

News | July 2026

Ombudsman's update

Demands on our service continue to rise

From April – June 2026 (Quarter 1), we have continued to see a significant year on year rise across all of our services.

Compared to Q1 25-26, the number of Public Service Complaints received has increased by 18%, Scottish Welfare Fund application review requests have increased by 54% and Whistleblowing complaints have increased by 89%.

The sheer scale of these increases demonstrates the continued demand for SPSO's services and the growing need for complaints and welfare applications to be reviewed.

Whistleblowing report on NHS Lothian neurodiversity assessment delays

This month, I have published a [public interest report](#) on an NHS whistleblowing case about delays in neurodiversity assessments for children and young people in NHS Lothian.

It followed more than a year of repeated commitments to develop and implement a reasonable action plan after upholding concerns raised by a whistleblower. To date, this action plan to address the waiting lists has not yet been developed.

The whistleblower first raised their concerns in October 2024, at which time they reported the waiting list to be around 7,500 patients. Commitments were continuously not acted upon by the Board and the waiting list continued to rise to 11,000.

Since taking up my role as Ombudsman last October, I have seen commitments to take action on whistleblowing complaints not being followed through on a number of occasions, and this was a key finding in my previous whistleblowing public interest report ([Case 202411198](#)).

In this case, the concerns were recognised as valid, but the lack of timely action undermined the purpose of the whistleblowing process. Staff should feel confident that raising concerns will lead to change. That confidence is critical to maintaining safe, effective and responsive NHS services.

[Read case 202507513](#)

Sharing insights with the Health, Care and Sport Committee

This month, I shared a report with the Health, Care and Sport Committee on the consistent themes we are seeing across health complaints: persistent delays, unsafe staffing levels, poor communication, and weaknesses in record keeping and follow up.

I intend to report regularly to this Committee, offering an independent, evidence based perspective on how Scotland's health system is experienced in practice.

[Read Scottish Public Services Ombudsman – our role and the NHS 2025-2026.](#)

Public service complaints

Resolving issues for complainants

Over the past month we have supported a number of complainants to resolve their complaints without the need for a full investigation.

We have supported a complainant to have their debt waived for the time period in which invoices were sent to the wrong address; a health board has reopened a complaint following our initial comments; and a local authority has updated its operational practices to reflect its own policy.

This month we made nearly 700 decisions on complaints, our Assessment and Guidance team responded to 1,331 enquiries and we published five investigations.

[Read our latest findings](#)

Fife patient discharged with insufficient community support

We upheld a complaint about the care of a patient (A) following their discharge from an NHS Fife hospital.

Our investigation found that A's mobility and required supports were not reasonably assessed prior to being discharged, leading them to be left upstairs overnight despite not being able to safely manage the stairs.

The decision to proceed with discharge did not adequately consider A's mobility, safety, and home circumstances, and there was a lack of coordination and oversight.

We made recommendations for the board to improve ward records to better evidence patients' current status, monitor progress towards physiotherapy and occupational therapy goals, and provide support to aid mobility. We also asked the board to apologise and to work more closely with other providers to ensure planned community supports are in place for discharge.

Complaint upheld over care and review process following patient death at NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde

We upheld several complaints about the care provided to a patient (A) by NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde and the Board's subsequent review following their death from complications related to a bowel perforation.

A had bowel cancer and a confirmed bowel blockage. We found that delays in transferring them to the Glasgow Royal Infirmary and aspects of their clinical care were not reasonable. We also found that the Board's Significant Adverse Event Review (SAER) was too narrow in scope, limiting opportunities to learn from the case.

We made recommendations to address the issues identified.

Concerns about the quality and consistency of SAERs are a longstanding feature of our casework and have been highlighted by Healthcare Improvement Scotland (HIS) who have issued [guidance to all health boards](#).

We will continue monitoring cases involving SAERs, while guidance from HIS is embedded across health boards.

[Read case 202403102](#)

[Read case 202407000](#)

Independent National Whistleblowing Officer

National guidance for NHS staff on speaking up in NHS Scotland

In collaboration with Healthcare Improvement Scotland, we are pleased to publish [National guidance for NHS staff on speaking up in NHS Scotland](#). Speaking up is essential to safe, high quality care. This guidance is designed to make speaking up simpler, clearer and easier to navigate. It sets out:

- what speaking up means
- when and how to raise a concern
- the different routes available for advice and action

[Find out more](#)

Speak Up Week

Speak Up Week 2026 will run from Monday 28 September to Friday 2 October 2026.

Our theme “Five Years of the Whistleblowing Standards – What’s Changed? What’s Next?” will explore the last five years and what needs to happen in the future.

- [Check out our resources that you can use to raise awareness for Speak Up Week, including backgrounds, social media graphics, posters and more!](#)
- [Sign up to our webinar on Thursday 1 October](#): ‘Reflecting on five years of the National Whistleblowing Standards’ when our panellists will explore key achievements, what lessons have been learned, and the work that remains in building a positive speak up culture.

We hope these ignite your organisation to be thinking about and planning your own local events!

Scottish Welfare Fund

Last month, we responded to 91 enquiries and made 65 decisions, 5 on community care grants and 60 on crisis grants.

In one case, we instructed the council to make an award of £500 to cover food, gas and electricity costs after their discretionary housing payment was reduced without notice.

Engagement

This month, we met with the Poverty Alliance to discuss the findings from its Scottish Welfare Fund Get Heard Citizens Panel. The discussion focused on applicants' experiences of the Fund, with particular emphasis on the accessibility of the application and review processes.

[Read our latest findings](#)

Training

Complaints Investigation Skills

Our trainer-led course will equip participants with the knowledge to conduct robust investigations, ask the right questions, assess evidence, and make informed decisions.

Book your spot now:

- [Tuesday 1 September](#)
- [Wednesday 2 September](#)
- [Monday 30 November](#)
- [Tuesday 1 December](#)

Good Complaints Handling

Our Good Complaints Handling online training self-guided course is aimed at staff handling complaints at stage 1 of the [Model Complaints Handling Procedure \(MCHP\)](#) but would be useful for anyone involved in complaints handling looking to develop their knowledge.

The course takes around 45 minutes to complete and costs £50 per person.

[Book now](#)

Child Friendly Complaints

Our Child Friendly Complaints online training is tailored for complaints handlers and frontline staff. The course shows how organisations can put children and young people's rights at the heart of the complaints process.

The course takes around 45 minutes to complete and costs £50 per person.

[Book now](#)
