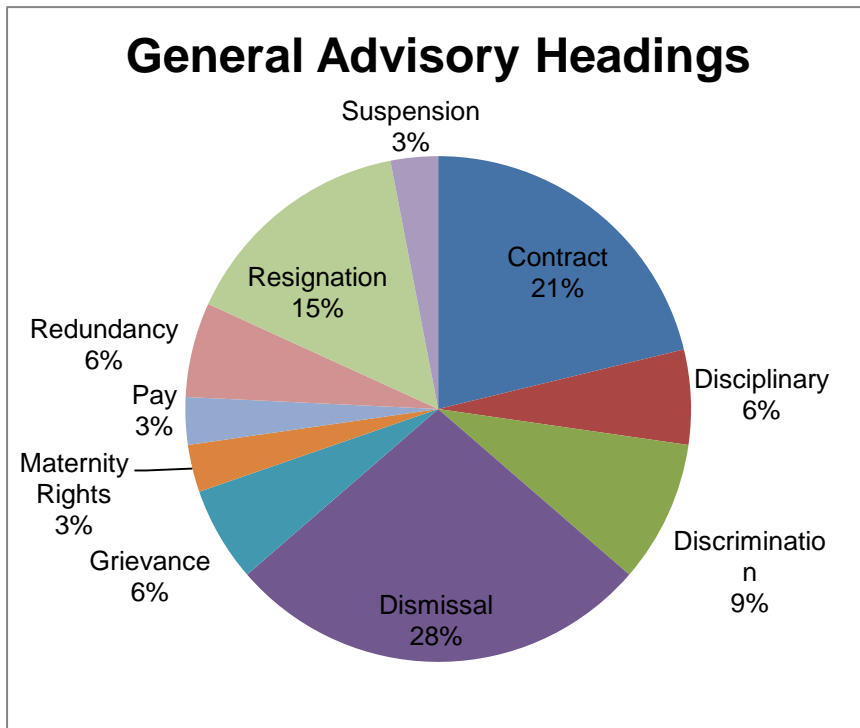
During this reporting period, 32 clients were referred to SWERC from CAB.

Initial Appointments made 10

Wasted appointments through failure to attend 6



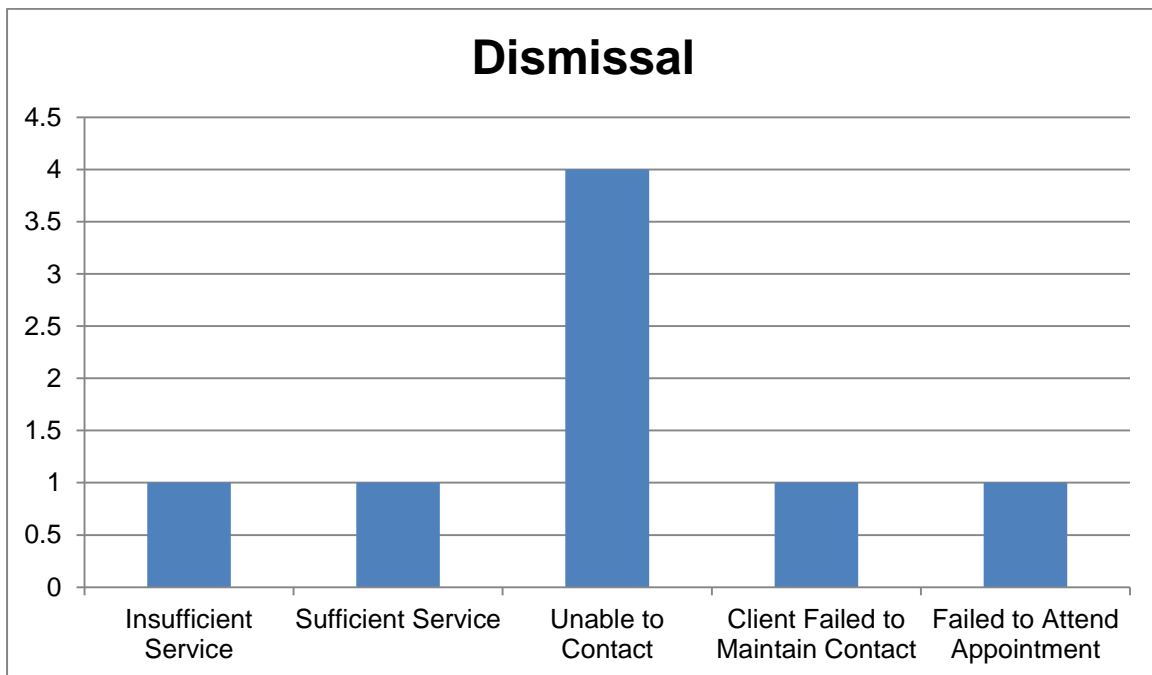
This table shows that 64% of clients were contacted within 48 hours of the referral being received. 25% were contacted within 7 working days, whilst we were unable to contact 11% of clients.



