

April 2023

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Thanks for being a subscriber to our monthly newsletter! We are reviewing the current format and want to know what our readers think. What would you like to see from this newsletter going forward? Our short survey should only take **2-3 minutes** to complete and we very much welcome your feedback.

[Take the survey now](#)

Our findings

Public service complaints

This month we

- published 13 decision reports available [here](#)
- upheld 9 complaints in full or part
- made 18 recommendations for learning and improvement

[Read more about the themes and trends from our latest findings.](#)

Scottish Welfare Fund reviews

Statistics

During March we

- responded to 104 enquiries
- made 83 decisions
 - 39 community care grants
 - 43 crisis grants
 - 1 self-isolation support grants
- upheld 44% of community care grants and 19% of crisis grants. The self-isolation support grant was not upheld.
- signposted an additional 245 applicants to other sources of assistance. More than 81% of these were calling us instead of their local council in error, with some unable to contact their council as no Freephone number was in place
- received 14 calls from councils seeking advice.



Stakeholder engagement

We raised one new issue under our [Support and Intervention Policy](#) this month concerning a council who were using an overarching principle of the guidance to refuse applications. This was significant because the principle does not form part of the decision making process. The council responded positively, advising that decision makers will follow the correct process going forward.

Case studies

We regularly update the [searchable directory on our website](#) with sample cases to share learning from our findings. Follow the link to find out more!

Access to information rights in Scotland

We recently responded to a [consultation from the Scottish Government on Access to Information Rights in Scotland](#) which centred on the need for future legislative changes to the [Freedom of Information \(Scotland\) Act 2002 \(FOISA\)](#).

We responded to this consultation because access to information, in respect of our statutory functions, is provided for in the [Scottish Public Services Ombudsman Act \(Scotland\) 2002](#). This gives us the powers during investigations (separate to FOI) to obtain information from third parties that may be challenging for complainants to access.

In our response, we made suggestions to provide assurance that the FOI Act, particularly Section 5 powers, can be used consistently to ensure it can keep pace with any changes in the delivery of public services.

[A summary of our response and the full submission can be found on our website.](#)



**Complaint Handling in the Public Sector
Digital Conference**
Thursday 27th April 2023

Book your place online at westminsterinsight.com

With guest speakers from:



UNIVERSITY of STIRLING | The Institute of Customer Service | Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman | SCOTTISH PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN | Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman | Devon County Council

The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO), Rosemary Agnew, will be participating at **Westminster Insight's Complaint Handling in the Public Sector Digital Conference** on **Thursday 27 April 2023**. Alongside Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman, Margaret Kelly, SPSO will explore implementing a positive organisational culture for complaint handling in the public sector.

[View the agenda](#) or [register for a place](#). For 20% discount, use code **SPKR3960**.

New whistleblowing resources

Our Independent National Whistleblowing Officer (INWO) team have launched a new suite of resources for NHS Boards designed to support the training and development of staff. All of the resources can be accessed from the [training, guidance and resources page on the INWO website](#).

If you would like to keep up-to-date with the work of our INWO team, you can [sign up to the INWO monthly news e-bulletin](#).

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