



INVESTORS  
IN PEOPLE

# Scottish Public Services Ombudsman Investors in People Interim Report 2019

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On behalf of Remarkable – the home for Investors in People in  
Scotland

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## 1. Outcome

This Investors in People assessment visit is the second annual visit of the three year cycle. The first visit took place in 2018 and the final visit is due to take place no later than the end of March 2020 when the outcome will be decided and advised.

The benefit to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman at this stage is that, taking into account the findings of the first annual visit, we can keep a clearer focus on overall performance against the people management strategies with good practices noted and actions taken to address identified development areas.

## 2. Introduction

### Background

The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) is the final stage for complaints about council, NHS, housing associations, colleges and universities, prisons, most water providers, the Scottish Government and its agencies and departments and most Scottish Authorities.

The SPSO has a clear Vision: The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman contributes actively and positively to Scotland's development and delivery of first class public services, putting people and learning at the heart of what we do by being innovative and world-leading in our approach to our reviews and standards.

The SPSO operates within three clear values. They are:

- We work independently and fairly.
- We are people-focused and value integrity and respect.
- We value learning and improvement.

The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman uses the Investors in People Standard to review and where possible improve its people strategies and the impact they have on overall performance. The Services achieved recognition in March 2011 and Gold status under the previous version of the IIP Standard in February 2017. This visit is the second of the three year cycle under the 6<sup>th</sup> Generation Investors in People Framework with the final visit to take place during March 2020.

Since the last full assessment visit I noted considerable changes have been made including the appointment of a new Ombudsman, changes to the structure and to jobs within the structure and a move to a new open plan office.

## Methodology

As shown below there are 67 people in scope and for an organisation this size and where an online assessment has not been undertaken the recommended sample size is 38%. To make sure I had an adequate representation we agreed that the full sample size should be 27 people with 9 to be selected each year.

Teams	Number employed in role	Sample for Each Year
Leadership Team	3	1
Advice Team	5	1
Corporate Services	10	1
Early Resolution	21	2
Improvement Standards & Engagement	8	1
Investigations	14	2
Scottish Welfare Fund	6	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>9</b>

**Figure 1:** Illustration of activity undertaken



- One to one interviews
- Open discussion and semi structured interview questions used
- Interviews lasted an average of 60 minutes but with slight variations based on business need



- Observed the office environment and how teams work together
- Outcomes of staff survey and previous reports considered



- Staff survey outcomes noted.



- Desk review of performance and benchmark reports

### 3. Summary of Findings

People have a clear and consistent understanding of the vision, aims and objectives of the Services. This has been developed through the involvement of all in the business planning activities including an all-staff planning day, the development of team plans aligned to the strategic plans and individual Personal Development Plan discussions with regular ongoing progress reviews. You have now introduced Communities of Practice groups providing people with an additional opportunity to make a positive contribution to the SPSO aims, objectives and long term sustainability.

**There were some mixed views with regard to the effectiveness of leadership and management and in this respect I suggest it would be beneficial to develop and promote a management charter that clearly defines what people can expect from managers and that supports current and potential managers in carrying out their duties effectively.**

**There is also an opportunity to consider a refresher programme on the capabilities each level of management should possess to lead, manage and develop their teams**

As stated above you have three clearly defined values. They are:

- We will work independently and fairly.
- We are people focused and value integrity and respect.
- We value learning and improvement

Discussions highlighted that people were involved in the development of them, believe in them and consider them to be essential to the successful delivery of the SPSO services. While the values are clear the behaviours in relation to them are not as clear and consistently understood. **I suggest there is an opportunity to review the behaviours aligned to the values and to introduce them into the Personal Development Plan discussions.**

People generally feel empowered to make decisions as long as they are within their levels of responsibility with an example being decisions on the handling of complaints. On a wider level people are directly involved in decision making on short and long term business plans and in the recently introduced Communities of Practice projects.

The members of the project teams within the Communities of Practice have additional levels of empowerment through involvement in decision making to support business improvement in particular areas.