Clients have been referred to SWERC under various general headings for Employment Law advice.

The chart shows the majority of referrals regarded clients who had resigned, been dismissed or had a general enquiry regarding their contract of employment.

Dismissal appeared to be the most popular reason for clients requesting advice; however, the following chart shows only one client had sufficient time with employer to make a claim for unfair dismissal. This client though, was advised that a redundancy payment was likely to be greater than an unfair dismissal payment.

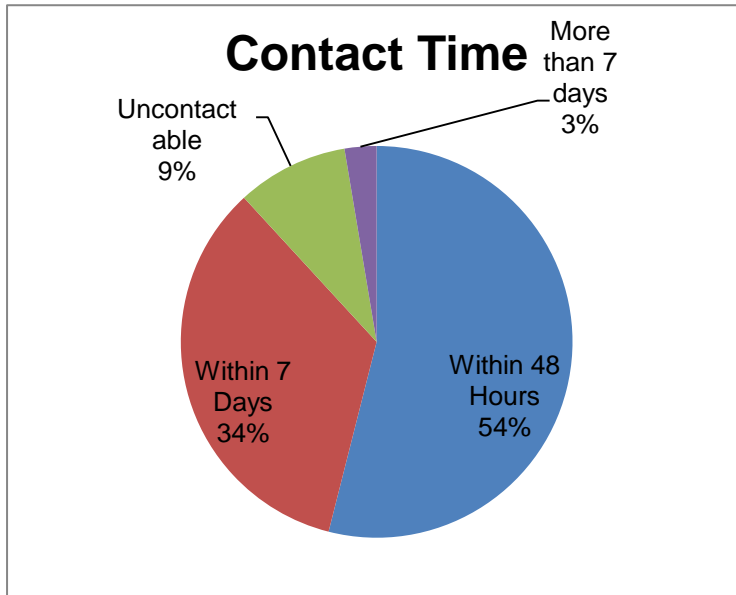


Reporting Period 01 April 2014 – 30 June 2014.

During this reporting period, 76 clients were referred to SWERC from CAB.

