

January 2022

In this month's e-newsletter:

- Our findings this month
 - Complaints
 - Scottish Welfare Fund reviews
- We are hiring!
- Independent National Whistleblowing Officer webinar
- COVID-19 information

Our findings

Complaints

This month we:

- published 24 decision reports available [here](#)
- upheld 13 complaints in full or part
- made 44 recommendations for learning and improvement.

Investigation report

In addition to our decision summaries, this month we are publishing one full investigation report: [202002915 Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS Board](#) relating to the care and treatment provided to a patient both during and after a hysterectomy. The surgery resulted in damage to their bowel which required additional emergency surgery.

We found that the Board failed to carry out the appropriate investigations prior to the surgery and did not reasonably communicate the associated risks to the patient.

We were critical that the damage caused to the patient's bowel during surgery was not identified at the time. Furthermore, the patient was not informed of this complication in a timely manner by the Board.

We made five recommendations directly in relation to these findings. These included asking the Board to apologise to the patient and conduct a Significant Adverse Event Review.

Scottish Welfare Fund reviews

Statistics

During December we:

- responded to 130 enquiries
- made 104 decisions
 - 20 community care grants
 - 51 crisis grants
 - 33 self-isolation support grants
- upheld nine (45%) community care grants, 13 (25%) crisis grants and 17 (52%) self-isolation support grants
- signposted an additional 237 applicants to other sources of assistance. The majority were contacting us instead of their local council in error, while others experienced difficulties as their local council did not have a Freephone number. The remaining applicants were either signposted to a separate organisation or were contacting us too early in the process to request a review and were advised accordingly
- responded to seven enquiries from councils seeking advice

Case studies

Since October 2021 we have observed an increase in the volume of independent review requests received for self-isolation support grants.

In one such case, the applicant (C) applied for a grant as they had been required to self-isolate and could not work, suffering reduced earnings as a result.

The council rejected the application at both stages of the process as they deemed C to not be in receipt of a low income.

We corresponded with C by email during the review process. C met all of the eligibility criteria except the low income criterion. C explained that the payslip in the relevant period was not a true reflection of their wages due to overtime, but we explained that it was earnings and could not be ignored. C was over the Real Living Wage threshold and when combined with their spouse's pay, their income was also over the relevant net household income threshold. Therefore, we did not change the council's decision. We provided the council with feedback in relation to not assessing C's net income at initial decision stage, and for using an out-of-date Real Living Wage threshold figure at first tier review stage. We also gave a finding regarding self-isolation support grant timescales at the initial decision stage.

Further examples can be found in the searchable directory [on our website](#) under the title 'Self-Isolation Support Grant'.

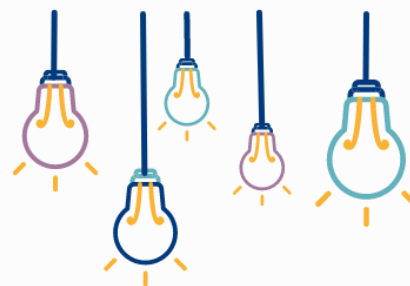
We are hiring!



ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

CLOSING 24 JANUARY 2022, 5PM

WE ARE HIRING



www.spsso.org.uk/working-for-us



We are looking for an experienced engagement and communications professional to support the SPSO's Leadership Team in developing and delivering the SPSO's communications strategy as we explore new and innovative ways of engaging with our stakeholders.

Reporting to the Head of Improvement, Standards and Engagement, this role is responsible for leading a small team to manage the operational delivery of all areas of engagement and communications. This includes the promotion of the SPSO's activities in relation to setting national complaints and whistleblowing standards and driving improvement in public services through our investigative casework.

[Visit our website for further details and how to apply for this role.](#)

Independent National Whistleblowing Officer webinar

Our next INWO webinar is on **Wednesday 2 February 2022, from 14:30-15:30**. We will be discussing the role of union reps in supporting their members during the whistleblowing process.

This is an ideal opportunity for union reps to learn about the National Whistleblowing Standards and what the process means for them and their members. As usual, we will put a recording of the presentation on our website after the event, for those that are unable to make it along.

To register your interest please email INWO@spsso.gov.scot.



INWO e-bulletins

Our INWO team sends out regular updates with further information about the service. [Our January e-bulletin can be found here.](#)

If you would like to receive future e-bulletins from the INWO straight to your inbox, please [register here to sign up to the mailing list.](#)

COVID-19 information

As lockdown restrictions have not been lifted, our office remains closed. Our service provision is not changing, with most of our staff continuing to work from home.

Please read our [website for more service information](#), such as operating hours of our Freephone advice line.

For further information contact:

Communications team

Tel: 0131 240 2990

Email: communications@spsso.gov.scot

SPSO Assessment and Guidance team

Tel: 0800 377 7330

Email: www.spsso.org.uk/contact-us

Website: www.spsso.org.uk