**There may be an opportunity to encourage people through development plan discussions to take greater responsibility for decision making to improve performance through their agreed personal objectives.**

The induction training at the start of employment ensures people have a clear understanding of what is expected of them. This is reinforced through job descriptions, policies and procedures, with support from line manager and, where appropriate, colleagues. A broader understanding of how their contributions fit with their team and SPSO objectives is clarified through the individual Personal Development Plans with agreed

objectives and there is regular feedback through engagement in strategic and operational planning and attendance at team meetings.

In discussions with managers and staff with regard to reward and recognition there were references to rewards being salary, pension and holiday entitlement. People also made reference to being encouraged to further develop knowledge and skills with financial support to undertake educational qualifications. References were made to Celebrating Success where achievements are recognised and there were references to having the opportunity to 'act up' and undertake suitable development activities in preparation for possible future progression.

References were made to the employee assistance programme with a confidential counselling service and most people referred to there now being a Health & Wellbeing Group with a range of programmed activities over the year and during Mental Health Week, an example being Mindfulness, and there is a strong focus on the creation and maintenance of an inclusive environment for all.

**While most people feel their managers recognise and value their contributions there were some who feel recognition could be stronger and more consistent. Consider engaging a team to give consideration to higher level reward for higher level performance.**

People referred to job descriptions being reviewed as part of the changes that have taken place over recent months. As a result they clearly define the key tasks and levels of responsibility people have in their jobs avoiding duplication of effort. Policies and practices also define the actions to be taken by post holders in relation to their work and the Personal Development Plans engage people in agreeing performance and development objectives that are motivational and support continuous improvement for the individuals, their teams and the SPSO. You have introduced open plan offices and observation demonstrated people are working well together and sharing ideas and information with each other.

People who were recently recruited to the SPSO explained how the approach to recruitment and selection was efficient and effective with a focus on competences relevant to the post. Comments made were that the selection process with panel interviews was "intense but fully supportive". People confirmed the induction programme is effective and that in addition to learning the role the activity involved getting to know people and how the role fits with other people's roles.

You have structured learning and development around the needs of the SPSO and individuals with examples being data protection, telephone skills, investigations and health and safety. Delivery takes place through role-play, coaching, guest speakers and on-line programmes

Once the Learning Co-ordinator identifies needs, arrangements are made to deliver the programmes through the variety of activities ranging formal qualifications to informal coaching and support.

**I suggest there is an opportunity to maximise the impact of learning and development through agreeing clear and measurable outcomes for all learning activities formal and informal and reviewing the impact on the desired performance on a regular basis.**

Continuous improvement remains at the heart of the business and the SPSO uses a wide range of internal and external sources to review and where possible improve the people strategies and the impact they have on overall performance. Examples Include:

- Feedback following learning and development activities.
- Customer complaints.
- SPSO Internal staff survey outcomes.
- Investors in People 6<sup>th</sup> Generation outcomes.
- Investors in Diversity outcomes.

Actions you take to achieve continuous improvement starts with strategic and team planning, individual Personal Development Plans with ongoing reviews at each level and taking into account the actions taken by the Communities of Practice project teams.

People referred to the excellent management of the recent office moves and this was the most common example of change being managed effectively during my discussions with managers and staff. There is now an open plan office environment and I noted during my visits that people work well in their teams and in sharing information and ideas. Your short and long term plans for the SPSO maintain a focus on sustainability of the organisation and stakeholders taken into account in business planning include management, staff, public service providers, members of the public who make complaints, Members of the Scottish Parliament and the wider Ombudsman community.

You engage people in the strategic planning through the all-staff away day and in operational planning within their teams. When finalised and implemented you hold regular review sessions and I noted minutes of management meetings are now made available to all. The Communities of Practice project groups also have an impact on business plans and in maintaining a focus on continuous improvement

My discussions with managers and staff members highlighted that the SPSO has a charities committee that make decisions on support to people and local charitable organisations within the community. References were also made to staff members having up to five days over a year to provide support to the community.