Initial Appointments made 34

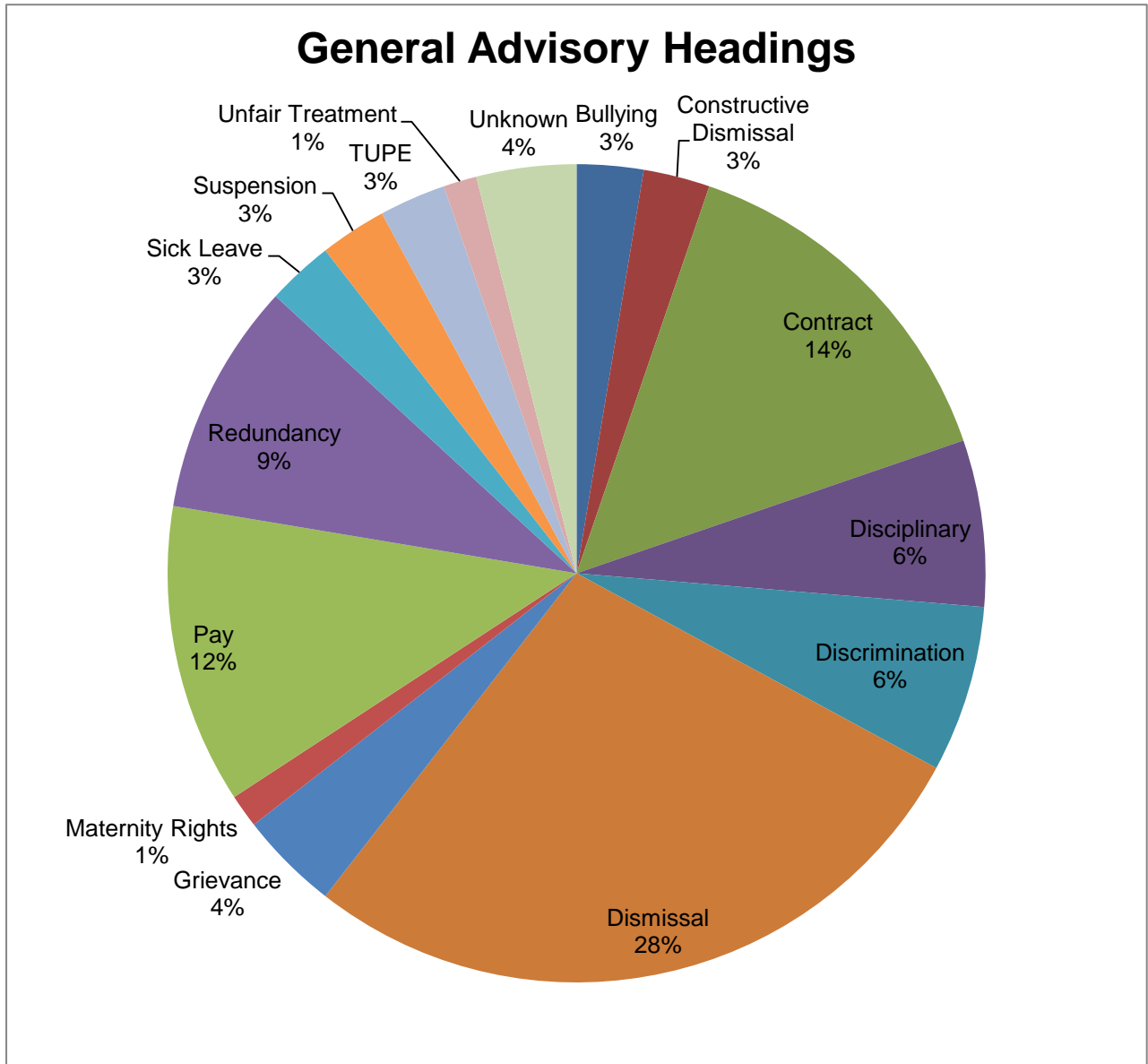
Wasted appointments through failure to attend 12



This table shows that 54% of clients were contacted within 48 hours of the referral being received. 34% were contacted within 7 days.

