

# SPSO NEWS

## January 2018

This e-newsletter highlights:

- A public investigation report about a health board's treatment of a patient with a rare and serious neurological condition
- An update from our Complaints Standards Authority, including work to bring the functions of the new NHS Independent National Whistleblowing Officer (INWO) to the SPSO
- Scottish Welfare Fund news: including spaces still available on our first ever SWF event on Thursday 8 February
- A draft revised SPSO strategic plan for 2018-2020.

This month we are publishing 68 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 68 reports we are publishing this month:

- 34 are about the health sector (33 summaries of decisions and 1 public investigation report)
- 17 are about local authorities
- We upheld (in full or part) 36 complaints, and made recommendations in 35 cases.

This month, we are publishing one full public investigation ([201608430](#)) about a health board's treatment of a patient with a rare and serious neurological condition. In this case, we found failings in the care and treatment provided to the patient, including:

- failure to provide neurosurgery to the patient within a reasonable time (whilst there were unexpected repair works at the hospital, we considered that the board should have made alternative arrangements)
- failure to discuss the risks with the patient of the delays
- inadequate levels of physiotherapy care
- concerns about the nursing care provided to the patient, including continence care, pain management and wound care
- failures in discharge planning and suitable aftercare.

Overall the patient had a difficult and distressing experience returning home following the surgery, and we upheld all of the complaints that were made.

We have made a number of recommendations to address the failings that we found.

## Complaints Standards Authority

[The latest CSA update includes:](#)

- an update on stakeholder engagement activity
- work to bring the functions of the new Independent National Whistleblowing Officer to the SPSO. We are now working with partners from the health sector, the Scottish Government and other stakeholders to develop the new Standards. This is to ensure the procedures for investigating NHS whistleblowing disclosures are standardised, consistent, properly applied and result in fair outcomes, while also providing the necessary safeguarding of patients, and those raising the complaints.
- complaints handling procedure compliance checks
- details of future complaint handlers' networks meetings.

## SPSO training: new course date announced

**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

There is still time to book a place for our first Scottish Welfare Fund engagement event on 8 February 2018 at the Wheatley Academy in Glasgow. Delegates will have a unique opportunity to share best practice with a series of speakers, meet SPSO staff and participate in interactive workshops across a range of focused topics. [Full details of the event and booking information can be found on our website](#). We would advise that bookings be made as soon as possible.

We recently held our first Local Authority Scottish Welfare Fund Sounding Board meeting of 2018. Discussion included approaches to cases involving applications for replacement items. These involved situations where applicants' existing goods were old or in poor condition due to wear and tear (including where the SWF fund have provided these items previously). Recently we have observed variances in approach by councils. We provided our Sounding Board members with case studies to illustrate our key considerations when assessing such cases.

## SWF Statistics and reporting

During December 2017 the SWF team:

- responded to 51 enquiries
- made 41 decisions (18 crisis grants and 23 community care grants)

The most common reason for us reaching a different decision than the council was where we considered that the available information had not been interpreted incorrectly. This mostly involved councils not taking into account applicants' specific circumstances, which included significant health problems; care needs; and the need for the item when assessing the priority of applications for washing machines, carpeting and sofas.

## Casework outcomes

In recent weeks, we have determined a number of cases involving applicants who have recently moved into unfurnished properties and have requested assistance from the SWF. [Full information about these can be found on our Scottish Welfare Fund website](#).

## **Revised SPSO Strategic Plan: “SPSO Strategic Plan 2018-2020: Putting People at the Heart of Public Services”**

We are issuing a draft updated strategic plan to the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, for consultation, with the intention of laying a revised 2018-2020 strategic plan before the Scottish Parliament by the end of March 2018.

The strategic plan sets out the Ombudsman’s vision for the delivery of her functions and the outward-looking, outcome focussed strategic aims to deliver that vision. The plan takes into account the range of SPSO responsibilities and the wider context in which the SPSO operates.

The draft plan, as submitted to the SPCB, will shortly be available to view on the SPSO website.

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