**There is an opportunity to more formally measure the impact of the people strategies on the objectives and key performance indicators and to take relevant action where appropriate.**

**While you make provision for support to people and organisations within the community discussions indicated there may be an opportunity to promote the actions taken by the Services to support local causes.**

## 4. Findings and Recommendations

### Indicator 1: Leading and Inspiring People

People demonstrated a clear understanding of the vision, aims and objectives of the SPSO and how they had developed their understanding through the levels of communication and engagement. I was provided with an understanding of how your business planning commences with an all staff planning day when people are involved in the development of draft plans for their own work area. The draft plans are then passed to the senior management team for approval and inclusion in the Strategic Plan. Once implemented the plans are reviewed by the senior team quarterly. At an individual level people have an annual Personal Development Plan discussion with a six-month review that focuses on performance and development objectives. People also have regular less formal discussions with their line manager.

*“Attempts are made to improve communication, all doors are open” - “there are good relationships with the Ombudsman”- “the Leadership Team can be seen as quite remote” - “line managers are really open and approachable” - “minutes of weekly meetings are shared”*

**Consider introducing a management charter that clearly defines what people can expect from their managers in the ways they are led, managed and developed and that supports current and potential managers in carrying out their duties effectively.**

**There is also an opportunity to consider a refresher programme on the capabilities each level of management should possess to lead, manage and develop their teams effectively.**

### Indicator 2: Living the organisation’s values and behaviours

You have three core values. They are:

- We will work independently and fairly.
- We are people-focused and value integrity and respect.
- We value learning and improvement.

Discussions highlighted people were consulted on the values and I noted that all have the opportunity to comment on them through the staff surveys. As a result, they are understood by all with people believing they are fully embedded across the SPSO. While people understand them and can explain what they mean in practice there is an opportunity to more clearly define behaviours managers and staff should demonstrate when carrying out their duties.

*“There was a general consensus the values are the right ones” - “the values were developed by the people”.*

**There is an opportunity to review the behaviours that managers and staff are expected to demonstrate in line with the values and to review performance in relation to them within the Personal Development Plan discussions.**

### **Indicator 3: Empowering and involving people**

Job descriptions, policies and procedures and the Personal Development Plans with support from line managers when required enable people to make decisions within their levels of responsibility. In this respect most people feel they can, and are trusted to, make decisions to improve how they work. People are also involved in contributing to decisions made with regard to strategic and team plans and now through participation in the Communities of Practice project groups where they can volunteer to be involved in decision making in areas they are particularly passionate about.

*“People are encouraged to come up with new ideas, but there is a requirement to work within constraints”.*

**There is a possible opportunity to encourage people to take greater responsibility for making decisions to improve how they approach their work through Personal Development Plan objectives**

### **Indicator 4: Managing performance**

The induction training at the start of employment ensures people have a clear understanding of what is expected of them as a result of being introduced to the job description, policies and procedures with support from their line manager and, where appropriate, colleagues. A broader understanding of how their contributions fit with their team and SPSO objectives is clarified through their individual Personal Development Plans with agreed objectives and there is regular feedback through engagement in strategic and operational planning and attendance team meetings.

Line management time invested in managing performance includes team and one-to-one meetings including the Personal Development Plan discussions and reviews.

### **Indicator 5: Recognising and rewarding high performance**

In discussions with managers and staff with regard to reward and recognition people discussed rewards including salary, pension and holiday entitlement. People also commented on being encouraged to further develop knowledge and skills and to the provision of financial support to undertake educational qualifications. People stated achievements are recognised through Celebrating Success and there were comments on having the opportunity to ‘act up’ and undertake suitable development activities in preparation for possible progression.

People talked about the employee assistance programme with a confidential counselling service and most referred to there now being a Health & Wellbeing Group with a range of programmed activities over the year and during Mental Health Week, examples being Mindfulness, Walking and Cycling Groups with a cycle to work scheme and there is a strong focus on the creation and maintenance of an inclusive environment for all.