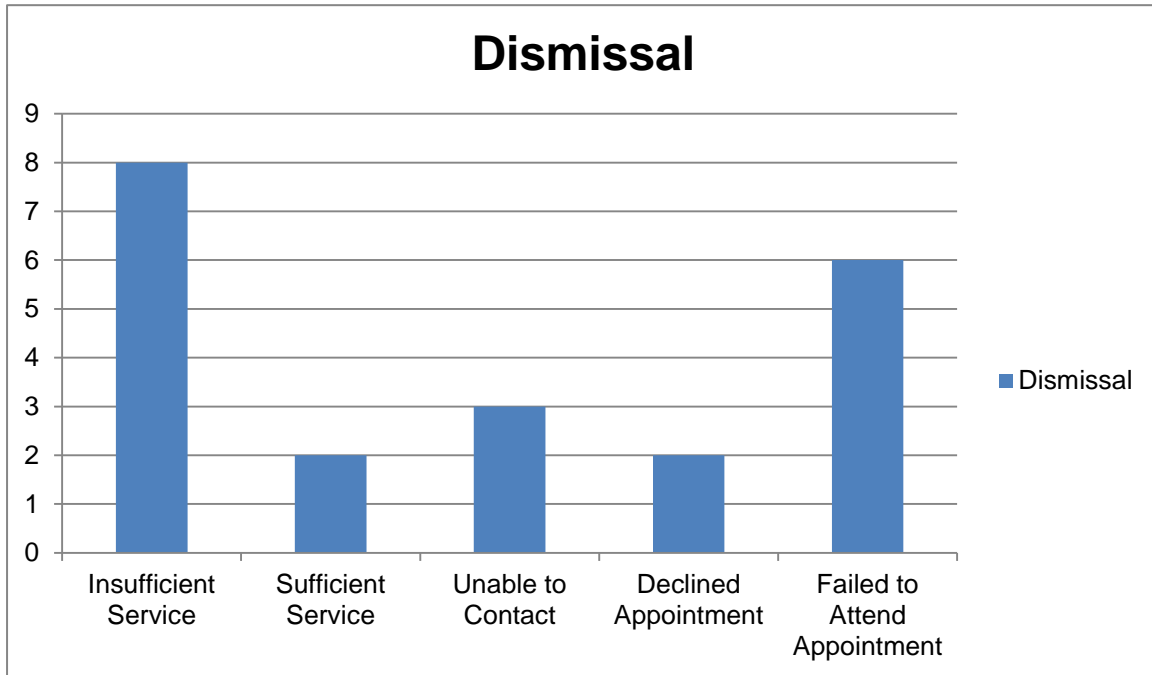
The table also shows that 3% equates to 2 referrals who were contacted after 7 days; in both cases this was because several messages had been left for the clients to contact us.

Clients have been referred to SWERC under various general headings for Employment Law advice. This chart shows the majority of referrals regarded clients who had been dismissed, had a general enquiry regarding their contract of employment or had pay queries.



During this reporting period, of the 76 referrals received, **16** involved the client being on or having had sickness leave.

Dismissal appeared to be the most popular reason for client requesting advice; however, the following chart shows two clients had sufficient time with employer to make a claim for unfair dismissal. We continue to work with both of these clients.

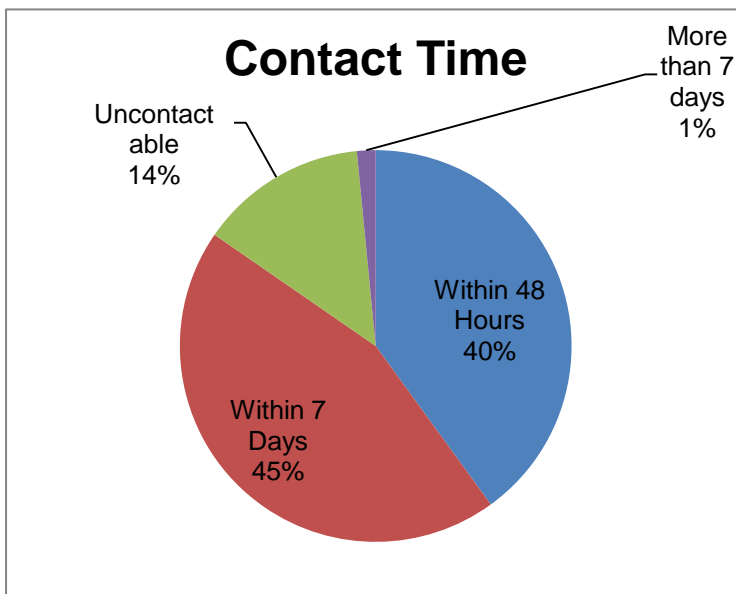


Reporting period 01 July 2014 – 30 September 2014.

During this reporting period, **66 clients** were referred to SWERC from CAB.

