

SPSO NEWS

February 2018

This e-newsletter highlights:

- a public investigation report about a health board's delay in diagnosing a patient's lung cancer, and the subsequent care and treatment provided to him
- our first Scottish Welfare Fund Independent Review Service engagement event
- consultation on our draft revised strategic plan
- information about SPSO's annual appearance at the Local Government and Communities Committee
- our Complaints Standards Authority (CSA) update, including details of stakeholder engagements this month
- Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF) news.

This month we are publishing 52 reports of complaints we investigated about a range of sectors including local authorities, health, colleges and universities, housing associations, the prison service and water authorities. [These are available on our website.](#)

Casework decisions

Of the 52 cases we are publishing this month:

- 35 are about the health sector (34 summaries of decisions and 1 public investigation report)
- 11 are about local authorities
- we upheld 29 complaints, in full or part, and made recommendations on 31.

This month we are publishing one full public investigation report ([201602341](#)) about a health board's delay in diagnosing a patient with lung cancer, and the care and treatment provided to him.

We were critical of the serious failings identified in the patient's care and treatment and concerned that the board did not appear to have followed national standards and guidelines. We upheld the complaint and we have made a number of recommendations to address the failings that we found.

The board has agreed to take a number of actions, including:

- a full review of patients who were removed from the cancer referral pathway at the same time as the patient in this case. This review should establish whether any others were removed from the pathway inappropriately without their case being discussed at a multi-disciplinary team meeting
- an evaluation of the Palliative Care Service to identify any training needs and ensure these needs are met
- apologising to the family
- arranging an independent and impartial review of the lung cancer service.

Our first SWF engagement event

This month we held our first SWF engagement event at the Wheatley Academy in Glasgow. Speakers and workshops focused on three main themes:

- good decision making
- ensuring accessibility and supporting staff
- quality assurance

There is further information about this event in the SWF update below, and all of the [presentations and workshop materials from the day are now available on our website.](#)

Revised SPSO Strategic Plan: Consultation

Our draft updated strategic plan is with the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body for consultation. The intention is to lay a revised 2018-2020 strategic plan before the Scottish Parliament by the end of March 2018.

The strategic plan is called “Putting People at the Heart of Public Services” and it sets out the Ombudsman’s vision for the delivery of her functions, focusing on people and public sector improvement.

[The draft plan, as submitted to the SPCB, is now available on our website,](#) and we welcome comments. Consultation closes on 28 February 2018.

Appearance at the Local Government and Communities Committee

On 31 January 2018 the SPSO appeared before the Local Government and Communities Committee at the Scottish Parliament. This is an annual invitation to discuss SPSO's annual report, performance and direction. [A full report of the session is available on the Scottish Parliament website.](#)

Complaints Standards Authority

[The latest CSA update includes:](#)

- an update on stakeholder engagement activity
- information about our work to develop Whistleblowing Standards and to prepare for the Independent National Whistleblowing Officer function, which will be delivered by SPSO
- details of recent and future complaint handlers' networks meetings.

SPSO training: upcoming course

Complaint Investigation Skills: Wednesday 21 March 2018, central Edinburgh

This course is for managers, team leaders, complaints officers and any other staff involved in the investigation of complaints. The course aims to develop awareness of what makes the experience of complaining a good one or a bad one and explores the investigation process from initial receipt to decision. [Please see the training page of our Valuing Complaints website for further course and booking information.](#)

Scottish Welfare Fund

SWF Communications and engagement

On Thursday 8 February we hosted our first SWF Independent Review Service engagement event. The event took place at Wheatley Academy in Glasgow, and was an opportunity for delegates to share good practice, listen to a range of speakers, meet with SPSO staff and engage in interactive workshops. This event was very well attended by councils and third sector representatives and we look forward to receiving feedback from delegates to help us identify future areas of learning.

[Materials from the day are now available on our website.](#)

Later this month, we will be providing the Scottish Government with our feedback regarding the annual review of the SWF Statutory Guidance. As part of this, we plan to highlight any areas where we have observed differences in approach amongst councils; and sections which would benefit from further clarification.

SWF Statistics and reporting

During January 2018 the SWF team:

- responded to 60 enquiries
- made 53 decisions (25 community care grants and 29 crisis grants).

We also referred one case back to a council during this period to be reconsidered. The highest number of enquiries were made from applicants living in Glasgow, Dumfries and Galloway, Highland and East Ayrshire.

Casework outcomes

In recent weeks, we have determined a number of cases where we assessed that the council should have carried out further enquiries as part of their decision making process.

[Full information about these can be found on our Scottish Welfare Fund website.](#)

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