*“Recognition could be better, there is an opportunity for more collective celebration” - “recognition is mixed, we get the odd thank-you” - “there is team recognition and recognition at the all staff meetings” - “I am quite happy with the feedback I get”.*

**I suggest there is an opportunity for managers at each level make sure there is a consistent approach to recognising and valuing the contributions of people individually and within teams. You may wish to consider how contributions are recognised and valued through all staff meetings, team meetings at the personal reviews and through the Communities of Practice discussions as well as when opportunities arise**

**Consider engaging a team in giving consideration to higher level reward for higher level performance.**

#### **Indicator 6: Structuring work**

People referred to job descriptions being reviewed as part of the changes that have taken place over recent months. As a result they clearly define the key tasks and levels of responsibility people have in their jobs avoiding duplication of effort. Policies and practices also define the actions to be taken by post holders in relation to their work and the Personal Development Plans engage people in agreeing performance and development objectives that are motivational and support continuous improvement for the individuals, their teams and the SPSO. You have introduced open plan offices and observation demonstrated people working well together and sharing ideas and information with each other.

*“Teams are fairly autonomous, standards are understood and people make decisions in relation to them”*

#### **Indicator 7: Building capability**

People feel the recruitment and selection process is firm and fair with panel interviews and competency based activity to test the capability of candidates.

You have structured learning and development around the needs of the SPSO and individuals with examples being data protection, telephone skills, behaviours, investigations and health & safety. Delivery takes place through role-play, coaching, guest speakers and on-line programmes.

You have put more structure to learning and development needs. Needs in relation to the business plans, are agreed when developing the plans and take into account developing trends and, for individuals, needs are agreed at their Personal Development Plan discussions. People who had recently started employment confirmed they had an effective induction that supported them in taking up their duties.

*“Recruitment was intense but you are really supported through the process”*

People referred to working together in their teams with the sharing of knowledge, skills and ideas and, during my visit I observed this taking place.

**I suggest there is an opportunity to maximise the impact of learning and development through agreeing clear and measurable outcomes for all learning activities formal and informal and reviewing the impact on the desired performance on a regular basis. The outcome should lead to increased efficiency and less stress for the learners.**

## **Indicator 8: Delivering continuous improvement**

The SPSO uses a range of internal and external sources to evaluate the impact the people strategies have on overall performance. Examples are:

- Staff feedback following learning and development activities.
- The SPSO staff survey outcomes.
- The Investors in People 6<sup>th</sup> Generation Framework outcomes.
- The Leaders in Diversity Framework outcomes.

The Communities of Practice you have are an additional good practice for engaging people in seeking to achieve continuous improvement in identified areas. People described how they have the opportunity to serve on groups that appeal to them most.

*“Leaders are receptive to ideas” - “continuous improvement plans have designated project owners with monthly reviews of progress - “we have good teamwork, everyone works together”*

**There is an opportunity to more formally measure the impact of the people strategies on the objectives and key performance indicators and to take relevant action where appropriate.**

## **Indicator 9: Creating sustainable success**

You have short and long term plans focused on sustainability and you have engaged staff in the development of them at strategic level during an all staff ‘away day’ with staff also involved in the development and review of the plans for their own areas of work. You have introduced the Communities of Practice project groups that have engaged volunteer representatives of staff in identifying where improvements can be achieved in specific areas adding a further dimension to communication and engagement.

Your office move was consistently referred to as being an excellent example of the management of change due to the phased and smooth operation of the move. The change of office has resulted in a more open plan environment that most staff are in favour of and during my visits I noted how people are openly sharing information and ideas.

My discussions with managers and staff members highlighted that the SPSO has a charities committee that make decisions on support to people and local charitable organisations within the community. References were also made to staff members having up to five days over a year to provide support to the community although at the present time people feel restricted in being able to support due to pressures of work.