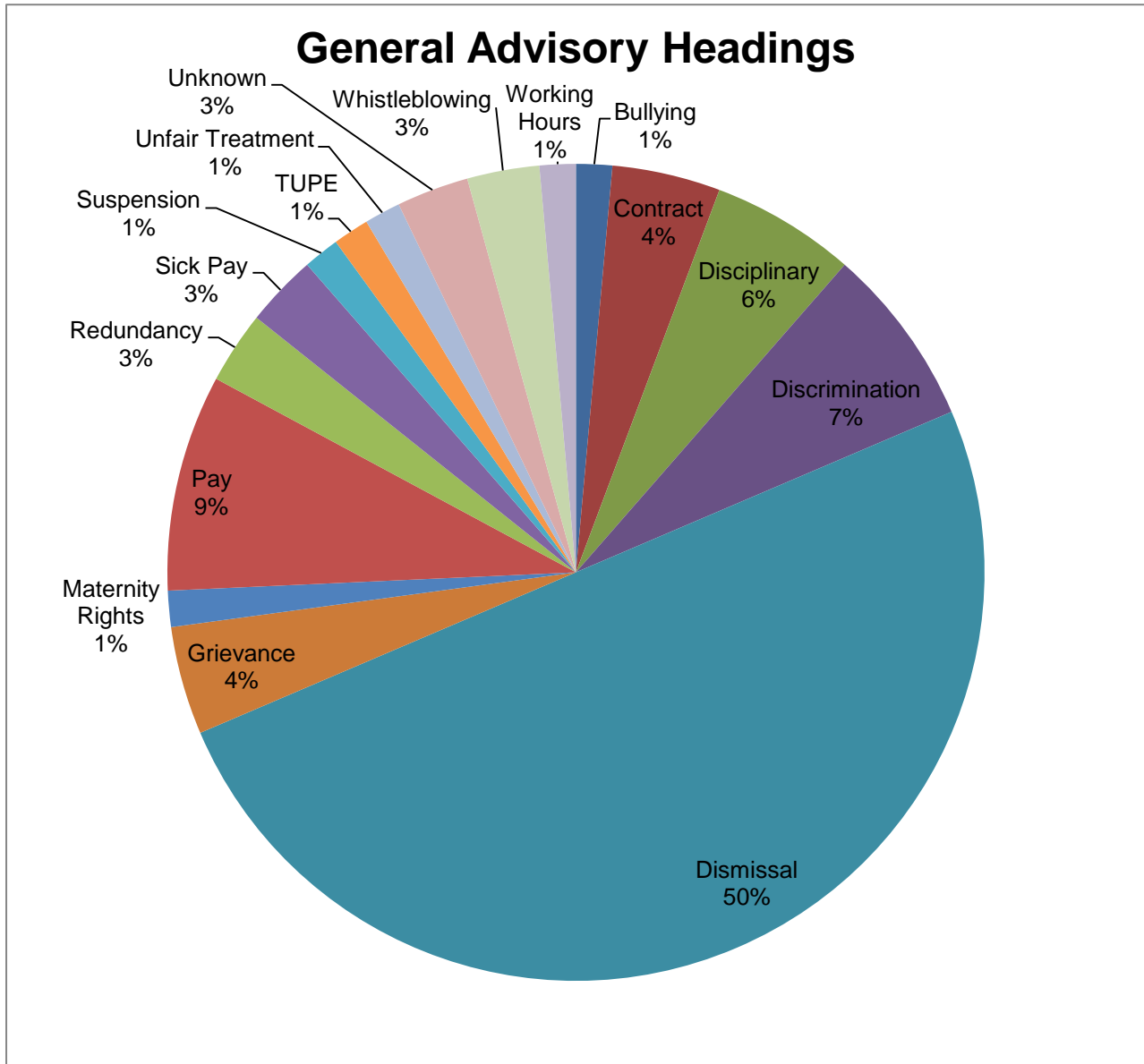
Initial Appointments made 33

Wasted appointments through failure to attend 6



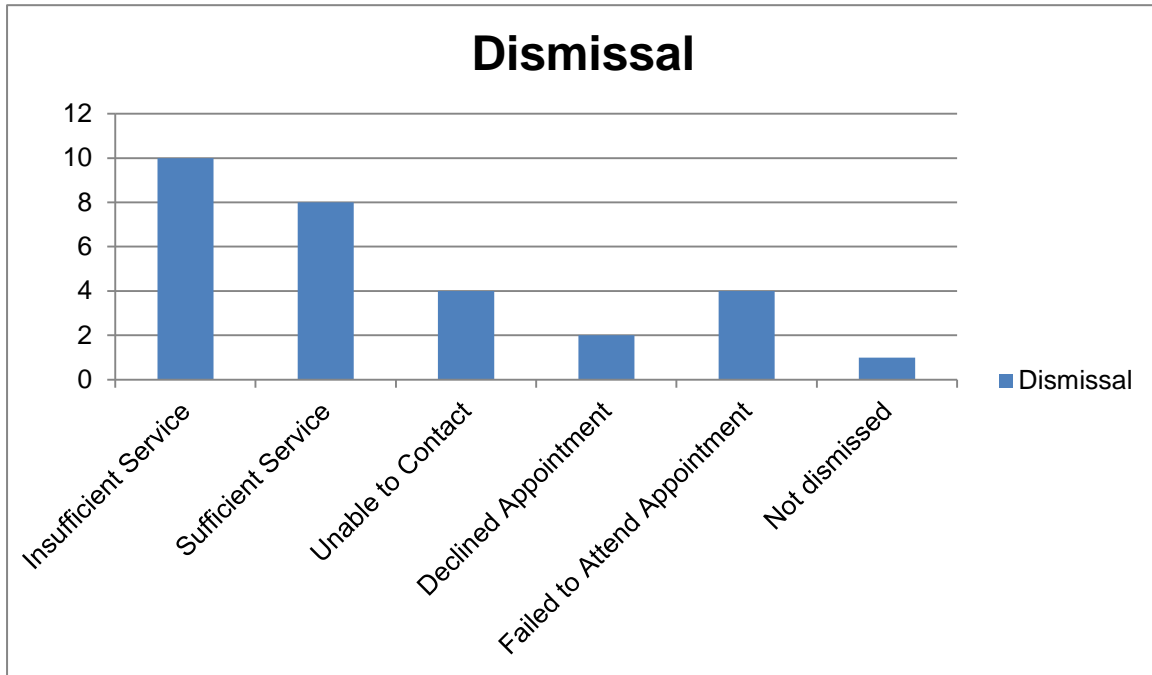
This table shows that 40% of clients were contacted within 48 hours of the referral being received. 45% were contacted within 7 days. The table also shows that 1% of clients which equates to 1 referral was contacted after 7 days; this was because several messages had been left for the clients to contact us.

Clients have been referred to SWERC under various general headings for Employment Law advice. The chart shows the majority of referrals regarded clients who had been dismissed, had a general enquiry regarding their contract of employment or had pay queries.



During this reporting period, of the 66 referrals received, **10** involved the client being on or having had sickness leave.

Dismissal appeared to be the most popular reason for client requesting advice; however, the following chart shows two clients had sufficient time with employer to make a claim for unfair dismissal. We continue to work with both of these clients.



In general during this quarter, 2 clients referred to us, are or were employed by Employer 1: both cases were unrelated.

2 clients are or were employed by Employer 2: both cases are unrelated.

2 clients were employed by Employer 3 and both were dismissed; however, we were unable to contact one of the clients and the second client declined an appointment with us.

2 clients were employed by Employer 4 and both were made redundant due to Unipart entering administration.

Conclusion

The volume of work undertaken could be compared to that of a medium sized practice. This work is all undertaken by our students. This gives us a unique selling point to prospective law students. We can offer 'real' work that can set them apart from their competitors in what is an increasingly competitive labour market.