

October 2022

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Our findings

Public service complaints

This month we:

- published 18 decision reports available [here](#)
- upheld 12 complaints in full or part
- made 49 recommendations for learning and improvement.

Decision reports: Learning points

This month we highlight the importance of giving clear consideration of treatment options and the interpretation of test results:

- [201909298](#) – we found that the health board misdiagnosed a patient with hearing loss and that the treatment given was not suitable for their condition. We also found that the patient was not provided with reasonable advice regarding the use of a hearing aid and that the board failed to identify and arrange appropriate investigations for the patient.

We asked the board to apologise, ensure that scans are appropriately interpreted and investigations arranged, and that patients are provided with advice on the use of hearing aid devices.

- [202007700](#) – we found that the health board issued an incorrect prescription for a patient with strabismus (a squint) and wide-angled esotropia (inward turning of the eye). When test results came back inaccurate, it should have prompted the clinician to question whether the patient's irides had been sufficiently dilated or consider whether it was appropriate to retest rather than issue the increased prescription. We also found that eye drops had been

administered at inappropriate intervals.

We asked the board to apologise to the patient and ensure that all considerations are taken into account before issuing increased prescriptions.

Scottish Welfare Fund reviews


Statistics

During September we:

- received 84 requests for review
- made 92 decisions
 - 19 community care grants
 - 54 crisis grants
 - 19 self-isolation support grants
- upheld five (26%) community care grants, 15 (28%) crisis grants and six (32%) self-isolation support grants
- signposted an additional 155 people to other sources of assistance. More than 88% of these were calling us instead of their local council in error.
- received eight calls from councils seeking advice.


Local authority survey report

This month we published a summary of our first ever Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF) local authority survey report. The findings help us measure our performance against our service standards, and identify actions we can take to improve our service. Thank you to all authorities who took part.



Scottish Welfare Fund

Local authority survey report 2021-22



We identified two main areas for improvement...

Increase awareness of our Support and Intervention Policy

Encourage dialogue around our decisions and reconsideration process

1. publish more case summaries
2. provide training sessions
3. issue performance statistics
4. support to improve decision letters

...and four actions for SPSO to consider to support learning.

[Read the SWF local authority survey summary report here.](#)

Case studies

The volume of new Self-Isolation Support Grant cases we are receiving has substantially decreased in recent weeks, ahead of the scheme closing at the end of the month. We have been focusing on progressing our existing cases, and have now allocated all outstanding cases. An example of a recent case is outlined below:

The applicant (C) asked for an independent review of the council's decision. They had applied for a Self-Isolation Support Grant after they tested positive for COVID-19 and were unable to work from home.

The council declined the initial application on the basis that C's income was over the Real Living Wage threshold and low income threshold. C was also not in receipt of a qualifying benefit. C requested a first tier review of the decision but the council did not change their decision.

We reviewed the council's case file and spoke with C for further information about their income and makeup of their household. The council had used a tax return from two years ago to calculate C's income. We used information provided by C and recent bank statements to assess their income. Overall, we were satisfied that C was in receipt of a low income and therefore eligible for an award. We also provided feedback about the council's use of incorrect information, written communications and timescales.

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

INWO Speak Up Week 2022

On 3-7 October 2022, our Independent National Whistleblowing Officer team held Scotland's first ever Speak Up Week. This was a valuable opportunity to promote and celebrate speaking up within the NHS in Scotland and we were delighted and impressed by the range of activities across Boards.

The overall theme was the **benefits of speaking up**. You can see what we got up to over on our [Speak Up Week webpage](#). Key highlights include:

- [The benefits of speaking up](#) – a recorded discussion between Dr Jayne Chidgey-Clark, the National Guardian, and Rosemary Agnew, the Independent National Whistleblowing Officer on the benefits of speaking up, making speaking up work for everyone, and their thoughts on changing culture in the NHS.
- Spotlight on [Confidential Contacts](#) and [Whistleblowing Champions](#) – blogposts highlighting the importance of both roles and their interaction with the whistleblowing process.
- [Building trust and transparency](#) – a thought provoking panel session chaired by Niki Maclean, SPSO Director. This included panel members from a diverse range of backgrounds:
 - Simon Watson - Medical Director at Healthcare Improvement Scotland (HIS)

- Stewart Hughes - Head of Group Security at SSE (formerly Scottish and Southern Energy)
- Sean Parker - Safety Reporting Programme Lead at the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA)

INWO e-bulletins

Our INWO team sends out regular updates with further information about the service. [Our October 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.](#)

Invitation to tender – cleaning services

The Ombudsman is inviting tenders for the provision of cleaning services for the office spaces occupied by The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO), The Scottish Commissioner for Human Rights (SHRC), the Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland (CYPCS) and Scottish Biometrics Commission (SBC).

The closing time and date for tender responses is 17:00, Friday 4 November 2022. Any response received after that date will not be considered further.

[Please follow this link for full information and details on how to make a submission.](#)

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