

SPSO NEWS

June 2018

In this month's e-newsletter:

- we'd like to know what you think about SPSO's communications and visual identity
- hot off the press! Annual complaints and enquiries statistics for 2017-18
- our monthly casework decisions
- recommendations for learning and improvement from this month's casework
- training course: Complaint Investigation Skills
- updates from the Complaints Standards Authority (CSA)
- news from our Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF) team.

SPSO visual identity

We are currently researching how we can improve our brand and visual identity in order to communicate more effectively – and would very much welcome your feedback. Our short survey will take you no more than 10 minutes to complete: [SPSO survey](#).

Thank you!

Annual statistics

Our annual statistics are [now available on our website](#). These figures show the number of enquiries and complaints we received and determined in the year 2017- 18.

In 2017-18, SPSO:

- determined 5,130 complaints and enquiries
- made 1,696 recommendations for redress and improvement, up from 1,379 last year.

Full information about the statistics for each sector, along with the subjects of complaints, is available on our website.



Casework decisions

This month we are publishing 31 reports of complaints we investigated about a range of sectors. [These are available on our website](#).

21 of the 31 cases we are publishing this month about the health sector; the rest being about local authorities, social care, housing and Scottish Government and devolved administration.

We upheld, in full or part, 17 complaints and made a total of 48 recommendations.

Learning and Improvement

The importance of continuously monitoring public service performance and improvements was highlighted to us in case [201700461](#). We found a number of failings, including excessive waiting times for treatment. In 2014 we had made similar findings (case [201401014](#)). At the time, the Board took action to reduce waiting times, but these had evidently not been maintained. In response to our investigation on case 201700461, the Board said that they have implemented a new pathway for assessments and have taken other steps to reduce waiting times again. We asked to see evidence of these actions, and we also made a number of recommendations for learning and improvement.

Did you know...?

We have a number of useful resources available on our [CSA website Valuing Complaints](#) to help staff at all levels of an organisation to handle complaints.

Training

We deliver a number of training courses to public sector organisations. Our next open training course is:

Complaint Investigation Skills on Wednesday 19 September at the Edinburgh Training and Conference Venue.

[To find out more and book a place, please visit our website.](#)

Complaints Standards Authority

[Our latest CSA update includes:](#)

- an update on stakeholder engagement activity
- progress in our work to develop Whistleblowing Standards for the NHS in Scotland
- details of future complaint handlers' network meetings.

Scottish Welfare Fund

Communications and engagement

This month we met with SWF decision makers in Glasgow. We gave an overview of our primary findings and discussed case studies focused on key themes for learning. Later this month, we are attending the Scottish Government's practitioner's forum for SWF decision makers, at which we will discuss the recent changes to the SWF statutory guidance. We also plan to publish our SWF annual report in the coming weeks. This will include information about casework, the annual trends, and the feedback we provided to councils.

Statistics and reporting

During May 2018, the SWF team:

- responded to 65 enquiries
- made 49 decisions (20 community care grants and 29 crisis grants).
- signposted 36 people to other sources of assistance (which in most cases was their local council)
- recorded 64 findings during the month, ten of which caused us to disagree with the council's overall decision.

The most common reason for us disagreeing with the council's decision was we considered the council had not assessed the available information correctly.

Casework outcomes

In recent weeks we have considered a number of cases where we assessed that councils did not take into account applicants' additional support needs; or make appropriate enquiries to gather further information about their health difficulties.

In one such case, an applicant applied for a community care grant for carpets in his living room, hallway and bedroom. The applicant had paid £1,000 to an individual to replace his carpets. However, the individual removed the carpets but did not replace them with new flooring, therefore, the applicant had been cheated out of the money and left with no flooring. The applicant was particularly vulnerable as he had learning difficulties and mobility issues. The council assessed that he did not meet the qualifying criteria: we disagreed with this assessment. We considered that the applicant was facing exceptional pressure to maintain a settled home and that this pressure had been increased by the situation with his carpets. We awarded carpets in all areas as we assessed they met the necessary priority level.

[Further information about our cases can be found on our Scottish Welfare Fund website.](#)

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