*“The change of office went really well, all went smoothly” - “you are encouraged to develop through projects and a programme of learning and development activities is issued”. - “there are no visible barriers and managers are very accommodating with support” - “the office move was a massive project that was very well communicated and done”*

**While you make provision for support to people and organisations within the community discussions indicated there may be an opportunity to promote the actions taken by the SPSO to support local causes.**

## Suggested Recommendations

**There were some mixed views with regard to the effectiveness of leadership and management and in this respect I suggest it would be beneficial to develop and promote a Management Charter that clearly defines what people can expect from managers and that supports current and potential managers in carrying out their duties effectively.**

**There is also an opportunity to consider a refresher programme on the capabilities each level of management should possess to lead, manage and develop their teams**

**I suggest there is an opportunity to review the behaviours aligned to the values and to introduce them into the Personal Development Plan discussions.**

**There may be an opportunity to encourage people through development plan discussions to take greater responsibility for decision making to improve performance through their agreed personal objectives.**

**I suggest there is an opportunity for managers at each level make sure there is a consistent approach to recognising and valuing the contributions of people individually and within teams.**

**Consider engaging a team in giving consideration to higher level reward for higher level performance.**

**I suggest there is an opportunity to maximise the impact of learning and development through agreeing clear and measurable outcomes for all learning activities formal and informal and reviewing the impact on the desired performance on a regular basis.**

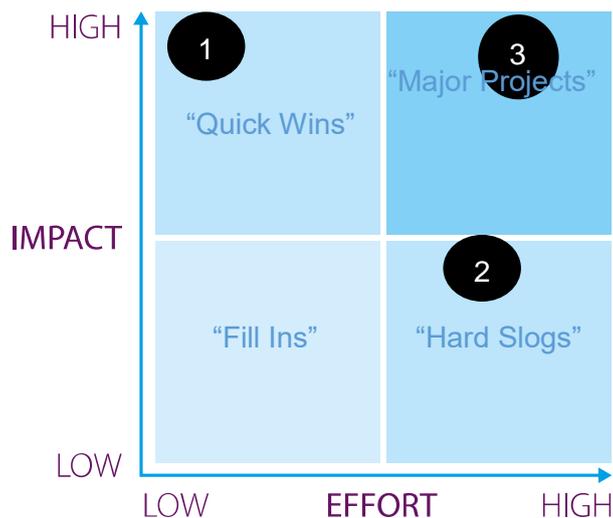
**While you make provision for support to people and organisations within the community discussions indicated there may be an opportunity to promote the actions taken by the SPSO to support local causes.**

**There is an opportunity to more formally measure the impact of the people strategies on the objectives and key performance indicators and to take relevant action where appropriate.**

## 5. Next Steps

When you have received this report I will contact you again to arrange a meeting. At that time we will consider the outcomes of this assessment visit and develop a plan for progression to the final stage in this assessment cycle.

An effective way to prioritise actions is to consider the IMPACT to the business versus the EFFORT required to achieve. We can discuss this further when we meet for our continuous improvement discussion next month but in order to start your thinking and planning I have started to use this technique in the example below. I hope this is a help to you:



**Suggestion 1: Align values, behaviours and management capabilities.**

**Suggestion 2: Review and promote the levels of empowerment**

**Suggestion 3: develop a strategy for corporate social responsibility**

The new 6th Generation of IIP requires formal activity on an annual basis and future diary dates are:

Accreditation	12-Month Review	24-Month Review	Accreditation Expiry
16/05/19	16/05/20	16/05/21	16/05/22

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**Remarkable** is a not for profit organisation owned by Scottish Enterprise and Highlands & Islands Enterprise. Remarkable is the exclusive delivery partner for Investors in People in Scotland, and has been since 1991.

Since 1991 Investors in People has set the standard for better people management and is an internationally recognised standard held by 14,000 organisations across the world. The standard defines what is required to lead, manage and support people in order to demonstrate sustainable results.

We strive to deliver value from this assessment but if you are unhappy with any aspect of the service you have received please feedback the details in the questionnaire you will be invited to complete. Alternatively

you can feedback to the Remarkable Quality Manager, Alan Gebbie, who presides over Investors in People. His email address is [alan.gebbie@thisisremarkable.com](mailto:alan.gebbie@thisisremarkable.com)